

The
Sovereign
Grace of God
In Salvation

By
John Roden

“For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” (Romans 9:15-16)

All Scripture references are from the
King James Version of the Holy Bible

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Foreword

In 1921, Arthur Pink, in the Foreword to the second edition of his work, *The Sovereignty of God*, wrote:

“It is perfectly right to insist on the responsibility of man, but what of God? . . . Which is to be more deplored—an over-emphasizing of the human side and an insufficient emphasis on the Divine side, or, an over-emphasizing of the Divine side and an insufficient emphasis on the human side? . . . Surely, there is far more danger of making too much of man and too little of God, than there is of making too much of God and too little of man.” [Arthur Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, Bible Truth Depot, Swengel, PA., 1930, p.10].

I agree with Mr. Pink, and I believe John Roden, the author of the volume you hold in your hands, does too. If there is error in this book, I assure you that it is not because of an insufficient emphasis on the divine side. *The Sovereign Grace of God in Salvation* agrees with Jonah that “Salvation is of the Lord” [Jonah 2:9].

Nearly one hundred years after Mr. Pink wrote those words, the reality of the effects of “making too much of man and too little of God” is overwhelmingly evident. This generation has even changed the lyrics of God-honoring hymns for fear of dishonoring fallen men. For example, in the old hymn, *At The Cross*, the phrase, “Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I,” has been changed to “such a one as I.” Yet, in the twenty-second Psalm, the Messiah is pictured hanging on the the cruel cross for sinners and crying, “But I am a worm [tola; maggot, worm], and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people” [Psalm 22:6]. Further, in modern times the Lord God is no longer sovereign and men are no longer helpless sinners. The God of the twenty-first century wants to do many

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things for the human race, but He is helpless to do them without the approval of the sinner. The Lord of glory must now share His glory, even though He said long ago, “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another” [Isaiah 42:8; 48:11]

In *The Sovereign Grace of God in Salvation*, John Roden has not sought to be consistent with modern trends, but with the written Word of God, the Bible. The title says it all. The Lord God is sovereign in the matter of salvation. It is not of man's will, nor of man's works, but of God alone who shows mercy [Romans 9:15-16]. Like Isaiah the prophet, John Roden has seen the Lord. Thus, he is made to cry, “Woe is me! For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” [Isaiah 6:5]. Translation: Unless the Lord stops at my house and deals with my soul, I am undone. The same goes for you, dear reader. We are challenged to make our calling and election sure [II Peter 1:10]. Let us not be satisfied with the assurance of the pastor or personal worker. Let us not rest until the sovereign Lord Himself, by His Spirit, from His Word, speaks peace to our hearts.

“Lord, bless the truths in this book to the souls of all who peruse its pages. Let the reader be careful to consider and examine what the author has said in the light of your holy Word. And may you, the One true God—Father, Son and Spirit—receive glory, honor, worship and praise. Amen.”

—PASTOR WILLIAM W. SASSER, JR.,
Grace Church, Franklin, TN, June, 2011.

Introduction

The Authority and Reliability of the Holy Scriptures As the Word of God

When the Lord Jesus was on trial just prior to His crucifixion, the Roman governor Pilate asked Him this question, **“What is truth?”** (John 18:38). Pilate then walked away without waiting for an answer, totally unaware that the sacred Person who stood before him was Truth Incarnate (John 14:6). Had Pilate been present with Christ and His disciples earlier, he would have heard the answer to his question as Christ opened His heart in prayer to the Father. During the course of this prayer for His chosen people, our Lord spoke these gracious words, “Sanctify them through Thy truth. **Thy Word is truth**” (John 17:17). The answer to Pilate’s question, “What is truth?” is found in these words of our Lord’s prayer. **The Word of God, as recorded in the Holy Bible, is the Truth.** It has the answers to all the great and vital questions of life, such as, “Who am I?”; “Where did I come from?”; “Why am I here?”; “What is the purpose of life?”; “Who is God?”; “What is He like?”; “How can He be known?”; “Is there life after death?”; and “How can I find acceptance and peace with God?”

The Bible claims for itself Divine authorship and inspiration. In the Old Testament, its writers repeatedly used such phrases as *“Thus saith the Lord,”* *“The Lord hath spoken unto me,”* *“The Word of the Lord by the hand of Moses,”* and many other similar expressions. In the New Testament, these words are recorded in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

“All Scripture is given **by inspiration of God,** and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

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The New Testament book of Hebrews begins with this sweeping statement:

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by Whom also He made the worlds.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)

Referring to the Holy Scriptures, the Apostle Peter wrote:

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2 Peter 1:20-21)

These passages teach that the Bible—while given to us through human agency—claims to be an **infallible revelation of truth** from the very heart of God. As such, it gives a true and accurate account of the creation of the universe and of man, the fall and desperate plight of mankind, the early history of the human race, the nature and attributes of God, and His personal involvement with His creation. It particularly reveals the triune God’s redemptive purposes for man in the Lord Jesus Christ. As we shall see, the **central theme** of the Bible which runs throughout its pages like a scarlet thread from Genesis to Revelation is **salvation by the sovereign grace of the triune God**, through a living faith in the Son of God—**blood redemption** through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Since the Lord Jesus Christ is **“God manifest in the flesh”** (1 Timothy 3:16; John 1:1,14), all words which He spoke are the very words of God Himself. Therefore He could truthfully say, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but **My Words** shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). The Apostle Peter repeated this statement in substance in 1 Peter 1:25:

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“But **the Word of the Lord endureth forever**. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”

In the final analysis, then, a search for Truth concerning God, man, salvation, and eternal life must begin with this question: “**What saith the Scripture?**” (Romans 4:3). It is for this reason that the Bible is referred to or quoted on every page of this book. It is truly the only source of absolute authority in the matter of our relationship to God. It is only the “**Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**” (2 Timothy 3:15). Therefore, all who read this book are encouraged to do so with an open Bible before them, and are encouraged to take the time to look up each Scripture reference given.

Though the Bible is our only authoritative resource, this writer acknowledges that much help has also been received from the writings of past and present authors—most of whom have been either credited in the text when referred to or quoted, or listed in the Bibliography.

This book is sent forth with the earnest prayer that God may be pleased to use it to the edification of His people and to magnify and glorify **His matchless, amazing grace** in the salvation of many precious souls—by leading them to repentance toward God and faith in the crucified, buried, risen, exalted, glorified, and enthroned Lord Jesus, Who said,

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.” (John 14:6)

May it be a blessing, dear reader, to you!

—JOHN RODEN

Matthews, North Carolina, January, 2019.

The Anvil of God's Word

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime:
Then looking in, I saw upon the floor
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

“How many anvils have you had,” said I,
“To wear and batter all these hammers so?”
“Just one,” said he, and then, with twinkling eye,
“The anvil wears the hammers out, you know.”

And so, thought I, the anvil of God's Word,
For ages skeptic blows have beat upon;
Yet though the noise of falling blows was heard,
The anvil is unharmed . . . the hammers gone.

—Author Unknown

At Calvary

Years I spent in vanity and pride,
Caring not my Lord was crucified,
Knowing not it was for me He died
On Calvary.

By God's Word at last my sin I learned;
Then I trembled at the Law I'd spurned,
Till my guilty soul imploring turned
To Calvary.

Now I've given to Jesus everything;
Now I gladly own Him as my King;
Now my raptured soul can only sing
Of Calvary.

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan!
Oh, the GRACE that brought it down to man!
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary!

(Chorus:)

Mercy there was great, and grace was free;
Pardon there was multiplied to me;
There my burdened soul found liberty —
At Calvary!

— WILLIAM R. NEWELL

Amazing Grace

Amazing grace—how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
the hour I first believed!

The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
as long as life endures.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we've first begun.

—JOHN NEWTON (1725-1807)

The Grace of God: What Does It Really Mean?

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

Probably the most popular hymn of all time is “Amazing Grace,” written in the 18th century by English pastor John Newton. This famous hymn is not only sung during the worship services of many churches today, but it has been recorded by popular singers and sung on television and at special events throughout the world. Many who are not regular church-goers can recite the first verse of the hymn. But how many of those who are familiar with “Amazing Grace” really understand the meaning of the grace of God, and are actually experiencing the power of it in their lives? Have they, as John Newton, seen themselves as “wretched,” “blind,” and “lost”? Can they truthfully say that it has been their experience: “I once was lost, but now I am found; I once was blind, but now I see!”? What is the grace of God, and why is it so amazing? Why was John Newton so thankful for God’s grace? Why do you and I need the grace of God, and how can we receive it? It is the purpose of this book to reveal the glory of God’s wonderful grace as it is taught in the Bible, and to point the reader to the only One who can bring that grace to him personally—the Lord Jesus Christ. “For the Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

The word “grace” stands out above all other words in the Bible in describing God’s great salvation, appearing 130 times in the New Testament alone. The prominence of

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“grace” is seen in the Ephesian passage quoted above, and in many others. For example, the Gospel is called “the gospel of the **grace** of God” (Acts 20:24). Believers are said to be “justified freely by His **grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). According to Titus 2:11, it is “the **grace** of God that bringeth salvation...” Again, in the same epistle to Titus, Paul wrote, “...that having been justified by His **grace**, we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). These are only a few of the many, many passages that teach the preeminence of the grace of God in salvation.

The word “grace” in all these Scriptures is a translation of the Greek word *charis*. This Greek word has various shades of meaning, according to the context in which it is used, but when it refers to the salvation of sinners, it always means **God’s unmerited favor**—the favor, blessing, and mercy of God shown to those who are totally unworthy, undeserving, and Hell-deserving, where there is no consideration whatsoever of any merit on their part.

The Biblical concept of the grace of God has been clearly expressed by this writer:

“The first and possibly most fundamental characteristic of divine grace is that **it presupposes sin and guilt. Grace has meaning only when men are seen as fallen, unworthy of salvation, and liable to eternal wrath . . .** Grace does not contemplate sinners merely as undeserving but as ill-deserving . . . It is not simply that we do not deserve grace; **we do deserve Hell!** . . . Grace ceases to be grace if God is compelled to bestow it in the presence of human merit . . . Grace is treating a person without the slightest reference to desert whatsoever, but solely according to the infinite goodness and sovereign purpose of God.”—Dr. C. Samuel Storms, *The Grandeur of God*

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In his excellent set of commentaries on Paul's Epistle to the Romans, D. M. Lloyd-Jones gives this definition of the grace of God in his comments on Romans 3:24:

“There is no more wonderful word than **grace**. It means **unmerited favor, or kindness shown to one who is utterly undeserving**. Here again the **purely gratuitous character** of our salvation is brought out. It is something that results from the sole exercise of the spontaneous love of God. It is not merely a free gift, but **a free gift to those who deserve the exact opposite**, and it is given to us while we are ‘without hope and without God in the world.’ ” (Vol. 3, pg. 57)

When we begin to explore the wonderful grace of God as it is set forth in the Scriptures, we are immediately confronted with the awesome and astonishing truth that **God is sovereign in the exercise of His saving grace**—meaning that He freely bestows it only upon those sinners **whom He has chosen**, with absolutely no regard to anything meritorious in them. God revealed this **sovereign aspect of His grace** in the Old Testament when He spoke these words to Moses:

“And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and **will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.**” (Exodus 33:19)

This **sovereign character of the grace of God** is also clearly taught in the New Testament in many passages, but most explicitly by the apostle Paul in Romans 9:1-24, which we will study in more detail in a later chapter. Two verses in this passage particularly stand out in defining **the absolute sovereignty of God** in the exercise of His grace:

“For He saith to Moses, **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.** So then it is not of

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him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of **God** that sheweth mercy.” (Romans 9:15-16)

Not only is the grace of God amazing and awesome because of its gratuitous and sovereign character, but it is also amazing because of its **transforming power** in the lives of those who truly experience it. We find this so clearly expressed in the following passage:

”**For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.**” (Titus 2:11-14)

This aspect of the **practical fruits of the grace of God in action** will be explored more fully in two sections of this book, “The Evidences of the New Birth,” and “The Sovereign Grace of God in Securing Salvation.”

With these definitions of the grace of God in mind, we find that, according to Ephesians 1:6-7, this **life-changing blessing, favor, and mercy of God** comes to Hell-deserving sinners like you and me only through the Lord Jesus Christ—redemption through His precious shed blood on Calvary's cross:

“To the praise of **the glory of His grace**, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, **in Whom we have redemption through His blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the **riches of His grace.**”

(For An Expanded Definition of the Grace of God—with footnotes to Bible references—please see Appendix A on page 180.)

Why We So Desperately Need the Grace of God

“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, **therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.**”

(Ecclesiastes 8:11)

There is something terribly wrong with the human race. Read the daily newspaper, watch the evening news on television, or study the history of mankind, and then ask this question: **“Why is man, obviously the most intelligent creature on this planet, so full of moral corruption, so naturally evil?”** Our race has produced such cold-blooded killers as Adolf Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden. There are mothers who destroy their own children in the womb. There are parents who kill or physically and sexually abuse their own offspring. There are thousands of people who commit suicide, being so disturbed of mind that they deliberately commit self-murder. Millions of human beings daily poison their bodies and numb their minds with the abuse of drugs and alcohol. Consider the two devastating world wars that took place in the 20th century. Consider all the murder, rape, thievery, racial and religious warfare, and other forms of human cruelty which goes on daily among men. Man by nature, either under a religious covering or without any religion, is basically greedy, selfish, and self-serving. The thin layer of modern civilization does not conceal the moral depravity that exists everywhere.

How can these sad facts be explained? Humanistic evolutionists erroneously teach that man is only a highly developed animal. They take it for granted that man began at the bottom of the moral ladder, and that through education and progressive civilization he will slowly climb out of his

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animal nature, and eventually create a “new world order” of peace, love and goodwill.

The truth revealed in the Holy Scriptures, however, is just the opposite. **The Bible declares that man began at the top of the moral ladder, but that through deliberate rebellion and willful disobedience to his Creator’s command, he fell to the bottom.** The truth is that mankind is not progressing at all from the standpoint of morals. In spite of all his scientific and technological achievements, man is still a morally depraved creature. Our highly educated, high-tech society continues to devise more intricate means of destroying itself—hydrogen bombs, chemical and biological warfare, and atomic intercontinental ballistic missiles are a few obvious examples.

As a result of the sexual revolution which began in America in the 1960s, adultery, fornication, and divorce are now taken for granted in our culture, and glorified in movies and on television. In our society it is now generally acceptable, cool, and sophisticated to be immoral. Sexual perversion is no longer generally considered to be a sin, but is now called “gay.” Out-of-the-closet sodomites are even pastoring churches and being elected and re-elected to political office (See Romans 1:24-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Children have been sexually abused by church officials in what has recently become a national scandal. Crime, revolt against civil authority, and violent demonstrations are rampant throughout the land, while law enforcement officials and the courts are overwhelmed and baffled in their efforts to cope with it. There aren’t enough jails to house all the criminals, and many are being returned to society with little or no punishment. We are now witnessing the disintegration of the family as never before. Many children today are allowed to run wild, doing whatever they please. Some have actually carried loaded guns to school, and shot and killed their classmates and teachers. And yet we are told by secu-

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lar humanists and evolutionists that the human race is progressing along the evolutionary trail!

The only logical conclusion is that which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures: **Man is ruined by a terrible tragedy.** According to the Bible, man is not now in the state in which he was originally created. The fall of man, as recorded in the third chapter of Genesis, provides the true explanation of human history, and the universal moral depravity of mankind. **Sin** has entered and become a part of human nature, and man is now a fallen and ruined creature who is capable of any vileness and wickedness.

According to the Bible, the source of all sin and human misery can be traced back to that tragic day in the Garden of Eden when our first parents, the fountain from which all mankind flow, willfully and deliberately disobeyed the command of their Creator. They partook of the forbidden fruit, as recorded in Genesis chapter 3 of the Old Testament. In the New Testament, Romans 5:12,19 states and interprets this sad fact very clearly:

“Wherefore, as by **one man** [i.e., Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: . . . For as by **one man's** [i.e., Adam's] disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one [i.e., Christ] shall many be made righteous.”

Man's Original State

Our first parents were created in the “**image and likeness of God**” (Gen. 1:26-27). Adam bore the image of God in that he was created a rational and moral being. He was not only a personality capable of thinking and reasoning, but he was also a living spirit who knew his Creator personally—

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originally living in personal fellowship and communion with God. From a moral standpoint, Adam bore the image of God in that he was originally endowed with a natural goodness and uprightness of heart. God's description of Adam immediately after his creation was **"very good"** (Genesis 1:31). According to Ecclesiastes 7:29, **"God hath made man upright..."**—upright not only in his physical stature, but also in his moral character. He was originally created naturally conformed to the moral character of God, Who Himself is **"good and upright"** (Psalm 25:8).

According to Genesis 2:19-20, Adam gave names to all living creatures, an ability which displayed an intelligence far greater than that which is attributed to the grotesque, ridiculous "ape-man" imagined by those who hold the evolutionary theory or hypothesis.

Man was originally a very glorious creature. The whole nature of his being pointed toward God his Creator. He was created to reflect the glory of God, even as the rest of the creation reveals His eternal power, wisdom, and majesty (Romans 1:20). Adam and Eve knew and worshipped their Maker and naturally walked in personal communion and fellowship with Him (Genesis 1:28-30; 2:16; 3:8-10). Man's affections were originally free from defilement, for God's law and God's love were written upon his heart and mind, unaffected by sin. Man's soul was created for an eternal existence. The "breath of life" was breathed into his body directly from God (Genesis 2:7). His body was originally created free from disease and death. Man was originally created as the masterpiece of God's handiwork, creative power, and wisdom—the capstone of all the creation which is so wonderfully displayed throughout the universe. Man was made in God's image, made for God's loving fellowship, made with an upright moral character, and given dominion over all the earth (Genesis 1:27-28, Psalm 8:5-6).

The Fall of Man

Though Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, having an upright moral character, they were not robots. God originally endowed them with free will; as free moral agents, they had the ability to choose to obey God's command, or the ability to choose to disobey it. God placed them under the most favorable circumstances, and forbid them only the fruit of one tree, though everything else in the Garden of Eden was theirs to use freely. God warned Adam of the consequences of disobedience:

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, **thou shalt surely die.**” (Genesis 2:17)

In giving this commandment to our first parents, God was putting man's obedience and loyalty to the test, and giving him the opportunity to exercise the faculty of free choice.

No one can deny that God has the sovereign right and prerogative to test his creature's fidelity. We may conclude by implication from **Romans 5:12-19** that if Adam had stood this probationary test in honor, choosing to obey rather than to disobey God, the fate and history of all mankind would have been vastly different. These verses clearly teach that **God constituted Adam as both the federal and seminal head of the human race**, and that **Adam acted in behalf of the entire human race** during this time of probation:

“Wherefore, as by **one man** sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free

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gift. For if through **the offence of one** many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was **by one that sinned**, so is the gift: for **the judgment was by one to condemnation**, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if **by one man's offence** death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as **by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation**; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as **by one man's disobedience many were made sinners**, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Romans 5:12-19)

Though it is not specifically stated in this passage, the implication is that obedience while under temptation would have confirmed Adam and all those whom he represented in holiness and righteousness forever. Disobedience plunged him—and the **entire race of mankind** in whose behalf he acted—under the sentence of death, into ruin and corruption, and under the judgment of a holy God. The Biblical account of the temptation and fall of the human race in the first man Adam is given in Genesis 3:1-7:

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing

good and evil. **And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.** And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

The Tempter—A literal serpent is involved in the temptation (see Genesis 3:14-15), but this serpent is only an instrument being utilized by an unseen, supernatural being. The real tempter was the Devil, or Satan, who spoke through the serpent, as revealed in the New Testament in Revelation 12:9 and 2 Corinthians 11:3,14. Satan, motivated by malice toward God, set out to deceive and destroy the human race by enticing our first parents to disobey God. Because he succeeded in this attempt, in the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ refers to him as “a **liar** and the father of it,” and “a **murderer** from the beginning” (John 8:44). Further on in this book, we will see in more detail what the Bible reveals concerning Satan’s origin, rebellion against God, subsequent history, and final doom.

The Temptation—Satan’s attack upon Eve, and ultimately upon Adam, was launched in four stages. First, he introduced doubt into Eve’s mind concerning the truthfulness of God’s Word. Second, he flatly denied that they would die as a result of disobedience, calling God a liar. Third, he slandered God by misrepresenting His motive in denying them the fruit of the tree. Finally, he enticed her with the promise that they would be elevated to the same level as God Himself, attaining such increased knowledge that they would be “as gods, knowing good and evil” (verse 5).

The Fall—Eve took the bait as presented by Satan, preferring to follow her own desires rather than the will of God.

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She saw that the tree was not only “good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes” but also “a tree to be desired to make one wise.” Eve brought her husband into the sin by offering some of the fruit to him, and the Word of God says, “**and he did eat.**” (verse 6).

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, writing by the verbal inspiration of the Holy Spirit, sheds much light upon the fall of man in 1 Timothy 2:14:

“Adam was **not** deceived, but **the woman being deceived** was in the transgression.”

From this verse we understand that Eve permitted herself to be duped and deceived, actually believed Satan’s lies, and transgressed the commandment of God. Adam, however, was **not** deceived; he did **not** believe Satan’s lies. His sin was an act of **deliberate defiance and rebellion** against the authority and rule of God over him. It is not clear from the Scriptures exactly **why** Adam chose this course of action, but if we may speculate a bit, and read between the lines, it seems highly probable that, upon observing Eve’s transgression, he transferred his allegiance and loyalty from the Creator to the creature, or from God to his wife Eve. Eve must have been very beautiful, the very essence of feminine loveliness and charm. Although no children were conceived before the fall, it is very likely that the first couple had already consummated their marriage with a pure and holy physical union, enjoying the pleasures of married love. Being fully aware of the consequences of disobedience, Adam was forced to make a choice, and in doing so, he made the wrong choice. He defiantly walked into sin with eyes wide open, deliberately preferring Eve’s approval, companionship and fellowship over the approval, companionship and fellowship of God. See Romans 1:25.

The Immediate Consequences for Adam and Eve—Instead of becoming as “gods,” achieving a level of

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knowledge equal to God, our first parents discovered that they were naked. They felt a sense of shame and guilt for having transgressed the commandment of God, and sought to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. Their one act of disobedience was actually **a transgressing of the whole moral Law of God**, the essence of which is supreme love to God, and to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:37-39). What sin is contained in this one act! They preferred the “god” of self, self-exaltation, and self-will over God and His will. They worshipped the creature rather than the Creator. In this sin there was blasphemy in that they so little regarded Him as their Ruler and Lord. There was spiritual adultery, in that they chose to side with God’s enemy, Satan. There was not only self-murder, but there was the murder of their entire unborn race. There was stealing, by taking that which did not belong to them. They bore false witness to the character of God and the truthfulness of God’s Words. They coveted that which was forbidden by their generous Creator and Benefactor.

Adam and Eve immediately attempted to hide from the presence of the all-seeing God (verse 8), the One Whom they once adored and worshipped. When God sought them out and began to interrogate them (verses 9-13), it is obvious that they who were originally created righteous had become corrupt and hardened sinners. Adam brazenly and impudently sought to shift the blame for his sin to Eve, and ultimately blamed God: “The woman whom **Thou** gavest to be with me, **she** gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (verse 12). When Eve was questioned by God, she blamed the serpent. Rather than confessing their sin in brokenhearted repentance, neither were willing to admit that they were to blame. A holy and righteous God pronounced judgment upon the guilty pair. Eve was now to experience pain in childbirth and to be under the rule of her husband (vs. 16); Adam was told that the ground is cursed for his sake, and that in sorrow and toil he will eat of it until physical death returns his body to the dust from which it was made

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(vs. 17-19). With **the sentence of death** hanging over them, our first parents were expelled by God from the Garden of Eden (vs. 23-24). This was the beginning of the human experience in the state of sin. As we shall see, all that Adam lost in his Fall, all of us—the entire human race—lost in him.

Additional Consequences of Adam’s Sin—When we read in Genesis chapter 1 the account of God’s creation of the universe, as He spoke the universe into existence, we find this phrase used repeatedly at various stages of creation, **“And God saw that it was good.”** And then in Genesis 1:31, on the sixth day when God had completed the creation, we find these words, **“And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.”** From these verses we know that everything that came forth from the hands of God in creation was originally perfect, with no flaws or defects. There was no chaos of natural disasters upon the Earth. Hurricanes, tornadoes, cyclones, typhoons, earthquakes, floods, volcanoes, and unbearable extremes of temperature were unknown. The Earth was a virtual paradise, with the Garden of Eden being God’s very best for Adam and Eve.

However, as we have already seen, God cursed the ground (or the Earth) because of Adam’s sin (Genesis 3:17-19). This accounts for all the **harsh realities** that we as a fallen race are faced with as a part of life in our world. Every disease, every natural disaster (which are commonly referred to as “acts of God”) that brings illness, injury, and loss of life and property, are manifestations of the truth set forth in Romans 1:18, **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”** Additional light is shed upon this subject in Romans 8:18-22, where we find revealed the truth that God has subjected not only the Earth but the entire created universe to the conse-

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quences of Adam's sin. The universe is presently in a state of gradual deterioration and corruption through the operation of a principle known as **entropy**, a phenomenon which scientists have discovered and defined as the **Second Law of Thermodynamics**. (For additional insight on this subject from both Biblical and scientific viewpoints, see the excellent book by Dr. Henry M. Morris, *The Twilight of Evolution*).

The Tragic Results of the Fall of Man

Adam's sin corrupted human nature, both soul and body, and poisoned the entire race of mankind contained in his loins. The streams of all mankind which have flowed from Adam are corrupt, because the source or fountain was poisoned by sin. Adam naturally transmitted that sin, guilt and corruption to all his posterity, for, **“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?”** (Job 14:4). Children are not born innocent, as many believe, but we all come into this world with a sinful nature, which manifests itself early in life by selfish attitudes and actions. Fallen Adam begot a son, not in the moral image of God, but in his own corrupt moral image and likeness, according to Genesis 5:3 and 1 Corinthians 15:22, 49-50. **Adam naturally fathered a race of guilty sinners**—all of us born under the sentence of death and destruction (Romans 5:12-19; Ezekiel 18:4).

In this book it is our main concern to see and understand, with God's help by the enlightening and convicting power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:25; Acts 16:14; Hebrews 4:12), the extent of our ruin—in order that we may then see our **desperate need** for the grace and mercy of God. It is absolutely necessary that you and I see, understand and acknowledge these truths, for otherwise we will not seek grace and mercy from God. If a man believes he is in good health, will he take medicine, or seek a cure? No! But suppose his body is being secretly invaded by a deadly cancer? How happy he would be if he received a warning in time to seek help at the hands of a physician who could cure him! Friend, the human race, and that includes you and me, is infected with a **deadly spiritual disease called sin**, and if we would be healed, we must be made aware of our lost, undone condition (Luke 18:13; Acts 16:29-30), and come to the **Great Physician**, the Lord Jesus Christ, who **“came into the world to save sinners”** (1 Timothy 1:15; Matthew

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1:21), and **“to seek and to save that which was lost”** (Luke 19:10). The following study is a **diagnosis of our fallen and corrupt state by nature**, as it is revealed by the penetrating Searchlight of God’s Holy Word which, in the power of the Holy Spirit, lays open and bare the human heart and mind (Hebrews 4:12-13; Jeremiah 17:9-10).

1. We Are Under the Sentence of Death

God warned Adam of the penalty of disobedience to His command, **“For in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die”** (Genesis 2:17). Death, in the Biblical sense, never means annihilation, or extinction of being, but **separation**, and this separation has three aspects, or phases:

(1) There is **spiritual death**, or the separation of the soul from God. Adam suffered spiritual death immediately when he disobeyed God’s command—he was immediately cut off, or separated, from the intimate and blessed fellowship, communion, and favor of the holy God Who created him. This spiritual death, or separation from God, is now the **natural condition** of Adam’s fallen race, according to the Bible: **“through the offense of one [i.e., Adam], many be dead”** (Romans 5:15); **“dead in trespasses and sins”** (Ephesians 2:1); **“you, being dead in your sins”** (Colossians 2:13). Spiritual death, then, is conscious existence, but conscious existence that is separated from the personal knowledge, fellowship, communion, and favor of God.

What are the symptoms of spiritual death in fallen man? There are at least four: (1) **Insensibility**—Just as a dead body is insensible to life around it, so fallen man is insensible and uncaring concerning the majesty, glory, and perfections of his Maker, the One Whom he should be worshipping and in Whom he should be finding his greatest delight. Fallen man is alive to the world around him through the five senses, but, by nature, he is **dead spiritually** to a personal relationship with God. (2) **Absence of breath**—Just

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as a dead body does not breathe, so fallen man spends his time here on earth out of touch with God, having no spiritual breath, or vital communication and true fellowship with the holy God who made him. (3) **Absence of ability** (Ephesians 2:1; Romans 8:7)—As a physically dead man does not have the ability to make himself alive (e.g., Lazarus, John 11), so spiritually dead man is unable to come to Christ apart from the life-giving, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit (John 6:44,63,65). (4) **Absence of desire** (Romans 3:9-18; John 3:19-21). In our fallen state, we do not **by nature** desire the true God and His ways. We are **by nature** set on having our own way, which is opposed and hostile to the holy God of the Bible and His ways (read Romans 8:7-8, 1 Corinthians 2:14).

The Bible pictures fallen man as “**alienated from the life of God**” (Ephesians 4:18), and “**without God in the world**” (Ephesians 2:12). Man in his natural, fallen state is so blinded by the pride of his own heart that he will not seek after the true God, according to Psalm 10:4, “**The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts.**” Fallen man may be religious, but the “god” which he worships is not the true and living God revealed in the Bible, but a figment of his own imagination. This is **spiritual death**.

(2) There is **physical death**, or the separation of the soul from the body. Although Adam lived many years after the Fall, his sin introduced the seeds of disease, aging, and physical death into his body (Genesis 3:19), and into the entire human race. The Scripture says of Adam, “. . . **and he died**” (Genesis 5:5). This sentence of physical death rests upon all mankind because “**In Adam, all die**” (1 Corinthians 15:22); “**The wages of sin is death**” (Romans 6:23); and, “It is appointed unto men **once to die**, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Each one of us is subject to physical death at any moment. We are truly only a heartbeat from eternity.

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(3) There is **the second death** (Revelation 20:6, 14). Death does not end our existence. It is but the door into eternity—an eternity filled with the joy of God’s presence if, in this life, we have come to know Him through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. If we have not, we face an eternity of misery in the **second death**, being “**punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power**” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Death seals our eternal destiny. There will be no other opportunities to be reconciled to God beyond death. Though lost men and women may have been deluded all of their lives, only seconds after death the delusion will be gone. They will awaken to the awful, dreadful reality of their doom, their true condition before God—but then it will be too late.

2. We Are Under the Reign and Power of Sin

The Word of God also pictures fallen mankind as being under the reign and power of sin, according to Romans 5:21, “that as **sin hath reigned** unto death”—and according to the words of the Lord Jesus in John 8:34, “Verily, verily I say unto you, **Whosoever** [habitually] **committeth sin is the servant of sin.**” This truth is also taught in Romans 6:16:

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, **his servants ye are to whom ye obey**; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

As we have seen, our first parents were originally created in a state of innocence. They had upright moral character and God-centered personalities, having been created in the image of God and made for fellowship and communion with Him. However, this original uprightness was mutable, or subject to change. They needed to be successfully tested in order to be confirmed in a permanent and unchangeable state of righteousness and holiness. **Adam occupied the**

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unique position of being both the federal and seminal head of all his posterity (Romans 5:12-19, 1 Corinthians 15:22). These passages clearly teach that **the entire human race** was tested in the Garden of Eden through its federal representative and seminal head, the first man Adam. **We all stood or fell with him and in him**, according to how he would respond to the commandment of God regarding the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Implications drawn from Genesis chapters 2 and 3 and Romans 5:12-19 invariably lead us to this conclusion: If Adam as federal and seminal head of the race had not disobeyed the commandment of God during this temptation and probation, the entire human race contained in his loins would have been confirmed in holiness and righteousness forever, with no possibility of the entrance of sin and death into the human family. (See Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 2, pg. 120.) Since the **premises** set forth in the above passages are true, then the **converse** must also be true: If Adam as our head had successfully stood the test, **every child of Adam's race** would have been born **holy and righteous**, without the slightest inclination to evil, **spiritually alive to God, not subject to death**, and with a **natural God-awareness**—a natural **God-centered personality**.

The great tragedy of the fall of man is not only that each of us come into the world under the sentence of death and under the wrath of God, but also that **we are born with a self-centered personality**. This innate self-centeredness, or selfishness, is the true essence of sin, the source from which all sinful thoughts, words, and actions flow. Every wicked deed, every harsh, cruel, or mean word, every slander or lie spoken or written, every wicked thought originates out of a selfish heart that is bent on gratifying self, glorifying self, and promoting self, even at the expense of others, if necessary. **There is no real love for God, nor concern for His glory in all our thoughts or actions**. If we truly know our own hearts and are honest with our-

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selves, we must confess that even our good deeds are tainted with selfish motives and selfish interests. **We are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners by nature, and under sin's reigning power.** The essence of the Law of God is that we should love Him supremely with all our heart, soul, and mind, and love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40). The reality is that, by nature, we love ourselves supremely and seek to glorify and exalt ourselves in all things rather than the living God, Who alone deserves to be glorified, exalted, and worshipped.

3. We Are Enemies and Rebels Against God

When Adam made the choice to transgress the commandment of God, it was a deliberate act of defiance and rebellion against God's sovereign authority over him. The immediate result was enmity in his heart against God, and this has been the **natural state** of every son and daughter born of Adam's fallen race ever since. This truth is very clearly expressed in Romans 8:7-8:

“The carnal mind is **enmity against God**; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that in the flesh **cannot** please God.”

The phrase, “the carnal mind,” is a description of the mind which characterizes all of us by nature, “the mind of the flesh.” The word “enmity” is better translated **hostile** from the Greek. What is the **source of this hostility toward God** in the heart of fallen man? According to this text, it is the requirements of the **Law of God**. The enmity and hostility in the heart of men and women against God is against Him as the **Lawgiver**, the moral Governor of the world. The carnal mind—the natural mind of fallen human nature—is not willingly, joyfully, and obediently in subjection to God's holy Law. Instead, man in his fallen state hates and despises the true God—the holy God Who reveals Himself

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in the Holy Scriptures. He hates even the concept of such a God who demands perfect obedience to His Law, and threatens with judgment, a curse, and eternal punishment upon all those who do not render that perfect obedience (Romans 2:11-16; Galatians 3:10).

If God should descend from His throne as King, Lawgiver, Judge, and Executioner, and should become one who is **only** all-loving and all-merciful, one who overlooks sin, makes no demands for obedience, threatens no punishment, and grants the desires of their hearts, all mankind would immediately love him. Multitudes have a concept of God just like that, calling Him “the Man upstairs,” a grandfatherly being who winks and nods at sin, a celestial Santa Claus. But such a “god” is only a figment of their imagination, and when they are confronted with **the true God**, the sovereign, holy God of the Holy Scriptures, this deep-seated enmity comes to the surface, and the rebel is unmasked. Unless our hearts have been renewed and changed by the grace of God, all of us, if we could have our own way, would reject and dethrone such a God, consigning Him to nonexistence, banning Him from the universe which He created. Millions have, in their own minds, attempted to do this very thing by accepting as true the so-called big bang theory and the theory of organic evolution, attempting to exclude God in their explanation of the origin of man and the universe. How much more can you hate and despise One, than to believe, hope, and wish that He does not exist? However, the Bible has one word to describe an atheist, and it is found in Psalm 14:1, “The **fool** hath said in his heart, There is no God.”

Our Enmity and Rebellion Against God Proven By Our Disobedience to His Holy Law

You may be saying, “But I do believe in God, and I am a good person. I do not hate God. I try to live by the Ten Commandments, and the Golden Rule. I am not the kind of person you are describing. Surely God will accept me

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on the basis of the good life that I live.” But the truth is, my friend, you are self-deceived, and do not really understand the true nature of God’s holy Law. The Law of God is **spiritual** (Romans 7:14), reaching beyond the outward conduct, penetrating to the very thoughts and intents of the heart. The Law of God is like a mirror, which exposes the exceeding sinfulness and wickedness of our hearts, and lets us see ourselves as we truly are in the sight of God, according to Romans 3:20 and 7:7-14. Unless we have been regenerated by the Spirit of God in the New Birth, we are all in our natural state truly rebels against God. In order that we may see this more clearly, let us consider the broad scope of God’s Holy Law as it is revealed in the Ten Commandments (Exodus Chapter 20):

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT, “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” forbids not only the worship of idols, or false gods, but forbids substituting anything in the place of God as the supreme object of our love and affection. This may include being obsessed with a love of the world, or a consuming desire for the material things of life, whether that be another person, entertainment, fame, or fortune (Luke 16:13; I John 2:15-17). According to the words of Christ, “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee **the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent**” (John 17:3). It is to be greatly feared that multitudes of professing Christians are not worshipping the true God of the Bible at all, but are worshipping a figment of their own imagination. Their God is a miserable caricature of the true God. He is a “god” who commands no reverence or respect, who will not punish sin, one who is helpless to accomplish His own will, and one who is easily checkmated and thwarted by the puny wills of men and devils! Modern man has attempted to make God over into his own fallen image!

The charge which God brought against Israel long ago is true of many today: **“Thou thoughtest that I was alto-**

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gether such an one as thyself” (Psalm 50:21). This is idolatry. When we assume that God is like us, that He thinks the way we think, and then worship that false concept of God, we are worshipping a false god. The true and living God revealed in the Bible is One Who is eternal, immutable, uncompromisingly just, perfect and majestic in holiness, and absolutely sovereign in all things, including the exercise of His mercy, grace, and love.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image . . . thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.” God forbids not only idolatry, or idol-worship, but He also forbids the use of images, pictures, or statues as an aid to worship. Therefore the Roman Catholic Church is guilty of gross idolatry by encouraging their members to reverence or bow down before images of any supposed likeness of Christ, the virgin Mary, or any saint. Protestants are also guilty of violating this commandment if their concept of God or the Lord Jesus Christ is based upon some artist’s picture.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT: “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain.” This commandment not only forbids profane swearing and damning anyone or anything in the name of God. It also forbids any light, irreverent use of His holy name, which include phrases commonly used today in ordinary conversation even by some professing Christians, such as “Jeez!”, “Jesus!”, “Christ!”, “God!” and “Oh my God!” Any light, indifferent use of His name not accompanied by an attitude of reverence for His majesty is a breaking of this commandment. Dear reader, does this commandment make you angry? If so, it only proves the truthfulness of Romans 8:7-8, that your heart is filled with enmity toward the true God, the One who gives you the very breath to profane His name!

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” This refers to the seventh-day sab-

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bath given as a sign between God and Israel under the Old Covenant (Exodus 16:23-30; 31:12-18; Ezekiel 20:12-20). Under the New Covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ, the seventh-day sabbath as given to Israel has been abolished. It was a shadow or type of the believer's rest in Christ (Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 4:1-11). But **the principle of devoting one day out of seven** to the worship of God and religious instruction is imbedded and incorporated into the practice of the Church of Christ from its earliest days (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). That one day is now Sunday, **the first day of the week**, in commemoration of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ on the first day of the week; it is specifically referred to as **THE LORD'S DAY** in Revelation 1:10. It should not be forgotten that Sunday is **THE LORD'S DAY**, not our day. In our society, millions have turned Sunday into a "fun day," devoting it exclusively to fun and recreation, and giving no thought to the God Who made them. They do not seek out a place of worship in a local church where they might hear the truth of God's Word preached and taught. Though the seventh-day sabbath of the Old Testament has been abolished, **the public worship of God on the first day of the week is an established New Testament principle**, and if we "forsake the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25) to worship God and to hear the Word of God preached and taught, we are guilty of violating this Biblical principle.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: "Honor thy father and thy mother." This commandment means that we should render to our parents the esteem, love, obedience, and respect which is due them. This commandment is broken daily by rebellious, disobedient, sassy and impudent children! Many grown-up children are unkind, inconsiderate, unloving, and even cruel to their parents, both in actions and words.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT: "Thou shalt not kill." In this commandment God not only forbids the act of murder,

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but He also forbids all undue anger, wrath, malice, resentment, and revenge, conceived in the heart or expressed in words (Matthew 5:21-22; I John 3:14-15). In God's sight, hatred, a desire to kill, or to wish someone dead is a violation of this commandment. Abortion and euthanasia would certainly be included in this commandment.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." This commandment not only forbids the outward acts of fornication and adultery, but also forbids all unclean thoughts, impure desires, unchaste affections and obscene looks. According to our Lord's words in Matthew 5:27-28:

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That **whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her** hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

This commandment applies equally to women, who are also capable of looking upon a man to lust after him (Genesis 39:6-7; 2 Timothy 3:6).

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT: "Thou shalt not steal." This commandment not only refers to acts of robbery, burglary, and shoplifting, but also forbids failure to return that which is borrowed, failure to pay just or legal debts (including cheating on tax returns), failure to render a day's work for a day's pay, failure to represent truthfully an item that is offered for sale. The taking of any item that belongs to another, no matter how small or insignificant, is stealing.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." This commandment is constantly broken every day. It includes not only perjury or false witness in court, but also tale-bearing, backbiting, and slandering another's character with lies, innuendoes, insinuations, and evil suggestions concerning the other person's

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actions or motives. It is commonly to be observed among mankind that we are all guilty of attempting to build ourselves up by tearing others down. And since the Law of God is spiritual, going beyond the outward deed, laying hold of the thoughts and intents of the heart, we break this commandment when we bear false witness against our neighbor, even in our thoughts, though it may never be spoken to another. In this regard, see 1 Timothy 6:4.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT: “Thou shalt not covet . . .”

This commandment strikes home to the very heart of the matter of our relationship with our fellow-man, or neighbor. We are forbidden to even secretly desire in our hearts to have, or be jealous of, that which belongs to another, which includes his or her money, clothes, possessions, looks, reputation, popularity, talents, knowledge, intelligence, or abilities.

Even if it were possible for any of us to obey the Law of God perfectly in word, thought and deed—except in one instance—we would still be regarded by the holy God as guilty sinners, according to James 2:10-11, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and **yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.**”

The Lord Jesus summed up the whole Law of God in two great Commandments, as recorded in Matthew 22:37-40:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.** On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

According to John 14:15-24, **our love for God** is judged by our obedience to Him. And according to Matthew 5:43-48, love to our neighbor must include **love to our enemies** as

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well. Do any of us really believe that we have this kind of **perfect love** to God, and such **perfect love** to our neighbors, loving them as we do ourselves? In the light of the above truths, do any of us honestly believe that we truly obey the Law of God **perfectly**, to the satisfaction of the all-seeing, all-knowing God, who searches and knows the hearts of all men and women? Must we not confess that we are rebels at heart, and that—unless we are “**reconciled to God by the death of His Son**” (Romans 5:10), and receive the “**washing of regeneration**” (Titus 3:4-6) in the New Birth—we are really “enemies of God” (Rom. 5:10; Colossians 1:21)? Do you not see that it is impossible to be acceptable to God on the basis of our own supposed goodness or righteousness? Let the Word of God speak to us further on this subject:

“As it is written, There is **none righteous**, no, not one; there is **none that understandeth**; there is **none that seeketh after God**. They are **all** gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is **none that doeth good**, no, not one.” (Romans 3:10-12)

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, **that every mouth may be stopped**, and **all the world may become guilty before God**. Therefore by the deeds of the law **there shall no flesh be justified in His sight**: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:19-20)

“**Cursed** is everyone that continueth not in **all things** which are written in the book of the law to do them.” (Galatians 3:10)

“But we are **all** as an unclean thing, and **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags**; we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6)

Our Enmity and Rebellion Against God Proven by How We Treat the Son of God

To fully understand fallen man's rebellion and contempt for God, we must go back 2,000 years ago to Mount Calvary, and there behold the **blood-stained Lord Jesus**, nailed to a Roman cross, suffering and dying between two thieves. Here is the **ultimate limit**, the **final unmasking** of man's hatred and contempt for God. It is the greatest tragedy that heaven and earth will ever behold. Upon that center cross hung the Lord of Glory, the Creator, murdered and slain by the hands of men (Acts 2:23). There we behold Christ, the infinite God Who condescended to take upon Himself our human nature, being made flesh (John 1:1,14; Philippians 2:5-11), put to death by a ruined, fallen race of sinners. It is the **most tragic end result** of the choice that man made in the Garden of Eden which shut God out of his heart—a heart that God made for Himself and His own infinite love.

Though the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified and put to death by the Jews and the Roman government centuries ago, all of us have our share in this awful crime. **We are all members of a fallen race of rebel sinners who have dared to kill the Son of God**, who is "God manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16, John 1:1, 14). Friend, you and I were there—as it were, by proxy—killing the Son of God. It was your sins and my sins that were the hammers that drove the nails into His hands and feet. It was the enmity and hatred of the human race for the true God that pressed the crown of thorns down upon His sacred brow, and flung the spear up into His side. When we realize what we as a fallen race of sinners have done to God's own dear Son, it should break our hard hearts, and bring us down in repentance at His pierced feet, causing us to grieve over the way we have treated God. (See John Newton's hymn on page 181, *I Saw One Hanging on a Tree, in Agony and Blood.*)

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But the greatest wonder of God's unchanging love, **the mystery of His marvelous grace**, is that He will pardon the vilest and most hateful of sinners by virtue of this shedding of His dear Son's precious blood (1 Timothy 1:15; Romans 3:24-26; 5:6-11). No sinner, regardless of how deep he has sunken into sin, regardless of how hardened and callous he has become, will be turned away, if he will come in **repentance and faith** to the crucified, buried, risen, and exalted Lord Jesus, seeking mercy and pardon (John 6:37; 1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 7:25). I know this is true, because He received and pardoned a sinner like me!

Only Christ Perfectly Obeyed the Law of God

Christ alone could truthfully make this statement concerning His relationship with God the Father: "I **do always** those things that please Him" (John 8:29). In the light of these humbling truths, my friend, there is only **one hope** for sinners such as you and me. We must have the perfect righteousness of Christ Himself imputed to us, or counted as our righteousness (Romans 3:21-22; 10:3-4), and the pardon and forgiveness provided for us through **faith in the Lord Jesus Christ**, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Then, if we experience the miraculous cleansing of the **new birth** (2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:4-7), our attitude toward God and His law is changed from enmity to love (1 John 4:19; Romans 7:22).

4. Our Hearts and Minds Are Blind and Corrupt

How blind must that person be, who at noon, when the sun is shining at its brightest, cannot see it! In a spiritual sense, as a result of the fall, **mankind is now spiritually blind**, according to Ephesians 4:18, "having the **understanding darkened**, being alienated from the life of God, through

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the ignorance that is in them, because of the **blindness of their heart.**” Apart from a powerful supernatural operation of God upon his mind and heart, fallen man is blind to spiritual truth, and cannot understand it (1 Corinthians 2:14).

In Adam’s fall, the spiritual light went out in his heart, and this has been the awful **natural spiritual condition** of every child of Adam’s race ever since. God is the all-glorious Supreme Being in Whom all of us should find our greatest joy and delight. But now, because of sin, we are by nature utterly lost from that personal knowledge of and fellowship with our Creator. By nature, we are now **alienated and estranged from Him**, cut off from the joy of His personal fellowship and manifested presence, even though all around us we see the unmistakable evidence of His eternal Deity and Godhead shining forth in all of His creation. The beauty of a sunset, the song of a bird, the precise movement of the heavenly bodies, and the amazing intricacies of the human body and mind all speak to us of God’s majesty, power, and wisdom. God’s indictment and description of fallen humanity’s natural spiritual condition is found in Romans 3:11, **“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.”** The eternal majesty of God is clearly revealed in the visible creation, and leaves all of us without excuse (Romans 1:20). But in spite of this inescapable knowledge that there is a God, and that we are responsible to Him, fallen man’s understanding is now covered with such spiritual darkness that, according to 1 Corinthians 2:14, **“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them,** because they are spiritually discerned.”

The heart of man is the source of all his actions, determining the issues of life, **for as a man thinks in his heart, so is he**, according to Proverbs 4:23; 23:7. Therefore, the heart and mind of Adam before the fall was riveted upon Divine

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things. He saw the glory and majesty of his Maker, and his affections flowed naturally toward God. But when, under temptation, Adam willfully sinned, his heart was changed. The moral image of God, with which he was created, was severely marred and defaced. This is the description of fallen man's heart ever since: **"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"** (Jeremiah 17:9).

The wickedness of fallen man is great upon the earth. Behold the bitter fruits of the corruption of our nature. The world is filled with violence, murder, stealing, adultery, fornication, unnatural lusts and all manner of wickedness, hatred and profanity. Where does it all come from? The Lord Jesus Christ tells us, in Mark 7:21-23:

"For from within, **out of the heart of men**, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: **All these evil things come from within**, and defile the man."

Observe how early this corruption of nature begins to appear in children. Before they can walk by themselves, all Adam's sons and daughters follow in his footsteps. As much as we love our children, we can't help but see ourselves mirrored in them, as they begin to develop. What a great deal of pride, vanity, willfulness, selfishness and bad temper appear in them! When they crawl out of infancy, how necessary it is to use the rod of correction to subdue the self-will and rebellion that is naturally in their hearts (Proverbs 22:15). [See *Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, by Thomas Boston, page 22.] The Bible's description of fallen man is penetratingly accurate: **"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth"** (Genesis 8:21), and, **"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies"** (Psalm 58:3). We see it in ourselves, and we see it in our children!

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Consider the **deceitfulness** of the heart of fallen man in deceiving others. If we will face the truth about ourselves, we must admit that **it is human nature to be deceitful**. It is the nature of fallen man to practice deceit. Suppose every unsaved person were to throw off his disguise. What a cesspool of wickedness and corruption would then be uncovered! Suppose every adulterer, adulteress, or fornicator were to openly expose their hearts, and reveal all their lustful thoughts. Suppose the dishonest person disclosed to the world all his deceptions, lies and covetous desires. Suppose every proud and conceited person revealed all their arrogance and the details of the self-exaltation that is going on in their hearts. What if every unbeliever and Christ-rejecter openly revealed their dislike and contempt for Christ, His Gospel, and His true disciples? What if every hypocrite who claims to be a Christian exposed his wicked heart to the world? Imagine for a moment what it would be like if every back-biter spoke the truth when he meets his friends and acquaintances. Suppose he were to tell them to their faces the unkind things he says about them behind their backs; or suppose he tells them frankly to their faces what he really thinks about them. The truth is that men and women put on a smooth face to cover up what they are really like, for they dare not expose all the evil that is in their hearts. Though we do not like to hear such frankness about ourselves, this is how we appear under the penetrating gaze of the all-seeing God who knows everything about us. This truth is not only taught in those verses quoted above, but it is clearly set forth in these passages as well:

“The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live . . .” (Ecclesiastes. 9:3)

“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” (Ecclesiastes 8:11)

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This corruption of heart and mind in fallen man is from birth (Psalms 51:5; 58:3), and apart from the powerful transforming grace of God in regeneration, it is permanent and unchangeable (Jeremiah 13:23). We do not have the power to change ourselves, but the **good news** is that the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the “**power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth**” (Romans 1:16), and that in regeneration, or the **new birth**, the Holy Spirit of God comes to dwell within us, and creates within us a **new heart** (Ezekiel 11:19; 18:31; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; 4:24). [See *What Is the New Birth?*, pages 129-133.]

5. We Are Under the Power of Satan

Modern man generally regards the Divinely-inspired record of Adam and Eve and the fall of man in the Garden of Eden as a myth, a mere fable or tale. The Biblical account of man’s creation and the entrance of sin into the human race is laughed at and scorned by many today, and so it follows that belief in a personal Devil has also generally been rejected. Our highly educated, materialistic society, including many religious leaders, now regard Satan and demonism as a relic of man’s superstitious past, a myth of the Dark Ages. But the Bible is the verbally-inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). It is God’s infallible revelation to man, given to us through holy men of God who spoke and wrote as they were inspired and moved by the Spirit of God (2 Peter 1:20-21). From the pages of the Holy Scriptures, we find revealed the existence of an **incredibly powerful, intelligent spiritual being**, an evil personality called **Satan**, or the **Devil**—his origin, his fall, his character, his evil purpose toward man, and his ultimate defeat and final doom.

Where did the Devil come from? God, who is infinitely pure and holy, surely did not create him a Devil—God cannot be the author or originator of sin. According to the Bible, Satan was once the highest and most glorious of cre-

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ated angelic beings (Ezekiel 28:14), called Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12). According to the Bible, he was full of wisdom, brightness, and perfect in beauty (Ezekiel 28:12-17). However, we know from Scripture that Lucifer's downfall was occasioned by both pride (Ezekiel 28:17; 1 Timothy 3:6), and a desire to be like God—that is, to be worshipped and adored as God by the vast angelic host. Lucifer's fall is referred to in Isaiah 14:12, **“How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!...”** and by the Lord Jesus in Luke 10:18, **“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.”** Isaiah further gives the reason for Lucifer's fall in verses 13-14, “For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the Most High.”

Lucifer became Satan when he tried to make himself not only equal to God, but even above God. Because of his pride and rebellion, God cast him out of Heaven, along with a host of other fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4), who followed Lucifer and recognized him as their head (Luke 10:18; Matt. 25:41; Jude 6). Those angels who did not follow Lucifer, but remained faithful to their Creator, are referred to in the Scripture as “the elect angels” (1 Timothy 5:21). The Bible does not reveal when this event took place, but it was probably after the creation referred to in Genesis 1:1, but before the temptation of Adam and Eve.

In the inscrutable and unsearchable wisdom of God (Romans 11:33-36), Satan was allowed to enter the Garden of Eden and permitted to utilize his deceptive methods in an attempt to seduce our first parents into disobeying God's command. Satan attacked Adam through Eve, and though she was deceived, Adam willfully and defiantly chose to reject the rule of God over him. In deliberate rebellion, he fell into transgression and condemnation. We have already learned from God's Word that in his creation, **Adam was constituted by God as the federal head and representa-**

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tive of the entire human race contained in his loins (Romans 5:12-19). By this one act of rebellion against His Maker, Adam not only plunged himself and all his posterity into ruin, but he also surrendered his, and our, God-given right to have dominion over the Earth. He and all his posterity contained in his loins became **bond-slaves to Satan**, who now rules as an usurper. By conquering Adam, the head of our race, **Satan conquered all mankind, and brought us all under his power**. He gained access to the minds and thoughts of all men (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Because of the above facts, **this fallen world is now Satan's kingdom**, and all the kingdoms of this world are, and always have been since the fall, under his influence and control. During the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, Satan actually made these claims, and the Lord Jesus did not refute them (Matthew 4:8-10). Instead, Christ referred to Satan repeatedly as **“the prince [or ruler] of this world,”** as recorded in John 12:31, 14:30, and 16:11. In a reference to Satan, the Apostle Paul calls him **“the prince [ruler] of the power of the air, the spirit that now work-eth in the children of disobedience”** (Ephesians 2:2). Later in that same epistle, Paul warns the Ephesian believers:

“Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against **the rulers of the darkness of this world**, against **spiritual wickedness** in high places.” (Ephesians 6:11-12)

These verses teach that **Satan heads and commands an organized kingdom of evil spirits** who assist him in his rule over fallen man. Satan and his evil spirits, or demons, **rule easily** in this “kingdom of darkness” because they find that fallen man is easily duped and enticed due to his own spiritual blindness and rebellion against God. **“Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were**

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evil” (John 3:19). Satan invented the art of the “power of suggestion” and used it successfully in the Garden of Eden. He and his under-rulers continue to use it daily to persuade men and women to do their bidding, whether they are unbelievers (John 8:44, Luke 8:12), or professing followers of Christ (John 13:2; Acts 5:3). The shocking and startling truth is that this rule of Satan over fallen man is so extensive that the Apostle John states in 1 John 5:19, “The whole world lieth in wickedness” [literally in the original Greek, “**under the power of the evil one**”]. In Revelation 12:9, the same Apostle refers to him as “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which **deceiveth the whole world.**”

Satan is motivated primarily by hatred for God, hatred and jealousy of man who is made in God’s image, and a desire to have subjects under his control. His primary area of activity is in the **spiritual realm**, or the realm of religion and philosophies of life. Because of Satan’s access and influence on the minds of lost men and women, he keeps them blinded to the truth of the Gospel, according to 2 Corinthians 4:3-4:

“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to **them that are lost**; in whom the ‘god’ of this world hath **blinded the minds** of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

As the “god of this world,” Satan is the great deceiver, the true originator of every false religion, every heretical perversion of Christian truth, and every false philosophy of life. He deceives millions in his kingdom of darkness, who are caught in the “snare of the Devil, who are **taken captive** by him at his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Probably the biggest lie that Satan has ever successfully used is the evolutionary theory or hypothesis, which has led millions of men and women to deny the existence of a personal God, and to scorn and deny the Biblical account of creation.

6. We Are Unwilling and Unable to Return to God

Another tragic result of the Fall of Man is that all of us, in our natural, unconverted state, being guilty and corrupt sinners, rebels and enemies of the true and living God, are doing everything in our own power, either consciously or unconsciously, to stay away from Him. Adam and Eve fled from the presence of God after their sin, feeling their guilt and dreading the God Whom they once loved. They covered themselves with fig leaves, and attempted to hide from Him among the trees in the Garden. Adam's fallen race continues to run from the true God, the God Who reveals Himself in the Holy Scriptures—though we may invent many kinds of false religions in an attempt to cover, with “spiritual fig leaves,” our feelings of guilt. In our fallen state by nature, we are born into this world and live our lives in gross spiritual darkness, described in Ephesians 4:18 as **“having the understanding darkened.”** The result of this condition is that **“There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God”** (Romans 3:11). Fallen man is not only running away from the true God in a **desperate flight from reality**, but because of a darkened understanding and spiritual blindness, he is also **totally unable, of himself**, to find and know the true and living God. **The knowledge of the true God comes only by Divine revelation** (2 Corinthians 4:3-6, John 17:1-3).

The Apostle Paul, writing on another occasion to the Corinthian church, had this to say concerning the fearful condition and rebellious attitude of the natural man (and woman) concerning spiritual truth and the things pertaining to the true and living God:

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14)

WE ARE UNABLE AND UNWILLING TO RETURN TO GOD

The only conclusion that can be drawn from these statements from Holy Scripture is that if any individual is ever inclined to seek after the true and living God—the God of the Bible—it must be because **God is taking the initiative**, and actively seeking that individual first, by powerfully overcoming his natural aversion to spiritual truth. The clearest teaching concerning fallen man’s total inability in the spiritual realm—and the necessity of God taking the initiative—came from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In John 3:1-21, our Lord repeatedly stressed the absolute necessity of the New Birth, of being born again by the Spirit of God. **“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”** (verse 3). In verse 5, Christ said, **“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”** In John chapter 6, the Lord Jesus again stressed the absolute inability of the natural man to perform acceptable spiritual actions, including the exercise of true faith. In verse 44, He said, **“No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”** The Lord repeated this truth in slightly different words in verse 65, **“Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father.”** And in verse 63, He said this, **“It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The Words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”** The clear and unmistakable teaching of these verses is that fallen man (“the flesh”) contributes absolutely nothing to spiritual life.

In the light of these sobering truths, it is absurd and unscriptural to believe and teach that the salvation of any individual ultimately hinges upon the exercise of his own so-called “free will.” **Fallen man’s will is not free, but under the direct influence of a sinful and wicked heart** which is by its very nature at enmity and at war with the true God. As we shall see in a later chapter, the will of a lost sinner is

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set free to believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ only when that sinner is acted upon by the invincible power of the Holy Spirit in effectual calling and regeneration.

In a sermon on John 5:40, Charles Spurgeon illustrates the absurdity of how one who erroneously trusts in the exercise of his own “free will” to be saved might boastfully pray:

“Lord, I thank thee I am not like those poor presumptuous Calvinists. Lord, I was born with a glorious free-will; I was born with power by which I can turn to thee of myself; I have improved my grace. If everybody had done the same with their grace that I have, they might all have been saved. Lord, I know thou dost not make us willing if we are not willing ourselves. Thou givest grace to everybody; some do not improve it, but I do. There are many that will go to hell as much bought with the blood of Christ as I was; they had as much of the Holy Ghost given to them; they had as good a chance, and were as much blessed as I am. It was not thy grace that made us to differ; I know it did a great deal, still **I** turned the point; **I** made use of what was given me, and others did not—that is the difference between **me** and **them**.”—*Free Will a Slave*, December 2, 1855

The question is settled decisively by Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by **grace** are ye saved through **faith**; and **that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God**: not of works, lest any man should boast.” See also Romans 9:15-16, 1 Corinth. 1:26-31, Acts 13:48, 18:27, Philippians 1:29, and John 1:11-13.

7. We Will Stand Before God on Judgment Day

A prominent theme running throughout the Holy Scriptures is that, at an appointed time in the future, every person who has ever lived will be summoned into the presence of the God of the universe, the Judge of all mankind, to give an

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account of his life, before the Judgment Bar of God. According to Hebrews 9:27, **“It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”** King Solomon, the Divinely-inspired writer of the book of Ecclesiastes, concluded the book with these words, **“For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”** (Ecclesiastes 12:14). And in the Psalms, referring to the coming Judgment Day, David wrote these prophetic words, **“For He (the LORD) cometh to judge the earth; He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth”** (Psalm 96:13).

Many centuries ago, the patriarch Abraham asked the question, **“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”** (Genesis 18:25). From the Word of God, the answer to that question is found in the absolute purity, holiness and justice of God. According to Psalm 89:14, **“Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne.”** And in Psalms 145:17, we find God’s character revealed: **“The Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works.”** The same truth about God is taught in Psalms 19:9, **“...the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”** In the light of these glorious perfections of God’s character, as revealed in His Word, we may be absolutely certain that a **future Judgment Day** is coming, a Day in which God will **“render unto every man according to his deeds”** (Rom. 2:6), a Day in which the justice of God will be fully demonstrated and vindicated before all created beings.

In the blazing Light of Truth streaming forth from the pages of the New Testament, we learn that God the Father has committed into the hands of His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the absolute authority to judge all mankind on that great Judgment Day. Listen to His own words recorded in John 5:22, 27: **“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son . . . and hath**

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given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.” The Apostle Paul, when he preached to the men of Athens on Mars Hill in Greece, concluded his famous message with these powerful words: **“But now [God] commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead”** (Acts 17:30-31). It is only fitting and proper that He Who is “God manifest in the flesh” (I Timothy 3:16), still bearing the scars of Calvary upon Him, shall judge the creature whose nature He took upon Himself in the Incarnation and the Virgin Birth.

According to the Scriptures, the **Lord Jesus Christ** will judge both born-again believers and lost sinners, but in separate judgments. We find a reference to the judgment of believers in 2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before **the judgment seat of Christ**, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” Similar references to the judgment of believers only are found in Romans 14:8-12; I Corinthians 3:12-15, 4:5; Hebrews 13:17, and 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Though the true child of God, the genuine disciple of Christ, will not be condemned with the rest of the world for his sins (I Cor. 11:32), we learn from these passages that this judgment will be a time when conduct toward fellow-believers will be scrutinized, labor in the name of the Lord will be tested, motives closely examined, and rewards given for faithfulness. It will be a judgment before the crucified, risen, and exalted Lord Jesus Christ, whose omniscient gaze is like His Word, “...piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. **Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto**

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the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:12-13).

Referring to the judgment of God, the Apostle Peter wrote these words, “For the time is come that **judgment must begin at the house of God**, and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Peter 4:17-18). The Word of God, however, leaves no doubt as to the certainty of **the great judgment day of lost sinners**, when every person who has ever lived, and departed this life without experiencing the New Birth—and without the pardon and forgiveness of their sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His substitutionary atonement on the cross of Calvary—shall be brought to final examination and judgment. It is referred to as the great white throne judgment, graphically described by the Apostle John in his vision of the future, recorded in Revelation 20:11-15:

“And I saw a **great white throne**, and Him that sat on it, from Whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were **judged** out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and **they were judged every man according to their works**. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

It is the resplendent majesty of Almighty God, the One sitting on the throne, that causes, at His Word, the earth and the heaven to flee away. When the **Lord Jesus Christ**, the

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Creator of all things (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17), shall appear on this **great white throne**, the Apostle Peter's prophecy will also be fulfilled,

“But the **Day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” (2 Peter 3:10)

According to this prophetic vision of the Apostle John, this is the final judgment of all the ungodly of all ages, from the beginning of human history until the end of time. Their souls were temporarily incarcerated in Hell, or Hades, the intermediate state, and are now summoned forth, given resurrection bodies suitable for eternal punishment (John 5:28-29), and judged according to their works.

The absolute justice of God will be revealed in this proceeding, each person being judged individually, as Jeremiah 17:10 is fulfilled, “**I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.**”

This judgment is not to determine whether an individual is saved, but rather to determine the degree of punishment, which will be meted out according to the degree of wickedness, and the amount of light sinned against. Those who have had the light of the Gospel, and yet rejected the grace and mercy of God through “**repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ**” (Acts 20:21), shall incur a greater degree of punishment than those who never heard the Gospel. Since God's knowledge is infinite (Psalms 147:5), He knows everything, and therefore He knows perfectly the exact details of every word, thought and deed that has ever transpired in the life of each individual standing before Him in this judgment. The memory of each individual being judged will also be perfect, as every detail of his

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or her life here on earth shall be surveyed and brought to his or her attention. According to Romans 2:1-16, God's judgment will be fair and impartial (vs. 11); according to truth—that is, His Law, either written or in the conscience (vs. 2, 12-15); according to deeds (vs. 6); according to the degree of light enjoyed (vs. 11-15); and the secrets of men will be exposed and judged—those things which have escaped the knowledge of others will nevertheless be brought to light (vs. 16).

The final outcome of this judgment is given in vs. 14-15 of Revelation 20. The sentence is pronounced and executed—the second death—eternal banishment from the presence of God in the Lake of Fire, also described in 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 as being **“punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.”** The ultimate destiny of those who are judged by the Lord Jesus Christ on this Great White Throne is also described by the Lord Jesus Himself in Matthew 25:46, **“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”** It is very clear from this passage that eternal punishment is **not** annihilation or extinction of being, simply because the **same** Greek word, *aionion*, is used to describe the “everlasting” punishment of the lost in the Lake of Fire as is used to describe the life “eternal” of the saved in Heaven (Interlinear Greek-English New Testament).

8. We Are Under the Wrath of God

We are aware that the material presented in this section will be offensive to many. However, we would remind the reader that most of the New Testament teaching on the wrath of God came directly from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in the context of the Sermon on the Mount that we find some of His most explicit statements on this subject (Matthew 5:22,29,30). If we are to deal honestly with

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His teachings, we are not at liberty to pick and choose that which we will or will not accept. We must receive not only the sublime principles of righteousness taught in the Sermon on the Mount, but we must also accept without question our Lord's teachings on **the severity of that punishment awaiting lost sinners in eternity in Hell**. The truth is that the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the **Love of God personified** (John 3:16), had more to say in the way of faithful warning about the wrath of God than He had to say about the mercy and love of God.

According to eternal principles of justice and righteousness, **the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven**, as expressed in Romans 1:18-20:

“For **the wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against **all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men**, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead: so that **they are without excuse.**”

In Paul's Epistle to the Romans, God's indictment of the entire human race is set forth in the first three chapters, and the conclusion is drawn in Romans 3:9-23. A selected portion of it is quoted here:

“. . . for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are **all** under sin: as it is written, There is **none righteous**, no not one; there is **none that understandeth**, there is **none that seeketh after God**. They are **all** gone out of the way, they are **together** become unprofitable; there is **none** that doeth good, no, not one. . . . Now we know that what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them that are under the Law:

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that **every** mouth may be stopped, and **all the world may become guilty before God**. Therefore by the deeds of the Law shall **no flesh** be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin . . . for **all** have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” (See also Romans 2:1-29.)

Because we are all sinners both by nature and by practice and guilty before God, we are all by nature exposed to the wrath of God, or “**by nature children of wrath**,” as it is expressed in Ephesians 2:3.

But **what is the wrath of God**, and what does the Bible mean when it speaks of His wrath? First, the wrath of God is **the holiness and righteousness of God in action**. God’s wrath is God manifesting His eternal detestation of all unrighteousness. Second, it is His expression of displeasure against sin, His indignation against evil, according to Psalm 34:16, “The face of the Lord is **against** those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.” Third, the wrath of God is His holy anger with sinners. According to Psalms 7:11, “God is **angry** with the wicked every day.” In a prayer of Moses, recorded in the Psalms, we find these words: “Who knoweth the **power of thine anger**, even according to thy fear, so is **thy wrath**” (Psalm 90:11).

According to John 3:35-36, John the Baptist declared that those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are under the wrath of God:

“The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but **the wrath of God** abideth on him.”

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke these words of warning to His hearers, recorded in Luke 12:4-5:

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“And I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: **Fear Him which after He hath killed hath power to cast into Hell;** yea, I say unto you, fear Him!”

Describing the final state of impenitent, lost sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke these words: “These shall go away into **everlasting punishment . . .**” (Matthew 25:46).

Just prior to His ascension into Heaven to the right hand of the Father, where He is now enthroned as Lord over all mankind (Romans 14:9), our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His disciples:

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but **he that believeth not shall be damned.**” (Mark 16:15-16)

The Apostle John, in the last book of the Bible, describes the final doom of all lost sinners of Adam’s race who die without salvation in Christ, who stand before God at the final judgment day and have been found guilty:

“And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was **cast into the lake of fire.**” (Revelation 20:14-15)

It is clear from the Holy Scriptures that God’s infinite holiness and justice demand retribution and wrath against sin. How could He, who delights only in that which is pure and holy, not also loathe and hate that which is evil? It is not necessary for any man to defend the character of God, or to make apologies for God’s eternal wrath and judgment upon sin. Those who imagine that God could never be angry, that He is only an all-loving, all-merciful God who would never

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send anyone to Hell, give evidence of their utter spiritual blindness, and a warped, twisted, and distorted view of God. God's wrath against sin is just as much a perfection of His character as is His love and mercy in sending His only begotten Son to die for sinners. [We are indebted to Arthur Pink for his excellent book, "The Attributes of God," for some of the thoughts expressed in this section.]

If we love the souls of men, we must follow Christ's example, and that of John the Baptist, warning men and women to "**flee the wrath to come**" (Luke 3:7). In this regard, we quote from J. C. Ryle:

"There is no mercy in keeping back from men the subject of Hell. Fearful and tremendous as it is, it ought to be pressed on all, as one of the great truths of Christianity. Our loving Saviour speaks frequently of it. The apostle John, in the book of Revelation, often describes it. The servants of God in these days must not be ashamed of confessing their belief in it. Were there no boundless mercy in Christ for all that believe in Him, we might well shrink from the awful topic. Were there no precious blood of Christ able to cleanse away all sin, we might well keep silent about the wrath to come. But there is mercy for all who ask in Christ's name. There is a fountain open for all sin. Let us then boldly and unhesitatingly maintain that there is a Hell, and beseech men to flee from it, before it be too late. 'Knowing the terror of the Lord,' the worm and the fire, let us 'persuade men' (1 Corinthians 5:11). It is not possible to say too much about Christ. But it is quite possible to say too little about Hell."—*Expository Thoughts on Mark*

A Biblical Description of Hell

Hell is a literal place, originally created and prepared by God for the judgment and punishment of the Devil and his

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angels, according to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 25:41:

“Then shall He say also to them on the left hand, **Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.**”

Because fallen man is now a sinful, wicked rebel against God, God has ordained that all those of Adam’s fallen race who die and enter eternity as lost sinners will share the same place and the same eternal punishment which has been prepared for the Devil and his evil angels. The Holy Scriptures are not at a loss for words in giving a description of this terrible place where unrepentant, unredeemed sinners suffer God’s eternal retribution for their sins. There is a wealth of material on this subject in the Bible which must be taught and preached if **the whole counsel of God** is to be declared (Acts 20:27). With these thoughts in mind, we might ask the question, What kind of a place is Hell?

(1) Hell is a place of outer darkness. As we have already seen, as a result of the Fall, we all by nature have a darkened understanding (Ephesians 4:18)—a **willful rejection** of the light of truth, according to John 3:19-20:

“And this is the condemnation, that Light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.** For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.”

The Lord Jesus said, “**I am the Light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness,** but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). Therefore, it is a just and equitable punishment for those who love the darkness and hate the Light to be cast into outer darkness, according to Matthew 22:13:

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“Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and **cast him into outer darkness**; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (See also Matt. 8:12, 25:30.)

Hell is described as a place of **“the blackness of darkness”** in Jude 13. Imagine how awful it is for unrepentant, unbelieving sinners to suffer the eternal punishment of Hell in **total darkness**.

(2) Hell is a place where lost sinners suffer eternal torment in everlasting fire. Lost sinners in Hell are exposed to the wrath of God without mercy. His wrath and fiery indignation against sinners finds expression in a **tormenting fire**, according to our Lord’s words in Luke 16:23-24 describing the rich man in Hell:

“And **in Hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments**, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for **I am tormented in this flame.**”

Some have raised the question as to whether the fire of Hell is literal; they believe that Christ is speaking in figurative or metaphorical language when He uses such terms. Though caution should be used in interpreting the Word of God on the subject of the eternal punishment of the lost, it is foolish and dangerous to tamper with or tone down God’s Word because it does not suit us, or because it may offend our natural sensibilities. (See the warning of Revelation 22:18-19.) **Could it be that if we had a better understanding of the holiness and justice of God and the awfulness of sin, we might be more receptive to the Word of God on this subject?** (See Revelation 19:1-3.)

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Whatever its nature, the wrath of God expressed in the fire of Hell is so terrible that it is capable of **tormenting lost sinners in both body and soul**, as well as spirit beings such as the Devil and his angels, according to the passages quoted above. See also Revelation 14:9-11, 20:10; Jude 7; Isaiah 33:10-14.

(3) Hell is a place “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:46). “Unquenchable fire” means that the fire of Hell is everlasting—it will never burn out, but will continue to torment the inhabitants of Hell forever and ever. The **“worm that dieth not”** is obvious figurative language, and refers not to a literal worm, but to the gnawing of an awakened, guilty conscience which will plague the lost in Hell throughout eternity.

(4) Hell is described as a “bottomless pit,” according to Revelation 9:1-2, 20:3. This language would seem to indicate that those who are suffering eternal punishment in Hell experience the dreadful sensation of **continually falling downward** in a pit which has no bottom. They are without hope of ever escaping the pit as they continue to fall down into everlasting darkness.

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was greatly used of God during the “Great Awakening,” a revival of the 18th century in both colonial America and England. He is most famous for his sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” In another sermon warning sinners about Hell, Jonathan Edwards said:

“The wrath of God burns against them. Their damnation does not slumber. The pit is prepared. The fire is made ready. The furnace is now hot ready to receive them. The flames do rage and glow. The glittering sword is whet and held over them, and the pit hath opened its mouth under them. **Oh sinner! Consider**

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the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath that you are held over in the hands of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in Hell.”—*The Eternity of Hell Torments*

Friend, you may laugh, and say there is no such place as Hell, but I would caution you to weigh seriously **the dying words of Thomas Paine**, the renowned American author and infidel whose book, *Age of Reason*, exerted considerable influence in his day against belief in God and in the Bible. When he came to his last hour before death in 1809, Thomas Paine cried out,

“I would give worlds, if I had them, that *Age of Reason* had not been published. **O Lord, help me! Christ, help me!** O God, what have I done to suffer so much! But there is no God! But if there should be, what will become of me hereafter! . . . If ever the Devil had an agent, I have been that one!”

Then, my friend, consider **the last words of Voltaire**, the noted 18th Century French infidel and talented writer who wrote much in his day against the Bible. He said of Christ, “Curse the wretch!” He once boasted, “In 20 years Christianity will be no more. My single hand shall destroy the edifice it took 12 apostles to rear!” However, the physician who attended him in his final moments before death said he cried out desperately:

“I am abandoned by God and man! I will give you half of what I am worth if you will give me six months life. **Then I shall go to Hell; and you will go with me.** O Christ! O Jesus Christ!”

Contrast the tragic death scene described above with **the last words of Dwight L. Moody** (1837-1899), the American evangelist who spoke these words with joy as he was

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about to enter eternity: “I see earth receding; **heaven is opening**. God is calling me.”

David Brainerd, whose remarkable evangelistic work among the American Indians still inspire the people of God who read about him, was heard to whisper at the moment of death, “He will come, and will not tarry. **I shall soon be in glory**, soon be with God and His angels!”

The Cross of Christ the Most Awesome Expression Of the Wrath of God

In conclusion, let us pause to consider **the most awesome expression** of the holy wrath of God the universe has ever witnessed or ever shall witness—far surpassing that which shall be displayed in the punishment of lost sinners in Hell, or the Lake of Fire. It took place 2,000 years ago on Mount Calvary, on Golgotha’s Hill, outside the city of Jerusalem, when “[God] spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all” (Romans 8:32). There the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the triune God—out of a compassionate heart of love for lost, guilty, Hell-deserving sinners—voluntarily surrendered His life as a substitutionary atoning sacrifice on behalf of His people (2 Corinthians 5:21). He “bore our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). It was there that He cried out, in great agony of soul, “**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?**” (Matthew 27:46). It was there that the holy, sinless Son of God voluntarily took unto Himself the **full stroke of God’s justice and holy wrath** that would have fallen upon every true believer (John 10:11, 15-18), suffering and dying in our stead, on our behalf (Romans 5:6-10), as the believer’s Substitute—satisfying the justice and the wrath of God in our behalf by shedding His own precious blood, when His soul was made an “offering for sin” (Isaiah 53:10). For every true believer, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of

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the Law, **being made a curse for us**, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Galatians 3:13). The cross of Christ, the cross of a crucified Saviour, is the most powerful and impressive demonstration of the righteous judgment and wrath of God, for it truly magnifies and glorifies the holy Law of God (Romans 3:31). And it is also there—at the cross of Christ—that we see **the most solemn warning** of the lost sinner's danger in the coming Day of Judgment. If **God spared not His only begotten Son** when He bore the sins of His people "in his own body on the tree" (Romans 8:32; 1 Peter 2:24), what then must await that **lost sinner** who dies and enters eternity without being sheltered under His precious atoning blood?

The Lord Jesus Christ Has Met Our Needs In the Gospel of the Grace of God

In view of these sobering truths, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that guilty, Hell-deserving sinners like you and me **desperately need** the grace of God! The **good news** of the Gospel of God's grace is that His grace and mercy is **freely bestowed** upon sinners like us through His sovereign good pleasure and kindness, in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ—through His **substitutionary sacrifice on Calvary's cross** (Romans 3:24-26). In salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ not only delivers us from the guilt and penalty of our sins, but **He also delivers us from the power of sin and the power of Satan**—a salvation which gives all the praise and all the glory to the **riches of the wonderful grace** of the triune God (Ephesians 1:6-7, 2:4-10; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31).

“Salvation is of the Lord”

The very heart of **salvation by the sovereign grace of God** throughout all of its aspects is expressed in Jonah 2:9: **“Salvation is of the Lord.”** It was designed and ordained by the **Father**, accomplished by the **Son**, and is applied by the **Holy Spirit**. **All three Persons of the Triune God** are in **eternal agreement** on the plan of redemption and its execution, as seen in the following passages:

“Blessed be **the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: **according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” (Ephesians 1:3-7)

“**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me**; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. **And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing**, but should raise it up again at the last day.” (John 6:37-39)

“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and **I lay down my life for the sheep.**” (John 10:15)

“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation **through sanctification of the Spirit** and belief of the truth.” (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

“It is the **Spirit** that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing.” (John 6:63)

The Sovereign Grace of the Triune God

“For he saith to Moses, **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.** So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”

(Romans 9:15-16)

As we have seen, the grace of God is His unmerited favor—the favor, blessing, and mercy of God shown to those who are totally unworthy, undeserving, and Hell-deserving, where there is no consideration whatsoever of any merit on their part—and based solely upon the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Using the word “**sovereign**” to describe the grace of God is just another way of stating that God reserves the right to freely bestow His grace and mercy upon those whom He chooses, and that salvation depends entirely upon the will of God, not upon the will of man. In order that we might have a better understanding of the **sovereign grace of the triune God**, let us study these truths under three headings: (1) The Tri-Unity of God; (2) The God of Absolute Sovereignty; and (3) God is Sovereign in the Exercise of His Grace.

1. The Tri-Unity of God

It is absolutely necessary that we have a Biblical concept of the triune nature of God. Otherwise, we would not be able to understand or appreciate the intimate, personal involvement of each Person of the Godhead in the revelation of His wonderful grace in redeeming and saving lost sinners.

The Holy Scriptures reveal that in a wonderful, yet mysterious and incomprehensible way, **God is one God in substance**, yet He is also **three distinct Persons**. These three Persons are co-equal and co-eternal, each Divine Person

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sharing equally in all the glorious attributes of Deity. Yet there are not three gods, but **one God**—the great Three-In-One, the glorious One-In-Three.

The Tri-Unity of God in the Old Testament

The profound mystery of God’s triune nature is **progressively foreshadowed** in the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi, and **expressly revealed** in the New Testament. Though both Testaments clearly teach that there is but **one God** (Deuteronomy 6:4; James 2:19), the Old Testament hints at a **plurality of Persons in unity** in the Godhead in its opening verse, “In the beginning **God** created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). The Hebrew word used here for God is *Elohiym*, a plural noun which implies either **more than one**, or a **compound unity** (See the Scofield Reference Bible note on Genesis 1:1). *Elohiym*, though a **plural noun**, is used over 2,200 times in the Old Testament referring to the **one God**, while the singular noun *El* is only used 213 times for God. Another passage using *Elohiym* which clearly teaches **plurality in unity** with reference to the **one true God** is Genesis 1:26-27, “And **God** [*Elohiym*] said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness . . . So **God** [*Elohiym*] created man in **His** own image . . .”

Plurality in the Shema

Jewish people object to the Christian doctrine of the tri-unity of God, and confidently quote the Shema to support their claim that God is one:

“Hear, O Israel: **The LORD** [Hebrew, *echad*] **our God** [*Elohiym*] **is one LORD** [Hebrew, *echad*]: And thou shalt love the **LORD** thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” (Deut. 6:4-5)

Our Jewish friends take it for granted that this passage teaches that Jehovah God is indivisibly one, and that it silences forever the New Testament teaching of the Deity of

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Christ—that Jesus is “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). However, the truth is that when we consult the Hebrew text, we find that the Shema is actually one of the strongest statements in the Old Testament declaring a plurality within the unity of God! Not only is the plural noun *Elohiym* used for God, but the Hebrew word translated “one” in this passage is *echad*, a **compound-unity noun**—a noun which demonstrates **oneness or unity**, but at the same time contains **several entities**. Some examples are: Genesis 1:5, “**first (echad) day**,” (evening and morning); Genesis 2:24, “**one (echad) flesh**,” (husband and wife); and Numbers 13:23, “**one (echad) cluster** of grapes.” Obviously one cluster of grapes consists of more than one grape. [Source: *One God or Three?* by Stanley Rosenthal]

If the Shema had been intended to teach the absolute oneness of God, there is another Hebrew word, *yachiyd*, which would have better conveyed that sense. This word *yachiyd* is used in Genesis 22:2, Proverbs 4:3, Psalm 22:20, Judges 11:34, Jeremiah 6:26, Zechariah 12:10, and Amos 8:10. In each of these passages *yachiyd* conveys the sense of “only one,” “solitary one,” or “unique one.” Since the Divinely-inspired writer (2 Peter 1:20-21) of Deuteronomy 6:4 purposely chose the compound-unity noun *echad* rather than the absolute-oneness noun *yachiyd* to express the oneness of God, it is obvious that **the Shema actually teaches an intrinsic plurality in the nature of the one God!** (Source: Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius Hebrew Lexicon.)

Many other references could be given from the Old Testament illustrating this progressive revelation of a plurality in unity in God. (For other examples, see Gen. 3:22, 11:7; 18:1-19:29, and Isa. 6:8.) In this regard, the following quotation from noted theologian B. B. Warfield is relevant:

“The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before;

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but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before. The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament, but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged.”—*The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity*

The Tri-Unity of God in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the tri-unity of God is clearly unfolded, as God reveals Himself as **one God in three Persons**—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One of the clearest verses is John 15:26, where we find references to all three Persons of the Trinity in these words spoken by the incarnate **Son of God**, “When the **Comforter** is come, Whom **I** will send unto you from the **Father**, even the **Spirit** of truth, which proceedeth from the **Father**, **He** shall testify of **Me**.” The tri-unity of God is also clearly set forth in Matthew 3:13-17 (our Lord’s baptism), and Matthew 28:19 (the baptismal formula).

The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is taught in 1 Timothy 3:16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifest in the flesh...**” This truth is also found in the following passages, among many others: John 1:1-3,14; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Acts 20:28; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:1-3.

The Deity and distinct personality of the Holy Spirit is explicitly set forth in such passages as Acts 5:3, 13:2; Ephesians 4:30; and 1 Corinthians 12:11, among many others.

The doctrine of God’s triune nature is therefore clearly established in the Bible, and therefore **the good news of the glorious Gospel of God is a Trinitarian message**, involv-

ing each Person of the Godhead. With these thoughts in mind, let us next see what the Holy Scriptures reveal concerning the **sovereignty of this triune God** in all things—especially His sovereignty as exercised in the salvation of lost sinners. Only then shall we be prepared to give our full attention to how each Person of the Holy Trinity participates in the great plan of salvation.

2. The God of Absolute Sovereignty

Not only is God triune in nature, but the Word of God teaches that this triune God is on the throne, ruling over the works of His hands as the **King** of the universe, according to Psalms 103:19, “**The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all.**” There are no chance happenings or accidents with God. According to Ephesians 1:11, He is a God who “worketh **all things** after the counsel of His own will.” His Kingship means His absolute, irresistible, infinite supremacy over all His creation (I Chronicles 29:11), and His undisputed right as Creator to rule the universe—and that all created beings, whether men or angels, are under His sovereign control. His providential rule extends to the minutest details, even to the exact moment that a sparrow shall fall to the ground, and the exact number of hairs on our heads at any given time (Matthew 10:29-30). All of creation is here for one purpose, according to Revelation 4:11:

“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power: for Thou hast created all things, and **for Thy pleasure** they are and were created.”

God’s sovereign control over His creation is also expressed in these words, “I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things not yet done, saying, **My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My**

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pleasure . . . yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; **I have purposed it, I will also do it.**” (Isaiah 46:9-11). The sovereignty of God means that because He has absolute authority, He is subject to none, influenced by none, independent of all, and does as He pleases, only as He pleases, and always as He pleases, and that no creature can thwart Him, and none can hinder Him, according to Daniel 4:35,

“He **doeth according to His will** in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and **none** can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest Thou?”

In this regard, Ephesians 1:11 is also very clear: God “worketh **all things** after the counsel of His own will,” just as it pleases Him—and His pleasure is guided by His own infinite wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and love.

According to the Bible, God exercises His sovereignty in the affairs of men and nations. It is not blind fate, chance, or “luck” that determines the course of events in our lives (Psalm 37:23; Isaiah 64:8; Acts 17:26-28; Proverbs 16:33; James 4:15), or the history of kingdoms and nations, which He overthrows or causes to prosper, as it pleases Him (Job 12:23; Psalm 22:28, 66:7; Acts 17:26). Rather, it is the ruling and overruling providence of God. He is truly the **King of kings**, and the **Lord of lords** (I Timothy 6:15); according to Proverbs 21:1, “**The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will.**” In Deuteronomy 8:18, these words are recorded: “But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth.” Obviously, He gives that power to some, and withholds it from others. And listen to these words from Proverbs 16:9, “**A man’s heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.**” The same truth is set forth in Proverbs 19:21:

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“There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.”

In conclusion, God’s absolute sovereignty simply means that He can do anything He wants to do, any time He wants to do it, any way He wants to do it, for any purpose He wishes to accomplish.

[Some of the thoughts expressed in this section were gleaned from *The Sovereignty of God*, by Arthur W. Pink.]

3. God Is Sovereign in the Exercise of His Grace

A prominent characteristic of God’s grace and mercy is that **He is free and sovereign to choose those to whom He will be gracious and merciful.** This truth is so vividly set forth in Exodus 33, where we find God condescending to speak to Moses “face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend” (verse 11), and Moses speaking also to God. What stands out in this unique conversation between God and man is Moses’ request in verses 13-18, “Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, show me now Thy way, that I might know Thee, that I may find grace in Thy sight . . .” and then Moses makes a specific request of the Lord in verse 18, **“I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.”** When Moses stood in the presence of the sovereign God of the universe, the Maker and Ruler of Heaven and Earth, his all-consuming desire was to **know the Lord, know His way, and see His glory.** How did God respond to this request? The answer is found in verse 19: “And He said, I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and **will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.**”

From these words of Holy Scripture, it is clear that God would have Moses—and us—know that, as far as fallen man is concerned, **His glory lies chiefly in His sovereign**

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right and prerogative to be gracious and merciful to whomever He chooses. As we shall see, God has always operated on this basic principle. He may choose to pass by some religious, self-righteous Pharisees (“Let them alone,” Matthew 15:12-14), but choose to be merciful and gracious to **adulteresses and harlots** (John 4:5-42; John 8:3-11; Luke 7:36-50), **Corinthian fornicators, homosexuals, drunkards, and thieves** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). According to this passage, God chose to be merciful and gracious to these wicked individuals in Corinth, **calling them to repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ**, pardoning their sins, and **gloriously changing and transforming them** by His sanctifying grace in the New Birth and conversion, according to 1 Corinthians 6:11, “**And such WERE some of you: BUT ye are washed, BUT ye are sanctified, BUT ye are justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

He may choose to pass by the wise and prudent, the mighty and the noble, but then choose to reveal His truth and His **wonderful grace** to “babes,” rough fishermen, despised tax-collectors, the simple and unlearned, the foolish and weak, the base and the despised of this world—even to a **dying thief** hanging upon a cross next to Him (Matthew 11:25-26, 16:13-17; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Luke 23:39-43). He may choose to destroy the murderer King Pharaoh (Exodus 14; Romans 9:16-18), but then choose to be merciful to a **murderer and persecutor of the church**, Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1-16).

If anyone should ask why God has not chosen or elected unto salvation many from among the wise, the mighty, or the noble, but instead has chosen many of His people, His elect, from among some of the most unlikely—the foolish, the weak, the base, the despised—the answer is given in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, “**...That no flesh should glory in His presence. . . . That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.**” Christ Himself

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settles the question beyond any doubt with these words recorded in Matthew 11:25-26:

“I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for **so it seemed good in Thy sight.**”

It is according to His good pleasure, with absolutely no reference to anything in man. If this seems unfair to you, my friend, remember that **God is under no obligation to show mercy and grace to any of Adam’s fallen race.** He could have justly permitted **all** of us, who are **all** by nature His enemies, and hostile to Him, to perish forever under His holy wrath. According to Exodus 33:19 quoted above, God reserves to Himself the sovereign prerogative and right to be merciful and gracious to those whom He will. And, as we shall see, God does indeed exercise this prerogative and right—and He is not unrighteous to do this, since all of us, all of fallen mankind, are worthy of eternal judgment.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, through the verbal inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, systematically develops this theme of the Sovereign Grace and Mercy of God in Romans chapters 9-11. In these three chapters, Paul deals with the perplexing question of why God has rejected His own covenant people, the nation of Israel (though some individual Jews were being saved), and instead, is now calling out a people from among the Gentiles to be His people, to make up His Church. There are two answers given: One answer is from **man’s point of view**, or the human side; the other answer is from **God’s point of view**, or the Divine side. From the human side, God has rejected national Israel because the majority of them, “being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God, for Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (10:3-4). But from the

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Divine side, it was God's eternal purpose (His foreordained plan before the foundation of the world) to temporarily, at least, reject the Nation of Israel, and to show mercy to an elect people, individuals unconditionally chosen out from among both Jews and Gentiles (9:24; 11:1-12). The two main questions that must be answered are these: (1) **why** has God chosen this course of action, and (2) **how** is this consistent with His promises to Israel through Abraham? This brings us to the main point we seek to establish, which is so clearly taught in Romans 9:1-24.

In Romans 9:1-24, Paul gives this astonishing and shocking explanation: The **ultimate, underlying reason** for God's rejection of the greater part of Israel and the calling of the Gentiles to salvation is that He sovereignly exercises His right and prerogative to **show mercy to whom He will**, and to **have compassion on whom He will**. Further, this **choice** or **election** of individuals to salvation, to be the people of God, has its source entirely in the will of God, with absolutely no reference to the works, or the will, of any of Adam's fallen race, whether Jew or Gentile. In other words, **God's election is unconditional**.

During the course of his explanation, or argument, Paul quotes Exodus 33:19, from the Old Testament: **"For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion"** (Romans 9:15). Now, my friend, if you and I can get a clear understanding of Romans 9:1-24, and are willing to submit our hearts to God's Word (John 8:47), submitting faulty human reasoning to God's infallible revelation, we will have a firm grasp of the principles upon which God operates in saving lost, guilty sinners from Adam's fallen race. I urge you to carefully read and prayerfully study these verses of Holy Scripture.

There is nothing in any of us that would cause God to love us or to be gracious to us. The only thing that makes the

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difference is the sovereign mercy and grace of God, bestowed upon and displayed in those whom He chooses (Ephesians 1:3-12; 2:1-10). In order to bring this truth out more clearly, let's make a Biblical comparison of two men, **Pharaoh and Saul of Tarsus**.

Pharaoh, king of Egypt, hated the people of God—so did Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:1). Pharaoh sought to kill the people of God—Saul of Tarsus was hell-bent and determined to persecute and kill all the disciples of Christ (Acts 22:4-5). Pharaoh said, “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go?” (Exodus 5:2)—Saul of Tarsus believed Jesus of Nazareth was a fake and an imposter, and held the clothing of those men who stoned His disciple Stephen to death as Stephen called upon God, saying “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:58-59). Pharaoh dropped into Hell under the waters of the Red Sea (Exodus 14)—Saul of Tarsus was unhorsed on the road to Damascus, conquered and subdued by the manifested glory and marvelous grace of the risen, exalted, and glorified Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 9:3-19). Later, he changed his name to Paul, was called to be an apostle of Christ, and eventually wrote at least 13 books of the New Testament! God said of Pharaoh: “Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee...” (Romans 9:17). The same God said of the murderer Saul of Tarsus, upon his conversion: “He is a **chosen vessel** unto Me.” (Acts 9:15). The **only thing** that made the difference between these two men was **the sovereign grace of God**—one was a **vessel of wrath** prepared for destruction, the other was a **vessel of mercy**, prepared beforehand for glory (Romans 9:22-23).

In concluding this illustration, I direct your attention to Acts 22:1-16, where the converted Saul of Tarsus, now known as the Apostle Paul, gave his own personal testimony before a large group of unbelievers. They were so antagonistic against him and his preaching that they had

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already arrested him and given him a terrible beating. After telling these people about how the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him in His majestic glory and power on the road to Damascus, and about his own miraculous conversion, **Paul boldly proclaimed before this group of unbelievers God's sovereign, electing grace as the sole cause of his own salvation!** In verse 14, Paul repeats the words Ananias spoke to him immediately after his conversion, "The God of our fathers has **chosen you** that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth." In essence, he tells them, "The reason I am a Christian is because **God chose me to salvation**, and I learned that the very first day I became a Christian!" According to these verses, Paul testifies that **God's sovereign electing grace** was the very first Christian truth Ananias taught him as a new convert—and as you can see from these verses, when Paul gave his own personal testimony, he was neither ashamed nor afraid to preach it before both believers and unbelievers!

Let's look at one more example of a bold, straightforward statement of God's sovereign electing grace, and that is from Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, who wrote in Acts 13:48, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: and **as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.**" The Greek root word translated "ordained" in this verse is *tasso*, and is also translated "ordained" in Romans 13:1. This verse could also be translated, "and as many as had been **appointed to eternal life** believed." In context, it simply means that certain Gentiles ("as many as") were **ordained** or **appointed** (we could also say **chosen**, or **elected**, Ephesians 1:3-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14) by God to eternal life, and the **result** of this Divine appointment or election is that they believed the Gospel message which was preached unto them by the Apostles. Without a doubt, this verse clearly teaches that the faith of certain Gentiles in

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the Lord Jesus Christ was the **result** of their election, not the **cause** of their election!

My friend, in view of this tremendous revelation of **God's sovereign grace in salvation**, made known to us in the passages above, we would be wise not to question the wisdom of our Maker (See Isaiah 45:9), but to bow before Him in adoration and praise that He would choose to save **any** of us. The real wonder is not so much that He rejected Esau, but that He loved and chose Jacob (Romans 9:13)! A study of the life of Jacob in the book of Genesis will show that it was **only the grace of God** that transformed him from a lying, deceitful rascal (Genesis 27:18-40) into a prince with God (Genesis 32:28)! As I reflect and meditate upon these precious truths, I am filled with wonder and praise to our sovereign God that He would choose to have mercy upon me. But for God's electing love, and His tender mercy revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and His bloodshedding on Calvary's cross, I would have been in Hell a long time ago! I praise God that He did not reward me according to what I deserved, but that He dealt with me "according to His [*great*] mercy." I still don't understand it, and I know I'll never get over it!

Truly, it would behoove poor sinful finite creatures such as you and I to accept by faith what we may not be able to understand. Then we will be able to exclaim with the Apostle Paul these wonderful words at the end of Romans 11:

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! **How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!** For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, **to whom be glory forever.** Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)

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In concluding this chapter, we would like to quote from a sermon by Charles Spurgeon on Matthew 20:15, “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?”:

“There is no attribute of God more comforting to his children than the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. Under the most adverse circumstances, in the most severe troubles, they believe that Sovereignty hath ordained their afflictions, that Sovereignty overrules them, and that Sovereignty will sanctify them all. There is nothing for which the children of God ought more earnestly to contend than the dominion of their Master over all creation—the **kingship of God** over all the works of his own hands—the **throne of God, and his right to sit upon that throne**. On the other hand, there is no doctrine more hated by worldlings, no truth of which they have made such a football, as the great, stupendous, but yet most certain doctrine of the Sovereignty of the infinite Jehovah. Men will allow God to be everywhere except on his throne. They will allow him to be in his workshop to fashion worlds and to make stars. They will allow him to be in his almonry to dispense his alms and bestow his bounties. They will allow him to sustain the earth and bear up the pillars thereof, or light the lamps of heaven, or rule the waves of the ever-moving ocean; but when God ascends his throne, his creatures then gnash their teeth; and when we proclaim an **enthroned God**, and his right to do as he wills with his own, to dispose of his creatures as he thinks well, without consulting them in the matter, then it is that we are hissed and execrated, and then it is that men turn a deaf ear to us, for God on his throne is not the God they love. They love him anywhere better than they do when he sits with his sceptre in his hand and his crown upon his head. But it is **God upon the throne** that we love to preach. It is **God upon his throne** whom we trust.”—*Divine Sovereignty*, May 4, 1856.

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With such an exalted and Biblical view of the transcendent majesty and glorious sovereignty of the triune God, we are now prepared to consider what the Holy Scriptures reveal concerning **God the Father's eternal purpose of grace**—His predestined plan—in choosing those who would be its recipients.

God's Eternal Purpose—An Unbreakable Chain of Sovereign Grace

Originating in Eternity Past, Executed in Time,
And Extending Throughout Eternity Future

“For whom He did **foreknow**, He also did **predestinate** to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also **called**: and whom He called, them He also **justified**: and whom He justified, them He also **glorified**.”
(Romans 8:29-30)

Foreknowledge

“For whom
He did
foreknow”

Predestination

“He also did
predestinate to
be conformed
to the image
of His Son”

Glorification

“whom He
justified,
them He
also
glorified”

E
T
E
R
N
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T
Y

Effectual Calling

“whom He did
predestinate,
them He also
called”

Justification

“whom He called,
them He also
justified”

← TIME →

The Sovereign Grace of God the Father In Planning Salvation

“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but **according to His own purpose and grace**, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

(2 Timothy 1:9)

This text says that God “hath saved us,” and that this salvation “was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” These words are in the past tense, which takes us back to **eternity past**. The salvation of every individual whom God planned to save was settled in His infinite Mind in eternity past, even before the creation of the universe, according to Ephesians 1:3-6:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as **He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having **predestinated** us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, **to the praise of the glory of His grace**, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.”

From these verses, we understand that the fall of the human race in the Garden of Eden through the first man Adam did not take God by surprise. God knows all things—His foreknowledge includes every minute detail of all future events. Therefore He was perfectly aware from all eternity, before the universe was ever created, that the human race which He would create in the realm of time would be plunged into destruction and death by Adam’s transgression. From God’s perspective in eternity, He determined, on the one

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hand, to **glorify His justice** by leaving some of Adam's fallen race to justly perish in their sins, in everlasting punishment in Hell under His wrath, which **all** of us so richly deserve. On the other hand, He determined to **glorify His sovereign mercy and grace** by choosing a people out of Adam's fallen race unto salvation and eternal life in Heaven. This is clearly taught in Romans 9:22-24:

“What if God, **willing to show His wrath**, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering **the vessels of wrath** fitted to destruction; and that He might **make known the riches of His glory** on the **vessels of mercy**, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

In 2 Timothy 1:9, quoted above, salvation is solely according to **“His own purpose and grace,”** and not according to any foreseen merit, faith, or good works in anyone. This grace was given to the chosen heirs of salvation in the plan and purpose of God before the world began. As we have already seen from the verses quoted earlier from Romans 3, man in his fallen state has by nature an **innate aversion** to the one true God, the God of the Bible, and will never of his own will or initiative seek after the true God, or desire to know Him (Romans 3:11; 1 Corinthians 2:14). As we have already seen, the Word of God teaches that every individual of Adam's fallen race by nature harbors enmity in his heart to the true God, this sovereign God Who reveals Himself in the Holy Scriptures:

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh **cannot** please God.” (Romans 8:7-8)

Therefore, if any individual is saved it is not because **he** purposed to be saved, but ultimately it is because **God** pur-

posed to save him. “It is not of him that **willeth**, nor of him that **runneth**, but of **God** that showeth mercy” (Romans 9:16).

**God’s Unbreakable “Chain of Sovereign Grace”
In Romans 8:28-30**

Romans 8:28-30 is perhaps the briefest yet most comprehensive statement of God’s eternal purpose of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ that can be found anywhere in the Word of God. It sets forth God’s sovereign grace as does no other passage:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to **them who are the called according to His purpose**. For whom He did **fore-know**, He also did **predestinate** to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, **them He also called**; and whom He called, **them He also justified**; and whom He justified, **them He also glorified.**”

The scope of this passage is exceedingly broad, reaching back to **eternity past**, before God spoke the universe into existence, extending through **time and space**, and reaching into **eternity future**, which is yet to come, when time as we know it shall be no more. God is the Infinite, Eternal One, which means that He is not limited by time or space; He created and transcends time and space, and with Him all things, including time, is the eternal present (Isaiah 57:15). There was never a “time” when God did not exist, and there shall never be a “time” when He does not exist. See Isaiah 43:13; Hebrews 1:8-12; Psalm 45:6,7; 102:25-27. According to these passages, there is no passing of time with the eternal God—the past and the future are always equally present with Him. However, we will use the terms

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“Eternity Past” and “Eternity Future” because they are useful as an accommodation to our own limited, finite understanding (Psalm 90:2).

In Romans 8:28-30, we see a chain of five links, which we have called “**God’s Unbreakable Chain of Sovereign Grace**” (Please see the pictorial illustration of the Chain on page 84.) Notice in the illustration that the first two links of the chain are anchored in eternity past, before the creation of the world, and before any created being had existence. The first link refers to those persons whom God **foreknew**, or elected. (See **Appendix B** on page 182 for the meaning of the word “foreknow.”) As we have already seen, God’s sovereign election of persons to salvation was unconditional, and took place in **eternity past**, before the foundation of the world. In the second link of this unbreakable chain, we find that those same persons whom God unconditionally **chose** to salvation before the foundation of the world, were **predestinated** to be conformed to the image of His Son. This predestination also took place in the mind and purpose of God, before the foundation of the world. For the third and fourth links of this unbreakable chain, we move into **the realm of time and space**. In the third link of this unbreakable chain, we find that these same persons who were foreknown or fore-chosen, and predestined before the foundation of the world, are now viewed as being actually in existence, and they are now **called**. This calling is an **effectual calling** which cannot fail, simply because it is the outworking of God’s eternal purpose. Those whom God has chosen and predestined before the foundation of the world to be conformed to the image of His Son are now in time **effectually called by His grace** into the New Birth and unto fellowship and faith in His beloved Son, which results in the fulfillment of the fourth link of this unbreakable chain: Those same persons who were chosen, predestined and called are now **justified** by faith in Christ. This means that by virtue of the redemptive work of

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the Lord Jesus in their behalf, they are declared righteous in Him. Finally, as we view the fifth link of this unbreakable chain of grace, we move into **the realm of eternity future**, where these same persons shall be **glorified**. This means that they shall at last reach the final goal of God's eternal purpose for them—they shall be **perfectly conformed to the image of God's Son**, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In connection with these thoughts, let's look briefly at 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14—a passage which contains clear references to both **God's electing grace** and **effectual calling**:

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because **God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit**, and belief of the truth: **whereunto He called you by our Gospel**, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

In these verses Paul is giving thanks to God for His having **chosen the Thessalonian believers to salvation**, and this choice, he says, was made “from the beginning,” or “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4). Then he states the **means**, both **Divine** and **human**, by which they were saved: (1) “**Sanctification of the Spirit.**” God the Holy Spirit sanctified them, or set them apart, by singling them out individually in regenerating grace, which resulted in (2) their “**belief of the truth.**” And then in verse 14 we find a clear reference to **God's effectual call** to them through the preaching of the Gospel, “**whereunto He called you by our Gospel...**” Without a doubt, these verses in 2 Thessalonians confirm the teaching of Acts 13:48, “And as many as were **ordained to eternal life** believed.”

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As we conclude this section, please weigh carefully these words spoken in a message on Romans 8:28-30 by Dr. William R. Crews, whose international television program, *The Awakening Hour*, has been greatly used by the Lord:

Perhaps someone is saying, “Preacher, it is unfair for God not to treat all men alike.” This indeed may appear to be the case to you, but remember, the Bible says, “. . . **Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?**” (Genesis 18:25). Yes, God does right in all that He does. God is sovereign and can and does do as He pleases. He is the Creator, Sustainer, Governor, and Consummator. Christ said, “**Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?**” (Matt. 20:15). We are all at His disposal because we are His creatures and He exercises authority and control over us. There is no unrighteousness with God. Whatever God does is not unfair. Remember, God said to Moses, “**I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.**” (Ex. 33:19). Can anyone honestly accuse God with being unfair when in the exercise of His grace He chooses and purposes to deliver a company of people from going down to destruction? We think not, especially when we consider that all of us are unworthy of grace but worthy of destruction. Once we understand that all of us if we received our just due would be left to suffer the just penalty of our sins, and if God in His grace purposes to rescue a portion of the race, then we can more easily understand that God is not unfair. One marvel of God’s grace to me is that He ever stooped to save any one of us. The “whom” certainly designates only that some, certain ones, will be rescued by God’s Golden Chain of Grace. And those comprising that company will never be able to say, “I’m among the group because God foresaw or foreknew I would believe.” Oh no, such is not the case at all. Note carefully, “**whom He did foreknow . . .**”

(Rom. 8:29). Not a mention is made of “what” He foreknew or even what He foreknew they would do. God’s eternal choice and purpose rested solely and entirely on His sovereign will, pleasure and plan. The choice was His and was uninfluenced by anything He foresaw in man or foreknew any man would do. **What unfathomable and marvelous grace!** I readily admit that there are many mysteries about the plan, purpose and foreknowledge of God. I cannot understand and explain why He foresaw me and drew me unto Himself. But I humbly bow before Him in praise and thanksgiving for choosing and including me in His benign plan. I want to live for Him and bring Him glory and magnify His blessed name. If I had 10,000 lives I would lay them down at His feet. My soul continues to bow before Him in humble thanksgiving, praise, worship, and adoration.—*Five Golden Links in God’s Chain of Grace*

The Sovereign Grace of God the Son In Providing Salvation

“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for **He shall save His people from their sins.**” (Matthew 1:21)

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners**, of whom I am chief.” (1 Timothy 1:15)

None of Adam’s fallen race could have ever been saved, unless the Lord Jesus Christ had been willing to assume the responsibility of satisfying their debt to the justice of God, and of providing a perfect righteousness for them. This responsibility was accepted by God the Son on behalf of those whom God the Father had chosen and given to Him. It was predestined in the unity of the Divine purpose of the triune God from all eternity, that at a precise moment in the history of mankind, the eternal Son of God would come into the world, take unto Himself their nature by being born of a Jewish virgin, becoming the perfect God-Man, and in that Divine-human nature accomplish their redemption, in order to save them from their sins (Matthew 1:21). This great truth is set forth in Galatians 4:4-5:

“But when the fulness of the time was come, **God sent forth His Son, made of a woman**, made under the Law, to **redeem them** that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

According to the Holy Scriptures, our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world for the **specific purpose** of saving a **particular people** whom God the Father had given Him:

“All that **the Father giveth Me** shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. For **I came down from Heaven not to do Mine own will**,

but the will of Him that sent Me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of **all which He hath given Me** I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." (John 6:37-39)

In John chapter 10, the Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as the "Good Shepherd," and calls these chosen ones His "sheep":

"I am the Good Shepherd; **the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.** . . . I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and **I lay down my life for the sheep.**" (John 10:11,14-15)

Just before He voluntarily permitted Himself to be taken by His enemies and crucified (John 18:1-13), our Lord spoke these words in a prayer to the Father, recorded in John 17:

"Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee: as **Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.** And this is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent . . . I pray for **them:** I pray **not** for the world, but for **them which Thou hast given Me,** for they are Thine." (John 17:1-3,9)

1. Blood Redemption in the Old Testament

The Bible consists of 66 books, written over a period of approximately 1,600 years, by 40 different human authors—yet its **amazing unity** demonstrates beyond any doubt that God Himself is its true Author, according to 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2, and 1 Peter 1:19-21. The central theme of this wonderful Book of God from Genesis to Revelation is **salvation by God's sovereign grace—blood redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ,** and the cen-

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tral figure of the Bible is Christ Himself. After His resurrection, our blessed Lord taught His disciples this precious truth, and gave them the key to understanding the Old Testament Scriptures, as recorded in Luke 24:25-26:

“Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: **Ought not Christ to have suffered these things**, and to enter into His glory?”

Following these words, verse 27 tells us:

“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them **in all the Scriptures** the things concerning Himself.”

Later, just before He ascended into Heaven to the right hand of the Father, the risen Lord Jesus spoke these words to His disciples:

“These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, **which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me**. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, **Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day**: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:44-48)

Notice in this passage that it was necessary for the Lord Jesus to open their understanding before His disciples could truly see that **Christ**, and **blood redemption** through Him by substitutionary atonement, is the grand central theme of the Old Testament.

In Colossians 2:17, Paul refers to the Old Testament ordinances, including the entire Levitical system of sacrifice

and worship as taught in the Law of Moses as “. . . a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” This verse teaches us that the Old Testament is a book containing many shadows, types, portraits, and prophecies of the Person and work of Christ the Redeemer who was yet to come.

Blood Redemption in Christ First Revealed In the Garden of Eden

Adam’s fall in the Garden of Eden plunged himself and the entire human race contained in his loins into ruin, darkness, and despair, with absolutely no hope within ourselves of recovery. But as someone has written, “Man’s extremity becomes God’s opportunity!” Our first parents had no sooner sinned, become guilty, and attempted to hide from the presence of God, than God Himself in His infinite condescension and mercy became the Seeker. The justice of God would have brought eternal destruction upon them immediately; that was all they deserved, but God came forth to seek them out, and said, “Adam, where art thou?” As someone has written, “It is the call of Divine Justice, which cannot overlook sin; it is the call of Divine Sorrow, which grieves over the sinner; and it is the call of Divine Love, which offers redemption to the sinner.”

The question then naturally arises, “Did God save Adam and Eve, and if so, how did He do it?” I believe that it is clear that He did save them by His grace, and there are two indications as to how He did it recorded in Genesis chapter three.

1. The Seed of the Woman

In Genesis 3:14-19, we read the account of God pronouncing righteous judgment upon Adam and Eve, and upon the Devil who tempted them by using the serpent as his tool, or mouthpiece. In verses 14-15, there is an amazing promise

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from God of a coming Redeemer and a prophecy of how He shall be victorious over Satan:

“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and **I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.**”

Though it might appear on the surface that God is addressing only the serpent, obviously more than a reference to the literal snake is meant. A curse was indeed pronounced upon the snake, but verse 15 has a far deeper significance. As we have already seen, the serpent was only the tool or instrument used by the unseen supernatural being called Satan in the temptation and fall of our first parents. Therefore, in the light of New Testament revelation, we understand verse 15 as both **a pronouncement to Satan** of his own future defeat and doom and **a promise to Adam and Eve** of a coming Deliverer, the **Seed of the woman**, who shall crush Satan’s head.

This ancient prophecy was wonderfully fulfilled 2,000 years ago according to Galatians 4:4-5:

“But when the fulness of time was come, **God sent forth His Son, made of a woman**, made under the law, to **redeem** them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

The Lord Jesus Christ, born of a Jewish virgin in Bethlehem of Judea, is the promised “Seed of the Woman” of Genesis 3:15, the Deliverer sent forth from God Who was to bruise the head of “that old Serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” (Revelation 12:9). According to 1 John 3:8,

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, **that He might destroy the works of the Devil.**”

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This bruising, or crushing, of Satan's head means that both he and his evil works, his kingdom of darkness upon earth and his power over mankind, is to be destroyed by the power of the Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ. This destruction of Satan and his evil works is in two stages.

The first stage has already taken place when our Lord was crucified on Calvary's cross. It was there that Satan thought he had gained the victory over Christ, having "bruised His heel" by instigating "his seed" (John 8:38-44) to murder the Son of God, Who was "**wounded** for our transgressions, **bruised** for our iniquities," according to Isaiah 53:5. In reality, it was at the cross that Christ gained the victory over Satan, according to His own words, spoken just prior to accomplishing His substitutionary atonement in behalf of his elect, "**Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the Prince of this world be cast out**" (John 16:11). In Colossians 2:15, the Apostle Paul wrote these words concerning His bloody sacrifice on the cross, "**Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it** [the cross]."

The second stage, Satan's final and complete destruction, is yet future, and will take place when Revelation 20:10 is fulfilled, "**And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.**" In the meantime, believers can enjoy daily victory over Satan in their experience by reliance upon the power of God and His Gospel, and by putting on the whole armor of God (Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:10-18). The Apostle Paul seems to have both the temporal and the ultimate fulfilment of Genesis 3:15 in mind when he makes this statement in the closing chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, "And the God of peace shall **bruise Satan** under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (Romans 16:20).

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How did Adam and Eve respond to this prophecy and promise of the coming Deliverer? We believe they responded in faith and were saved, evidenced by what we are told in Genesis 3:20-21. Verse 20 reads, “**And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.**” By naming his wife Eve, the mother of all living, it appears that Adam believed God’s promise of the coming Deliverer, who was to be the “Seed of the woman,” who would crush Satan’s head.

2. The Coats of Skins

The above interpretation of verse 20 seems to be confirmed by God’s action which immediately followed, as recorded in verse 21: “**Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.**” This will become apparent as we now study this verse, and bring the full light of the New Testament to bear upon it.

As we read of God’s holy judgment upon the sin of Adam and Eve in this tragic chapter of the Bible, we also see in the above verse **the grace of God** manifested toward the guilty pair. The wonderful grace of blood redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ is unmistakably prefigured and foreshadowed in God’s provision of coats of skins as clothing for Adam and Eve. Since they did not have the full revelation of New Testament truth as we have it today, our first parents probably did not fully understand all the implications of this provision. However, it is certain that they did receive it by faith as an act of grace and mercy toward them from God, Who might just as easily have visited them with immediate death and eternal punishment in Hell.

In His provision of the skins of animals as clothing for Adam and Eve, God preached to them the **Gospel of salvation by His free grace through blood redemption in Christ**—not in words spoken, but graphically demonstrated by type and symbol. God Himself took those sacrificial

animals, probably lambs (John 1:29), and killed them before the eyes of Adam and Eve. He then made garments from their bloody skins, and personally wrapped them around their naked bodies. By these symbolic actions, God was teaching Adam and Eve the Divine principles of **salvation by grace alone and blood redemption in Christ**—principles which had already been established and predestined in the mind and purpose of God before the foundation of the world (2 Timothy 1:9-10; 1 Peter 1:18-20). In this one act of grace and mercy by God toward our first parents, He laid down, by implication, **3 requirements** which must be met before a sacrifice can be acceptable to Him as an atonement for sin:

1. An acceptable sacrifice for atonement of sin must be provided by God Himself. The skins of the slain animals were a gift from God, not anything produced by the works or efforts of Adam and Eve. How beautifully does this portray the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Love Gift to lost, guilty sinners, as set forth in the New Testament—"For God so loved the world that **He gave His only begotten Son...**" (John 3:16; John 1:29). Adam and Eve did absolutely nothing to regain the favor of God; the only sacrifice which God will accept is the One which He Himself provides, which is His work and His free gift of grace. They did not even have to put these coats of skins on themselves, for even this was done for them by God, who "clothed them." A **covering provided by God** for the nakedness of our first parents **at the expense and death of another** immediately points us to that matchless "**Robe of Righteousness,**" the spotless righteousness of the crucified, buried, risen Lord Jesus Christ, which is **imputed** to every repenting sinner who trusts in Him! (Isaiah 61:10; 45:24; Jeremiah 23:6; Romans 3:21-22; 5:19; Philippians 3:8-9; 1 Cor. 1:30).

2. An acceptable sacrifice unto God for atonement of sin must be by the death of an innocent Substitute. The

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animals which God killed to provide the coats of skins had no part in Adam's sin. The sacrifice involved the death of an innocent substitutionary victim. Again, this is a type or picture of **Christ crucified**, of whom it is said in 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, **the just for the unjust**, that He might bring us to God..." Our Lord's death on the cross of Calvary was a substitutionary atonement for our sins, the innocent taking the place of the guilty, according to 2 Corinthians 5:21, "For **He hath made Him to be sin for us**, Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." The Apostle Paul stresses this precious truth so clearly in Romans 5:10, "For if, when we were enemies, **we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son**, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

3. An acceptable sacrifice unto God for the atonement of sin must be by the shedding of blood. Although the shedding of blood is not specifically mentioned in Genesis 3:21, it is implied, for procuring the skin of an animal must of necessity involve the death of the animal and the shedding of its blood. This principle of **substitutionary blood atonement**, or blood redemption, is clearly stated in the New Testament in Hebrews 9:22, "...and **without the shedding of blood is no remission**" of sin. Therefore, when God killed the animals and shed their blood in the Garden of Eden in order to provide the coats of skins for Adam and Eve, He was teaching them by type and symbol the great eternal truth of substitutionary blood atonement in the Lord Jesus Christ, the coming "Seed of the woman." This is the central truth of the Holy Scriptures (Romans 3:24-26; 5:6-11; Ephesians 1:7; Revelation 5:9).

[We are indebted to the late Dr. M. R. DeHaan and his excellent book, *Portraits of Christ in Genesis*, for much of the material above.]

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Therefore, my friend, it is clear from this example that God is teaching man at the very outset in the Garden of Eden, immediately after the Fall, that there is only one acceptable sacrifice for sin which He will receive. It must meet all three of the requirements listed above. From this point on, we can easily trace by type, picture, promise, and prophecy the doctrine of **substitutionary atonement by blood** throughout the Old Testament, until it is actually fulfilled and accomplished by the blood-shedding of God's own dear Son, as He voluntarily sacrificed His own life for us as our Substitute on Calvary's cross—thereby satisfying the offended justice of God in behalf of God's elect. **The shadows, types, and pictures of Christ in the Old Testament then fade away in the full light of New Testament revelation**, when in the fulness of time, the One to whom they all pointed appeared upon the scene, personally fulfilling each one (Galatians 4:4-5; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 9:26; 10:1-14).

Without the Shedding of Blood, There Is No Remission of Sin

In the New Testament Book of Hebrews, we find these words, **“Without the shedding of blood is no remission”** (Hebrews 9:22), a declaration that God cannot and will not forgive or pardon sin except through substitutionary atonement by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the sum and substance of the Old Testament, as we have seen from the words of Christ Himself in Luke 24:44-48. In God's own appointed time 2,000 years ago, the eternal Son of God was manifested in the flesh for the express purpose of offering Himself up to God the Father as a substitutionary sacrifice, rendering a full and complete satisfaction to the offended justice of God in behalf of His chosen people. Until that time, God had ordained that fallen man should approach Him and find pardon and forgiveness through animal sacrifice, which was acceptable to Him only by virtue

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of the fact that it was offered in faith, and represented and pointed forward to the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ (See Hebrews 9:13-10:14).

It would seem that the Word of God confirms the teaching above by what immediately follows—the story of Cain and Abel, and the offerings which they brought before the LORD.

Abel's "More Excellent Sacrifice"

Adam and Eve had two children born in those early days immediately after the Fall—two sons which they named Cain and Abel. As these two children grew up together into young manhood, they had evidently been instructed by Adam concerning the promise of a coming Deliverer, the "Seed of the woman," and God's provision of the coats of skins. Though it is not specifically stated, we believe that God made it very clear to the first family by the example of the coats of skins (and possibly also by direct revelation) what He required as an acceptable atoning sacrifice for sin. This becomes apparent as the story of Cain and Abel unfolds, and especially as we focus **light from the New Testament** upon it. The account is found in Genesis 4:1-7:

"And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. **And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect.** And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well,

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shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”

Immediately following in verses 8-17 is the chilling narrative of the first murder in the human family: Cain angrily killing his brother Abel while they were together in the field, rather than obeying God’s requirement for sacrifice—and the curse which God put upon him as punishment.

Before going further, let us now read the New Testament commentary on these two brothers, and their respective offerings:

“By **faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain**, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” (Hebrews 11:4)

“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because **his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.**” (1 John 3:11-12)

In the light of these New Testament passages, let us now carefully study each brother, the sacrifices they offered, and God’s response to each one.

The first thing we notice is that both brothers were religious; they both believed in God, and they both brought sacrificial offerings unto the LORD, seeking His acceptance and approval. Cain was the first to do so, which would indicate that he was the most zealous.

Cain’s chosen occupation was that of a farmer, being a “tiller of the ground,” and he brought “of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.” He undoubtedly brought a very beautiful offering of fruits and vegetables,

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the result of his own diligent farming efforts. He must have been quite proud of it, anxiously expecting God's acceptance and commendation as a reward for his hard work. And it might also be that in bringing such an offering, he thought he was **doing well** by acknowledging God as the Giver and Sustainer of life.

Abel, on the other hand, was "a keeper of the sheep," and his offering to God consisted of **a slain lamb, involving the shedding of blood**, with "the fat thereof." No further details are given, but it seems to be strongly implied that though Cain brought his offering to the Lord first, Abel brought his soon thereafter, and to the same place. At this point, one thing we should keep in mind is that although Cain was a farmer, a **sacrificial lamb** was also easily available to him, if he had wished to offer it. God's response to these two brothers and their offerings is found in verses 4-5, "**And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and his offering He had not respect.**" We are not told in the record exactly how God expressed His approval or acceptance of Abel's bloody sacrifice, but if we may judge by other Bible references, He probably expressed His approval visibly by powerfully consuming the slain lamb with fire directly from Heaven (Leviticus 9:24; 1 Kings 18:38; 1 Chronicles 21:26; 2 Chronicles 7:1).

Why did God reject Cain's offering? The answer is not hard to find. Picture the scene of what has just happened. God has just consumed Abel's slain lamb with fire from Heaven, while leaving Cain's offering untouched and unacknowledged. Cain became very angry because God acknowledged Abel's sacrifice, and ignored his own. And we may be sure that his anger was directed primarily toward God. In verse 7, God plainly tells Cain, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" In the phrase, "sin lieth at the door," the Hebrew word translated "sin" is *chatta'ah*,

which is also translated “sin-offering” in 116 other occurrences in the Old Testament. In the light of Hebrews 11:4, God is obviously telling Cain, “If you will bring the **right sacrifice** [in **faith**, and in the right spirit], you and your sacrifice will be accepted.” God is merciful, longsuffering, and compassionate; therefore, the door was still open for Cain to be accepted, had he been willing to obey the Word of God. (See the Scofield Reference Bible notes and Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary on this verse.)

The first lesson to be learned in this story is that Cain’s offering was rejected because he brought “of the fruit of the ground,” the result of his own labors, instead of the sacrificial lamb, a gift from God. Cain’s offering did not involve the death of an innocent substitutionary victim, and neither was there any shedding of blood. Rather, it indicated a denial of the Fall in the Garden of Eden, a denial of the reality of sin, and a denial of the need for substitutionary atonement by the shedding of blood. Therefore, God rejected Cain’s sincere, earnest religion of works (Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 9:22). Rather than humbly confessing his error, admitting that he was a sinner before God, and in repentance bringing the right sacrifice, Cain was infuriated, his proud, self-righteous spirit manifesting itself. He was angry at the thought that he could not approach and worship God—and be accepted by Him—on the basis of his own accomplishments. He was furious that all his diligent labor in the field and the beautiful offering which he had brought should count for nothing in God’s sight. He could not strike out at God in his anger, therefore he struck out at God’s image in Abel, committing the first murder. 1 John 3:12 tells us the **real reason** Cain killed Abel: “because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.” Obviously, this reference to the evil works of Cain is a reference to the bloodless offering which he brought, his unwillingness to repent, and his unwillingness to bring an offering to God that He would accept, one which involved the shedding of blood.

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Why was Abel's offering accepted? Simply because in bringing the sacrificial lamb, shedding its blood and putting it to death, he was humbly confessing himself to be a guilty sinner, and acknowledging the fact that a guilty sinner can only approach God and be accepted by Him by means of substitutionary atonement—the shedding of the blood of an innocent substitutionary victim. Hebrews 11:4 tells us that Abel offered it **“in faith,”** and that he **“offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain.”** Since **“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”** (Romans 10:17), we can be assured that **both brothers had heard from their parents** the promise of the **“Seed of the woman,”** and the story of the coats of skins, and the truths that God taught them in this gracious provision. It is evident also that Abel offered his sacrifice with a repentant heart. God accepted Abel's bleeding sacrificial lamb by virtue of the fact that it represented and was a type of **Christ crucified,** the substitutionary atonement by the blood of **“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29; Isaiah 53:7). What a beautiful picture of **blood redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ,** set forth so clearly on the very threshold of God's revelation in the Old Testament!

Blood Redemption in Christ Is the Central Truth of the Bible

Blood redemption in Christ runs like a scarlet thread from Genesis to Revelation. It was promised in the Garden of Eden when man fell, and was accomplished when Christ died for sinners. It was portrayed in the burnt offerings of Noah (Genesis 8); in the promised seed of Abraham (Genesis 12:3, Hebrews 2:16); and in the substitutionary sacrifice which God provided in the stead of Isaac (Genesis 22:13). Isaac and Jacob built altars on which they offered bloody sacrifices in approaching and worshipping God (Genesis 26, 35)—recognizing that He required an atoning sacrifice as a basis for forgiving sin.

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The **Passover Lamb** (Exodus 12), the lamb without blemish, is a beautiful symbolic picture of Christ crucified. It was the shed blood of the Passover lamb, sprinkled upon the door posts, that protected the first-born of the Israelites when God's judgment fell. The Lord said, "When I see **the blood** I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). This figure or type of Christ crucified in the Old Testament is confirmed by the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 5:7, "For even **Christ our Passover** is sacrificed for us"; confirmed by the Apostle John in John 19:31-37, and also confirmed by the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:18, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things . . . but with the **precious blood of Christ**, as a **Lamb** without blemish and without spot."

What glorious pictures of Christ's substitutionary blood atonement are seen in **Israel's whole Levitical system of worship** which was given to Moses directly by God Himself on Mount Sinai! In the Book of Leviticus, **Christ crucified** is symbolized by the "Burnt Offering," the "Sin Offering," and the "Trespass Offering," as well as many other sacrifices commanded by God to be observed by the ancient Israelites. **All these sacrifices were specifically ordained and commanded by God**, and pointed symbolically to the One who was to come, as predicted in Genesis 3:15—the Seed of the woman, Christ the Redeemer, whose blood was shed to atone for sin. It is not the blood in the veins of the Sacrifice that makes atonement for sin, but **the blood poured out** upon the Cross that God accepted in behalf of guilty sinners. The bloody Old Testament sacrifices were offered by the Israelites according to God's instructions, and were types of "Christ crucified," pointing to His great substitutionary sacrifice on Calvary's cross.

The New Testament truth of **blood redemption** by the substitutionary atonement of Christ is clearly taught in the Old Testament in Leviticus 17:11:

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“The life of the flesh is in **the blood**, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for **it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.**”

This Scripture explains the meaning of the animal sacrifices for sin. The slain animal represented the execution of the penalty of the Law (death) upon a substitute offered in the stead of the offender. The animal sacrifice in itself had no power to take away the sin of the Israelites (Hebrews 10:4). God accepted it at that time **only** by virtue of the fact that it represented and pointed forward to the great Antitype of **Christ crucified**, where the eternal Son of God poured out His own precious blood in substitutionary atonement for guilty sinners. It is **only** the bloody atoning sacrifice of Christ which vindicated the righteousness of God in passing over and forgiving sin (Romans 3:24-26).

The Psalms are so full of the glory of Christ that we could not cover them all here. But to name a few: **Psalm 2** is of Christ, God’s Son and coming King; **Psalm 8** fully recognizes His Deity, but presents Him as the Son of Man (Hebrews 6:2-11); **Psalm 16** is a prediction of the resurrection of King Jesus, the Holy One (vs. 10); **Psalm 22** is a graphic picture of the suffering Saviour, and death by crucifixion, predicting the very words which Christ would utter in His terrible agony of soul, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”; **Psalm 23** presents Christ as the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20); **Psalm 24** predicts the ascension of King Jesus into glory as Lord of all; the **45th Psalm** presents King Jesus in all His glory and beauty, “fairer than the children of men,” with “grace poured into His lips”; and **Psalm 69** foreshadows the humiliation and rejection of Christ—verse 21 is a direct reference to the Cross (Matthew 27:34,48).

The **prophecies of Isaiah** find their literal fulfillment in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. **Isaiah 7:14** pre-

dicts His virgin birth (Matthew 1:18-25); in **Isaiah 9:6** we find these prophetic words concerning Christ, “For unto us **a Child is born**, unto us **a Son is given**: and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” A detailed picture of the substitutionary sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus is recorded in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, where we find these words:

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:5-6)

On one occasion the Lord Jesus Christ told the Jewish religious leaders who did not believe on Him:

“Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me.”
(John 5:39)

In this brief study, we have seen how true are these words of our Lord! How wonderfully does the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ fill the volume of the Book, from Genesis to Revelation (Psalm 40:7-8; Hebrews 10:7)!

2. Blood Redemption in the New Testament

The Bible is a **blood-drenched Book** throughout—the story of **blood redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ** is pre-figured, prophesied, or told from the early chapters of its first Book of Genesis after man’s fall, right on through both Old and New Testaments, including the Book of Revelation, its last Book (Revelation 5:9, 7:14, 12:11). In this regard, we would like to quote Dr. M. R. DeHaan

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(1891-1965), a successful physician and surgeon before his conversion and call to the Gospel ministry. He was a preacher who was heard by millions as he conducted his half-hour Radio Bible Class each Sunday for more than 27 years. He said:

“When we are accused of preaching a **Gospel of blood**, we plead guilty to the charge, for the only thing that gives life to our teaching and power to the Word of God is the fact that it is **the blood** which is the very life and power of the Gospel. From Genesis to Revelation we see **the stream of blood** which imparts to this Book the very life of God.”—*The Chemistry of the Blood*

According to the Holy Scriptures, nearly 2,000 years ago God personally visited lost and fallen mankind, and dwelt among men for 33 years. **The eternal, invisible God personally invaded time and space, being made visible in human flesh, in the Person of Jesus Christ** (John 1:1,14; 1 Timothy 3:16); the glory and majesty of God was actually seen in Him (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:16). The second Person of the triune God, God the Son, took unto Himself human nature; He had no earthly father, but was supernaturally conceived in the womb of a Jewish virgin by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:35). By means of the incarnation, He became the **God-Man, truly God and truly Man**. As such, He was thus able by His **substitutionary blood atonement** to fulfill all the Old Testament types, symbols and prophecies which pictured and portrayed Him as a bloody sin-offering unto God (See Hebrews 10:1-10.)

The true and real humanity of Christ is portrayed throughout the Gospels, from the account of His virgin birth to His agonizing death on the cross. He became weary and exhausted, needed sleep, was capable of being tempted

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(yet without sin), and suffered pain and death; He experienced the full range of human emotions such as grief, joy, fear (though it was godly fear), sorrow, and anger (though it was a righteous and holy anger). We may be sure that, in the days of His earthly sojourn in the flesh, He was one with us, and like us in every respect, with one exception, and that is sin (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 7:26). Christ was holy and pure, and without the slightest taint of a sinful nature or personal sin of any kind.

Now, my friend, consider this: **this same Jesus**, this God-Man, at the age of about 33, was taken by the wicked hands of His enemies, unjustly tried, unjustly condemned, and then slain (Acts 2:23)—**He died the shameful death of being crucified, nailed to a Roman cross outside the city of Jerusalem, between two thieves!!** We must ask, and find the answer, to this question—**Why??**

The question has two answers: One from the **human** perspective, and the other from the **Divine** perspective.

First, let's look very briefly at the human side. From the earliest days of Christ's public ministry, He stirred up the opposition and enmity of the religious leaders in Israel: the scribes, the Pharisees, the chief priests, and the Sadducees. They were offended not only because of His claims to Deity, or equality with God (John 5:17-18, 10:30-33), but also because He rebuked them on numerous occasions, sometimes severely, for their hypocrisy. In view of all the miracles He performed, and the authority with which He taught, they should have humbled themselves in repentance, cast off their religious pretensions, and sat at His feet to be taught and instructed by their own Messiah, the very Son of God. However, because He rebuked them and refuted their authority, they, being motivated by hatred, pride, envy, and self-righteousness, conspired together to have Him put to death by the Roman authorities. They were

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finally successful, aided by the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, one of His own disciples, and the moral weakness and political ambitions of the Gentile Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who himself admitted, **“I find no fault in Him.”** Thus the Son of God, the Perfect Man, the Second Person of the triune God manifest in human flesh, suffered the cruel and humiliating death by crucifixion. He hung naked upon a Roman cross in open public view outside the gates of the city of Jerusalem, **blood** streaming forth from five major wounds, and numerous minor ones. **Blood** poured from the crown of thorns pressed down upon His sacred brow. **Blood** flowed from His back, which was ripped open by a severe beating with a whip, a Roman instrument of torture called a “cat-o-nine-tails.” From the human perspective, this is why and how He was put to death.

Now for the second answer to our question, we must seek to understand the crucifixion of Christ from the **Divine perspective.** Though the actual crime and heinous sin of the Saviour’s death must be charged to the human race, to each one of us through our representatives, the death of Christ was far more than human cruelty and Jewish malice. **It was ordained and predestined by God the Father, and agreed to by God the Son, before the foundation of the world!** We dare not charge God with the sin, nor minimize the fact that the human race is guilty of slaying the Son of God, but **we must ultimately trace the crucifixion of Christ to its source: God’s eternal purpose of sovereign grace!** According to Isaiah 53:10,

“Yet it **pleased the LORD** to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief, when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin...”

If God is pleased to open our understanding of the Scriptures (Luke 24:44-48), we will be able to see beyond the Roman nail and spear, and the crowd which cried for His

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death, and we will know and believe that **it was the love of God, and the plan of God the Father, that sent God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to voluntarily offer Himself up to the Father as a Substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of His chosen people!** Let's explore the Scriptures in order to better understand this wonderful truth.

In 1 John 4:9-10, the Apostle John made this tremendous statement concerning the great love of God the Father for His people:

“In this was manifested **the love of God toward us**, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**”

It was the Father's great love for His elect that caused Him to both **send**, and **give**, His only begotten Son to die in their behalf. In this regard, see John 3:14-17 and Galatians 4:4-5.

In 1 Peter 1:18-20, the Apostle Peter wrote concerning the basis upon which believers are saved. He wrote that we were redeemed—

“with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: **who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you.”

In these verses, Peter is not only teaching that believers are saved through the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's spotless, perfect Lamb, “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). He is also teaching that **this substitutionary sacrifice of Christ was foreordained, or predestined, by God before the**

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foundation of the world, or in eternity past, before time began.

The Apostle John uses similar language in the book of Revelation, as he describes Christ as **“the Lamb slain from [i.e., before] the foundation of the world.”** (Revelation 13:8)

In a bold sermon preached to some of the very ones who were responsible for His crucifixion, the Apostle Peter, in calling them to repentance (Acts 2:38), brings out **both the human and the Divine perspectives** of the death of Christ in one sentence:

“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” (Acts 2:23)

The Greek words translated “determinate counsel” here literally means **predetermined plan, or predetermined course of action**. The Greek word translated “foreknowledge” in this passage carries a much stronger meaning than mere knowledge beforehand; it actually means **foreordination**. The verse means, then, that Christ—though He was taken by wicked hands and crucified and slain—was **also** delivered to this death by the **predetermined plan and foreordination of God!**

Another passage in the Book of Acts which states this tremendous truth is Acts 4:26-28:

“The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”

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We learn from these verses that everything which was done against the Lord Jesus Christ by the rulers and people of both Israel and the Gentiles, which included all of His sufferings and cruel death by crucifixion, was **the fulfillment of what God Himself had determined beforehand, or predestined, should be done**. When Pontius Pilate asserted to Christ that he had the power to either crucify or to release Him, our Lord responded in these words, **“Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above . . .”** (John 19:11). Thus we see that in a wonderful, incomprehensible and mysterious way, the sufferings and death of Christ is the greatest example of **God the Father predestinating an event**—which, from the human perspective, was the ultimate sin—in order to accomplish His eternal purpose of sovereign grace. God the Son was in **perfect agreement** with this plan (John 10:17-18), and came into the world for this very reason, in order to accomplish that purpose by **voluntarily surrendering His life to death by crucifixion, a substitutionary blood atonement** unto God the Father on behalf of His people (Mark 10:45). However, this predetermined plan and action by the triune God did not destroy or impair the responsibility of those who crucified Him. Though they fulfilled God’s great eternal purpose of redemption in the sacrifice of His own beloved Son, **they also acted freely from the willfulness of their own sinful natures and were alone responsible for their sin**, as is clear from Acts 2:23, 36-38.

For other illustrations of how the God of the Bible, the God of absolute sovereignty, controls and directs the actions of evil men and evil spirits in exacting detail in order to accomplish His own will and purpose—without in any way destroying or impairing their responsibility—see the following examples: Job 1,2; Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 45:5,8; 50:20); Pharaoh (Exodus 4:21, 9:12,16; 14:17); and King Ahab (I Kings 22:20-23).

**As Sinners, We Have Two Desperate Needs Which
Have Been Met by the Lord Jesus Christ**

From a legal or judicial standpoint, poor sinners like you and me have **two desperate needs** that must be met before we can ever hope to be accepted and received into the favor and blessing of a holy and just God:

(1) We stand guilty and condemned before God, having broken His holy law (Romans 3:19-20; Galatians 3:10), incurring His wrath (Romans 1:18), and therefore **we need forgiveness and pardon.**

(2) We are absolutely destitute of any righteousness that God will accept (Romans 3:10); all our so-called righteousnesses are as filthy rags before Him (Isaiah 64:6), and therefore **we need a perfect righteousness**, because the holy God of the Bible will accept nothing less than that.

The glorious **good news of the Gospel** is that God the Father, through the Person and redemptive work of God the Son, has freely provided both of these for those who believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ! Since we are totally unable to justify ourselves before God, God in His great wisdom and mercy devised a plan whereby He can legally and righteously justify—or declare righteous—all those who believe and trust in the Person and work of His blessed Son. Therefore, the Scripture says, **“It is God that justifieth”** (Romans 8:33). How, then, can God—consistent with His own justice and holy Law—declare guilty sinners as legally righteous? How is it that God is able **“to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”** (Romans 3:26)?

(1) Forgiveness and Pardon for Guilty Sinners

“It is **God** that justifieth” (Romans 4:5, 8:33)

According to human laws, the Governor of a State may arbitrarily pardon a criminal who is guilty of a capital crime

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and set him free from the death sentence if he chooses to do so. This would be mercy exercised toward the offender, without satisfaction to justice and the law, which calls for the execution of the criminal. In such a case, we would say that the criminal received mercy, but certainly not justice. The criminal was set free, but justice, in this case, was violated.

However, God, who is infinitely pure and holy, does not govern as man governs. He cannot and will not arbitrarily pardon a sinner without satisfaction to His own justice and the demands of His own Law. He has declared that He **“will by no means clear the guilty”** (Exodus 34:7), and, **“cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them”** (Galatians 3:10). The requirements of the Law of God must be perfectly met and satisfied by all those who are under it, which is the entire human race; otherwise, the curse demanded by the Law must be executed, which is eternal banishment from the presence and loving favor and blessing of God, and punishment forever in the Lake of Fire. **In the light of God’s pure holiness and justice, every sin must and shall be punished, either in the person of the offender, or in the Person of the God-appointed Substitute.**

In the triune God’s great plan of redemption, God the Son undertook to do in time all that was necessary to **justify** all those whom God the Father had elected, or chosen in eternity, before the foundation of the world. This aspect of God’s eternal purpose of sovereign grace is stated clearly in Galatians 4:4-5, **“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”** The express mission of God the Son was to fulfill God the Father’s eternal purpose of grace by coming into the world as the

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virgin-born Son of God, “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16), in order that He might justify, redeem, and deliver all His chosen people from their sins, according to Matthew 1:21, “And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for **He shall save His people from their sins.**” From the very moment of His conception in the womb of the virgin, Christ became the Divine Substitute for His chosen people. He was born under the Law of God that He might fulfill it perfectly in their behalf, so that a perfect righteousness could be provided for them. We will study this aspect of justification next, but for the moment we want to concentrate our thoughts on that aspect of justification which refers to the pardon and forgiveness of guilty sinners based upon the substitutionary bloodshedding of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary’s cross. We seek to grasp and understand the great eternal truth set forth in Romans 5:9, “Much more then, being now **justified by His blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

Christ, because He is the eternal Son of God, “God manifested in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16), had “the power of an endless life” (Hebrews 7:16); no created being had the power to take His life from Him: “No man taketh it [life] from Me, but **I lay it down of Myself**, that I might take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father” (John 10:18). Christ “endured the cross, and despised the shame” for the “joy that was set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2). He voluntarily and willingly submitted Himself to be taken by the hands of wicked men and crucified, in order for Him to bear the sins of His people in substitution before God the Father, that He might justify and save them! **Our Lord was not passive in the surrender of His life, but was active in purposely laying down His life for His chosen people** (John 10:11-18; 15:13)! Rather than merely submitting to death, Christ actually anticipated it, viewing His own substitutionary death on the cross as something to be **accomplished** (Luke 9:31; 12:50; Mark 10:45). My

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friend, **the Lord Jesus went voluntarily and willingly to the cross, because His heart was filled with compassion and love for sinners like you and me!** He loved us so much that He was willing to lay down His own life in order to save us! “By this know we the love of God, because **He laid down His life for us**” (1 John 3:16); “**God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**” (Romans 5:8). Oh, the greatness of the Saviour’s love for sinners!

How does Christ’s voluntary surrender of His life and blood-shedding upon the cross of Calvary make it possible for God to justify guilty sinners, freely forgiving and pardoning them, yet still be consistent with His justice and holiness as expressed in His holy Law, which demands satisfaction? The answer is found in Galatians 3:13:

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, **being made a curse for us:** for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

The same truth is clearly set forth in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

“For He [God the Father] hath made Him [Christ] **to be sin for us,** Who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

The Lord Jesus became our Substitute, and “**bore our sins in His own body on the tree**” (1 Peter 2:24). From a legal or judicial standpoint, He was made, or reckoned, to be what we are—**sin**, that we might be made, or reckoned, to be what He is—**righteous!** What anguish of soul He must have suffered when the **full stroke** of the wrath and judgment of the Holy Father fell upon Him as our Substitute, which brought forth this cry from His lips, “**My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?**” (Matthew 27:46). When God the Father imputed all of our sins to Christ, then hid His face from Him, left Him forsaken to suffer the penalty that we deserved, Christ drank the cup of damnation

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dry, even to its bitterest dregs. He swallowed up the wrath of God in our behalf when He took all the sins of His people—past, present, and future—and was punished for them all, there and then, that we might never be punished! He suffered, in those hours of dreadful agony of soul and blood-shedding, what you and I deserve to suffer throughout eternity as lost sinners under the wrath of a holy God! What grace and what mercy from the very heart of the Son of God for such sinners as we are!

In a sermon on Christ's sufferings and death, Charles Spurgeon, a famous English Baptist minister of the 19th century, made these comments:

“All Hell was distilled in that cup, of which our God and Saviour Jesus Christ was made to drink. It was not eternal suffering, but since He was Divine, He could, in a short time, offer unto God (the Father) a **vindication of His justice** which sinners in Hell could not have offered had they been left to suffer in their own persons forever.”—*The Agony in Gethsemane*, 1874

The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ

The **resurrection of Christ from the grave** is proof that God the Father has accepted the substitutionary sacrifice of His beloved Son on behalf of His chosen people, according to Romans 4:25, speaking of Christ, “**Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification,**” and according to Romans 6:4, that “**Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father . . .**” The resurrection and exaltation of our blessed Lord is proof that every believer is “**justified by His blood**” (Romans 5:9), and that if we are trusting in Him, all of our sins—past, present, and future—are cancelled, pardoned, forgiven, and blotted out forever by the shed blood of the Crucified One! When we come to the crucified, risen and

exalted Lord Jesus as lost, guilty sinners, acknowledging our guilt, and gratefully receiving Him by faith as our Lord and Saviour, we find that He has reconciled us to God. We find that God's wrath against us for our sins was fully expended and satisfied in the depths of His great love manifested in the Substitutionary sacrifice of our blessed Lord on our behalf. All our guilt disappears as God reveals to us His great love, and receives us as His own dear children. **"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God!"** (1 John 3:1). **Hallelujah, what a Saviour!**

(2) A Perfect Righteousness for Guilty Sinners

"It is **God** that justifieth" (Romans 4:5, 8:33)

The Lord Jesus not only offered Himself up to the Father as a substitutionary sacrifice in behalf of His people, **He also lived a perfect life under the holy Law of God in their behalf.** He not only secured a pardon and forgiveness of sin for us by His substitutionary death—He also secured for us a perfect righteousness by His life. What we could not do for ourselves because we are now sinners fallen in Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Son of God, undertook to do for us. In order that God might be just in the saving and justifying of the ungodly (Romans 3:26; 4:5), Christ, though He existed eternally in the form of God, and therefore thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon Himself the form of a Servant, by taking unto Himself human nature (Philippians 2:5-7; John 1:1,14). In that human nature the Lord Jesus Christ rendered perfect obedience to the Law of God, thereby fulfilling it in behalf of all those whom He justifies. Because He is both God and man in one Person, He wrought out a full, perfect and sufficient righteousness for all those who should put their trust in Him.

My friend, the Holy Scriptures plainly declare this wonderful truth! In Romans 3:21-22, we find these words, "But

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now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even **the righteousness of God** which is by faith of Jesus Christ **unto all** and **upon all** them that believe.” It is brought out again in Romans 5:19, where the Apostle Paul is comparing the disobedience of Adam to the obedience of Christ: “**As by one man’s** [i.e., Adam] **disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One** [i.e., Christ], **shall many be made righteous.**”

Paul tells us in Philippians 3:8-9 that he has counted everything but loss that he may be “**found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.**” And we are told in Romans 4:3 that “**Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**” The Greek word used here for “counted” means “to put to one’s account.” Now it is evident from I Corinthians 1:30 that this righteousness which is put to the account of every believer is the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ: “But of Him [God] are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and **righteousness**, and sanctification, and redemption.”

“It is God that justifieth!” God the Father clothes the repenting sinner who trusts in the Lord Jesus with the “**Robe of Righteousness**” (Isaiah 61:10), which is nothing less than the **spotless righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ**. What a wonder of the sovereign grace and mercy of God that He would, before the foundation of the world, choose lost, guilty, Hell-deserving sinners from among Adam’s fallen race, and predestine them to be conformed to the image of His Son, and then in time give those spiritually dead rebels the life-giving effectual call, leading them to repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then **justifying them by clothing them in the righteousness of His own dear Son**.

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It is a great and marvelous mystery that the righteousness of One who is now enthroned in Heaven as sovereign Lord over all creation, the God-Man Who still bears the scars of Calvary upon Him, should justify me, a sinner, on earth!

Now, my friend, whose righteousness are you trusting in to get you to Heaven? If you are trusting in your own works and good deeds for salvation, you are like those Jews the Apostle Paul speaks of in Romans 10:3: “For they, being **ignorant of God’s righteousness**, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For **Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.**”

If you are attempting to justify yourself before God by your own supposed righteousness, you are despising the “**Gift of Righteousness**” (Romans 5:17) which God has provided for you, and defying Him to His face by refusing to submit to His righteousness. Are you, my friend, trusting wholly and completely in the crucified, buried, risen, exalted, and enthroned Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation? If you are, then you can say, in the words of that old hymn, “**My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness!**” If so, you are resting upon a solid foundation, for He is the Rock of Ages, solid and unmovable—all other ground is sinking sand!

The Sovereign Grace of God the Holy Spirit in Applying Salvation

“It is the **Spirit** that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63)

So far in these studies we have seen how both God the Father and God the Son are actively engaged by sovereign grace in the salvation of lost sinners—the Father in planning the salvation of His people, and the Son in providing salvation by blood redemption and a perfect righteousness for those whom the Father has chosen and given to Him. What remains for our consideration is the **actual application** of that salvation to those particular individuals for whom it was intended. This is primarily the work of the **Holy Spirit**, the third Person of the triune God—but it is also true that in the unity of the Trinity, the other Persons of the Godhead are also intimately involved in this gracious work. The Scriptures represent God the Father as the Initiator of the first step in the application of redemption—the effectual call (1 Corinthians 1:9; Romans 8:28-30). He is also the One who is the active Agent in the adoption of the elect into the family of God (1 John 3:1-2; Galatians 4:4-6). In like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ is also active in producing the New Birth, or the regeneration of God’s elect, according to John 5:24-25.

When we consider the devastating effects of sin upon the human race and the helpless condition of fallen mankind, the application of salvation to God’s chosen people must necessarily be a remedy for that condition. **In their natural state before they are redeemed, God’s elect are no different from the rest of mankind** (Ephesians 2:3; Titus 3:3). A powerful, supernatural operation of the Spirit of God upon them and within them is necessary in order for them to be transformed into the children of God. The first

stage of that transformation is the effectual call, which results in regeneration, or the new birth.

1. The Effectual Call and the New Birth

The new birth, also called regeneration (Titus 3:5), is an inward work of the Holy Spirit of God in the heart of a sinner, whereby that sinner—who by nature is **spiritually dead** as a result of our fall in Adam—is given **spiritual life**. He is not only enabled by the grace of God to **see** (perceive, know, and understand) the kingdom of God, but he is also enabled by the grace of God to **enter into** that spiritual kingdom, which is salvation, or eternal life (Ephesians 2:1-5; John 3:3-7; 6:63). This powerful, regenerating operation in the hearts of elect sinners is performed by God the Holy Spirit, as God the Father draws them unto the Lord Jesus Christ by giving them an **effectual or irresistible call** (John 6:44,65). This effectual call is given **only** to those whom God the Father has chosen by sovereign grace in **eternity past**, before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-11), and predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, according to Romans 8:28-30:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to **them who are the called according to his purpose**. For whom he did **fore-know**, he also did **predestinate** to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also **called**; and whom he called, them he also **justified**, and whom he justified, them he also **glorified**.”

(For a **graphic illustration** of this tremendous passage of Scripture which unfolds the triune God’s eternal purpose of sovereign grace, please see the illustration on page 84.)

This effectual call which inevitably results in regeneration or the new birth is given to elect sinners through **the in-**

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strumental means of the Word of God in the proclamation of the Gospel message. This vital truth is clearly set forth in 1 Peter 1:23-25:

“Being **born again**, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the Word of God**, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. **And this is the word which by the Gospel** was preached unto you.”

2. The Universal Call vs. the Effectual Call

When the Gospel is proclaimed, there is a **universal call** that goes forth to all those who hear it or read it, as expressed by the Lord Jesus Christ in His command to His disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and **preach the Gospel to every creature**. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16). In this universal call, God “commandeth **all men everywhere** to repent . . .” according to Acts 17:30-31. In this universal call of the Gospel message, the Lord Jesus Christ entreats and pleads with all men and women who hear it, through His ambassadors, to be reconciled to God, according to 2 Corinthians 5:20, “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, **as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ’s stead**, be ye reconciled to God.” This is an outward call, which reaches the ear, or the faculty of the understanding, but does not in and of itself penetrate to the depths of the soul in converting and life-giving power. This universal call may be resisted or rejected, or in many cases it may produce a response which leads to only a mere profession of faith in Christ (see Matthew 7:15-23; Mark 4:1-20).

If this were the only call which God gave to fallen man, no one would ever be saved. The reason is simply because, as

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we have already seen, all of us are by nature spiritually dead, rebels and enemies to God, held captive and spiritually blinded by Satan, under the reigning power of sin; we have no natural inclination or ability to know, come to, seek, or be reconciled to the holy God of the Bible. By nature, we all have a dislike and aversion to this sovereign God who reveals Himself in the Holy Scriptures, and want nothing to do with Him. The truth is, it is our nature to hate and despise that which we desperately need if we are to be saved—the **sovereign grace of God the Holy Spirit** operating within us in a mighty irresistible power which will lead us to true “**repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ**” (Acts 20:21)—a power which will convert us and change us into new creatures in Christ Jesus, according to 2 Corinthians 5:17:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, **he is a new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Do you see why the effectual call which results in the New Birth is absolutely necessary? **Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.** An unregenerate person in Heaven would be as out of place as a fish out of water, because those who are glorified and enter the Heavenly Home are beholding the glory of God revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is their delight and joy throughout eternity, and to Whom they sound forth His eternal praises: “**Worthy art thou, O Lamb of God, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood**” (Revelation 5:9, 12). Would one whose very nature is enmity and aversion to the God of the Bible be at home and at ease in such an atmosphere of holiness and praise? “Marvel not that I said unto thee, **ye must be born again**” (John 3:7).

Therefore, God the Father gives each one of His elect more than just the universal call—He gives them an **effectual call** which actually **accomplishes** that for which it is in-

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tended: their regeneration, or being “born again” by the Spirit of God. Our Lord Jesus drew the distinction between the outward universal call of the Gospel, and the **particular, distinguishing effectual call** of God’s sovereign grace—which comes only to God’s elect—when He taught the parable of the marriage feast in Matthew 22:1-14. I urge you to read it carefully. We will not quote the entire parable here, but only note the conclusion which He drew from it, “For many are **called**, but few are **chosen**.”

Another parable taught by our Lord Jesus to a great multitude of people gathered by the Sea of Galilee provides a perfect illustration of both the **universal call** of the Gospel and the **effectual call** to God’s elect—the parable of the Sower and the Soils, **Mark 4:1-9**. We will not attempt to quote or fully expound this parable here, but urge you to read it carefully, paying close attention to our Lord’s explanation of the parable, which He gave only when He was later alone with His disciples, as recorded in **Mark 4:13-20**. The seed sown is the Word of God (the proclamation of the Gospel), and the four kinds of soil represent the various kinds of hearts of those who hear the Gospel. Because they have not received God the Father’s **effectual, life-giving call**, Satan is permitted to snatch the Word from the hearts of some (the soil by the wayside); others fall away as a result of persecution or tribulation (the “stony ground” hearers); and still others fall away because of the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches (the soil surrounded by thorns). However, the hearts of the fourth group is described as “good ground,” representing those who hear the Word, receive it, and bring forth fruit, in varying degrees. Since the Bible clearly teaches that there are **none good** (Romans 3:10-12), and that the heart of fallen man is **deceitful** and **desperately wicked** (Jeremiah 17:9), what made the difference? The difference **must be** that the power of God accompanied the Gospel message as it was preached by **preparing the hearts** of His elect, so that they

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become the “good ground” hearers—by the sovereign grace of the **effectual call** which resulted in their being regenerated, or “born again.” (See 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6; Titus 3:3-7.)

To confirm this teaching, please note these astonishing words which came from the lips of the Lord Jesus, as He later explained to his true disciples (His elect), **why** He taught the vast multitudes in Israel in parables at that particular time—it was actually to **conceal** the truth from some, while He **revealed** it to others.

“And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, **Unto you it is given** to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but **unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables:** That seeing they may see, and **not perceive**; and hearing they may hear, and **not understand**; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.” (Mark 4:10-12)

Essentially the same truth is taught in Matthew 11:25-26:

“I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast **hid** these things from the wise and prudent, and hast **revealed** them unto babes. Even so, Father, for **so it seemed good in Thy sight.**”

3. What Is the New Birth?

As we have already seen, though God the Father gives the effectual call to His elect, the Agent of the new birth is the Holy Spirit, and the Instrument He uses is the Word of God in the proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—His cross, or substitutionary blood atonement, His resurrection and Lordship (1 Peter 1:23-25; James 1:18; 1

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Corinthians 1:18-31; Acts 2:22-36). But the question must be answered, “What exactly is the New Birth, or what is the nature of regeneration?” Various terms are used throughout the Scriptures to describe regeneration, so the best approach is to study carefully some of those terms.

(1) The New Birth is called a new creation, according to 2 Corinthians 5:17:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, **he is a new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

The new birth is more than just a reformation of the old man, such as giving up bad habits, or “turning over a new leaf.” It is the creation of a **new man**, or a new nature, which bears the image of the Lord Jesus Christ—created by the powerful supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit within the individual (Colossians 3:10; Romans 8:29). It is also called a **new heart**, according to Ezekiel 36:26.

What are some of the characteristics of this new creature, or new man? What old things have passed away, and what things have become new?

The born-again believer has **new desires**. His desire is no longer to serve the flesh, or glorify himself, but to serve and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ—and to grow in the grace, knowledge, and likeness of Christ. Where he once loved sin, **he now has a desire for holiness**.

The born-again believer has a **new conversation**. Where he once was obsessed with the material aspect of this present life and loved to talk only about that, he is now alive spiritually, and therefore intensely conscious of the spiritual dimension of life, and loves to talk about the things of God, the Word of God, and the hope he has in the Lord Jesus

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Christ. **The Person of Christ is the center of his thoughts and meditations**, and he loves conversation with others who exalt Him and give Him honor, glory and praise. The one who once blasphemed the name of the Lord now holds His name in the highest reverence, and does not use it irreverently, lightly, or in vain.

The born-again believer has **new companions and a new family**. He will no longer run with the old crowd, for his likes and dislikes are no longer the same. Usually he will not have to drop his unconverted friends because they will in many cases drop him and call him a religious fanatic (1 Peter 4:3-5). Unconverted family members may avoid him because of the change that has taken place in his life, and because he no longer fits in with their worldly lifestyle. However, he finds new friends among the saints of God, and a new family—brothers and sisters in the Lord!

The born-again believer has a **new Book**. He once avoided the Bible, but now he treasures this Book above all others because in it he hears the voice of God speaking to him. From the pages of this blessed Book he learns more and more of the Lord Jesus Christ who died to save such a sinner as he. **He also finds within the pages of God's Word directions on how to live a life that is pleasing to God**. Once he could not understand the Bible. Now, however, through the enlightening power of the Holy Spirit and the reading, preaching, and teaching of the Word, he gains more and more insight into the Holy Scriptures, desiring the "sincere milk of the Word," that he might grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:1-2; 2 Peter 3:18).

(2) The New Birth is a passing out of death into life; it is the Holy Spirit giving spiritual life to a sinner who is by nature spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, according to Ephesians 2:1:

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“And you hath **he quickened [made alive]** who were **dead** in trespasses and sins.”

Spiritual life is imparted to the elect sinner in the New Birth as a result of the effectual call, by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, with absolutely **no contribution** from the individual:

“It is the **Spirit that quickeneth [makes alive]; the flesh profiteth nothing:** the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63)

In the unity of the Godhead, it is also the life-giving Word of the Lord Jesus Christ which raises the elect sinner out of the grave of spiritual death, and makes him alive unto God:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is **passed from death unto life.** Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when **the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.**” (John 5:24-25)

This born-again one who has been made **spiritually alive** unto God now has been given a **personal knowledge and understanding of God** (John 17:1-3; 1 John 5:20). He is no longer His enemy, but having now been reconciled to Him through the blood of the Son of God, he has **peace with God** (Romans 5:1,10), and **loving fellowship and communion** with all three Persons of the triune God (1 Corinthians 1:9; John 14:15-17; 21-23; 2 Corinthians 13:14). The New Birth is truly a **miracle of God’s amazing grace**, because it transforms a spiritually dead rebel and enemy of God into one who is God’s friend, alive to His majesty and glory, and in subjection to His authority as Lord.

(3) The New Birth is a deliverance out of Satan’s kingdom into the Kingdom of Christ, according to Colossians 1:13-4:

“Who hath **delivered us from the power of darkness**, and hath **translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son**: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”

Before the effectual call and the new birth, the elect sinner was not only held captive and blinded by Satan in his kingdom of darkness (2 Timothy 2:24-26; 2 Corinthians 4:4), but he was like all the rest of mankind—**spiritually a child of the Devil**, that evil “**spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience**” (John 8:44; 1 John 3:10; Ephesians 2:2). In the universal proclamation of the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, **God the Father by the effectual call singles out His elect** from among all those who hear it. The Holy Spirit **regenerates** these individuals so that their spiritual eyes are opened, and through a demonstration of His mighty power they are turned from “darkness to light, and **from the power of Satan unto God**, that they might receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 26:18). By His grace and power, they are **transformed** from children of the Devil into children of the living God! In his epistle to the Thessalonian believers, Paul taught that they could know that they were elected or chosen of God because of this powerful, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in them:

“Knowing, brethren beloved, **your election of God**. For **our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance**; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.” (1 Thess. 1:4-5)

In this regard, see also 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Acts 13:48; 1 John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14-15.

4. What Happens When a Person Is “Born Again”?

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, **Ye must be born again**. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; **so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.**” (John 3:6-8)

In these verses, the Lord Jesus Christ compares the action of the Holy Spirit in producing regeneration in God’s elect to the action of the wind. Though we may hear the sound of the wind, and see the results of its presence, the wind itself cannot be seen; it is powerful and mysterious, coming and going as it pleases; in a sense, at least from the human standpoint, the wind is “sovereign”; no man can control or command it! In like manner, regeneration or the new birth is a mysterious, powerful, secret operation of the sovereign Holy Spirit performed upon the inner being of the elect sinner who is being effectually called by the sovereign grace of God. It cannot be seen or perceived by anyone, including the individual who is being “born again.” However, just as the **effects of the wind** are seen and known, so too are the **effects of the New Birth** seen and known.

(1) The Preparatory Work of the Holy Spirit Prior to the New Birth

A preparatory work of the Holy Spirit **always precedes** the New Birth of God’s elect into the Kingdom of God. The parable of the sower and the soils (Mark 4:1-20), alluded to earlier, provides an excellent example of this vital truth. It was only the “good ground” upon which the seed was sown that actually yielded fruit, and according to our Lord’s explanation of His own parable, the “good ground” repre-

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sented those who not only hear the word, but also “understand it” (Matthew 13:23). They are characterized by Him as those who “in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). According to 2 Corinthians 2:14 and Romans 3:11, **fallen man by nature cannot of himself, unaided by the Holy Spirit, understand spiritual truth**, and according to Jeremiah 17:9, **none of us by nature possess an honest and good heart**.

In the light of these truths, the clear implication is that, just as soil must be prepared to receive the seed in order to produce natural fruit, so also must the human heart be prepared to receive the Word of God in order to produce spiritual fruit. And indeed this is the case. This preparatory work of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts and minds of God’s elect prior to the New Birth is described in various ways in the Word of God.

The preparatory work of the Holy Spirit prior to the New Birth is called an opening of the heart. Though we may be devout, religious, and outwardly moral, our hearts are naturally closed to the truth, and must be **opened** by the invincible power of the Holy Spirit before we can understand and truly receive the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such was the case of **Lydia**, a woman who heard Paul preach when he addressed a group of religious women who were meeting for prayer by the riverside near Philippi:

“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: **whose heart the Lord opened**, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us.” (Acts 16:14-15)

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According to this account, it was **only** because the Lord opened Lydia's heart, that she attended unto the Gospel message preached by Paul. Therefore, the Seed of the Word preached fell upon "good ground," meaning Lydia's heart was opened and prepared by the Holy Spirit to receive it. We are not told the content of Paul's message, but we may be assured that it contained the **basic truths** of the Gospel: the justice and wrath of God against sin, the desperate state of all mankind in sin, the insufficiency of self-righteousness, or the inability of being justified by the works of the Law, the Gospel of the grace of God in the Person of the crucified, buried, risen, ascended and enthroned Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, His substitutionary blood atonement, and the absolute necessity of "repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). The size of the group of women is unknown, but apparently only Lydia and her household or family were the objects of God's sovereign, electing and saving grace from among them. "As many as were **ordained** to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48).

The preparatory work of the Holy Spirit prior to the New Birth is conviction of sin. It is the Holy Spirit of God who convinces men and women of "**sin, righteousness, and judgment**" (John 16:8-11). The Holy Spirit may do this without the use of human means, but ordinarily He uses His servants who proclaim the Gospel message (Peter, Acts 2:37; Stephen, Acts 6:8-8:1; 9:5; Romans 10:14-15). One of the marks of a God-called preacher is that he preaches in the power of the Holy Spirit a message which produces conviction of sin in the hearts of lost men and women who hear that message. He is bold to do so, without the fear of man.

In this preparatory work of conviction, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God, whether it is heard preached, taught, or read, and using it as a powerful, sharp, two-edged sword

(Hebrews 4:12), lays bare the elect sinner's heart, exposing to him his own awful, ruined, fallen condition. He lets the sinner see himself as he really appears before the all-seeing eyes of God—a **lost sinner**, guilty before God, under the judgment and wrath of a holy, sin-avenging God, and justly condemned to die. Such a sinner, convicted by the Holy Spirit of his lost condition before God, begins to cry out to God for mercy. Two examples of God's elect receiving the effectual call of God under Holy Spirit conviction are: (1) the Philippian jailer, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" (Acts 16:25-30); and (2) the publican praying in the temple, "**God be merciful to me a sinner**" (Luke 18:10-14).

(2) The Revelation of Christ in the New Birth

It is the Holy Spirit's greatest work to **glorify Christ** (John 16:13-15), and He does it by showing the elect sinner the glory of the crucified, risen, exalted, and enthroned Lord Jesus Christ, as the only hope for lost, guilty, Hell-deserving sinners. It is a **personal revelation of Christ's glory** made only to the elect, as they are being effectually called, and regenerated, or "born again," by the Holy Spirit. Second Corinthians 4:3-4 describes the condition of all mankind—including the elect, **before** this revelation is given:

"But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the 'god' of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

In the verses following, 2 Corinthians 4:5-6, we find a description of what happens to every one of God's elect when **the Holy Spirit gives them an effectual call**, and reveals **the glory of Christ** to them:

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“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, **hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**”

This revelation of the glory of God the Father as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, “the image of God,” which “**hath shined in our hearts,**” is a **sovereign, supernatural revelation given only to God’s elect,** according to the words of Christ Himself:

“At that time, Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast **hid these things** from the wise and prudent, and hath **revealed them** unto babes. **Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.** All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and **no man knoweth the Son,** but the Father, **neither knoweth any man the Father,** save the Son, and he to **whomsoever the Son will reveal him.**” (Matthew 11:25-27)

The sovereign, supernatural character of this revelation of His glory is also taught by our Lord in His words to Peter:

“He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, **Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.** And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for **flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.**” (Matthew 16:15-17)

The Lord Jesus Christ revealed Himself in a most dramatic fashion to Saul of Tarsus, an enemy and persecutor of the Church, according to Acts 9:1-19. In this account of Saul’s conversion, an **effectual call** which resulted in his being regenerated, or “born again,” **came only to Saul,** though

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apparently many others were present at the time. His traveling companions also fell to the ground, saw the great light, and heard the sound of a voice, but did not hear the actual words which were spoken. **Saul alone** saw the Person and heard the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, words which were spoken directly and personally to him. Later on, when Saul became Paul the Apostle, with regard to this revelation, he would write these words to the Galatian believers:

“But **when it pleased God**, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and **called me by his grace** [effectual calling], to **reveal His Son in me**, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” (Galatians 1:15-16)

We are not told all that transpired between Saul of Tarsus and the Lord Jesus during his three days of blindness, but we are told that, “Behold, he prayeth!” We may be assured that the Lord taught him in those days the **Gospel of blood redemption: substitutionary atonement through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ**, and made Himself known to him as his own precious Lord and Saviour! From that day on, the **central theme** of Paul the Apostle’s preaching was the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (Acts 9:19-22; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 2:1-2; Galatians 6:14). Paul also attributed his salvation **solely to God’s sovereign, elective grace** (Acts 22:12-14).

5. The Evidences of the New Birth

(1) Repentance and Faith

When the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is proclaimed, a **two-fold response** is commanded from all who hear it, according to the words of Christ Himself, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: **repent ye, and believe the Gospel**” (Mark 1:15). The central theme of Paul’s preaching was the **substitutionary blood atone-**

ment of Christ—the message of the cross . . . Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 2:1-2), and the response he sought from his hearers was two-fold, according to Acts 20:21, “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.**” Therefore, repentance and faith are inseparable graces wrought in the hearts of all those whom God the Father effectually calls, and whom the Holy Spirit regenerates. They are **unmistakable evidences** of the New Birth. Some have raised the question as to which comes first, repentance or faith? The truth is that they are inseparable—**true faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ** is a repenting faith, and **true repentance toward God** is a believing repentance. Both repentance and faith are **absolute necessities** in order to be saved (Luke 13:3,5; Hebrews 11:6)—one cannot exist without the other. In order to understand what these terms mean, we should consider each one separately.

“Repentance toward God”—Though it may involve and impact our relationship with others, **repentance is primarily toward God.** David’s heinous sins of adultery and murder involved Bathsheba and Uriah, yet in his prayer of repentance toward God in Psalm 51 he says, “Against **thee and thee only** have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight” (Psalm 51:4). Though true repentance recognizes that sin against our neighbors must be dealt with, and restitution and reconciliation must be made where possible, David also recognized that, in the final analysis, all sin is ultimately a violation of God’s holy Law, and rebellion against His authority as the Lawgiver—and that **repentance must be toward God.** But what is the meaning of repentance? How do we know whether we are really repenting toward God, or whether our repentance is spurious and counterfeit, a repentance that itself needs to be repented of (2 Corinthians 7:9-10)? According to the Word of God, true “repentance toward God” has three elements:

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First, true repentance is a confession or acknowledgment of the truth the Holy Spirit shows us about ourselves. All of us are by nature filled with pride and a self-righteous, self-justifying spirit. True repentance is not natural to us, and therefore it is a gracious gift from God to His elect as a result of regeneration (Acts 5:31, 11:18). They, being deeply convicted by the Holy Spirit of their sinfulness, are led by Him to **acknowledge the truth about themselves**—their lost, ruined condition before God (2 Timothy 2:25; John 16:7-11). Under Holy Spirit conviction, God's elect are led to face the stark reality that they are **lost, guilty, Hell-deserving sinners** under the righteous judgment of a holy God. Biblical examples are the repentant thief (Luke 23:40-41) and the publican in the temple (Luke 18:13-14). The Holy Spirit strips them of their **self-righteous rags** in order that they may desire to be clothed upon with the spotless, **imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ** (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:21-23). In regeneration, He shines the light of truth concerning themselves, and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ into their hearts (2 Corinthians 4:4-6). By the grace of God they are given **the gift of repentance** whereby they agree with God's indictment of themselves (Romans 3:10-20). By His grace they become joyfully, gratefully and gladly willing to be saved on God's terms—as objects of God's sovereign grace and mercy (Titus 3:4-7). They are glad to be saved on the basis of the imputed righteousness of Christ (Romans 10:3-4), and the shedding of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross as their Substitute (Romans 3:24-26; 1 Peter 1:18-21, 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

They **rejoice in blood redemption in Christ**, and that **God receives all the glory in their salvation**. They seek no credit or glory for themselves (1 Corinthians 1:29-31).

Second, true repentance is a turning to God from sin. In Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians, he teaches them

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that they may know their election of God because the Gospel came to them not in word only, but in the power of the Holy Spirit (1:4-5). And in 1:9, we find that **both faith and repentance** are given as further evidences of their election and therefore of their regeneration:

“For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how **ye turned to God from idols** to serve the living and true God.”

By the grace of God, the Thessalonians **turned to God** (faith), and **turned from idols** (from sin, repentance). In true “repentance toward God,” there is not only a confession of our sins, but, in abhorrence and hatred of them, **we turn from them to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to serve the living God**. An Old Testament passage which sets forth **both repentance and faith** is Isaiah 55:6-7:

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; **let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord**, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

True repentance recognizes that salvation is not only a deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin (justification), but **a deliverance from the love and practice of sin** (sanctification, Matthew 1:21; Romans 6:18-23). In simple terms, the children’s hymn, as quoted in one of Spurgeon’s sermons, expresses this aspect of repentance so clearly:

“Repentance is to **leave the sins** we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve, **by doing so no more.**”

Third, true repentance is an abiding and continuing attitude of contrition. A broken spirit and a contrite heart are marks of a true born-again believer (Psalm 34:18;

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51:17; Isaiah 57:15, 66:2). As long as sin remains in us, there will be a consciousness of it and a sensitivity to it (Romans 7:15-25)—which leads us to daily confession, and a plea unto God for forgiveness and cleansing through the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 1:7-10; Psalm 51). The true born-again believer is more conscious of his own sins of word, thought, and deed than he is of the sins of others, and therefore he judges himself more severely than others, taking Matthew 7:1-5 to heart. Under the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, it was a spiritual sight of **“Christ crucified”** for sinners like us that first broke our hearts in repentance toward God, and it is again to the **cross of Christ**, and to **the risen Christ of the cross**, that we must **continue** to go in confession and contrition for forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:7-10; Hebrews 4:14-16).

“Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”—A living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the surest marks or evidences of one who has truly been born again by the Spirit of God. The Word of God draws a clear distinction between true faith and spurious or counterfeit faith. There is the “faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness” (Titus 1:1), and then there is a “faith without works,” which “is dead, being alone” (James 2:17,26). There are those who, after professing faith in Christ, “draw back unto perdition,” and then there are those who “believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:39). How may we know whether our faith is genuine, whether we truly have the faith of God’s elect?

The first thing we must recognize is that, like true repentance, **true faith is a gift from God to His elect** (Ephesians 2:8; Philippians 1:29). None of us by nature have the inclination, let alone the ability, to exercise the kind of faith that is necessary to truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This kind of faith does not originate in an individual’s exercise

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of his so-called “free will”—it has its source in the new birth, or regeneration, according to John 1:12-13:

“But as many as **received him**, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: **which were born**, not of blood, **nor of the will of the flesh**, nor of the will of man, but of **God.**”

(1) The faith of God’s elect is based upon Divinely imparted knowledge. More than a superficial knowledge and mental assent to Gospel truths about Christ is necessary (John 2:23-25; 8:30-59). A supernatural knowledge of Christ must be imparted to the soul by the Holy Spirit before it can savingly believe in Him. A lost sinner is blinded by Satan, and cannot see any glory in the crucified, risen and exalted Lord (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)—the **Gospel of blood redemption** in the Lord Jesus Christ is foolishness to the unregenerate (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2:14). But when God gives one of His elect the effectual call in regeneration, He not only convicts him of sin and leads him to repentance toward God by shining the light of truth into his heart, but it is also by that same supernatural shining of spiritual light into our hearts by the Holy Spirit that enables us to see “**the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ**” (2 Corinthians 4:6). **The Person of a revealed Christ can be trusted**—an unrevealed and unknown Christ cannot be trusted.

(2) The faith of God’s elect is a faith that trusts and relies solely upon the crucified, risen, exalted Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice for salvation. True faith is the lost sinner utterly forsaking all reliance upon himself and anything that he can do, and fully trusting and relying upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of lost sinners. His spiritual eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit to see the beauty and glory of Christ, and **the love of Christ for sinners like himself** (Romans 5:6-11). By the grace of God

he gladly commits his soul into the hands of the Crucified One for time and eternity to save just such a sinner as he is!

(3) The faith of God's elect receives Christ as Lord as well as Saviour. When the Philippian jailer, under Holy Spirit conviction as a result of God's effectual call, fell down before Paul and Silas, he tremblingly implored, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**" They replied, "**Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house**" (Acts 16:30-31). Verse 32 says, "and they spake unto him the Word of the Lord." Though we are not told the full content of the message which they spoke, we may be sure that in the power of the Holy Spirit **submission to the Lordship of Christ** was pressed upon the jailer and his family, as well as **justification by faith in Christ and His substitutionary blood atonement**, as taught in Romans 10:9-13, especially verse 9, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the **Lord Jesus** [literally in the Greek, "**Jesus as Lord**"], and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." The Philippian jailer demonstrated the reality and genuineness of his faith and his **submission to Christ as Lord** by his baptism and good works (Acts 16:33-34)—at a time when identification with the despised Christ and His despised disciples could have meant signing his own death warrant! Regarding the relationship of the **Lordship of Christ** to true faith and true conversion, we believe a quote at this point from Evangelist James A. Stewart is appropriate:

"There must be a **confession of Jesus as Lord of the life**. Although this includes a public confession of our faith in Christ as Redeemer, it is plainly evident from the New Testament that it also involves **the acknowledgement of the entire life to live under the lordship of Christ**. That this confession is not a mere lip service is clearly evident from the words of the Sav-

our, **‘Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven’** (see Matt. 7:21-27). Paul warns the Corinthian believers, **‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost’** (1 Corinthians 12:3). Only by the miracle of regeneration and a transformed life is a man able to call Jesus the Lord.”—James A. Stewart, *The Lordship of Jesus Christ*

See also Colossians 2:6 and 2 Corinthians 5:15-17.

(2) The Believer’s Cry

One of the first evidences of life in a natural birth is the cry of the new-born baby. In like manner, there are no still-born children in the Kingdom of God—just as surely as a new-born baby evidences life by his cry, so does a born-again child of the Living God evidence life by his cry:

There is **the cry of adoption**: “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, **crying, ‘Abba, Father’**” (Galatians 4:6). God no longer appears to us as a stern Judge, but as our loving Heavenly Father, into whose family we have now by His sovereign grace been adopted (Ephesians 1:4-6). Therefore, the Spirit of adoption in our hearts cries out unto Him, **“Father! Father!”**

There is also **the cry of hunger**: “As new-born babes, **desire the sincere milk of the Word**, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). The Word of God is our daily Bread; we desire to feed upon it, and we must feed upon it. The born-again believer, having personally tasted that the Lord Jesus Christ is gracious to sinners, hungers and thirsts after Him in a spiritual sense. Christ is now the Bread of Life (John 6:48), and he searches the written Word in order to fellowship with the Living Word! His attitude is now like

that of Jeremiah, **“Thy Words were found, and I did eat them, and thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart”** (Jeremiah 15:16).

There is also **the cry for comfort**. The born-again believer finds that he is now a stranger and pilgrim in this present world; it is no longer his home, for his affections are now set on things above, where the Lord Jesus Christ is enthroned in Heaven at the right hand of the Father as Lord of all (Colossians 3:1-3; Philippians 2:9-11). He has an eternal inheritance “that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4). The born-again believer longs to be with Christ, to behold His glory (John 17:24). And so the Father has sent forth the Comforter into our hearts, the Holy Spirit (John 15:26), Who takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us from the Word of God (John 16:13-15), bringing comfort to our hearts, regardless of our circumstances in this life. The Lord Jesus Christ, His glory and the loveliness of His Person, fill the believer’s life with satisfaction and joy, for **in Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”** (Colossians 2:3). **“Whom having not seen, ye love; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”** (1 Peter 1:8).

(3) The Fruit of the Spirit

If we have been born again, and the Spirit of Christ dwells within our hearts, then according to Galatians 5:22-23, **“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance . . .”** These graces are wrought in our hearts and lives by the Holy Spirit as we grow in the grace, knowledge, and likeness of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). In his Epistle to the Philippian believers, Paul sets forth both **the human side** and **the Divine side** of this process of spiritual growth and sanctification:

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“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling. For **it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.**” (Philippians 2:12-13)

According to Romans 8:29-30, **the goal of God’s predestination of the believer** is to conform him to the image of His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. This sanctification is a slow, life-long process, **begun** in the new birth, and **consummated** both spiritually and bodily in the believer’s glorification when he beholds the Lord Jesus Christ, either at death or at His glorious appearing (1 John 3:2-3; Philippians 3:20-21). The born-again believer is being transformed into His image by the Holy Spirit as He reveals to us the glory of the Lord Jesus as He is lifted up in the Word of God—as we see His glory and fellowship with Him, we are changed day by day into His image. This is what is meant by 2 Corinthians 3:18:

“But we all, with open face **beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed [transformed] into the same image**, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

(4) **The Evidences of the New Birth In 1st John**

Many evidences and signs of regeneration or the new birth are given us in the Apostle John’s First Epistle. Some of them are:

The Born-Again Believer Has a Living Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1). If we have been born again, we believe with all our heart in the Lord Jesus Christ. The born-again believer has committed his soul into the nail-pierced hands of the Crucified One! Under Holy

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Spirit conviction he has seen himself a lost, guilty, Hell-deserving sinner, and has been led and enabled by the Holy Spirit to trust completely in the Lord Jesus Christ and His substitutionary blood atonement for his salvation. He rests all his hopes for eternal life in the blessed Lord, and does not trust in his own righteousness, goodness, or good deeds.

The Born-Again Believer Practices Righteousness. The Apostle John wrote, “Everyone that **doeth righteousness** is born of Him” (1 John 2:29). Those who are born again seek to live according to the will of God. They want to do those things that please Him, and avoid those things that displease Him. They sincerely want to be obedient to the teachings and commandments of Christ, though they also know that they daily fail to do this to perfection, which is a painful reminder of indwelling sin (Romans 7:18; Galatians 5:17), causing them to cry out against even the very presence of sin in their nature (Romans 7:14-25).

The Born-Again Believer Loves and Keeps the Commandments of God. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if **we keep his commandments**. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4); “For this is the love of God that **we keep His commandments**: and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). Before regeneration, we were enemies and rebels at heart against God, not subjecting ourselves to His Law (Romans 8:7). But we who have been born again (John 3:3,7) by the sovereign grace of God, are made new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17), which not only loves God, but desires to please Him, and delights in His commandments (Romans 7:22). Having been delivered from the curse of God’s holy Law through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His curse-bearing substitutionary blood atonement on his behalf (Galatians 3:10-13), the born-again believer now has a different relationship to the Law, and therefore a different attitude toward it.

The Born-Again Believer Has Been Delivered From Satan's Power, and He Does Not Habitually Sin. Because of the **solidaric union** of all of God's elect with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and glorious resurrection (Romans 6:1-11; Hebrews 2:14; Colossians 2:15), sin's dominion and Satan's power over us is broken when we are regenerated by the Spirit of God, according to 1 John 5:18: **"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that Wicked One toucheth him not."** **"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin"** (1 John 3:9). (See also Hebrews 2:14 and Colossians 2:15.) In context, these verses do **not** teach that a born-again believer lives a life of sinless perfection (see 1 John 1:8)—but they **do** teach that **those who have been regenerated or born again do not live in the habitual practice of sin!** The true Christian hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, considers it his greatest plague, resents and mourns over the burden of its presence in his heart and life; **he longs to be completely delivered from it** (Romans 7:14-25)! He knows that "in many things we offend all" (James 3:2), and therefore he knows that he cannot prevent sinful thoughts from entering his mind, or omissions, shortcomings and defects from appearing in both his words and actions. But he also can truthfully say that, in the sight of God, **these things cause him grief and sorrow**, and that his renewed and regenerated heart does not give consent to them (Romans 7:17-25).

The Born-Again Believer Has a Special Love for Other Believers. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, **because we love the brethren.** He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1 John 3:14). Though he has a general love for all men, one who has been born again has a **special love** for all true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. While there may be some differences in our interpretation of the Word of God, there is a **bond of fellowship and**

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friendship among true believers that the world cannot know and cannot understand. However, this love among brothers and sisters in the Lord should be so evident that unbelievers cannot help but notice it, according to our Lord's own words:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That **ye love one another**; as I have loved you, that **ye also love one another**. **By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.**” (John 13:34-35; see also 1 John 3:22-23)

The Born-Again Believer Overcomes the World. The Apostle John wrote, “Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world” (1 John 5:4). The born-again believer does not use the world's opinion as his standard of right and wrong, but the teaching of the Holy Spirit from God's Word is now his guide to daily living. Having learned of the Father, he is now more concerned with pleasing the Father than with pleasing man. He is taught by the Holy Spirit to take the command of 1 John 2:15-17 to heart:

“**Love not the world, neither the things in the world.** If any man love the world, the love of 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 passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

The Holy Spirit also teaches the born-again believer that one of the greatest benefits of the substitutionary blood atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ in his behalf is **deliverance from “this present evil world,”** according to Galatians 1:3-5:

“Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, **Who gave Himself for**

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our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

The following quote is from J. C. Ryle’s article on 2 Corinthians 6:17 titled “The World,” in his book, *Practical Religion*:

“In every age of the Church, **separation from the world** has always been one of the grand evidences of a work of grace in the heart. He that has been really **born of the Spirit, and made a new creature in Christ Jesus**, has always endeavored to ‘come out from the world,’ and live a separate life. They who have only had the **name** of Christian, without the **reality**, have always refused to ‘come out and be separate’ from the world.”

[We are also indebted to J. C. Ryle’s tract, “*Are You Born Again?*” for some of the other thoughts expressed above.]

The Sovereign Grace of the Triune God In Securing Salvation

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: **And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.** My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and **no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.**” (John 10:27-29)

The Scriptures abound with many passages like the one above which plainly declare the **absolute eternal security** of every born-again believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is **impossible** that any of the true children of God should ever be lost, or lose their salvation. Though this comforting truth is clearly taught in God’s Word, it has been the subject of much controversy down through the centuries since the apostolic age, and it still is today. Due to the limitations of space in a work such as this, our study of this issue cannot be exhaustive. Rather than enter into all the fine points of the debate, our approach to the subject will be to study this precious truth from two angles, or two perspectives: The Divine side and the human side. The thing we must always bear in mind is that whatever the controversies, we can be absolutely certain that **the Bible does not contradict itself.** Therefore, if we are enabled by the grace of God to view this subject from both the Divine and the human perspectives, much of the misunderstanding can be cleared up, and much of the controversy can be resolved.

From the Divine Perspective: Preservation, Eternal Security of the Believer in Christ

In these studies we have learned that the salvation set forth in the Bible is a **Trinitarian salvation**—that is, it is a salvation in which **all three Persons of the triune God** are personally and intimately engaged in the salvation of the

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people of God. As we shall see, born-again believers are eternally secure in Christ and cannot lose their salvation because it is **guaranteed** by the sovereign purpose of each Person of the Trinity.

1. The Eternal Purpose of God the Father Cannot Fail

The eternal security of the born-again believer is guaranteed because the sovereign purpose and plan of God the Father cannot fail. We have seen that before the foundation of the world, **God the Father** chose a people unto salvation out of Adam's fallen and apostate race, and gave them to His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Ephesians 1:3-12, believers were chosen by God the Father in Christ before the foundation of the world, and **predestinated** unto the adoption of sons, **“to the praise of the glory of His grace.”** All those whom God the Father chose and predestinated to the adoption of sons and final glorification must reach that goal **simply because the sovereign God of the universe cannot fail in that which He purposes** (Isaiah 14:24, 27; 46:10-11; 55:11; 2 Timothy 1:9), and because **“the glory of His grace” shall be praised** throughout eternity! God the Father will not permit **“the glory of His grace”** to be diminished in the least by the loss of **any** whom He has chosen!

Probably the clearest passage in all of the Word of God on the eternal security of the true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is **Romans 8:31-39**. This passage immediately follows **Romans 8:28-30**, which we have already studied in detail. In the light of the great truths of God the Father's election and predestination which Paul taught in this tremendous passage, he drew this comforting conclusion in **Romans 8:31-39**:

“What shall we then say to these things? **If God be for us, who can be against us?** He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he

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not with him also freely give us all things? **Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?** It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. **For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God,** which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

If God the Father is “**for us,**” (both in His eternal purpose, and in giving His beloved Son to bear the sins of His elect in substitutionary atonement), as this passage clearly teaches, is there **anything** that can separate us from His love for us in the Lord Jesus Christ? Absolutely nothing!

Another truth taught in the Word of God that should comfort every born-again believer is that **God the Father has reserved a place in Heaven for every one of His elect,** and **He is determined to keep them by His Divine power** until they reach that predestined goal. This precious truth is set forth in 1 Peter 1:3-5:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to **an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,** who are kept by

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the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

According to this passage of Scripture, it is not presumption on our part to believe that **if God has reserved a place in Heaven for us, and if He is determined to keep us by His almighty power, we will, by His marvelous grace, certainly reach that Heavenly Home!** See also John 14:1-4. Before moving on to the next section, I would encourage the reader to look up the following passages which, among many others, also teach the faithfulness of God the Father in preserving His chosen people so that they will continue on to the end of their earthly lives in final perseverance: Psalm 37:23-24,28; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Jude 24-25.

2. The Mission of God the Son Cannot Fail

The eternal security of the born-again believer is guaranteed because the purpose for which Christ came into the world cannot fail. According to the plan and purpose of God, at precisely the appointed time, **God the Son**, through the incarnation, came into the world for the express purpose of providing salvation for every individual chosen by God the Father, and given to Him. By the shedding of His own precious blood on Calvary's cross, the Lord Jesus Christ provided substitutionary atonement to the Father for those who were given to Him, fully satisfying the claims of Divine justice in their behalf. This truth is clearly established by our Lord's words as recorded in John 6:37-40:

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that **of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that everyone which seeth the Son, and**

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believeth on him, may have everlasting life: **and I will raise him up at the last day.**”

Further confirmation from the Word of God of the **unfailing mission** of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth to redeem all His chosen people is set forth in John 10:14-18, 27-29:

“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: **and I lay down my life for the sheep.** And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father . . . My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: **And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.** My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and **no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.**”

Without question, these verses teach that every born-again believer is **eternally safe and secure** in the almighty hands of both God the Son and God the Father. Nothing can defeat the purpose and plan of God the Father, and nothing can defeat the execution of that plan by God the Son. Praise the Lord for His amazing, sovereign grace!

Further, because He is “God manifested in the flesh,” **the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for His people** can never be defeated or diminished. It is immutable and invincible, and will ultimately bring each and every born-again believer to the place in Heaven that God the Father has reserved for them. Though the verses below are a portion of a passage already quoted above, this truth should be re-emphasized:

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“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (Romans 8:35-37)

Let us next consider the fact that part of the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ is **His intercession in behalf of His beloved people**. Numerous passages teach that **Christ, as the great High Priest of His people, effectually intercedes for them**. His high-priestly prayer as recorded in John 17 should bring much comfort to every child of God. We may have much assurance that **His prayer in John 17:24 will definitely not go unanswered:**

“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

According to this passage, none of those who were given to Him by the Father, for whom He died, and for whom He now prays, will ever be lost, but will be with Him in Heaven to eternally behold His glory! Another text which brings out this precious truth is Hebrews 7:25:

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

If this God-Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, loved His people enough to **lay down His life for them** (John 15:13; 1 John 3:16), and **even now intercedes continuously in their behalf before His Father’s throne**, surely we can trust Him with our eternal salvation! The Apostle Peter learned the power and efficacy of his Lord’s intercessory prayer the hard way! See our Lord’s prayer for him in Luke 22:31-32,

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as it relates to Peter's fall into sin by denying His Lord (Luke 22:54-62). See also 1 John 2:1-2.

3. The Work of God the Holy Spirit Cannot Fail

The eternal security of the born-again believer is guaranteed because the work of the sovereign Holy Spirit in the life of the believer cannot fail. We have already learned from the Scriptures that in the process of time, **God the Holy Spirit** calls out each one of those whom the Father has chosen and given to the Lord Jesus Christ, and for whom He died, with an **effectual call**, whereby they are born again, being justified by faith as they are enabled by the grace of God to believe and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. In God's great salvation, **the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within the born-again believer**, according to John 14:16-17:

“And I will pray the Father, and **he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever**, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and **shall be in you.**”

If the Holy Spirit indwells the true believer, and will abide with him forever, **how is it possible then for the believer to ever be lost?** For the believer to be lost, the Holy Spirit would have to be lost!

In light of the above, the truth is that **the Holy Spirit working within the believer will complete the work of sanctification which He began in the new birth**, bringing it to perfection when the believer is glorified at the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, according to Philipians 1:6:

“Being confident of this very thing, **that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ . . .**”

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Therefore, it is the **sanctifying power of the indwelling Holy Spirit** which enables the true believer to be obedient, and to do the will of God, according to Philippians 2:12-13:

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For **it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.**”

Finally, it is a most blessed truth that **the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer draws his attention to the Lord Jesus Christ** as He is lifted up in the Word of God (John 16:13-15), and **by enabling us to see His glory, He begins a process of transformation whereby we begin to be changed into His image**, according to 2 Corinthians 3:18:

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed into the same image** from glory to glory, even as **by the Spirit of the Lord.**”

Now, dear friend, if the Holy Spirit of God indwells us, if He promises to perform the work of salvation within us until the return of the Lord Jesus from Heaven, if He enables us both to will and to do that which pleases God, and if He is in the process of transforming us into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ according to God the Father’s predestined plan (Romans 8:29), **shall He not then enable us to persevere in the faith to the end of our earthly life?** We may be absolutely certain that God the Holy Spirit is faithful and able to do that which He has promised to do!

From the Human Perspective: The Believer’s Perseverance

God’s preservation of His people and their perseverance to the end of their earthly life are like two sides of the same coin—they are inseparable, and run parallel to each other

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throughout the Holy Scriptures. You cannot have one without the other. We have seen this vital truth from the Divine perspective; now let us view it from the human perspective, or from the standpoint of **the believer's responsibility and duty to persevere in a life of obedience and holiness**, as it is set forth so clearly in God's Holy Word.

As we begin to study this part of our subject, it is important that we never lose sight of the fact that **salvation is by the sovereign grace of God from beginning to end, from election to glorification**. The perseverance of born-again believers is ultimately due to their preservation by the grace of the triune God, leaving us with nothing of which we can boast or glory in (1 Corinthians 1:26-31, 15:10; Ephesians 2:8-10). We will persevere to the end **only** because we are preserved and kept by the work of the triune God in us and in our behalf. If left to our own strength, none of us would persevere, but would not only fall into sin, but fall away completely. Dear friend, keep this truth in mind: **God will ultimately get all the glory in every part of our salvation, even in our own perseverance!**

THE TEACHINGS OF THE LORD JESUS IN THE GOSPELS ON PERSEVERANCE

The same Lord who said, "I give unto them eternal life; and **they shall never perish**, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand," also warned and encouraged His disciples with these words:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. **Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away**: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. **Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.** I am the

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vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. **If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.**” (John 15:1-6)

Notice that in this passage “abiding in Christ” is essential to producing fruit, meaning the fruit of the Spirit, as described in Galatians 5:22-23. Here we have a distinction or contrast drawn by the Lord Jesus between those who merely make a profession of faith but do not continue in fellowship with Him and obedience to Him, and those who are enabled by the grace of God to continue to look to Him by faith and follow Him. If the professing believer does not abide in Christ by faith and obedience, thereby producing the fruit of the Spirit, it is evidence that his profession of faith is false, that he is actually a counterfeit Christian. The end result of such a false profession is that, as a hypocrite, he will be cast “into the fire” or into Hell (vs. 6).

Throughout the Gospels, the Lord Jesus Christ taught that, from the human perspective or standpoint, **our perseverance in the faith as His disciples to the end of our earthly lives is the only evidence that we are truly saved.** This is clear from Matthew 10:22: “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but **he that endureth to the end shall be saved.**” Again, He said to some who professed to believe in Him:

“As he spake these words, many believed on him. 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 8:30-32)

These verses clearly teach that a mere profession of faith in Christ is not enough; **there must be a following on in**

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obedience and continuance in His Words as proof and evidence that we actually know the truth, and have been set free from the bondage of sin (in context, see vs. 33-36).

Another passage from the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ which clearly demonstrates that a mere profession of faith in Him is not enough, but emphasizes **the necessity of the professing believer's obedience to His Words**, is Matthew 7:21-23:

“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but **he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven**. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? **And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**”

It is truly amazing how the twin truths of God's preservation of His elect and the absolute necessity of their perseverance in faith and obedience run parallel—and are perfectly balanced—in the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the Gospels!

PERSEVERANCE AS TAUGHT IN THE EPISTLES

Let us now proceed to the Epistles, the verbally inspired writings of the Apostles, where there are many other examples of this teaching. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we find many passages which warn, challenge, and exhort professing Christians in their responsibility to persevere in the faith and to hold fast to the end. Although from the Divine perspective, the salvation of the elect is by sovereign grace alone, does not depend in the least upon their works, and is absolutely secure and certain, yet when we view it from the human perspective, good works are the necessary evidence that we have the faith of God's elect, simply because **God**

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has ordained that His elect produce the fruit of good works, according to Ephesians 2:8-10:

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

If good works, obedience, the fruit of the Spirit, and perseverance in the faith is absent in the life of the professing believer in Christ, it is clear evidence that he is **not** one of God’s elect!

Consider Hebrews 3:6, where, in context, we read that we are Christ’s house, His building, meaning that we are His workmanship, His people, “**IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.**” The writer of Hebrews continues this thought a few verses later, where he makes this statement: “For we are made partakers of Christ, **IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.**” This theme of **warning and exhortation to obedience and holiness** is prominent throughout Hebrews, and is exemplified in these verses:

“Follow **peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God . . .**”
(Hebrews 12:14-15)

Then consider these words of exhortation to holiness from the Apostle Peter:

“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As **obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner**

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of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:13-16)

Then let us also weigh carefully these words of exhortation from the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian believers to pursue a life of holiness and sanctification:

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, **let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**” (2 Corinthians 7:1) (See also 1 Thessalonians 4:7; Romans 6:22; Colossians 1:9-10; 1 John 3:1-3.)

These passages from the Epistles strongly reinforce Ephesians 1:4-6 and Romans 8:28-30, which teach that **God’s election and predestination of his people is unto holiness, and unto their being conformed by the grace of God to the image of the Lord Jesus.** They clearly demonstrate that it is our responsibility, as we are enabled by the grace of God working in us, to persevere in the pursuit of a life of holiness and true righteousness, which is pleasing to God our Saviour, according to Philippians 2:12-13.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

How, then, are we as believers going to be able to persevere to the end, in view of the weakness of our own flesh, the power of temptation by Satan and demonic forces, and the attractions and allurements of this present evil world (James 1:13-15; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 John 2:15-17)? The answer to this question is found in Colossians 2:6-7:

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

We began the Christian life by looking away from self unto the Lord Jesus Christ alone by faith, trusting in Him and His precious shed blood, and bowing to Him as Lord

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and Master of our lives. According to this passage, **we are to continue on in the Christian life in the same way that we began**, looking to Him by faith day by day, not only as our Deliverer from the penalty of our sins, but also as our Deliverer from the power of sin. This precious truth is confirmed and reinforced by Hebrews 12:1-2:

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith**; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We must be continually **“looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith”** as He is appearing as our Heavenly Advocate and Representative before God the Father on the Throne of Grace, according to Hebrews 4:14-16:

“Seeing then that **we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God**, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. **Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**”

Because in His flesh He was tempted in every way that we can be tempted, yet without sin, He is a compassionate High Priest and Saviour who knows how to comfort, help, and deliver us from temptation and the power of sin and Satan. This precious truth is also taught in Hebrews 2:17-18:

“Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a **merciful and**

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faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. **For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.**”

May both writer and reader take to heart these encouraging words placed in the Word of God for our help and benefit, as we seek to persevere in faith and obedience to our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

What About Those Who Fall Away?

Though the Word of God clearly teaches that true born-again Christians will hold fast in perseverance to the end because they are held fast by the triune God, the question still remains, “What about those who fall away?” It is an observable fact of life, as well as Scriptural truth, that many who profess faith in Christ later desert that profession, either by overt apostasy or by obvious failure to produce any fruit or evidence that they are truly born-again believers. Many who do not deny Christ in words go back to the world, give up their profession entirely, or deny Him by their ungodly lives. The best biblical example of this is our Lord’s parable of the Sower and the soils, recorded in Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-13, and Luke 8:4-15. We will not quote these passages here, but we urge the reader to study them carefully, especially the Lord Jesus’ explanation of His own parable.

THOSE WHO FALL AWAY OR APOSTATIZE WERE NEVER TRULY CONVERTED

The conclusion we must draw from this parable of our Lord is that those who give up their profession of faith in Him, fall away, or apostatize were never truly born-again believers in the first place, though some may have for a period of time appeared to be so. They may have exhibited much zeal for Christ, but later repudiated their profession and turned away from Him. They may have “run well,” but only “for a

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while.” Regarding the parable of the Sower and the soils, and those who fall away, one writer said:

“The first possibility is that their profession was not genuine in the first place. They confessed Christ with their mouths and then later committed a real apostasy from that confession. They are like the seed that fell in shallow soil and sprang up quickly, then withered and died (Matt. 13:5-6). The seed never really took root. **They gave some outward signs of conversion, but their conversion was not genuine.** They are like those who honored Christ with their lips but whose hearts were far from Him (Matt. 15:7-8). Their faith was spurious from the beginning....In this category we can readily assign Judas [Iscairiot]...” (R. C. Sproul, from his excellent book, *Grace Unknown*, pg. 208).

This conclusion is supported and clearly stated by the apostle John in 1 John 2:19:

“They went out from us, but **they were not of us**; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: **but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.**” (See the rest of the context in verses 20-25.)

In all of this we are not saying that a true born-again believer cannot fall into sin, because it is obvious from Scripture and from experience that we can. The examples of David’s sin of adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband, and Peter’s denial of the Lord Jesus Christ in the hour of trial are left in the Holy Scriptures as testimony of that sad fact. And there are many other examples. But what we are saying is that none of God’s elect will so fall into sin as to fall away from the faith completely, and be eternally lost. David’s sincere repentance and godly sorrow for his sin is recorded in Psalm 51, and Peter’s true repentance is demonstrated by his bitter tears (Matthew 26:75),

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and subsequent godly life. **In every case where there is sin in a believer's life, there will also be chastening and correction from our loving Heavenly Father,** as set forth in Hebrews 12:5-13, which will lead us to repentance and restoration. If there is no chastening and no true repentance, this is clear evidence that we do not belong to Him!

This section would not be complete without giving at least some consideration to the erroneous teaching that a true born-again believer can fall away, apostatize, and lose his salvation. Those who hold this error appeal to an assortment of verses of Scripture, taken out of context, in order to support their contention. Space will not permit us in a work such as this to examine all of them, but we would like to at least look at one passage. The passage most often referred to by false teachers in support of their contention is **Hebrews 6:4-6**, verses which deserve careful exposition in order to refute their error. It is quoted as follows:

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

In order to rightly understand the meaning of these verses, we must know the context or setting in which they are found, which includes knowing to whom they were addressed. In his introduction to and analysis of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Pastor John MacArthur states that the Epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to 3 distinct groups of people: (1) Hebrew Christians who were suffering rejection and persecution by fellow Jews; (2) Jewish unbelievers who, although they were intellectually convinced of the basic truths of the Gospel, had not actually come to trust in

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Jesus Christ as their own Saviour and Lord; and (3) Jewish unbelievers who were not convinced of the truth of the Gospel, even though they had had some exposure to it.

We are convinced that the individuals addressed, or referred to, in these verses were never, in any sense, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and are therefore in the third group. They were Jews who had been exposed to the truth of the Gospel, deliberated the issue for a while as “fence sitters,” but in spite of their exposure to all of the powerful influences mentioned in verses 4-5, **their deliberate and final decision was to reject the claims of Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament and as their own Lord and Saviour.** By doing so, these Jews basically agreed with those who crucified Him. They were saying, in essence, that He is not who He claimed to be, and deserved to be crucified as a blasphemer and an imposter. It is in that sense that they “crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

Since there is no other way of salvation other than through faith and trust in the crucified, buried, risen, exalted and enthroned Lord Jesus Christ, these unbelieving Jews, in their final and deliberate rejection of Christ as their Messiah, had cut themselves off from any hope of ever being saved. God regarded their deliberate decision as final, **leaving them alone to perish in their unbelief**, just as He did the Pharisees in Matthew 15:12-14. His own verdict regarding them is that “it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.” We are convinced, then, that these individuals had committed the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, in that they attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to the Devil (Matthew 12:24, 30-32; Mark 3:22).

False teachers confidently refer to this passage as proof that a genuine believer can apostatize and lose his salvation because they say that only a Christian could have been “once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were

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made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.” But is that really so? Let us examine the passage more closely.

First, can an unbeliever be “enlightened”? The answer is, Yes, he can. The term **enlightened** literally means: “to come to an intellectual perception of the truth.” It means to be made mentally aware, or instructed in something. It carries with it no connotation of belief or unbelief, but simply means that the truth is revealed to him, and this can even be by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. After being enlightened to the message of the Gospel by the Holy Spirit as it is proclaimed, the individual can still reject it in unbelief. A Biblical example of this is found in Matthew 4:15-17. The people of Galilee and the surrounding area were **enlightened by the preaching of the Lord Jesus**, yet most of them continued in unbelief, rejecting Him and his message—especially in Nazareth where he grew up, according to Luke 4:14-29. Therefore, being enlightened with an intellectual perception of the truth of the Gospel is no proof that a person is a true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Next, is it possible for an unbeliever to “taste of the heavenly gift”? Obviously, the heavenly Gift is the Lord Jesus Himself, according to 2 Corinthians 9:15. However, salvation comes **not** by “tasting” Christ, but **by “eating” Him as the Bread of Life in a spiritual sense**, according to John 6:47-58. Just as one may taste of food without eating it, it is also possible for one to “taste” of Christ without actually partaking of Him, or taking Him into your heart so that He becomes a part of you! One may hear, sample and investigate Gospel truth, yet in the final analysis still reject it in unbelief. Therefore, we conclude that an unbeliever may “taste” of the Lord Jesus, the Heavenly Gift, without ever truly receiving Him as a result of being born again.

What about having been “made partakers of the Holy Ghost”? Surely, you might say, only a Christian can par-

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take of the Holy Spirit! However, a closer look at that word “partake” in the original reveals that it means “an association with someone, or one who shares in.” In Hebrews 1:4-9 the same Greek word refers to the angels who were the companions or fellows of Christ. In this case, the unbelieving Jews were sharers in the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the sense that they heard the Gospel message, witnessing the miracles wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit either by Christ or His apostles. Some may have been miraculously healed or may have witnessed the multiplication of the bread and fish when the Lord fed the 5,000.

So there are many ways in which these unbelieving Jews may have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, but **there is a vast difference between “associating or sharing” with the Holy Spirit and being permanently indwelt by Him**; see John 14:16.

The final phrase used in this passage to describe those Jewish unbelievers who have fallen away is that they “have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.” We find the word “tasted” used again here, which should indicate to us that these Jews had merely tasted the Word of God as the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was proclaimed to them, **rather than ingesting it and taking it into their hearts**. They sampled and investigated the Word of God, but they were not regenerated by it (1 Peter 1:22); neither did they feed upon it as spiritual food, as born-again believers do (1 Peter 2:1-2). In like manner, these Jewish unbelievers had a “taste” of the powers of the world to come when they witnessed the signs, wonders, and miracles which accompanied the proclamation of the Gospel. The “powers of the world to come” is likely a reference to the prophesied Millennial Kingdom when the Lord Jesus Christ shall rule over the Earth with His saints for 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-6, Revelation 5:10)—a time upon

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the restored Earth when miracles will be commonplace occurrences, as the Crucified One rules as Lord over all!

Our conclusion, then, is that this controversial passage does not prove that a born-again believer can lose his salvation. **There is absolutely no evidence that these individuals were ever true believers.** There is no mention in these verses of salvation, the new birth, or justification—none of the normal terminology for salvation is used in this passage. And the truth is that none of the terminology used to describe these individuals is used anywhere else in the Word of God to describe the elect of God. This passage is **not** a warning about how a believer can lose his salvation. Rather, **it is a warning to those who are “fence-sitters,” those who may be on the verge of finally rejecting the truth of the Gospel, and the eternal consequences thereof.**

In closing this section, let us remember that the truth of the eternal security of the believer in Christ has been given to us in the Word of God for the encouraging and strengthening of the dear children of God. **It has not been given to us so that we can use it as a license to sin!** (See Romans 6:1-2, in context with the rest of that chapter.) Those who say, “Once saved, always saved!” and use that as an excuse to live a life of sin and ungodliness are greatly deceived, and, unless they repent in all sincerity, and turn to the Lord, will one day hear those piercing and terrifying words from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ, “I never knew you: **depart from me, ye that work iniquity**” (Matthew 7:23). (See the warning and exhortation in Ephesians 5:1-11.)

Final Words to the Reader

No doubt some who read this book will be greatly offended by it, denying that they are such great sinners as pictured within these pages. But, my dear friend, the truth has been set before you from the Holy Scriptures, in order that you and I may see our **desperate need for the grace of God**, and how His grace is so wonderfully manifested in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. I urge you to read this message again, with an open Bible before you. Trace all the Scripture references given—let the Word of God penetrate deep into your heart, praying that the Holy Spirit will open up His Word to you, and grant you faith to believe it. **“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”** (Romans 10:17).

These final remarks are addressed to **four groups of people** who may be reading this book:

1. To scoffers, unbelievers, and the indifferent, I warn you in love to your souls, that, **“It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment”** (Hebrews 9:27). The wrath of a holy and just God rests upon you continually, for you have not believed the testimony God has given of His Son (John 3:36). You are still in your sins, guilty before Him—unpardoned and unforgiven. The Judge of all the earth will one day summon you to appear before the Bar of Justice to judge you according to truth (Romans 2:2). You will not be able to justify yourself before Him who judges the “secrets of men” (Romans 2:16). Friend, it is **Christ or Hell, repent or perish—turn or burn** (Mark 16:15-16; John 3:35-36; Luke 13:1-5). Where death finds you, eternity will keep you. The day is surely coming when **“every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”** (Philippians 2:10-11). Why not give up your rebel-

lion, bow to Him as Lord now, and seek Him for mercy on the basis of His precious shed blood—while there is still hope for mercy, pardon, and eternal life?

2. To religious leaders and professing Christians, I ask this searching question, “Have **you** been born again?” The words of the old spiritual ring true, “Everybody that’s talkin’ ’bout Heaven ain’t going there!” If we may judge by what we see all around us in the religious world, it is to be greatly feared that many professing Christians and religious leaders today are deceived and blinded by Satan concerning their own spiritual condition before God—and because many ministers are preaching “another gospel,” “another Jesus,” by “another spirit,” they are blindly leading thousands of their “converts” to everlasting destruction along with themselves (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; 11:4,13-15; Matthew 15:12-14; 23:13-15).

How about you, dear reader? Have you been deceived about your own soul’s condition? Do you have a mere head-knowledge of Gospel truths, a mere mental assent to the facts of the Gospel message, or **has the Gospel come to you in life-giving, life-changing power**—not in word only, but also in “**power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance**” (1 Thess. 1:5)? In other words, has the Holy Spirit showed you that you are a lost, guilty, Hell-deserving sinner before a holy God? Has the Lord led you to Biblical “**repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ**” (Acts 20:21)? Has the Lord Jesus Christ been revealed to you as the only hope for poor **lost sinners** like yourself (1 Timothy 1:15), and are you trusting **only** in Him and His substitutionary blood atonement on Calvary’s cross and His perfect righteousness for your salvation? Are you happy and satisfied to be **saved only by the grace of God** as revealed in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is the **Lord Jesus precious to you**, because you have **actually tasted** and experienced for your-

self that the Lord is gracious—when he saved a **lost sinner** like yourself (1 Peter 2:3,7)? Because He has saved you and delivered you **by His wonderful grace**, do you love Him (1 Peter 1:8), and now desire in your heart to live in **obedience to Him** and His teachings (Romans 6:16-18)? In other words, **Do you know Him and follow Him?** (John 10:14, 27-28; 1 John 5:20). The Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to save only **lost sinners** (Luke 15; 19:10; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; 1 Timothy 1:15)—He saves no other kind! Dear friend, it matters not who you may be—if **you have missed Holy Spirit conviction**, you have missed the New Birth. If you have missed the New Birth, you have missed Bible repentance and faith. If you have missed Bible repentance and faith, **you have missed Christ**; and if you have missed Christ, you have missed it all! Ask the Lord to search your heart, and reveal the truth to you in these matters (Psalm 139:23-24).

3. To seekers, there is much encouragement and hope for you. Has the Word of God found a place in your heart? Do you see yourself to be lost, guilty before God? Do you acknowledge that God is just in punishing sin, and that He would be just and righteous in casting you into Hell forever? Are your own sins a burden to you, and do you long to have them pardoned, and to be delivered from them? It is to just such a sinner that Christ speaks these words, **“Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out”** (John 6:37). God speaks to you, my friend, from His Word: **“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else”** (Isaiah 45:22). Look to the crucified, buried, risen, enthroned Lord Jesus, for it is a look away from yourself to the Crucified One that saves. You cannot save yourself, but you can look to Him Who **“is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them”** (Hebrews 7:25).

FINAL WORDS TO THE READER

Dear friend, let not the truth of **salvation only by the sovereign grace of God** as set forth in these pages be a discouragement to you—rather, let it be a great encouragement to you. If you are truly seeking Him, this is evidence that **He was seeking you first!** Has He not elected **sinners** to eternal life? Are you not a sinner? Here is sound counsel for you from Charles Spurgeon, spoken over a century ago:

“Sinner, whoever you may be, wherever you may be, your greatest comfort should be to know that **salvation is by grace**. Why, man, if it were by merit, what would become of you? Suppose that God saved men on account of their merits, where would you drunkards be? Where would you swearers be? You who have been unclean and unchaste, and you whose hearts have cursed God, and who even now do not love him, where would you be? But when it is all of grace, why, then all your past life, however black and filthy it may be, need not keep you from coming to Jesus. Christ receiveth sinners, **God has elected sinners**; He has elected some of the blackest of sinners—**WHY NOT YOU?** He receives every one that comes to Him. He will not cast you out. There have been some who have hated Him, insulted Him to His face, that have burned His servants alive, and have persecuted Him in His members, but as soon as even they have cried, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” He has given them mercy at once, and He will give it to you if you be led to seek it. If I had to tell you that you were to work out your own salvation apart from His grace it were a sad look-out for you, but when it comes to you thus: black, there is washing for you! dead! there is life for you! naked! there is raiment for you! All undone and ruined! here is a complete salvation for you! O soul, mayest thou have grace to lay hold of it, and then thou and I together will sing to the praise of the glory of

Divine grace.”—C. H. Spurgeon, *Salvation Altogether by Grace*, July 29, 1866

4. To fellow-believers—Let us rejoice in the Lord, for we have much for which to be thankful. Can we ever praise Him and thank Him enough for His grace and mercy in pardoning Hell-deserving sinners like us? Let us be moved with compassion for lost sinners around us, that know not our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us tell them of the love of Christ for poor sinners, not only by our witness, but also by our lives—by reflecting His great love to others. If truly we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, and if truly the love of Christ is shed abroad in our hearts, we should be like Paul the apostle, whose expression of compassion for his fellow Israelites is set forth so vividly in Romans 9:1-5—his preface to the strongest passage in the Bible on God’s sovereignty in electing grace. **We should be moved with compassion** for our lost friends, relatives, and neighbors, that the Lord may grant them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:25; Acts 20:21). **A burden for lost souls is not inconsistent with the doctrine of God’s sovereign grace taught in the Word of God.** There are no hard cases with our sovereign God! He can save the most hardened, the most callous—He can break the will of the most determined rebel (for example, Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9). He can pardon the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). I know this, because He saved a sinner like me!

“**Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.**” (Isaiah 55:6-7)

FINAL WORDS TO THE READER

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly**. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But **God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**. Much more, then, being now **justified by his blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” (Romans 5:6-9)

“If thou shalt **confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus** [literally, **Jesus as Lord**], and shalt **believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved**. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for **the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him**.” (Romans 10:9-13)

Appendix A:

An Expanded Definition Of the Grace of God

GRACE is the **unmerited favor of the triune God**, based upon the Person and mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, whereby in His own sovereign good pleasure, it pleases Him to manifest His own glory¹ by showing kindness and mercy to those whom, before the foundation of the world, **God the Father** chose, or elected² to **save, or redeem**—with absolutely no consideration or foresight of anything in them—**from among His enemies**,³ all of whom are by nature rebellious, Hell-deserving sinners⁴ — by **effectually calling them** through **God the Holy Spirit**,⁵ to repentance toward God, and faith in His dear Son,⁶ by **justifying them**,⁷ by **delivering them** from the reigning power of sin and Satan,⁸ by **adopting them** into His family and **giving them** the Spirit of adoption, the Holy Spirit, to indwell them,⁹ by **giving them** spiritual and eternal life¹⁰ and **transforming them** by regeneration, or the New Birth,¹¹ so that they are enabled to willingly¹² become His **true worshippers**,¹³ and His **obedient, loving servants**,¹⁴ and whom He will ultimately **glorify, or perfectly conform** to the image of His dear Son¹⁵ — all of this at a tremendous cost to Him of **incomprehensible personal sacrifice**:¹⁶ the voluntary, **substitutionary, propitiatory sacrifice**,¹⁷ the shedding of the **precious blood**¹⁸ of His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ¹⁹—**God the Son** manifest in human flesh—in their behalf.²⁰

¹ Ephesians 1:5-6,9, 2:4-9, Luke 12:32, Exodus 33:17-19, Romans 9:15-16; ² Ephesians 1:3-4, Acts 13:48, John 6:37, 17:2, 2 Thess. 2:13; ³ Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:21; Rom. 9:16; ⁴ Ephesians 2:1-3, Titus 3:3-7, Romans 3:9-12; 5:18; ⁵ Romans 8:28-30, 1 Corinthians 1:23-31, 2 Timothy 1:9, John 6:37,65, Jeremiah 31:3; ⁶ Acts 13:48, 16:14, 18:27, 20:21; ⁷ Romans 3:24-

26, 4:5, 5:9, 8:30,33; ⁸ John 8:31-36, Romans 6:14-22, Acts 26:18, Colossians 1:13; ⁹ John 1:12, Ephesians 1:5, Galatians 4:5-7; ¹⁰ John 5:21,24-25, 10:27-28, 17:2; ¹¹ Ephesians 2:10, Titus 3:3-8; ¹² Philippians 2:13, Psalms 110:3; ¹³ John 4:23-24; ¹⁴ Psalms 119:57-60, John 14:15,21,23, Hebrews 5:8-9, I John 2:3-4, 3:14, 4:11-21, Revelation 14:12, 22:3; ¹⁵ Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; ¹⁶ John 3:14-17, 2 Corinthians 8:9, 1 Peter 1:18-19; ¹⁷ John 10:11,15, 2 Corinth. 5:21, Romans 3:24-26; ¹⁸ 1 Peter 1:18-19; ¹⁹ 1 John 4:9-10, 2 Tim. 3:16; ²⁰ Acts 20:28.

I Saw One Hanging on a Tree

I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agony and blood,
Who fixed His languid eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood.

O, can it be, upon a tree,
The Savior died for me?
My soul is thrilled, my heart is filled,
To think He died for me!

Sure, never to my latest breath,
Can I forget that look;
It seemed to charge me with His death,
Though not a word He spoke.

My conscience felt and owned the guilt,
And plunged me in despair,
I saw my sins His blood had spilt,
And helped to nail Him there.

A second look He gave, which said,
I freely all forgive;
This blood is for thy ransom paid;
I die that thou mayst live.

—JOHN NEWTON

Appendix B:
The Meaning of “Foreknow”
In Romans 8:29

“For whom He did **foreknow**, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

The first link of God’s unbreakable Chain of Grace in Romans 8:28-30 is **God’s foreknowledge**, as found in verse 29, “For whom He did **foreknow**, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son . . .” Much confusion exists today concerning the meaning of the word “foreknow,” as used in this verse of Scripture. There are those who assume that it means that God simply knew beforehand who would respond by faith and repentance to the Gospel message, and on that basis, He then predestinated those individuals to be conformed to the image of His Son.

A more detailed study of the Scriptures will reveal that **the foreknowledge of God** in this text has a much deeper meaning than simply His perfect knowledge beforehand of all events, or of what every individual will do. If we attempt to add some qualifying phrase to this verse, such as “whom He did foreknow (would repent and believe in Christ)” we are imposing our own presuppositions upon the text, rather than letting the language of the text speak for itself. This is a false teaching because it ultimately bases election upon the will of man, rather than upon the will of God—and is contrary to the explicit teaching of Scripture in Romans 9:15-16 and John 1:12-13. A much better way to understand the foreknowledge of God in this passage is to compare Scripture with Scripture, and let Scriptural usage of the word determine its meaning.

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This verse speaks of God foreknowing particular individuals, not their actions or what they will do. When the prefix “fore” is added to “know,” it adds the sense of “beforehand” to the word “know.” And so if we are to truly understand what is meant by God’s foreknowledge in this text, we must see how the word “know” is used in Scripture when it refers to God knowing individuals. According to the Bible, if God “knows” a person or a people, it means that **God has a special regard for that person or people; they are the special objects of his affection and love.** This thought is expressed so clearly in Amos 3:2, where God, in speaking to Israel, says, **“You only have I known of all the families of the earth...”** Does this mean that He knew nothing about the rest of the families of the earth? Obviously it doesn’t mean that. The Lord in His omniscience knows the intimate details of all the families of the earth, but He knew Israel in a special way—they were **His chosen people** whom He had set His heart upon. And why did the Lord love and choose Israel above all the other families of the earth? It certainly was **not** because of any foreseen good in them, but simply because it pleased Him—it was His own sovereign good pleasure to do so, according to Deuteronomy 7:6-8. See also Romans 11:2.

Another Old Testament example of God’s special knowledge of particular individuals is found in Jeremiah 1:5, where God, in speaking to Jeremiah, had this to say, “Before I formed you in the womb, I **knew** you.” Much more than just foreknowledge of all the intimate details of Jeremiah’s life is meant. God is saying to Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in your mother’s womb, I had a **special affection, love, and regard** for you.”

When we come to the New Testament, this same concept is clearly expressed in a negative fashion in Matthew 7:22-23:

“Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And then will I profess

unto them, **I never knew you:** depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.”

Does Christ mean here that He will say to these individuals, I never knew anything at all about you, or your actions? No. It is obvious that He knew every detail of their works of iniquity. Clearly, His meaning must be, “I never had a special affection, love and regard for you.” But in contrast, notice how in John chapter 10 the Lord Jesus uses the word “know” to express the tender and loving relationship that exists between Himself and His sheep, and between Himself and His Father:

“I am the Good Shepherd, and **know** my sheep, and am **known** of mine. As the Father **knoweth** Me, even so **know** I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:14-15)

The Apostle Paul used the word “know” in the same sense in 2 Timothy 2:19,

“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord **knoweth** them that are His.”

Surely the Lord knows every detail about all men, but He knows in a special way of affection and love those that are His, those who are “**the called** according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). The same thought is expressed by Paul in Galatians 4:9:

“But now, after that ye have **known** God, or rather, are **known** of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements. . .”

In the light of the above truths, Romans 8:29 can then be understood to mean that those individuals whom God “foreknew” or “fore-loved”—those that He fixed His distinguishing love upon and chose beforehand, those chosen

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by God the Father unto salvation, **even before the foundation of the world** (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14) to be His own from among Adam's fallen and condemned race—He predestinated those individuals to be conformed to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. “Whom He did foreknow” in this passage is just another way of expressing the teaching of **God's sovereign, unconditional electing grace**, as we have seen so clearly taught in many other passages of Scripture. These “elect,” or “chosen ones,” before their salvation, are in themselves no different from the rest of fallen mankind—before they receive the effectual call to salvation, they are also by nature “**children of wrath, even as others**” (Ephesians 2:3; Titus 3:3), but **God has chosen to make them His own dear children** (Ephesians 1:4-6)—**trophies of His grace and mercy**—“vessels of mercy which He had afore prepared unto glory” (Romans 9:23).

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