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Chad Stendal



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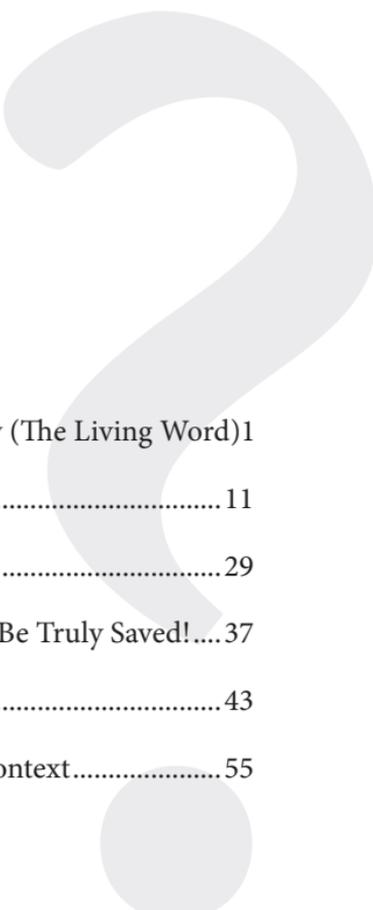
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For if ye live according to the flesh, ye shall die; but if through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Romans 8:13)

CHAPTER ONE

Deity and Humanity in One Body (The Living Word)

I AM the Alpha and the Omega, beginning and end, . . . I AM the first and the last, and that lives and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore. (Revelation 1:8, 17b, 18)

This *beginning* is the same beginning as in John 1:1: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* This verse literally reads in the Greek: “the Word was with the God, and the Word was God [deity].” In this passage (in the Greek), the word “God” with the article (“the”) refers to God the Father. The word “God” without the article in the Greek means deity (Christ). This clearly shows that God, as in God the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son, are two distinct entities.

The Greek term *Logos* with the article *Ho Logos* (“the Living Word”) is the most complete and complex term in the universe. It includes all God’s power and knowledge. Everything about the universe – biology, chemistry, nuclear physics, and science – is included in this term.

All of this knowledge and power, which is the Word of God, was placed in a body, and this resulting person is Christ, *a body hast thou prepared me* (Hebrews 10:5).

When God spoke the creative word to bring the universe into existence, He utilized the *Ho Logos*, the Living Word, Christ. *All things were made by Him, and without him was not any thing made that was made* (John 1:3). *And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us* (John 1:14). John the Baptist testified about Jesus, indicating that Jesus existed before he did. He cried out, saying, *This is he of whom I spoke, He that comes after me is preferred before me, for he was before me* (John 1:15).

Here are a few of the many verses indicating the deity of Christ before His baptism:

And no one has ascended up to the heaven but he that came down from the heaven, even the Son of man. (John 3:13)

For the bread of God is he who descended from heaven and gives life unto the world.
(John 6:33)

And now, O Father, clarify thou me with thine own self with that clarity which I had with thee before the world was. (John 17:5)

What if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? (John 6:62)

If God were your Father, ye would surely love

me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither did I come of myself, but he sent me.
(John 8:42)

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad. (John 8:56)

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM. Then they took up stones to cast at Him. (John 8:58, 59)

This term, *I AM*, one of the names of God (see Genesis 28:13; Exodus 3:14), is used over and over: *I AM the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6); *I AM the bread of life* (John 6:48); *I AM the door* (John 10:7); *I AM the good shepherd* (John 10:11). These are just a few examples; there are many others. A mere man would not have dared to make these statements. The prophets had to say, “Thus saith the Lord.”

Has in these last times spoken unto us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the ages. (Hebrews 1:2)

For it was expedient that he, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, preparing to bring forth many sons in his glory, should perfect the author of their saving health through sufferings. (Hebrews 2:10)

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your

sakes he became poor that ye through his poverty might be enriched. (2 Corinthians 8:9)

For by him were all things created, that are in the heavens and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they are thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: all things were created by him and in him; And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. (Colossians 1:16, 17)

These are some of the most prominent verses on the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you have trouble understanding how Christ can be God and man at the same time, you are not alone. We must pray for light from the Holy Spirit because this understanding is vital to progress in your Christian life. The two great terms expressing these two aspects of the life of Jesus Christ are “Son of Man” and “Son of God.” “Son of Man” is the term used by Old Testament prophets to express Christ’s humanity. Christ uses it to indicate that He is the representative of the human race, the last Adam. *For as by one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous (Romans 5:19).*

It was because of His claim that God was His father and His use of the sacred name of God (*I AM*) in reference to Himself that Jesus was crucified. The main charge against Him was blasphemy. (See Matthew 27:43; Mark 14:61-64; Luke 22:70, 71; John 18:5-8, 37; 19:21.) This

perception began early on, for in John chapter 5 we read: *Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath but also called God his own Father, making himself **equal** with God* (John 5:18 emphasis added). Let us now look at another Scripture that also references the divinity of Jesus Christ and relates this to His humanity.

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, **being in the form of God**, thought it not robbery to be **equal** with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, **made in the likeness of men**, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Therefore, God also has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord in the glory of God the Father.*
(Philippians 2:5-11 emphasis added)

Many people have given up on living a victorious life because they believe that Jesus had special help from His divinity, which is impossible for us. The good news is that Christ lived a righteous life using only the power that is available to us. Make no mistake: Jesus was a real man

with all the limitations that we have. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He did not get a special deal. At His baptism, He received the Holy Spirit without measure and performed all His actions with the same power that is available to all believers. He gave this promise to all believers: *All power is given unto me . . . Go ye therefore* (Matthew 28:18, 19). He also promises greater works to the believer than He (the Lord) did (John 14:12).

So the question is why don't we see the same power today as in the days of the apostles? A recent Gallup poll tells us that there is not any difference morally between the professing evangelical church and the populace at large. We find the same number of divorces, illegitimate children, and abandoned mothers in each group. The problem begins with a false, "easy-believism" gospel that is being preached, which doesn't require full repentance (turning from all known sin) and faith (full confidence) in Christ to deliver us from the sins that were just repented of (Hebrews 6:1, 2).

In addition to a great many false conversions, we also have a great many false baptisms in the Holy Spirit. True prophets are rare. Divine healing for the most part is a cruel deception to poor, sick people mesmerized by slick manipulators. The Lord is far more interested in your spiritual healing than in your physical healing. Make sure you have made a full repentance and turning from sin and a complete surrender of your life to the Lord before you even think of asking for divine healing. *If I regard*

iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me (Psalm 66:18). When people ask me to pray for them, I always ask them to spend time making sure they have a clean heart before I pray for them for healing. Do not listen to or follow a person claiming to be an apostle, prophet, divine healer, or leader of any kind who does not walk in humility and economic responsibility. *He that says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked* (1 John 2:6). Using this verse as criteria would eliminate most of today's leaders and leave us totally dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ laid aside His heavenly glory and power and became a true man. After His resurrection, He had a glorified body but was still a real man with nail prints in His hands. God exalted Him, giving him all power. *For there is only one God and likewise only one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus* (1 Timothy 2:5). Here we have in view His humanity. Many people have felt encouraged to understand that Jesus was a man just as we are. This humanity makes Christ more real and understandable. In addition, many people are encouraged to try to live a Christian life, because if Christ could do it using the same abilities available to us, then there is hope for us to do the same. This is a worthy goal, except that this is not how we are to live the Christian life. This idea to follow in His steps or to imitate the pattern of the Son in the Scripture is not possible. We must enter into the divine life of Christ.

Many try to live the Christian life in their own strength, and it is not until they have failed miserably that they turn to Christ to do it in them: *Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27b).

I can't, but Jesus can!

This is why the gospel describes us as: dead to sin, and alive in Christ!

For Jesus Christ to lay aside His heavenly glory and power and become a man and die for us, He had to pay a price. This price is referred to as a ransom. Jesus Christ gave up at least two divine attributes when he became a man: His omnipresence (being everywhere at once) as well as His omniscience (being all knowing, relying instead on His Father through the Holy Spirit). This same help, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is available to all true believers who walk in the Spirit and have the mind of Christ. This loss of attributes was permanent, although the Father gave Him all power and authority; He is now a man and can be in only one place at a time. (See Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; John 20:27; Acts 1:11; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 Peter 3:22.) He is positionally seated at the right hand of the Father. He comes to us now through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we find the promise of the Holy Spirit coming, and by the Spirit's help, He comes to us.

And I will ask 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 does not see him, or know him; but ye know him, for he dwells with you and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. (John 14:16-18 emphasis added)

Therefore, we see Christ, the head of the church, which is His body. The Spirit of this body is the Holy Spirit, which is also the Spirit of God the Father. These three are so intertwined and interdependent that it is futile to try to organize them to form a man-made creed. We need to be immersed in this body with the mind of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, being perfected as God the Father is perfect, speaking only the words given by the Father, and doing only those things directed by the Father as Jesus did and does.

Do not allow extreme doctrines to overwhelm your time and thought. Walk in the Spirit and be conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ, zealous of good works.

It is interesting that the doctrine that Jesus was only a man – a doctrine that denied His deity – appeared in the second century. This was known as the Monarchian controversy. With the widespread acceptance of the gospel of John and the book of Hebrews, this false doctrine diminished, but it has appeared again fairly recently.

I have been serving the Lord for fifty-eight years, and I have seen many doctrines come and go. Every time I return to the United States, there is always a new

doctrine that is all the rage, with many people jumping on the bandwagon. Doctrine should never separate the true body of Christ. That is why John, at the end of his life, does not give key doctrines as the final word, but rather gives only the admonition to “Love one another.”

Man’s love always seeks a reward (something in return). God’s love, on the other hand, is born of sacrifice, seeks nothing in return, and is redemptive by nature. Jesus Christ was not some strange hybrid (half-man and half-God). He is 100 percent man and 100 percent God. This is why He can redeem us in the love of God and bring us into the very nature of God in Himself as members of the body of Christ.

And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving Spirit. Howbeit the spiritual is not first, but the natural; and afterward, that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord of heaven. As is the earthy, such are those also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such also are those that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (1 Corinthians 15:45-49)

Redemption through His Blood

When I had been in Colombia as a Bible translator for about twelve years, the Lord clearly showed me that there were two gospels being preached in the evangelical church. One is what I now call “easy believism,” wrongly called the gospel of grace, and the other is the true gospel of the kingdom of God. This true gospel is also of grace in the sense that it operates by the power of God and you cannot earn it, but it requires our submission to the authority of God through repentance and faith which correspond to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 20:21).

I realized that it was not sufficient to believe with your head that Christ died and rose again. You must be identified in that death through repentance, so that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead can be active in you. The message is very clear: We must deny our self so that Jesus Christ can live in us (Romans 6:11; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15). The only problem with this is that many people don't care to enter by that narrow gate of total commitment.

Instead, they prefer to find another, easier way that will deliver them from the penalty of sin without requiring them to repent and turn from their sins that they might do the will of God. That is, they do not wish to give up their own way and obey God, preferring instead to live their own lives in all-important areas such as finances, work, school, family, leisure time, etc. Since they refuse to put off their old man who is a slave to sin, the flesh, and the world, and put on the new man in Christ through obedience, how can they ever be “born again” and be made a new creature in Christ? It is when God calls us to repentance and we yield that the grace of God really becomes effective in our lives.

The easy-believism doctrine of “cheap grace” began in about 1918 and quickly swept through many Bible schools and churches. Its battle cry is: “Only believe.” But “only believe” is a healing verse, not a salvation verse (Mark 5:36). When the Scriptures speak of salvation, it is in the context of *repent and believe* (Acts 20:21; Hebrews 6:1). If repentance is not overtly stated, it is in the context. In addition, easy believism uses the English meaning of the word *believe* (i.e., head knowledge of the facts) instead of the principal Greek meaning of *pisteuo*, which is trusting or putting confidence in Christ instead of yourself. (See notes in the Amplified Bible.)

The reason that easy believism could not be preached before about 1918 is that the total dedication demanded by the four Gospels had to be removed. It wasn't until the

dispensational teaching of Darby, and until the Plymouth Brethren relegated the four Gospels to an earlier dispensation and taught that all miracles and spiritual gifts were done away with, that the way was cleared to teach easy believism. The division between the so-called gospel of grace and the kingdom message of Christ is usually described as having occurred at the time of the conversion of Cornelius and the gospel going to the Gentiles, or when Paul turned to the Gentiles (Acts 10; 13:46).

There is a tremendous problem in relegating everything that took place before Cornelius as a dispensation of law and works and everything after that as a new dispensation of grace. The Scriptures clearly teach: *For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified* (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16).

So we can plainly see that God's message of salvation has always been by grace, whether in the Old Testament or in the New. This is why the sacrifice system was set up under which God could show mercy to repentant people. The difference between the two systems was that now through identification in Christ's resurrection we receive power from the Holy Spirit to overcome the sins that we repented of previously. But the first step of identification in the death of the sacrificial lamb for the forgiveness of sins remains the same and now Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Right here I want to define the true meaning of the key terms according to their meaning in the Greek and

in context, and contrast them with their changed meaning under easy believism. On the mission field, as a Bible translator for an indigenous tribe (the Kogi tribe of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta), it is my job to know what the words of the New Testament really mean in their context. To my amazement and horror, I discovered that every single key term had been radically changed and watered down to conform to the dispensational teachings of easy believism.

Below are listed the true meanings of the key terms that I have used in this paper, contrasted with their usual interpretation in the average Bible institute or church today.

Term	Superficial Meaning	True Meaning
Gospel	The good news that God has a free gift for you.	The good news that we have a new King and we don't have to serve the old tyrant, the Devil, any longer.
Faith or Believe	Believing facts.	Trusting and relying on the Lord Jesus Christ.
Repentance	Changing your mind about the facts. Optional for salvation.	Always changing your mind about sin. Essential for salvation. Implies a 180-degree turn that can only be accomplished by the grace of God with a new goal of doing only the will of God and showing fruits of repentance.

REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD

Grace	Unmerited favor. A free gift.	God's power – God doing for you what you acknowledge you are unable to do for yourself.
Salvation	Promises salvation from hell but not salvation from the power of sin now.	Linked to being saved from sin resulting in eternal life here and now and as a final possession at the judgment.
Good works	Not required, even after salvation. Some have even gone so far as to say it would be better not to do any, because you might get to trusting in them for your salvation.	Initiated by the Holy Spirit – done in His way at His time with His power. God has foreordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).
Mission of the church	To increase membership.	To glorify Christ in holiness and truth.
Believer's relationship with Christ	Christ is Savior from the penalty for sin.	Christ is the Head and Lord of His body, the church.

Underlying easy believism is a totally wrong view of what Christ did for us on the cross and how we appropriate it. To correct the key error of the atonement (of how we are reconciled with God), we have to go way back in history

to the year AD 1099, just after the Eastern Orthodox and Western Catholic churches split. Up until that time, all Christians believed that the physical death of Christ as our sacrifice resulted in forgiveness of sins, based on our identification in Christ's death. But in AD 1099, a man named Anselm was instrumental in changing that concept and proposed that each person had to pay a penance for sins. He taught that each sin was an affront to God and had to be individually atoned for by the Christian through prayer, fasting, pilgrimages, and good works of all kinds. This became the underlying doctrine of Western Roman Catholicism – salvation by self-works.

At the time of the Reformation, the Reformers correctly proclaimed that we are saved by faith and not by self-works. However, they did not change the basic error underlying penance for each individual sin. They simply assumed that Christ somehow suffered for each sin. According to their theology, Christ somehow paid the penance for each sin instead of returning to the sacrifice system where the physical death of the animals (looking forward to Christ's physical death) reconciles the sinner, provided that the sinner identifies in the death of the sacrifice, and thus the penalty of death is paid. We, therefore, must agree that the "old man" controlled by our flesh has to be put to death so that the life of Christ can come forth in us.

The Reformers then got themselves into a set of problems when they tried to answer the questions of how and when

did Jesus suffer all this penance for individual sins. Also, if He paid for everyone's sins in this individual fashion, everyone would have to go free, because God could not demand the penalty a second time, if it had already been paid by Jesus at a specific point in time. Another thing was that it wouldn't matter if you believed that this happened or not; the sin would have been already paid for. This is the basis for the universalism of many churches today that believe that because Christ paid for the sins of the whole world, then ultimately the whole world must be saved. Now Calvin understood this implication and set up the doctrine of the "limited atonement" in which he reasoned that Jesus had died for only the sins of the elect, and that God had decreed before the creation of the world that certain ones would be saved and the vast majority would be lost. This led to the doctrine of "irresistible grace" for the elect. The elect had to be saved, because their sins had been paid for, but the rest of the world was damned because Christ had not suffered for their sins.

These doctrines of double predestination – some to be saved and some to be lost – held sway for about two hundred years. (The Greek word *proorizo* – predestination – really means to mark out the way to the destination in advance, and Jesus is *the way, the truth, and the life*.) Then John Wesley appeared on the scene in England in about 1750, preaching *whosoever believes* (John 3:16), and that God was not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Wesley

touched off the longest-lasting revival since the days of the apostles. He had a beautifully simple doctrine that everyone could understand. It had three main points:

Anyone could be saved if they would repent and turn to Christ to deliver them from all known sin (John 3:16).

If you were saved, you'd know it. God's Spirit would witness to your spirit that you were a son of God (Romans 8:16), and *We know that we are passed from death unto life, in that we love the brethren* (1 John 3:14).

If you were saved, you'd show it. *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are made new* (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15).

The first two of these three points ran directly contrary to Calvinist doctrines that only those predestined to be the elect could be saved, and that you never knew for sure if you were a believer. Calvinists called this the sin of presumption, and it was presumed that if you thought you were one of the elect you would let your guard down. Indeed, the theme and preaching under the Great Awakening was against "carnal security."

Wesley's third point ran parallel to Calvin's last doctrine of the "perseverance of the saints." This meant that if you were one of the elect, you would remain faithful to the end, doing all the things that true Christians should do, such as to *present your bodies in living sacrifice* (Romans 12:1) and to be *faithful unto death* (Revelation 2:10). This Calvinistic doctrine of persevering unto the end produced

some of the most godly men the world has ever known, men such as Jonathan Edwards, Timothy Dwight, David Brainard, and Adoniram Judson, to name just a few.

Today's Calvinism has changed drastically since the days of classical Calvinism. It usually begins with a call to accept Christ as your Savior, followed by the sinner's prayer. If the decision to accept Christ has been made from the heart, in response to the call of God, it will be the start of a work of faith in the heart that should be followed by teaching on repentance and faith, leading to a public testimony of identification in Christ's death and resurrection by water baptism and by receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. If the decision is only a head-knowledge mental decision, the results won't last long. Unfortunately, much of today's evangelism is of the latter type; it's only superficial.

The effect of Wesley's preaching touched off a social revolution as well as a spiritual revolution. Methodist Sunday schools, organized to educate the poor, were followed by day schools for uneducated common people. Wesleyans initiated prison reform as well as labor unions. (Of the first twelve martyrs of the labor movement, eleven were Methodists.) Methodists also started universities and hospitals in addition to orphanages and care for the destitute and invalid. Above all, the Methodist movement was famous for circuit-riding preachers who covered the British Isles and sent five thousand circuit-riding preachers across America, moving with the frontier westward.

The great spiritual secret of the Methodists was the class meeting. These meetings were held weekly in addition to the church services. The groups were kept small. If the group grew to more than twelve people, it split into two groups. The purpose of these meetings was intimate fellowship. You had to admit if you had a pure heart and if you were walking in victory. You could share your problems, and everyone would pray for you. When you had answers to prayer or spiritual victory, everyone would praise the Lord with you. Lack of intimate fellowship is probably the greatest need of the church in today's world.

Wesley's preaching consisted of three points of doctrine: (1) Anyone can be saved; (2) If you're saved, you'll know it; and (3) If you are saved, you will show it. These had a great impact on the Calvinistic world of the eighteenth century, and most Calvinists switched over to believing in a general atonement, which is the belief that Christ paid for the sins of the whole world. Most of them also came to believe in the assurance of salvation – you could know you were saved. Most Calvinists today don't even realize that for two hundred years Calvin and his followers were “hope-soers” – never being sure of their salvation until their life was over, even if they had persevered until the end.

Today's Calvinists and easy-believism preachers have a very great problem to overcome. Now they must explain how Christ could have suffered the equivalent of an eternity in hell for eight billion people, or however

many people have lived on the earth. When I first heard that I would go to an eternal hell if I didn't repent, and that Christ had paid the price for my sins, my first question was, "If Christ paid the equivalent of an eternity in hell, then why wasn't He still there?" Eternity never ends, and He could not suffer the equivalent of an eternity in hell in six hours on the cross or even in the three days He was physically dead. Something was very wrong here. However, at my conversion, I put these doubts aside as most do, and got on with my Christian life.

It was not until I had been a Bible translator for many years that I began to realize that some of the basic doctrines I had been taught were in error.

Christian leaders and believers for four centuries have known that something did not add up, but we were afraid of challenging any basic doctrines that we had been taught, for fear of being branded as heretics. Once I realized the basic truth of salvation through repentance and faith (trust) based on identifying in the death and resurrection of Christ (agreeing to let God deal with our old life and nature so that He can put His life and nature in us), everything else began to fall into place.

The Scriptures clearly teach that Christ died physically, not spiritually. Some theologians tried to have Christ dying spiritually because this was the only way they could think – for Christ to pay something so great as to be the equivalent of an eternity in hell for every person. They latched on to the Lord saying, *My God, my God, why hast*

thou forsaken me? (To this, they added a number of human deductions with no biblical basis whatsoever. They said that God placed upon Jesus the sins of the whole world, which was true, but not in the way they thought.) Next came the supposition that God could not look upon sin. Then came another supposition that God turned His back on Jesus and separated Himself from Him, then the out-of-context statement that separation from God is death, and so they claim that Christ died spiritually. Now they had an explanation for anyone who asked how their sins were forgiven. “Just believe [with your head] that Christ paid for your sins, and you’re saved from the penalty for sin which is death.”

However, the Bible says just the opposite. *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself* (2 Corinthians 5:19). Psalm 22, which begins with the question, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* also states in verse 24: *neither has he [God] hid his face from him [Christ], but when he [Christ] cried unto him, he [God] heard.* If Christ died spiritually, then the Godhead would have been split, and the whole world would have gone into chaos. Christ not only created all things, but in Him all things consist or hold together (Colossians 1:16, 17).

The doctrine that Christ died spiritually is not taught anywhere in the Scriptures. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me* occurs in only two of the four Gospel accounts. The doctrine of Christ’s spiritual death appears nowhere in the New Testament and, if true, should have

been the cornerstone of all future preaching. It is not there. Neither is there any prototype for it anywhere in the Old Testament.

A surprising number of well-known preachers today take an equally unscriptural approach to how Christ suffered for our sins. They believe that Christ suffered in hell. They imagine the demons stomping on poor Jesus for your sins. As one popular evangelist said who repented from this unscriptural doctrine, “When Jesus said, ‘It is finished,’ He did not mean ‘to be continued in hell.’”

Christ did descend into the two-compartment Hades mentioned in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:23). He did not enter there to suffer, however, but entered as the King of Glory with the keys to life and death and took the Old Testament believers (Abraham and the rest) to heaven. (See Psalm 68:18; Ephesians 4:8.)

The church has been in a dilemma for over four hundred years because theologians could not accept that the Bible meant exactly what it said. When the Scriptures speak of salvation, they always speak about salvation from all known sin, not just salvation from the penalty of sin at the judgment day. When the Bible says repent, it always means repent and turn from all known sin, not just change your mind about the facts. When the Bible says believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, it means trust right into the Lord Jesus, putting your full confidence in Christ to deliver you from the sins of which you just repented and to cleanse your heart.

People don't like to take the Bible literally, because that means they must allow God to change their lives. Many do not believe that the Lord can speak to a person today. They believe that today He speaks only through the Scripture according to their watered-down version of it and with changed meanings of all the key terms. To them, "Put ye off the old man, and put ye on the new man" is optional. Making Christ the Lord of your life is optional. All these errors have perpetuated themselves because there is a basic error at the heart of easy-believism theology. Those who hold to this do not understand that Christ's physical death on the cross is sufficient. They do not understand that Christ came to earth in a physical body, not just to secure forgiveness of sins, but that He brought His body through all temptations to get that body over to the cross and get it crucified to break the power of the flesh, sin, the world, and the Devil over us. He came to set the captive free, redeem us when we were slaves to sin, and break sin's power. He is the great Kinsman Redeemer. The ransom paid was a true sacrifice.

Once we realize that Christ paid for our sins as a sacrifice, things become much clearer. A sacrifice is not tortured, and neither did Christ pay a penalty or have to do penance for each of our sins in some way beyond what the Scriptures describe. Instead, He dies the sinner's death as our representative man, the last Adam. How does that one physical death reconcile the sins of all believers who trust in Him? When Christ died on

the cross in our place, He said to God, *Into thy hands I commend my spirit*. Since His resurrection, He offers to incorporate into Himself anyone who will come under His government and identify in His death and resurrection through repentance and faith. The elders would lay hands on them to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, who would then impart to them one or more spiritual gifts. The new believer was incorporated into the body of Christ and began walking in the Spirit.

Once the believer becomes one person with Christ, then Christ's death becomes their death of the flesh. Colossians 2 speaks of the *circumcision of the Christ* in which the living Word of God cuts the control of the flesh over the desires of our heart. Then that same Spirit which raised Christ from the dead quickens the person into spiritual life, and they are born again. Their sins are forgiven because they have agreed to be dead and crucified with Christ, and they receive power to become a son of God and overcome the sins and evil in their life through walking under the government, control, and direction of the Spirit and not walking according to the lusts of the flesh. This is covenant with God on His terms. The principle on which the sins are forgiven is given in Romans 6:7: *For he that is dead is justified from sin*. The penalty for sin is physical death, which may be followed by the "second death" (eternal death) at the judgment day if your name is not written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27).

No matter how many sins a criminal has committed, all charges against him are dropped when he dies. Who shall bring any charge against us? It is Christ who died (in our place). Jesus Christ's death can wipe out all the sins of everyone who identifies in Christ's death and resurrection through covenant with God on God's terms. We must die to our own way if we are to enter the kingdom of God. There is room at the cross for *whosoever will come*. If we are one person with Christ, then His death is our death; His resurrection is our resurrection. And there is more: His ascension directly into the Holy of Holies and into the presence of God is ours as well.

We can now walk daily in the presence of God, and the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. All known sin is to be confessed and repented of. Each day the Lord will show us other things that need correction, or perhaps we may have committed a willful transgression. In this case, the correction of the Lord, coupled with the consequences of our error, will help to remove the root cause of sin from our hearts if we willingly submit to the discipline of God. The process to maintain a conscience void of offense is the same as the beginning in the faith: repentance and turning from sin, coupled with faith and confidence in Christ's power to overcome the sin you just confessed. Of course, restitution or an apology may also be necessary as the Lord leads. (This would be in no way a penance, but rather an act of obedience to the Lord's personal direction and empowered by Him.)

One more matter needs our urgent attention: What part does the blood of Christ play in all of this? *For the soul (or life) of the flesh is in the blood* (Leviticus 17:11), and *Without the shedding of blood there is no remission [of sin]* (Hebrews 9:22). The flesh is the symbol of our selfish rebellion against God. In Colombia's civil war, the government will give complete amnesty to any rebel who turns himself in, provided he turns in his rifle, which is the symbol of his rebellion. In the natural world, we are rebels against God. The symbol of our rebellion is the flesh. The separate, selfish life of the flesh is God's great enemy. God demands death to the flesh. The evidence that the flesh is dead is the shed blood. God does not want to reform the old man controlled by the lusts of the flesh; He wants the old man dead. The shed blood of Christ, therefore, is the only thing that will placate God's wrath against sinful man. We can say we are saved (from the wrath of God) by Christ's death. Or we can say we are saved by His blood. The blood stands for a violent, physical death, not a spiritual death. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sins. What this means practically to us is that if we are not ready to identify in Christ's death and reckon as dead the old man of the flesh controlling our inner man, then there is no forgiveness of sins.

Since the life is in the blood, once we are dead with Christ, His life through the Holy Spirit can cover us. To be "under the blood of Christ" means that we have

entered into a blood covenant on God's terms and that we now operate under His government and authority.

The true gospel is very simple: You are to be dead to sin with the life of Jesus Christ in you (Romans 5:10-6:2). Now truly old things have passed away and *all* things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

CHAPTER THREE

Four Important Scriptural Truths

After thirty-eight years as a missionary in the extremely violent country of Colombia, I wish to share with you four biblical texts. These are the texts I consider to be extremely important. They have shaped my life and ministry for all these years. They are as follows: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 20:21; Romans 6:7; and Galatians 5:16.

(1)1 Corinthians 15:1-4. *Moreover, brothers, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received and in which ye stand; by which also ye are being saved if ye retain the word that I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received: how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that he was buried and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.* In this text, we have the true gospel stated, and it stands in sharp contrast to the easy believism often preached today. This verse states that Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and on the third day He rose again. It is not sufficient to believe these facts with our

mind. That is the mere mental assent characteristic of easy believism. We must be identified in that death, and then God is authorized by us to deal with anything that He does not like in us, and the same power that raised Christ from the dead can quicken our earthly bodies (with His life).

The true gospel is exceedingly simple: We are to be dead to sin and alive in Christ. We are to be reckoned dead to the flesh, the world, and sin of every kind – crucified with Christ. Now you are ready to identify with Christ in His resurrection, so that the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead will quicken your mortal body. Now you can be genuinely “born again.” Old things will pass away and all things will become new. The death and resurrection of Christ is the essence of the gospel, but how do we actually appropriate this into our lives? This brings us to the second vital text of the Bible.

(2) Acts 20:21. Paul went from house to house publicly *testifying both to the Jews and also to the Gentiles, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In the Scriptures, repentance is always repentance from all known sin. It means confessing, forsaking, and turning from all known sin. By repentance, we identify in the death of Christ. We receive the forgiveness of sins. Complete repentance is not possible without help from God. We need the power of His grace. Repentance is not just showing remorse for the things that we have done wrong; it involves a complete turnaround and reordering

of our priorities until God is at the center of our life. We must revolve around Him and desire what He wants instead of trying to get Him to do what we want.

Now we come to the other half of the gospel, identifying in Christ's resurrection by faith. The word *faith* in the Greek language does not mean just believing that Christ arose, but it also means confidence and trust that this resurrected Christ will live in us. When this happens, our faith will receive a boost from Him, and His faith (dependency on His Father) will become active in us.

For ye have not received the spirit of slavery to be in fear again, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. (Romans 8:15)

And because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (Galatians 4:6)

So we now have the gospel presented simply in Scripture. Jesus Christ's death and resurrection is an accomplished fact and is appropriated by repentance and faith. The death and resurrection is God's plan of salvation so that repentance and faith may be fully implemented in us. We play a part in this by being docile and willing to depend on God, whose part is to provide the grace (power) to change and transform us (Romans 5:1, 2). The simple gospel message is: We are to be dead to sin and Christ alive in us. This leads us to the third vital text of the Bible.

(3) Romans 6:7. *For he that is dead is justified from sin.* Just how are our sins forgiven? The popular concept is that Christ died for our sins, and all we have to do is believe (using *believe* as just mental assent) and we will get by at the judgment day.

What Christ actually did was die a sacrificial death as the representative man. (One died for all.) He dies the sinner's death, but when that is accomplished, He still has spiritual life (*into thy hands I commend my spirit*). He descends into Hades and takes captivity captive. Then, after being bodily resurrected, He ascends into the Holy of Holies in the heavens, and from there He sends His Holy Spirit to incorporate into Himself all believers who have entered into covenant with God on God's terms, those that have identified in His death and resurrection (through repentance and faith). We become members of His body, and He is our Head and Lord.

Since we are now one person with Christ, His death is our death (to the control of our flesh), and His resurrection is our resurrection.

Since what He accomplished was a sacrifice for sin, just as in the Old Testament types, the sacrifice does no good unless our heart is contrite. We must acknowledge that we have broken God's law and are worthy of death. However, God in His mercy will accept the death of the sacrifice if we humbly, with repentance, identify in the death of the sacrifice. This means we must give up our own way and be willing to come under His guidance

and authority in all matters. Our sins are then pardoned, because you can't bring a legal charge against a dead person. Who shall bring anything against us since Christ died for us and in our place as the representative man, the last Adam? This one death will now legally wipe out all the sins of everyone who has become one person with Christ (members of the body of Christ).

This returns us to the simple view of the atonement held by the church for its first thousand years. It also resolves the longstanding controversy of whether Christ died for only the elect or if He died for everyone. Christ died for everyone, but His death and resurrection apply only to those who identify in him through repentance and faith. He does not suffer a little more for each sin the world has committed, and the teaching that all we have to do is believe (with our mind) that He did this is incomplete.

God wants us to clearly understand from the beginning of our Christian life the basic premise of the gospel – we are to be dead to sin and alive in Christ. Now if you are not in accord with God's terms, then God may not give you the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. (This is the equivalent of God's signature on the covenant, or lasting relationship, between Him and us.) The elders of the early church would lay hands on the new believer so that they would receive the Holy Spirit. They were baptized right into Christ and right into the local church. The new Christians became not only members of Christ, but also

members of the body of Christ, the church. The power of the Holy Spirit came upon them to give not only pardon, but also victory over sin by the grace of God. This victory was to be maintained by walking in the Spirit, which brings us to the next verse.

(4) Galatians 5:16. *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.* The Lord showed me forty years ago that to walk in the Spirit means that all our decisions, even the very small ones, need to be led by the Holy Spirit as we listen to His voice and obey Him as our Head and Lord and King.

We would never have been able to stay alive here in Colombia if we had not been walking in the Spirit. Many people have come up to me saying, “I just can’t hear the voice of the Lord and understand His will for my life.”

The Lord says, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me* (John 10:27). What this means is that if God cannot communicate with you, then you may not be one of His sheep. You should go back over these basic conditions and see if you have honestly complied with them by the grace of God.

Have you made a complete repentance by confessing and turning from all known sin? Have you yielded everything to the Lord, including your remaining years, your finances, your family, your job or school, and your leisure time? Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed (Acts 19:2)?

Remember, you are not a Christian because someone

told you that you are. The only assurance of salvation is God's Spirit witnessing to your spirit that you have passed from death unto life. Has your life been transformed so that you love the brethren (1 John 3:14)?

If you have received the Spirit, then walk in the Spirit, and be zealous of good works (Titus 2:14). Evangelical good works are done at God's direction and timing and with His power. If, as you endeavor to walk in the Spirit, God convicts you of something in your life, or if you commit a sin, it needs to be brought into the light and dealt with. James 5:16 says, *Confess your faults one to another*. Keep short accounts with God and repent and put faith in Christ to deliver you and give you victory over your problem. God will then continue to perfect you, and you will be genuinely sanctified (set apart as a vessel for God's exclusive use) and holy (clean and pure). This is essential because Scripture says, *Follow . . . holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord* (Hebrews 12:14).

This whole process results in the good news that we have a new king, and we can come out of the kingdom of darkness, where we were slaves to the flesh, sin, the world, and the Devil, and enter into the kingdom of God's beloved Son where there is love, joy, and peace. Your life will now have purpose, and the end thereof will be eternal life (God's quality of life) as a permanent possession with a glorified new body, living in the continuous presence of the Lord. This is the real good news of the gospel!

Why Millions of People May Not Be Truly Saved!

Satan is the great deceiver! One of his master deceptions is in changing the meaning of the key terms in Scripture that have to do with salvation.

Some of these terms are: salvation, faith, grace, and the lordship of Christ. With these wrong interpretations in mind, the potential convert is presented with two choices:

1. Salvation is by self-works, or
2. Salvation is by grace as a free gift without conditions.

Limiting our thinking in this way completely eliminates a third alternative:

3. True salvation from the power of sin is by Christ in you empowering you to live a victorious Christian life. Christ in you does the works. Your part is to trust and rely on Him to do it in you.

What does it mean to be “saved”?

According to option 2, salvation simply means that

on the judgment day, a person who has accepted what Christ has done for them as an historical fact will not be condemned for their misdeeds, even if they continue to live in sin and rebellion without repentance after the time of their acceptance of what they conceive that Christ did for them. Many verses of Scripture indicate that this will not be the case.

Do not deceive yourselves; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that sows in the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life. (Galatians 6:7, 8)

For if ye live according to the flesh, ye shall die; but if through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Romans 8:13)

Know ye not that the unjust shall not inherit the kingdom of God? (1 Corinthians 6:9)

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, . . . as I have also told you in time past that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

For this ye know, that no fornicator nor unclean person nor covetous man, who is also an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive

you with vain words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:5, 6)

These are only a few of the verses that could be quoted. However, to refute this option 2, we have to correct a great number of false assumptions. First, let us look at the word *saved*. The Bible often makes a practice of using one word to stand for a previously introduced phrase. For example, the *law* often stands for the Old Testament, that is, the Law, the Psalms, and the prophets. *The day* many times stands for the day of the Lord or the judgment day. The scriptural term *saved* is a short form for the larger term, saved from the wrath to come.

The Scriptures make clear that the only way to avoid the wrath to come is to have victory over those high-handed, willful transgressions that bring the wrath of God on the children of disobedience. The relationship between salvation, faith, and grace is best noted in Ephesians 2:8-10. The word *grace* in Greek comes from the same root as *joy*. So Ephesians 2:8 could be translated: *For by grace [the intervention of God's power in our lives should be the motive of great joy] are ye saved [from sin] through faith and that [salvation from sin] not of yourselves: it is the gift of God [in response to believing and trusting in Christ and His promises, who in the highest sense is the gift of God].* (See John 3:16.) Faith here means to put trust and confidence in Christ instead of in yourself, that God will do for you what you acknowledge you cannot do for yourself.

Many have responded to calls to make Jesus Lord of their life by raising their hand. They acknowledge that He is the Lord, but the supreme question is, is He *your* Lord? Does He have the last word in all decisions? Is everything turned over to Him – finances, family, job or school, leisure time, everything?

I was a young engineer with three small children when the Lord, who was directing our family, directed us to buy a small bungalow. This was a much smaller house than the other engineers of my rank were living in. Also, our car was one of the lowest-priced cars that would still run. The house was extremely small, but it had an attic and a basement that provided more space. Best of all, the Lord was there. There were my favorite apple, plum, and pear trees and some raspberries across the back. There were wonderful Christian neighbors, and it was close to our local church. With one-third of the world starving, this is no time for luxury. It would not surprise me if God began downsizing Christians who truly begin listening to God as their Lord. There is a lot more to making Christ Lord than raising your hand.

The reason why millions of people cannot be truly saved by easy believism is that it doesn't work. To explain why it doesn't work, we are told that we don't receive an actual righteousness; what we receive is an imputed righteousness. Some people then claim that we are accounted righteous when we're not. God may overlook sins that we are not conscious of, but willful, high-handed sin

will have serious consequences. A verse used to justify sin is Genesis 15:6. Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness. Notice it does not say “instead of righteousness.” What this verse is saying is that Abraham trusted and put his confidence in God to deliver him from sin, and these righteous acts done by God through Abraham were accounted (or imputed) to Abraham’s account.

The Gallup poll has shown that about ninety million people have raised their hands and made a profession of faith in our generation. The vast majority notice no change in their lives and turn away. Less than 1 percent continue. Because they don’t understand that you must enter through the narrow gate of a full repentance and turn away from all known sin, coupled with a complete trust in Christ to deliver and give the victory over all the sins just repented of, they are deceived. This incomplete turning to Christ with your mind only and not your heart acts like a vaccination against the true gospel of the kingdom and is the reason why millions of people may not be truly saved from the power of sin and the wrath to come.

Time to Cross the Jordan

The fall of the towers of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, was a detailed preview of Revelation 18 (the great city of Babylon was destroyed in one hour). We have now entered at least partially into the day of the Lord, which is the seventh millennium from Adam. (Remember that 2 Peter 3:8 says, *One day before the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day.*) I believe there was a lot of intercession and a lot of repentance, which stayed the hand of the Lord from completing the tremendous destruction of 2 Peter 3:10: *the elements, burning, shall be dissolved, and the earth and the works that are in it shall be burned up.*

For six thousand years, we have had man in control of this world, referred to in Scripture as man's day. We have now entered the seventh day since creation, the last thousand years, referred to as the day of the Lord. There needs to be a transition from man's day to the day of the Lord, and we believe there will a period of transition between the two.

There is a key message for this moment that God

wants us to proclaim. In the last twenty years or so, many people have made a profession of faith, but relatively few have made a total commitment to the Lord, and few are walking in victory. The old sanctification preachers, such as Leonard Ravenhill, A.W. Tozer, and Ted Hegre have all gone to be with the Lord, but their teachings are still with us. They all taught three stages to the Christian life. The three stages represented the children of Israel coming out of Egypt, their wandering in the wilderness for forty years, and their final crossing of the River Jordan into the Promised Land.

This represented three stages in the Christian life: In the first stage, the Christian comes out from the world, represented by *Egypt*, and is baptized in water, typified by the Red Sea, and is baptized in the Spirit and fire (1 Corinthians 10:2).

In the second stage, the Christian passes time in the *wilderness* of the dealings of God until everything that was looking back to Egypt and all selfish tendencies are dead. The final stage then represents crossing the *River Jordan* into a life of victory in the fullness of the inheritance of the sons of God. This last step represents the ultimate consequences of a total commitment, which is entrance into God's rest.

The old-time preachers used to say that you could know in what stage of the Christian life you were by who your enemy was. If you were still in Egypt, then your enemy was worldly attractions and pleasures. If you were in the

wilderness, then your enemy was personal sins, such as anger and selfishness. If you are in the Promised Land, then Satan himself is your enemy, and you are actively engaged in some aspect of Christian work, which is actively taking ground away from the Enemy.

Another illustration of this threefold progression in the Christian life is the plan of the temple with its outer court, inner court, and the Holy of Holies. There is an increase in holiness required in the three courts, culminating with the Holy of Holies. We are invited to sanctify ourselves and come boldly into the Holy of Holies. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). God is interested in a close, intimate relationship with man, and all that is necessary is to repent and turn from all known sin and turn everything over to Him: our possessions, our work or school, our leisure time, everything. After all, we really don't own anything. It all belongs to God, and we are just stewards and administrators of whatever we possess.

The last important example of the threefold progression of the spiritual life of the believer is the three main feasts of the Jewish calendar. With the first feast – Passover – we get the blood applied and the promise that the death angel will pass over us. Christ is our Passover Lamb. As we eat of the Passover Lamb and identify therefore in His death, the shed blood, which stands for death to the flesh, is applied to the “doorpost” of our lives as a covering and protects us from death for sin. At the “Passover”

(our initial conversion experience), all that is required is that we agree to God's terms for the covenant between us.

The second feast of the Israelites' calendar is the Feast of Weeks, known as Pentecost. In the spiritual application of this feast, the believer is immersed in the Holy Spirit, according to the promise given through John the Baptist when he said that he baptized in water, but the One coming after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. *And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, . . . they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance* (Acts 2:1, 4). This feast has to do with the exchange of gifts as the down payment or earnest of the entire covenant. We yield our members (starting with our tongue) to God *who has also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts* (2 Corinthians 1:22), *which is the earnest of our inheritance unto the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory* (Ephesians 1:14). Spiritually, this feast has to do with the dealings of God with His people in the *wilderness* until they are ready to enter the *Promised Land* of the fullness of their inheritance in Christ.

The last feast is the Feast of Tabernacles. This is the feast celebrating the full harvest. It represents the great end-time harvest of Revelation 7:9, 14: *a great multitude, which no man could number, . . . who came out of great tribulation*. They have white robes denoting holiness. This is the bride who has made herself ready without

spot or wrinkle. This is a people who have been brought into actual compliance with the terms and conditions of God's covenant by grace, by the power of the Holy Spirit and the fire of the dealings of God, so that God might "tabernacle" (dwell) with and in them in fullness. They have learned to rest from their own labors that God might work in and through them.

All of these three examples have a strong call for the *holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord* (Hebrews 12:14). When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, it was only a few days' journey to the River Jordan. But when Joshua and Caleb exhorted the people to cross over the River Jordan and possess the Promised Land, the people refused. They were afraid of the large stature of the local inhabitants. Later, when they tried to enter on their own timing, they were defeated (Numbers 14:44, 45). This shows clearly that we have to enter the "Promised Land" when God asks us to, and that the children of Israel had only one opportunity to do so. Unbelief, which is disobedience, disqualified them when they were first instructed to cross over the Jordan. They didn't believe that God could defeat the local people and bring them into the Promised Land. Their punishment for this unbelief was to wander around in the wilderness until everyone who refused God's promise was dead.

Finally, even Moses, their great leader, was dead. God then said to Joshua, *Moses, my slave, is dead*. Joshua was then commissioned to take the people into the Promised

Land. God promised to be with Joshua as He was with Moses. There was an important requirement for entering the land of promise. You had to make a complete commitment to the Lord in answer to Joshua's challenge of *Choose you this day whom ye will serve*. Joshua clarified it with a complete and public total commitment to God, stating, *as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*.

The comparison with today's believers is very clear. Most of us who have made a profession of faith can remember a day in our life when God spoke to us to make a complete consecration of our lives to Him, and we didn't do it. Others of us did so, but then things got tough, and we went back on our commitment. The result is that most of us have been wandering around in the "wilderness" for a few years or for many years, depending on our circumstances.

With all the floods, droughts, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. happening now, it should be clear to everyone that the time is extremely short. The destruction of the Twin Towers in close preview of the fulfillment of Revelation 18 is yet another sign of the end. Another barometer of the times is the steady deterioration of the situation with Israel. God is making His final appeal. This appeal resounds as a great trumpet sounding out over the whole world. *Choose you this day whom ye will serve*. This is not a wishy-washy offer of just accepting Christ as your Savior. It is a total commitment of *whom ye will serve* and involves your whole house.

It has been a long time since we have had preachers capable of calling church leadership to repentance. It is too late to pretend that only sinners need repentance. If we are going to have a bride without spot or wrinkle, repentance must begin with pastors, elders, deacons, and old-time members of the church. It is high time for all of us to cross the River Jordan, yielding everything to Christ in a death to sin. One of the things that damaged the old-time preaching of death to self was a confusion on what God wanted dead. What God wants dead is the combination of the flesh controlling the inner man – called in the Scriptures the “old man.” He does not want our inner man or personality dead. When God controls, deals with, and purifies the inner man, we have man capable of reaching his full potential as the “new man in Christ.” One thing that God is determined to see the end of in these last days is lukewarm Christians. (See Revelation 3:16.) In countries like Colombia, the heavy persecution can automatically take care of this. If being a Christian is liable to cost you your life, you may either become a real Christian or else give up any pretense of the faith.

Now what God wants from each one of us – church leaders and members alike – is a straightforward answer to the key question of our life:

Choose you this day whom ye will serve.

He expects a straightforward answer with no equivocation:

*As for me and my house, we will serve the
LORD.*

At this late hour, He is giving all of us another chance to enter the “Promised Land” of the fullness of our inheritance in Christ. According to the scriptural example of the children of Israel, you will not have another chance. If the scriptural typology holds true, this is God’s final appeal! Yes or no. Up or down.

There is a great lack of the fear of the Lord in this generation. Many people do not believe that God could condemn professing Christians who are living in sin – so-called carnal Christians. They state the verse that says there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ, ignoring the last part of the verse, which says, *who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit*. In other places, I have carefully refuted this verse and the use of other verses taken out of context to justify nominal Christians pleading for sin.

God is tired of all this lukewarmness. The final harvest has come upon us. The final trumpet is sounding. God wants to bring as many as possible into full compliance with His plans and purpose and have them cross over the River Jordan. God wants His sons to come to maturity (the word *maturity* is the same as the word *perfection* in both Greek and Hebrew) so that He might give them the fullness of their inheritance instead of just the earnest (the down payment) of the Spirit that was given at Pentecost.

This is the main thrust of the Christian life. We have been deceived, by the great deceiver, into thinking that the Christian life is complete after we make a profession of faith, when in fact, it is just beginning. In Hebrews 6:1, 2, after we clearly undertake the foundational facts of the gospel, we are admonished to go on to perfection. (See also Matthew 5:48.) Note the thoroughness of faith based on repentance from dead works and faith and confidence in our Lord Jesus Christ. Dead works here are “good” things that are not initiated by God, as well as dead sinful works. These two foundational truths are not just some simple profession of faith, but are the true gospel. Probably the most important step in going on in Christ is learning to walk in the Spirit. This is the most important thing I have learned in my fifty-eight years of serving the Lord. Galatians 5:16 contains one of the great promises of victory in the Christian life: *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me (John 10:27). If you cannot hear the voice of the shepherd, then you may not be one of His sheep. It is just that simple. I have had many people tell me, “Brother Chad, I just can’t hear the Lord’s voice.” In that case, you must go over your repentance from dead works in more detail and call upon the Lord for help. You must be sure you have turned over everything to the Lord’s control: your finances, your family, your work or school, your leisure time, everything. This repentance and commitment must

be complete, because *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me* (Psalm 66:18). It will not be easy, because we are talking about an identification in Jesus Christ's death, which brings an end to our old selfish life. However, looking at the positive side, *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are made new* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The reason most professing Christians can't be more effective and victorious than they are, is that they think they can get through this life still keeping at least part of their selfish life intact. The truth is that none of us are coming out of this alive. We can either identify in Christ's death here and now (i.e., give up our own way), or die when our time comes and face the possibility of the second death, the eternal death of the soul, later on at the judgment day.

I am reminded of a vivid illustration from the 101st Airborne Division during World War II. On D-Day, the 101st was dropped behind the enemy lines with important objectives. The second day after the objectives were reached, a terrified soldier who had been hiding out rejoined his platoon. The lieutenant asked him why he hadn't helped with the fighting. The soldier said that he was scared. The lieutenant replied that they were all scared, but that the soldier's big problem was that he thought that he could come out of the war alive. The lieutenant said, "None of us are coming out of this alive."

The sooner you realize this, the sooner you can start

functioning as a soldier. The sooner professing Christians realize that they're not coming out of this alive and identify in Christ's death and resurrection, the sooner they can start functioning as soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Verses Often Used Out of Context

Two of the principal methods Satan uses to deceive potential believers are: (1) changing the clear meaning of biblical terms, and (2) taking key verses out of context to make the potential convert believe they are a Christian when they have never truly repented and trusted Christ with their whole life.

Take the famous salvation verse: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved* (Acts 16:31). This verse is often taken out of context and used to assure potential Christians that if they believe the facts about Christ (with their mind), they are saved Christians and will pass the judgment day. What the verse is really saying is that if we trust and put confidence in Christ through repentance and faith – we trust right into Christ, then we shall be saved from the power of sin right now and not stand ashamed on the judgment day.

How do we know that repentance and faith are included in this account of the Philippian jailer? We know this from the context. After the earthquake in Philippi, the trembling jailer wanted to know what to do to be saved

(redeemed from the power of sin now as well as from the wrath to come). The jailer must have agreed to be identified in Christ's death and resurrection or Paul would never have baptized him. It should be noted that in every conversion recorded in the New Testament, the new believer was baptized the same day. The apostles were using water baptism as the decision-making moment. The Lord placed baptism right at the beginning of the believer's spiritual life so that the key message of "Dead to sin, and alive in Christ" would be imprinted on the new believer. It is easy to see that the disciples' method of preaching *repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ* (Acts 20:21), would be much more successful than the present method of raising your hand and praying after the pastor or evangelist.

As a linguist and Bible translator, I discovered that almost all key Bible terms have had their meaning changed and watered down over time. Not only have many Bible terms been changed from their key meaning, but biblical-sounding phrases have entered the professing believer's vocabulary, giving a wrong direction to the Christian life. One of these is "We are saved to tell others." This saying implies that the primary goal in our Christian life is verbal witnessing. This is an error. The primary goal in our Christian life is to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are saved unto good works which God has foreordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). The Lord put it very clearly:

Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in the heavens. (Matthew 5:16)

In other words, through your God-directed good works and words, you will be able to give *every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and reverence* (1 Peter 3:15). Joy and friendship will surely lead more people to Christ than the arm-twisting methods often associated with soul winning. I should note, however, that sometimes God directs us in a more blunt approach.

Another nonbiblical phrase that many professing Christians accept without thinking is “The Bible will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from the Bible.” The only thing that will keep you from sin is faith in Christ that by the grace (power) of God your life may be transformed. He is the only one who can lead the Christian life. The Bible tells us about Jesus Christ and exhorts us to turn everything over to Him and to walk in His Spirit. But the Bible is not an end in itself. Reading the Bible is a good idea, but it doesn’t do us any good unless we come to repentance and put full confidence in the Christ the Bible describes.

And the very God of peace sanctify you completely, that your spirit, soul, and body be preserved whole without reprehension for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ
(1 Thessalonians 5:23).