

Message To The World

A Simple Straight-Forward Message Explaining God's Plan Of Salvation, Easily Understood By All.

In the world today, there are so many different religions; each one of which has their own churches, temples, mosques or other places of worship. Because of this religious diversity, many people often find themselves wondering which one is the correct one to believe in and follow. They feel overwhelmed, and completely lost amidst the multitude of choices available to them. Perhaps you are one of such people. What creates this confusion in the first place, is the fact that each of these religions has a set of beliefs which may differ with, and contradict what is being taught by some of the others. The reasons why this is so are many, but the end result is that many people don't know in which direction to turn in order to find the truth.

One idea which is shared by Christianity, Judaism and Islam, is the belief in one God, Who created the Earth and all life on it; in fact, the entire universe; a Supreme Being. This is why they are referred to as monotheistic religions. This belief in one supreme God sets these three religions apart from other belief systems, as some of the others do not teach that there is one Supreme Being. Instead, they worship many different gods, each with its own power and authority. For example, such is the case with Hinduism, from which different popular forms of meditation are derived. Other religions worship the forces of nature, such as Wicca, or dead relatives, such as Shintoism.

In the case of certain religions, an ordinary human being is elevated to the status of a god, through the erection of temples and statues in that person's honor, and through the widespread teaching of his belief system. Such is the case with Buddhism. Some belief systems go as far as to say that we are gods. They rely upon the self-help technique, and claim that all answers are to be found within oneself. They teach that we have the power to control our own destinies without any intervention from a Higher Power. And yet other religions, such as the African-derived Santeria, bow down to Satan and the wicked forces of darkness. In some developed countries, people also worship power, money and materialism. Of course, there are also those who claim that they do not worship any god or spirit. In fact, they deny the existence of the spiritual world altogether. This current life is all there is, they claim. There is nothing else to follow they insist.

Even between Christianity, Judaism and Islam, there are some differences of which you should be aware. Just because a religion promotes the belief in one Supreme Being does not necessarily mean that it is safe to follow. What makes the Christian faith different from all other religions, is the fact that it is the only one which is honest enough to speak of our need for a Saviour, Who offers us the free gift of Eternal Life, in a new and better world where all suffering,

pain and sorrow will be removed. Other belief systems, such as Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism, erroneously teach that we can gain Eternal Life, and be a part of this wonderful new world, even if we don't believe in the Saviour. According to their doctrines, Salvation is based upon doing good things, or perfecting ourselves by living many times, or keeping many rules. In other words, they would have us to believe that we can gain Eternal Life through our own good merits. Even though it shares some common history with the Christian faith, Judaism likewise rejects basic Christian beliefs.

Exactly what are these beliefs?

As I noted a moment ago, Christianity teaches that we cannot save ourselves. We need some outside help. We need a Savior. Why is this so? According to the Bible, we are all sinners; we aren't perfect; we have all made mistakes; regardless of how young or how old we may be. Our greatest mistake, or sin, is that we don't love God or each other as much as we should. That is why there are so many problems in the world today. Many people simply do not act out of love for God, or out of love for others, but only out of love for themselves. They live self-centered lives, instead of God-centered lives. "Me" must come first, and whatever is good for "Me", is good for everyone else. It is this kind of sick attitude which results in war, murder, rape, abortion, theft, the oppression of the poor, and many other crimes.

This attitude also results in our being dishonest with others, as well as with ourselves, because we are not willing to face up to the truth regarding ourselves. Such things are all motivated by pride, selfishness, and the evil which lurks in our heart. Not only do such acts hurt others, but they hurt God as well, and they keep us separated from Him, just as parents are sometimes not too happy to see their children when they have been disobedient. In fact, because we do not obey God's Laws of Love as we should, and because we rebel against His Will for our lives, it forces Him to punish us; just as responsible parents will punish their children when they too do something wrong. In this case, the Biblical law is very clear regarding the penalty for the sins of rebellion and unbelief. It states such things as the following:

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

". . . he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."
John 3:36b, KJV

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
Matthew 10:28, KJV

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God . . . For our God is a consuming fire."
Hebrews 10:31, 12:29, KJV

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was

cast into the lake of fire."
Revelation 20:15, KJV

"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."
Revelation 21:8, KJV

That is a heavy price to pay, but we choose it through our own continual stubbornness and unbelief. God does not choose it for us, as some false accusers would have you to believe. Moreover, we can have peace in our hearts, knowing that no matter how bad we have been, or how rebellious we have been, all is not lost. Just as most parents eventually embrace their children in love once again, God too does not remain mad at us forever; He does not cast us away forever; unless that is what we truly want. He is mindful of the fact that we are weak, human flesh; and so as King David wrote, He has pity upon us:

"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."
Psalms 103:13-14, KJV

In His mercy, God, is willing to give us time to acknowledge our errors, to ask for forgiveness, and to repent. That is why in the midst of affliction, the Prophet Jeremiah wrote:

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."
Lamentations 3:22-23, KJV

So you see, God's love and mercy are renewed every single morning; and because they are, He has purposely made a way for our sins to be forgiven, so that our relationship with Him can be restored.

The way that He did this, is by allowing His own Son, Jesus Christ, to take our punishment for us. It is as if one of our brothers or sisters or friends decided to take the blame for something that we did, and be punished for it; even though we really did it. This is true love; this is putting others before self; and this is exactly what Jesus did for us. The Bible tells us that He took upon Himself our sins:

"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."
2 Corinthians 5:21, KJV

In other words, even though Jesus was sinless, God the Father allowed His Son to take upon Himself the sins of the world. He allowed Jesus to be punished for us, so that we could find atonement, or forgiveness and reconciliation with the Father, through His Sacrifice. That is why John the Baptist said upon recognizing Jesus as the Savior of all mankind:

". . . Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the

world."

John 1:29b, KJV

Why was Jesus obligated to die such a gruesome death in the first place? Couldn't it have been avoided? In a word, no. According to the laws of the Old Testament, the remission of sin could only be achieved through the sacrifice of an unblemished goat or lamb. That is why we find the ritual sacrifice of animals throughout the Old Testament. It was a foreshadow of better things to come in Christ. Thus, as Paul and other writers explain, Jesus became the Lamb of God of the New Testament. By His dying on the Cross, He became the Author of the New Covenant between God and man. He became the Final Sacrifice. There needs to be no more:

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Matthew 26:28, KJV

"And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance . . . And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission."

Hebrews 9:15, 22, KJV

"And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

Hebrews 12:24, KJV

Jesus accepted the guilty verdict of His accusers; He took the whipping for us; He took the death sentence which we truly deserve; by His own loving choice. We were all held hostage by sin, and Jesus paid the ransom price for our freedom, through His sufferings upon the Cross. In the Gospels of Mark and Luke He said:

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Mark 10:45, KJV

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Luke 4:18-19, KJV

The Apostle Paul also tells us "For ye are bought with a price . . .", and what an expensive price it was indeed! In other words, Jesus didn't look out for Himself first. He wasn't concerned with His own wellbeing; He was only concerned about our wellbeing, and our future in the Kingdom of His Father. Jesus came to fulfill a mission, but He had to be willing to temporarily forsake His place in Heaven, and His life on Earth, in order to fulfill it. That is why Paul also writes:

"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 made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was 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. Wherefore God also hath 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, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:5-11, KJV

Jesus' life was not self-centered, but rather God-centered. He wanted to please His Father first and above all; and so He gladly laid down His life for us, as atonement for our sins. Jesus didn't have to do it, but He did. He obeyed His Father's Will, because He knew that it was absolutely necessary for our Salvation. In His moments of agony while in the Garden, He said:

". . . Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

Luke 22:42, KJV

And that same night, He took the path that led to the Cross, when He was betrayed into the hands of sinful men. Would any of us have had the same degree of love which must have been required in order to make such a difficult choice? And it was indeed an act of love. As the Apostle John wrote:

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

1 John 3:16, KJV

Many so-called wise men, holy men, philosophers and teachers have come and gone down through the centuries. They have each impressed men with their wisdom, and inspired men with their teachings and examples of love, patience, and tolerance; but none of them, not one single one of them, ever did what Jesus Christ did. None of them paid the Ultimate Price. None of them opened the way to Eternal Life. Only Jesus could do that, and He willingly did so. Not only that, but He warned us of those false prophets who had come before Him, and of those who would undoubtedly come after Him. In the Gospels He tells us:

"All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them."

John 10:8, KJV

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Matthew 24:24, KJV

Jesus knew from the beginning that there was no other way, but the way of the Cross; and by going the torturous way of the Cross, He in fact became the Way to Eternal Life. That

is why in the Gospel of John He tells us:

". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

John 14:6b, KJV

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

John 10:28, KJV

Some time later, the Apostles affirmed Jesus' teachings when they said such things as the following:

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Acts 4:12, KJV

". . . Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved . . ."

Acts 16:31, KJV

The Apostle Paul also tells us that Jesus is the Author and the Finisher of our faith. Jesus started it all, and without Him, it would have never been:

"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."

Hebrews 12:2, KJV

The Bible plainly teaches us that we simply cannot ever be good enough, or perfect enough, to deserve God's love and mercy. How much less the Salvation, and the Heavenly Life which He offers us? These are things which only He can bestow upon us because of His great love towards us. As John also wrote:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 3:16, KJV

The Apostle James also plainly states that anything good we have in our lives, is a gift come down from God above:

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

James 1:17, KJV

So Salvation is a token of God's love. All we have to do is to accept His love through Christ's Sacrifice. If we are really honest with ourselves, then we know in our hearts that our very best is never going to be good enough. We cannot save ourselves, from ourselves and our personal sins, no matter how hard we try. We are imperfect in the flesh and always will be, simply because we are humans born with a sinful nature. We already know how to do wrong and evil from a young age, but we must learn to do good. As it is also

written:

"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."

Ephesians 2:8-9, KJV

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us . . ."

Titus 3:5a, KJV

Before his conversion to the Christian faith, the Apostle Paul, then known as Saul, was a very zealous, self-righteous Jewish Pharisee who did his best to uphold the Mosaic Law. He was probably very confident that his own so-called goodness and dutiful keeping of the Mosaic Law made him a prime candidate for Heaven; at least until that fateful day on the road to Damascus when he had his dreadful encounter with the risen Jesus Christ! The Lord greatly humbled Paul, and opened his spiritual eyes, so that he could finally see the truth regarding his miserable, sinful condition. It was after that, that we find Paul writing such things as the following:

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Romans 7:24, KJV

"For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

1 Corinthians 15:9, KJV

What a change of attitude after God had time to deal with Saul's pride! Sadly, there are a lot of Sauls in the world today. Such people tend to possess a lot of self-confidence. They have inflated egos and high opinions of themselves. Quite often they will look down upon others who they feel do not meet their standards and expectations. Those people who are religiously zealous, sometimes have a tendency to think that they are a little better, perhaps a little more holy, and just a bit more righteous than others. This is not the real righteousness which comes from God; but rather, it is self-righteousness; and the Bible does not speak well of it. For example, the Prophet Isaiah wrote:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Isaiah 64:6, KJV

King Solomon likewise offered some wise advice regarding those people who have such high opinions of themselves, and who are filled with their own false sense of righteousness. In the Proverbs he wrote:

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Proverbs 16:18, KJV

Please take a moment now to consider your own life. If you

can be honest with yourself, whether you are young or old, you know in your heart that you have not always led an exemplary life. Perhaps you have lied in order to cover for yourself; perhaps you have said cruel things which have hurt others; or perhaps you have stolen something which did not belong to you. You have undoubtedly done certain things of which you are ashamed, which would embarrass you if they ever came to light. In short, you have not fully lived according to God's Laws of Love, which Jesus emphasized in the following verses:

". . . The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

Mark 12:29b-31, KJV

What you need to understand, is that while we can hide our misdeeds from our friends and family, we cannot hide them from God. He sees all, and He knows all; and He certainly knows the evil thoughts that dwell in our hearts. That is why He inspired the Prophet Jeremiah to write the following:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Jeremiah 17:9, KJV

In fact, way back in the very first book of the Bible, shortly before the Great Flood had occurred, God observed the evil nature of man; and He was sorry that He had ever created him. Thus, He chose to destroy man, because that was the only way to purge the Earth of man's iniquity. In the book of Genesis we read:

"And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

Genesis 6:5-7, KJV

Shortly after the Great Flood had occurred, God again confirmed the evil nature of man's heart when He said to Himself:

". . . I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done."

Genesis 8:21, KJV

The Prophet Isaiah was also keenly aware of our fallen, sinful condition, and our need for a Savior. That is why in one of his prophecies regarding the coming sufferings of Christ, he too wrote:

"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 53:6, KJV

King David of old likewise recognized the fallen state of rebellious men. In his fourteenth Psalm he writes:

". . . The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Psalms 14:1-3, KJV

Turning to the New Testament, on one particular occasion, Jesus and His followers were self-righteously judged by the Scribes and the Pharisees, because they failed to wash their hands before eating. Exactly how did Jesus respond to their ridiculous accusations? Consider the following:

"Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

Matthew 15:17-20, KJV

A number of years after his own conversion to the Christian faith, the Apostle Paul paraphrased parts of King David's fourteenth Psalm when he wrote the following in his letter to the Roman brethren:

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:"

Romans 3:10, KJV

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Romans 3:23, KJV

Over and over again, in both the Old and the New Testaments, we are reminded that we are sinners. We are told that evil lurks in our hearts, and that we are fallen creatures. It should be obvious then, that it is utterly useless for us to try to hide our sins from God. As the old saying goes, "Be sure that your sins will find you out". Jesus Himself said regarding the hypocritical religious leaders of His day:

"For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known."

Luke 12:2, KJV

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."

John 15:22, KJV

In his Epistles, the Apostle Paul also makes it clear that we all have a future appointment with the Lord:

"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."
2 Corinthians 5:10, KJV

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"
Hebrews 9:27, KJV

So as you can see, we can fool others, but we simply cannot fool God. He knows the real score, and the Day of Reckoning is coming for each one of us, whether we choose to believe it or not. We will each have to acknowledge our sins.

"Exactly what is sin?" you might be wondering. "I have led a rather decent life", you might be tempted to say. "I have never killed anyone. I have never robbed a bank. I have never raped anyone. I really fail to see how I am a sinner, or why I need to believe in this Jesus of yours. I am a good person".

Let us address the last remark first. Are you really as good as you claim to be? On one particular occasion, a certain person addressed Jesus as "Good Master", and inquired of him what good thing he must do in order to have Eternal Life. How did the Lord respond to this man's respectful remark? It may surprise you to know that Jesus answered by saying:

". . . Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."
Matthew 19:17b, KJV

So with one statement, the Lord informed the man that there is only One good; that is, our Father in Heaven, and He then told the man something which He knew the man would not be able to fulfill. He said "keep the commandments". In other words, it seems that the Lord was trying to show the man the error of his ways, when he falsely assumed that he was good, and erroneously believed that he could merit Eternal Life by his own good deeds.

How much this sounds like many people today, even some who belong to organized religion. They have the mistaken idea that they have to give God a little help in saving them. Indirectly, such people are stating that Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross is not sufficient atonement for our sins. The idea seems to be that we need to add our human endeavors to the finished work at Calvary. If Jesus said that it was finished, (John 19:30), then it was indeed finished. Nothing needs to be added to His Sacrifice, in order for us to gain Salvation; nothing but faith in what He did for us.

Returning to the definition of sin, in his first Epistle, the Apostle John offers us a very short, clear-cut definition of sin. He states:

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for

sin is the transgression of the law."

1 John 3:4, KJV

What does "transgression" mean? In the New Testament, it is derived from a Greek word which means to live outside of the law, or to violate the law; that is, to break the law.

Exactly what law is John referring to? Obviously, being an Israelite, he was referring to the greatest laws of human conduct the world has ever known; that is, the Laws of Moses as laid down in the Old Testament. Jewish life centered around the Laws of Moses, as is evident in both the Old and the New Testaments. As we saw a moment ago, while there are literally hundreds of laws contained in the Old Testament, Jesus summed them up when He said that the greatest laws, or commandments, are to love God, and to love our neighbor as ourselves; and we most certainly love ourselves more than anyone else. "Me" is number one. The survival of self is the rule which governs this current world. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it . . ."

Ephesians 5:29a, KJV

If we each loved our neighbor as we love ourselves, the world would truly be a wonderful place in which to live. Sadly, that is far from being true in our modern times. In fact, Jesus said that because of iniquity, or sin, the Endtime would be marked by a lack of love in the world, and Paul said that the citizens of the Endtime would be lovers of their own selves, more than lovers of God, as we see by the following two verses:

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Matthew 24:12, KJV

"For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy . . ."

2 Timothy 3:2, KJV

So again, the greatest of all the Biblical laws is simply love, because all other laws are encompassed by it. James referred to it as the "Royal Law" in the following verse:

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:"

James 2:8, KJV

So if we truly wish to please our Heavenly King, we need to obey His Royal Law: love. Any time that we do something which is not motivated by love for God, or love for our fellow man in some way, but only by a selfish love which will bring us some personal advantage or gain, we are in fact breaking God's Law. James tells us that even if we keep all of the Biblical laws and only break one of them, we are guilty of breaking them all:

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

James 2:10, KJV

Such is the futility of trying to keep the Law. Such is the futility of trying to attain Salvation through our own good deeds. We cannot be good enough of our own accord. We have transgressed the Law; and that makes us sinners; every single one of us. There is simply no way around it. There are no loopholes. There are no bargaining chips. We are all guilty as charged.

But, as we have already seen, not all is lost. There is a way out of this mess. There is a way to be exonerated of guilt. There is a way to avoid the punishment we deserve. There is a silver lining to the sin which clouds and overshadows our lives. Guilt, condemnation, judgment and punishment do not have to be the end of this story if we don't wish for them to be. We are not without hope. There is a way of escape. As Jesus Himself taught His followers:

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
John 3:17, KJV

We have already been condemned by our own selfish and sinful actions. What we clearly need now is a Savior, and Jesus is that Savior. He offers us freedom from the bondage of sin; He offers us the hope of Redemption; and He offers us the gift of Eternal Life, through His Sacrifice of Love on the Cross. As the Apostle Paul explains it:

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."
Romans 5:6, KJV

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."
Ephesians 2:12-13, KJV

So you see, through accepting Christ's sufferings on the Cross as atonement for our sins, we can be reunited with the Father. Our fellowship and close relationship with Him can be restored. That is why only a few verses later, Paul also adds:

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"
Ephesians 2:19, KJV

Why does Paul say this? Because that is precisely what God has wanted all along. He has wanted His wayward children to return to Him, just like in the story of the Prodigal Son found in Luke chapter fifteen. In fact, at the very beginning of the Gospel of John, we are plainly told that we can become a part of God's Household; we can become His adopted children, simply by accepting the Sacrifice of His Son:

"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:"

John 1:12, KJV

So by simply believing in what Jesus did for us, and by repenting of our sins, we can find forgiveness, and we can be reunited with God; both in this life, as well as in the life to come. God is very willing to forgive us for our mistakes; He is able to blot out our sins from the Book; He is able to remove the stain of guilt from our lives, if we choose to believe in and accept the Sacrifice of His Son as the perfect atonement for our sins. In fact, He pleads with us to make the right choice. As the Prophet Isaiah wrote over 2,500 years ago:

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Isaiah 1:18, KJV

There is no other way. God knows that we cannot be perfect enough; we cannot be righteous enough; we cannot do enough good deeds in order to merit Salvation and Eternal Life. We will fall short of the goal every time. We will never meet His standard of perfection. By ourselves, we are simply a hopeless case; so we must humble ourselves, and be willing to admit that we can't do it alone, and that we need His help. If we cry out to Him and confess our sins, and confess our need, He promises that He will hear us, and He will save us. Again, the Prophet Isaiah wrote:

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:"

Isaiah 59:1, KJV

As the previous verses from Isaiah state, we can be cleansed of our sins. We can be washed clean and made white as snow by the Blood of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

If you have never heard it before, this is the central message of our Christian faith: You are a sinner, but God loves you anyway. He wants to forgive you, and He wants to bring you into His Family, and give you Eternal Life; but first you must be willing to meet the conditions which He has established. That begins with the realization that you are a sinner, and then repenting of your sins, whatever they may be. If you are willing to do this, and if you are willing to admit your need for a Savior, and if you recognize Jesus Christ as that Savior, you will gain both forgiveness and Eternal Life. God is waiting on you to make the right choice. As the Apostle Peter wrote so many years ago:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9, KJV

In other words, God keeps His promises. It is not His Will for any of us to perish; so He patiently waits for us to repent of our sins, so that He can extend His Hand of Salvation to us. In the Old Testament, during the time of Moses and the children of Israel, it was also said by that great liberator:

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"
Numbers 23:19, KJV

God the Father, and Jesus His Son, have kept their part of the bargain. Their word is good. It can be trusted. They will deliver the promised blessings of forgiveness, as well as Eternal Life to those who believe. Jesus paid with His earthly life as a ransom for our sins. He died for you; for me; for all of us. That is why in the Gospel of John He tells us:

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."
John 12:32, KJV

"All men" means exactly that; all men; because we are all sinners before God, and in need of a Savior. It does not matter of what national origin you might be. It does not matter of what religious persuasion you might currently be, or even if you profess no faith at all. The bottom line, is that without Christ, you are hopeless, and you are utterly lost. So again, Jesus fulfilled His Mission on the Cross. He did His part. Now it is up to you to do your part. Will you? If you are one of His children, you will know it, and you will hear the Voice of His Spirit speaking to your heart via this message. As Jesus also said:

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:"
John 10:27, KJV

The Apostle Paul also tells us that those who are called, are predestinated and chosen by God since before the world began, and that the Lord knows those who are His. Consider these verses:

"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 . . . That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:"
Ephesians 1:3-5, 10-11, KJV

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

2 Timothy 2:19, KJV

If you feel God's Spirit tugging at your heart right now, and if you have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, I would like to invite you to do so right now. It is not advisable for you to put it off for another day; after all, you may not have that long. As the old saying goes, "We are all old. We could die tomorrow". God forbid that this should happen to you, but if it did, can you say with all certainty that you have the assurance of Salvation and Eternal Life? Quoting from the Prophet Isaiah, the Apostle Paul wrote:

". . . I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

2 Corinthians 6:2, KJV

In speaking of the brevity of the human lifespan, the Apostle James also wrote the following:

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

James 4:14, KJV

Considering then the uncertainty of your future, would it not be wise on your part to make the decision to accept Jesus Christ today; in fact, right now? If you feel that you are ready, but are not quite certain regarding how to go about doing it, allow me to suggest the following small prayer as a guide. Please remember that prayer is not just a dead ritual that you repeat over and over again as is taught by some religions. Prayer is talking heart to heart with our Heavenly Father. Through the following prayer, or a similar one, you are expressing your acceptance of your sinful condition, your need for a Saviour, and recognizing that Jesus Christ is that Saviour.

Please understand that Salvation is a matter of belief and acceptance. The words of this prayer are only the vehicle, or the means, of demonstrating that acceptance before God. The words themselves do not save you. What saves you is the faith and belief in your heart in God's promises, as I have explained them to you in this message. You might want to pray something like the following:

"Heavenly Father, I know that I am not perfect. I admit that I have made my share of mistakes. I know that I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus is your Son, and that He gave His life on the Cross for my sins. Heavenly Father, I ask You to please forgive me for my sins through the Sacrifice of Your Son, and to grant me Eternal Life. Please fill my life with Your Spirit, and help me to understand Your Word, the Bible. As I do, help me to submit myself to Your Will for my life; help me to live a life which is pleasing in your sight; and as much as is within me, help me to also begin telling

others about Your Son, Jesus, so that they may have Eternal Life as well. Thank-you Father for hearing my prayer. In Your Son, Jesus's name, I humbly ask. Amen."

If you have just prayed this prayer, or a similar prayer with sincerity, then the Spirit of Jesus Christ has come into your life, and you have been forgiven for your sins. Your slate has been washed clean by the Blood of the Lamb, and you have been given a fresh start; for as the Apostle Paul wrote:

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

2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

Jesus Himself spoke of this new spiritual birth, or rebirth. One certain night, a noble Pharisee came to Jesus to inquire of Him regarding His doctrine. During the conversation, the Lord said to Nicodemus:

". . . Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 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."

John 3:3b, 5b-7, KJV

By accepting Christ as you have just done, your spirit has been renewed, and you have received Eternal Life; and someday soon it will become a physical reality for all of us. We know this is so, because the Bible says so; and that is all we have to know. You may not have heard a loud clap of thunder, or felt some grand onslaught of emotion; but everything you have just asked for has been granted to you by faith, simply because God says so in His Word; and as we have already seen, God is not a man that He should lie. He keeps His Word. He keeps His Promises, more than any human being you will ever know.

So you have great reason to rejoice, because you have just been admitted into the eternal Family of God! You belong to Him by right of adoption through Jesus Christ. In fact, at this very moment, the Angels in Heaven are rejoicing with you! We know that this is so, because Jesus said so Himself. In the Gospel of Luke He tells us:

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance . . . Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

Luke 15:7, 10, KJV

May God truly bless you in your New Life with Him! To assist you in your new-found faith, we suggest that you immediately begin to read your Bible. As a new Believer in Christ, it would be good for you to begin by reading the four Gospels which describe in great detail the Birth, Life, Message, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. We also encourage

you to read the many Scripture-filled articles which can be found at our web site, endtimeprophecy.net. These articles will answer many questions you have regarding the Bible. Again, may the Lord bless you and enrich your life as you study the many wonders of His Word, and begin to share it with others.

All references were taken from the Authorized King James Version of the Holy Bible.

Original English version written by the WordWeaver

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

Mensaje Al Mundo

Un Mensaje Simple Y Franco, Que Explica El Plan De Dios Para La Salvación Del Mundo; Fácilmente Comprendido Por Personas De Todas Las Edades

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En el mundo de hoy, existen tantas religiones diferentes; cada una de las cuales tiene sus propias iglesias, templos, mezquitas y otros lugares de adoración. Debido a esta diversidad religiosa, muchas personas a menudo se encuentran preguntándose cuál de ellas es la religión correcta en que uno debe creer y seguir. Se sienten inundadas y completamente perdidas en medio de la multitud de opciones a su disposición. Quizás tu seas una de tales personas. Lo que crea esta confusión en el primer lugar, es el hecho de que cada una de estas religiones tiene un conjunto de creencias que sean diferentes, y que contradigan lo que está siendo enseñado por algunas de los demás. Las razones por lo cual esto ocurra son muchas, pero el resultado final es que muchas personas no saben en que dirección deben buscar para encontrar la verdad.

Una idea, la cual es compartida por el Cristianismo, el Judaísmo y el Islam, es la creencia en un solo Dios, Quién creó la Tierra, y toda la vida sobre ella; de hecho, el universo entero; eso es, un Ser Supremo. Es por esta razón que son referidas como religiones monoteístas. Esta creencia en un solo Dios Supremo distingue a estas tres religiones de otros sistemas de creencia, siendo que algunos de los demás no enseñan que existe un solo Ser Supremo. En su lugar, ellas adoran a muchos dioses diversos, y cada dios tiene su propio poder y autoridad. Por ejemplo, tal es el caso con el Hinduísmo, de lo cual se derivan muchas formas populares de meditación. Otras religiones adoran a las fuerzas de la naturaleza, tal como el Wicca, o a parientes muertos, tal como el Sintoísmo.

En el caso de ciertas religiones, un ser humano ordinario es elevado al nivel de un dios, por medio de la construcción de templos y estatuas en honor de esa persona, y a través de la propagación extensa de su sistema de creencias. Tal es el caso con el Budismo. Algunos sistemas de creencia van a tal extremo, a decir que nosotros mismos somos dioses. Ellos ponen su confianza en la técnica de "auto-ayuda", y reclaman que todas las respuestas de esta vida se encuentran dentro de uno mismo. Ellos enseñan que tenemos el poder de controlar nuestros propios destinos sin ninguna intervención de un Poder más Alto. Y aún, hay otras religiones, tal como el Santería que proviene de la Africa, que se someten a Satanás y las fuerzas malvadas de la oscuridad. En algunos países desarrolladas, la gente también adoran el poder mundial, el dinero y el materialismo. Por supuesto, también

hay personas que reclaman que adoran ningún dios o espíritu. De hecho, niegan la existencia del mundo espiritual enteramente. Esta vida actual es todo lo que hay, ellos reclaman. Hay nada más que sigue la muerte ellos insisten.

Aún entre la Cristiandad, el Judaísmo y el Islam, hay algunas diferencias de las cuales debes estar enterado. El hecho de que una religión promueve la creencia en un solo Ser Supremo, no signifique necesariamente que es seguro seguirla. Lo que hace la fé Cristiana diferente de todas las otras religiones, es el hecho de ser la única religion que es suficiente honesta a hablar de nuestra necesidad por un Salvador, que nos ofrece el regalo de la Vida Eterna, en un mundo nuevo and mejor, donde todo sufrimiento, dolor y aflicción serán eliminados. Otras creencias, como el Islam, el Budismo y el Hinduismo, erróneamente enseñan que podemos ganar la Vida Eterna, y ser parte de este maravilloso nuevo mundo, aunque no creamos en el Salvador. Según las doctrinas de ellas, la Salvación es basada en hacer cosas buenas, o en el perfeccionamiento de nosotros mismos por medio de la reencarnación, u observando muchas reglas. En otras palabras, quieren que creamos que podemos ganar la Vida Eterna a través de nuestros propios buenos méritos. Aunque comparte alguna historia común con la fé Cristiana, de la misma manera, el Judaísmo también rechaza las creencias básicas Cristianas.

¿Exactamente cuál son estas creencias básicas Cristianas?

Como indiqué hace un momento, la Cristiandad nos enseña que no podemos salvar a nosotros mismos. Necesitamos alguna ayuda de afuera. Necesitamos a un Salvador. ¿Porque es así? Según la Biblia, todos nosotros somos pecadores; no somos perfectos; todos hemos cometido errores; a pesar de cuán joven o cuán viejo seamos. Nuestro error principal, o pecado, es que no amamos a Dios, o a los demás, lo cuanto que deberíamos. Es por eso que existen tantos problemas en el mundo de hoy. Muchas personas simplemente no son motivados por el amor de Dios, o por el amor hacía los demás, pero solo por amor por sí mismos. Viven vidas ego-centristas , en lugar de vivir vidas Dios-centristas. Lo "yo" debe venir primero, y cualquier cosa que sea bueno para "mí", es bueno para los demás. Es esta clase de actitud enferma que resulta en guerras, asesinatos, violaciones, abortos, robos, la opresión de los pobres, y muchos otros crímenes.

Como resultado de esta actitud, somos deshonestos con los demás, y también con nosotros mismos, porque no estamos dispuestos a enfrentar la verdad sobre nosotros mismos. Todas estas cosas son motivadas por el orgullo, por el egoísmo, y por el mal que vive dentro de nuestros corazones. Estos actos no solamente hacen daño a los demás, pero lastiman a Dios también, y nos mantienen separados de El; así como a veces, a los padres, no les da gusto ver a sus hijos, cuando han sido desobedientes. De hecho, porque no obedecemos a las Leyes de Amor de Dios como deberíamos, y

porque nos rebelamos contra Su Voluntad por nuestras vidas, eso fuerza Dios a castigarnos; así como padres responsables castigarán a sus hijos cuando ellos también hacen algo equivocado. En éste caso, la Ley Bíblica es muy clara con respecto a la pena por los pecados de rebelión e incredulidad. Expresa tan cosas como lo siguiente:

"Porque la paga del pecado es muerte . . ."
Romanos 6:23a, RV

". . . el que es incrédulo al Hijo, no verá la vida, sino que la ira de Dios está sobre él."
Juan 3:36b, RV

"Y no temáis á los que matan el cuerpo, mas al alma no pueden matar: temed antes á aquel que puede destruir el alma y el cuerpo en el infierno."
Mateo 10:28, RV

"Horrenda cosa es caer en las manos del Dios vivo . . . porque nuestro Dios es fuego consumidor."
Hebreos 10:31, 12:29, RV

"Y el que no fué hallado escrito en el libro de la vida, fué lanzado en el lago de fuego."
Apocalipsis 20:15, RV

"Mas á los temerosos é incrédulos, á los abominables y homicidas, á los fornicarios y hechiceros, y á los idólatras, y á todos los mentirosos, su parte será en el lago ardiendo con fuego y azufre, que es la muerte segunda."
Apocalipsis 21:8, RV

Eso es un precio pesado de pagar, pero lo escogemos por medio de nuestra propia obstinación y incredulidad continua. Dios no lo escoge por nosotros, como algunos acusadores falsos gustarían hacerte creer. Además, podemos tener paz en nuestros corazones, sabiendo que a pesar de cuán malo hemos sido, o cuán rebelde hemos sido, no todo está perdido. Así como la mayoría de los padres eventualmente abrazarán a sus hijos con amor una vez más, Dios también no permanece airado con nosotros eternamente; El no nos rechaza para siempre; a menos que eso es lo que realmente queramos. El está atento del hecho que somos débil carne humana; y así, como el Rey David escribió, El tiene misericordia para con nosotros:

"Como el padre se compadece de los hijos, Se compadece Jehová de los que le temen. Porque El conoce nuestra condición; Acuérdate que somos polvo."
Salmos 103:13-14, RV

En Su Misericordia, Dios está dispuesto a darnos tiempo para reconocer nuestros errores, para pedir perdón, y para arrepentirnos. Es por eso que en medio de su aflicción, el Profeta Jeremías escribió:

"Es por la misericordia de Jehová que no somos consumidos,

porque nunca decayeron sus misericordias. Nuevas son cada mañana; grande es tu fidelidad."

Lamentaciones 3:22-23, RV

Así, ves, el Amor y la Misericordia de Dios son renovados todas las mañanas; y porque ellos son, a propósito, El ha creado una manera para que nuestros pecados sean perdonados, a fin de que nuestra relación con El puede ser restaurado.

La manera en que Dios hizo esto, es por permitir que Su propio Hijo, Jesucristo, tomara nuestro castigo por nosotros. Es como si uno de nuestros hermanos o hermanas o amigos decidió tomar la culpa por algo que hicimos, y ser castigado por ello, aunque nosotros realmente lo hicimos. Esto es amor verdadero; es poner las necesidades de otros delante de nuestros propios necesidades; y esto es exactamente lo que Jesús hizo por nosotros. La Biblia nos dice que El llevó sobre Sí nuestros pecados:

"Al que no conoció pecado, hizo pecado por nosotros, para que nosotros fuésemos hechos justicia de Dios en él."

2 Corintios 5:21, RV

En otras palabras, aunque Jesús era sin pecado, Dios el Padre permitió que Su Hijo tomara sobre El Mismo los pecados del mundo. Permitted que Jesús fuese castigado en nuestro lugar, para que pudiéramos encontrar expiación, o perdón y reconciliación con el Padre, por medio de Su Sacrificio. Es por eso que Juan el Bautista, al reconocer Jesús como el Salvador de toda la humanidad, dijo:

"He aquí el Cordero de Dios, que quita el pecado del mundo."

Juan 1:29b, RV

¿Por qué Jesús fue obligado a morir una muerte tan horrible en primer lugar? ¿No podía haber sido evitado? En una sola palabra, no. Según las Leyes del Antiguo Testamento, la remisión del pecado solo podría ser lograda por medio del sacrificio de una cabra o un cordero sin defecto. Es por eso que encontramos el ritual del sacrificio de animales a través de todo el Antiguo Testamento. Era un presagio de las cosas mejores por venir en Cristo. Así, como Pablo y otros escritores explican, Jesús se hizo el Cordero de Dios del Nuevo Testamento. Por Su Muerte en la Cruz, El se hizo el Autor del Nuevo Pacto entre Dios y los hombres. El se hizo el Sacrificio Final. No hay necesidad de otro sacrificio:

"Porque esto es mi sangre del nuevo pacto, la cual es derramada por muchos para remisión de los pecados."

Mateo 26:28, RV

"Así que, por eso es mediador del nuevo testamento, para que interviniendo muerte para la remisión de las rebeliones que había bajo del primer testamento, los que son llamados reciban la promesa de la herencia eterna . . . Y casi todo es purificado según la ley con sangre; y sin derramamiento de sangre no se hace remisión."

Hebreos 9:15, 22, RV

"Y á Jesús el Mediador del nuevo testamento, y á la sangre del esparcimiento que habla mejor que la de Abel."

Hebreos 12:24, RV

Jesús aceptó el veredicto culpable de Sus acusadores; El fue azotado por nosotros; El llevó la sentencia de muerte que nosotros verdaderamente merecemos, por Su propia elección amorosa. Todos de nosotros éramos rehenes del pecado, y Jesús pagó el precio del rescate para nuestra libertad, a través de Sus Sufrimientos sobre la Cruz. En los Evangelios de Marcos y Lucas El dijo:

"Porque el Hijo del hombre tampoco vino para ser servido, mas para servir, y dar su vida en rescate por muchos."

Marcos 10:45, RV

"El Espíritu del Señor es sobre mí, Por cuanto me ha ungido para dar buenas nuevas á los pobres: Me ha enviado para sanar á los quebrantados de corazón; Para pregonar á los cautivos libertad, Y á los ciegos vista; Para poner en libertad á los quebrantados: 19 Para predicar el año agradable del Señor."

Lucas 4:18-19, RV

El Apóstol Pablo también nos dice "Porque comprados sois por precio . . .", ¡y qué alto precio fue de verdad! En otras palabras, la preocupación principal de Jesús no era para Sí mismo. El no estaba preocupado con Su propio bienestar; solamente estaba preocupado con nuestro bienestar, y nuestro futuro en el Reino de Su Padre. Jesús vino a cumplir una misión, pero tenía que estar dispuesto a temporalmente renunciar a Su lugar en el Cielo, y Su vida en la Tierra, para cumplirla. Es por eso que Pablo también escribe:

"Haya, pues, en vosotros este sentir que hubo también en Cristo Jesús: El cual, siendo en forma de Dios, no tuvo por usurpación ser igual á Dios: Sin embargo, se anonadó á sí mismo, tomando forma de siervo, hecho semejante á los hombres; Y hallado en la condición como hombre, se humilló á sí mismo, hecho obediente hasta la muerte, y muerte de cruz. Por lo cual Dios también le ensalzó á lo sumo, y dióle un nombre que es sobre todo nombre; Para que en el nombre de Jesús se doble toda rodilla de los que están en los cielos, y de los que en la tierra, y de los que debajo de la tierra; Y toda lengua confiese que Jesucristo es el Señor, á la gloria de Dios Padre."

Filipenses 2:5-11, RV

La vida de Jesús no era egocéntrico, más "Dios-céntrico". El quería complacer a Su Padre en primer lugar y sobre todo; y así, con gozo, dió Su vida por nosotros, como expiación para nuestros pecados. Jesús no tenía que hacerlo, pero lo hizo. El obedeció la Voluntad de Su Padre, porque supo que era absolutamente necesario para nuestra Salvación. Durante los momentos cuando El agonizaba en el Jardín de Gethsemaní, El

dijo:

". . . Padre, si quieres, pasa este vaso de mí; empero no se haga mi voluntad, sino la tuya."

Lucas 22:42, RV

Y aquélla misma noche, Jesús tomó el camino que Lo llevó a la Cruz, cuando fue traicionado por las manos de hombres pecadores. ¿Si algunos de nosotros estuviéramos en el lugar de Jesús, hubiéramos tenido el mismo grado de amor que, sin duda, fue necesario para hacer una elección tan difícil? Y de hecho, fue un acto de amor. Como escribió el Apóstol Juan:

"En esto hemos conocido el amor [de Dios], porque él puso su vida por nosotros: también nosotros debemos poner nuestras vidas por los hermanos."

1 Juan 3:16, RV

Muchos hombres supuestamente sabios, hombres santos, filósofos y maestros han aparecido a través de los siglos. Cada uno de ellos ha impresionado a la humanidad con su sabiduría, y ha inspirado a los hombres con sus enseñanzas y ejemplos de amor, paciencia, y tolerancia; pero ninguno de ellos, ni un solo de ellos, jamás hizo lo que Jesucristo hizo. Ninguno de ellos pagó el Precio Final. Ninguno de ellos abrió el camino que nos dirige a la Vida Eterna. Solo Jesús pudo hacer eso, y El lo hizo voluntariamente. No solo eso, pero El nos avisó de los falsos Profetas que vinieron antes de él, y de los que indudablemente vendrían después de El. En los Evangelios El nos dice:

"Todos los que antes de mí vinieron, ladrones son y robadores; mas no los oyeron las ovejas."

Juan 10:8, RV

"Porque se levantarán falsos Cristos, y falsos Profetas, y darán señales grandes y prodigios; de tal manera que engañarán, si es posible, aun á los escogidos."

Mateo 24:24, RV

Jesús sabía desde el principio que no había otro camino, sino el camino de la Cruz; y por el hecho de seguir el camino torturado de la Cruz, en realidad, El se volvió el Camino por lo cual, podemos obtener la Vida Eterna. Es por eso que en el Evangelio de Juan El nos dice:

". . . Yo soy el camino, y la verdad, y la vida: nadie viene al Padre, sino por mí."

Juan 14:6b, RV

"Y yo les doy vida eterna y no perecerán para siempre, ni nadie las arrebatará de mi mano."

Juan 10:28, RV

Algún tiempo después, los Apóstoles afirmaron las enseñanzas de Jesús cuando dijeron cosas como las siguientes:

"Y en ningún otro hay salud; porque no hay otro nombre debajo del cielo, dado á los hombres, en que podamos ser salvos."

Hechos 4:12, RV

". . . Cree en el Señor Jesucristo, y serás salvo tú . . ."

Hechos 16:31, RV

El Apóstol Pablo también nos dice que Jesús es el Autor y el Consumador de nuestra fe. Jesús lo comenzó, y sin El, eso nunca habría sido:

"Puestos los ojos en al autor y consumidor de la fe, en Jesús; el cual, habiéndole sido propuesto gozo, sufrió la cruz, menospreciando la vergüenza, y sentóse á la diestra del trono de Dios."

Hebreos 12:2, RV

La Biblia claramente nos enseña que simplemente no podemos ser lo suficiente buenos, o lo suficiente perfectos, para merecer el Amor y la Misericordia de Dios. ¿Cuanto menos la Salvación, y la Vida Celestial que El nos ofrece? Esas son cosas que solamente El nos puede conceder a causa de Su gran amor por nosotros. Como Juan también escribió:

"Porque de tal manera amó Dios al mundo, que ha dado á su Hijo unigénito, para que todo aquel que en él cree, no se pierda, mas tenga vida eterna."

Juan 3:16, RV

El Apóstol Santiago también expresa claramente que cualquier cosa buena que tengamos en nuestras vidas, es un regalo que desciende de Dios de lo alto:

"Toda buena dádiva y todo don perfecto es de lo alto, que desciende del Padre de las luces, en el cual no hay mudanza, ni sombra de variación."

Santiago 1:17, RV

Entonces, la Salvación es un señal del Amor de Dios. Todo lo que tenemos que hacer es aceptar Su amor a través del Sacrificio de Cristo. Si somos realmente honestos con nosotros mismos, sabemos en nuestros corazones que a pesar de tan bueno tratamos de portarnos, aún no es suficiente para salvarnos. No podemos salvar a nosotros mismos de nosotros mismos y de nuestros pecados personales, no importa cuánto lo intentemos. Somos imperfectos en la carne y siempre lo seremos, simplemente porque somos seres humanos nacidos con una naturaleza pecaminosa. Ya sabemos como hacer cosas equivocadas, y como cometer maldad desde nuestra juventud, pero tenemos que aprender a hacer el bien. Como también está escrito:

"Porque por gracia sois salvos por la fe; y esto no de vosotros, pues es don de Dios; no por obras, para que nadie se gloríe."

Efesios 2:8-9, RV

"No por obras de justicia que nosotros habíamos hecho, mas por su misericordia nos salvó . . ."

Tito 3:5a, RV

Antes de su conversión a la fe Cristiana, el Apóstol Pablo, entonces conocido como Saulo, era un Fariseo Judaico muy celoso y santurrón, que hizo su mejor para guardar la Ley de Moisés. Probablemente estuvo muy seguro que su propia supuesta bondad, y su obediente cumplimiento de la Ley de Moisés, aseguró su lugar en el Cielo; por lo menos hasta aquel día inevitable en la carretera de Damasco, cuando él tuvo su terrible encuentro con Jesucristo ya resucitado de los muertos. El Señor humilló a Pablo grandemente, y abrió sus ojos espirituales, para que al fin, él pudiese ver la verdad con respecto a su condición miserable y pecaminosa. Fue después de esto, que encontramos a Pablo escribiendo cosas como las siguientes:

"¡Miserable hombre de mí! ¿quién me libraré del cuerpo de esta muerte?"

Romanos 7:24, RV

"Porque yo soy el más pequeño de los apóstoles, que no soy digno de ser llamado apóstol, porque perseguí la iglesia de Dios."

1 Corintios 15:9, RV

¡Que cambio de actitud después de que Dios tuvo tiempo para abordar el orgullo de Saulo! Lamentablemente, hay muchos Saulos en el mundo de hoy. Tales personas tienen tendencia a poseer mucha santurronería. Tienen egos hinchados y opiniones altas de ellas mismas. Bastante a menudo, mirarán con desprecio a las personas que sienten no están a su nivel social, y que no encajan a sus expectativas. Esas personas que son celosas religiosamente, algunas veces tienen tendencia a pensar que son un poco mejor, quizás un poco más santas, y apenas un poco más justa que los demás. Esa no es la verdadera justicia que proviene de Dios; más bien, es santurronería; y la Biblia no habla bien de eso. Por ejemplo, el Profeta Isaías escribió:

"Si bien todos nosotros somos como suciedad, y todas nuestras justicias como trapo de inmundicia; y caímos todos nosotros como la hoja, y nuestras maldades nos llevaron como viento."

Isaías 64:6, RV

Del mismo modo, el Rey Salomón ofreció algunos consejos sabios acerca de esas personas que tienen opiniones tan altas de ellas mismas, y que están llenas de su propio sentido de justicia. En los Proverbios él escribió:

"Antes del quebrantamiento es la soberbia; Y antes de la caída la altivez de espíritu."

Proverbios 16:18, RV

Ahora, tome, por favor, un momento para considerar tu propia vida. Si puedes ser honesto contigo mismo, aunque seas joven o viejo, sabes en tu corazón, que siempre no has conducido una vida ejemplar. Quizás has mentido para cubrir para sí mismo; quizás has dicho cosas crueles que han lastimado a los demás; o quizás has robado algo que no te perteneció. Indudablemente, has hecho ciertas cosas de las cuales estás avergonzado, que te embarazarían si algún día saldrían a luz. En corto, no has vivido completamente según las Leyes de Amor de Dios, que Jesús acentuó en los versos siguientes:

". . . El primer mandamiento de todos es: Oye, Israel, el Señor nuestro Dios, el Señor uno es. Amarás pues al Señor tu Dios de todo tu corazón, y de toda tu alma, y de toda tu mente, y de todas tus fuerzas; este es el principal mandamiento. Y el segundo es semejante á él: Amarás á tu prójimo como á tí mismo. No hay otro mandamiento mayor que éstos."

Marcos 12:29b-31, RV

Lo que necesitas comprender, es que mientras podemos esconder nuestras fechorías de nuestros amigos y familia, no las podemos esconder de Dios. El lo ve todo, y sabe todo; y ciertamente sabe los pensamientos malos que residen en nuestros corazones. Es por eso que inspiró al Profeta Jeremiah a escribir lo siguiente:

"Engañoso es el corazón más que todas las cosas, y perverso; ¿quién lo conocerá?"

Jeremías 17:9, RV

De hecho, en el primer libro de la Biblia, poco antes había ocurrido el Gran Diluvio, Dios observó la naturaleza mala de los hombres; y se arrepintió que los había creado. Así, escogió destruir la humanidad, porque aquélla era la única manera de purgar de la Tierra, la iniquidad del hombre. En el libro de Génesis leemos:

"Y vió Jehová que la malicia de los hombres era mucha en la tierra, y que todo designio de los pensamientos del corazón de ellos era de continuo solamente el mal. Y arrepintióse Jehová de haber hecho hombre en la tierra, y pesóle en su corazón. Y dijo Jehová: Raeré los hombres que he criado de sobre la faz de la tierra, desde el hombre hasta la bestia, y hasta el reptil y las aves del cielo: porque me arrepiento de haberlos hecho."

Génesis 6:5-7, RV

Poco después había ocurrido el Gran Diluvio, otra vez Dios confirmó la naturaleza mala del corazón del hombre, cuando dijo a Sí Mismo:

". . . No tornaré más á maldecir la tierra por causa del hombre; porque el intento del corazón del hombre es malo desde su juventud: ni volveré más á destruir todo viviente, como he hecho."

Génesis 8:21b, RV

El Profeta Isaías también estaba muy consciente de nuestra condición caída y pecadora, y de nuestra necesidad para un Salvador. Es por eso que en una de sus profecías cerca de los sufrimientos futuros de Cristo, también escribió:

"Todos nosotros nos descarriamos como ovejas, cada cual se apartó por su camino: mas Jehová cargó en él el pecado de todos nosotros."

Isaías 53:6, RV

El Rey David de antigüedad también reconoció el estado caído de los hombres rebeldes. En su Decimocuarto Salmo escribe:

". . . DIJO el necio en su corazón: No hay Dios. Corrompiéronse, hicieron obras abominables; No hay quien haga bien. Jehová miró desde los cielos sobre los hijos de los hombres, Por ver si había algún entendido, Que buscara á Dios. Todos declinaron, juntamente se han corrompido: No hay quien haga bien, no hay ni siquiera uno."

Salmos 14:1-3, RV

Mirando al Nuevo Testamento, en una ocasión particular, Jesús y Sus seguidores eran juzgados por los Escribas y los Fariseos (para demostrar su propia justicia), porque ellos, (Jesús y Sus seguidores), no lavaron las manos antes de comer. ¿Exactamente cómo Jesús contestó a esas ridículas acusaciones? Considere lo siguiente:

"¿No entendéis aún, que todo lo que entra en la boca, va al vientre, y es echado en la letrina? Mas lo que sale de la boca, del corazón sale; y esto contamina al hombre. Porque del corazón salen los malos pensamientos, muertes, adulterios, fornicaciones, hurtos, falsos testimonios, blasfemias. Estas cosas son las que contaminan al hombre: que comer con las manos por lavar no contamina al hombre."

Mateo 15:17-20, RV

Algunos años después de su propia conversión a la fe Cristiana, el Apóstol Pablo parafraseó partes del Salmo Decimocuarto de Rey David, cuando escribió lo siguiente en su carta a los hermanos Romanos:

"Como está escrito: No hay justo, ni aun uno;"

Romanos 3:10, RV

"Por cuanto todos pecaron, y están distituídos de la gloria de Dios;"

Romanos 3:23, RV

Repetidamente, en ambos Testamentos, Antiguo y Nuevo, somos recordados que somos pecadores. Nos informan que la maldad habita en nuestros corazones, y que somos criaturas caídas. Debe ser obvio entonces, que es totalmente inútil para nosotros intentar esconder nuestros pecados de Dios. Como el dicho antiguo dice, "Sabed que su pecado le hallará". Jesús

El Mismo dijo con respecto a los líderes religiosos hipócritas de Su día:

"Porque nada hay encubierto, que no haya de ser descubierto; ni oculto, que no haya de ser sabido."

Lucas 12:2, RV

"Si no hubiera venido, ni les hubiera hablado, no tendrían pecado, mas ahora no tienen excusa de su pecado."

Juan 15:22, RV

En sus Epístolas, el Apóstol Pablo también clarifica que todos tenemos una cita futura con el Señor:

"Porque es menester que todos nosotros parezcamos ante el tribunal de Cristo, para que cada uno reciba según lo que hubiere hecho por medio del cuerpo, ora sea bueno ó malo."

2 Corintios 5:10, RV

"Y de la manera que está establecido á los hombres que mueran una vez, y después el juicio;"

Hebreos 9:27, RV

Así que como puedes ver, podemos engañar a los demás, pero simplemente no podemos engañar a Dios. El sabe la cuenta verdadera, y el día del Juicio Final viene para cada uno de nosotros, si escogemos creerlo o no. Cada uno de nosotros tendrá que reconocer nuestros pecados.

"Exactamente qué es el pecado?" quizás estés preguntándote. 'Me he portado bastante bien en esta vida', quizás seas tentado a decir. "Nunca he matado a nadie. Nunca he robado un banco. Nunca he violado a nadie. Realmente no entiendo cómo soy un pecador, o porqué necesito creer en este Jesús de Quien hablas. Soy una buena persona".

Dirigamos a la última observación primero. ¿Realmente eres tan bueno como reclamas ser? En una ocasión particular, una cierta persona Le dirigió a Jesús como "Maestro bueno", y Le preguntó qué cosa buena debe hacer para obtener la Vida Eterna. ¿Cómo respondió el Señor a la observación respetuosa de este hombre? Quizás te sorprende saber que Jesús contestó por decir:

". . . ¿Por qué me llamas bueno? Ninguno es bueno sino uno, es á saber, Dios: y si quieres entrar en la vida, guarda los mandamientos."

Mateo 19:17b, RV

Así pues, con una sola declaración, el Señor informó al hombre que hay solamente un Ser Bueno; eso es, nuestro Padre en los Cielos; y entonces dijo al hombre algo que El supo que el hombre no sería capaz de cumplir. Dijo "guarda los mandamientos". En otras palabras, parece que el Señor estaba tratando de mostrar al hombre el error de su lógica, cuando él supuso falsamente que era bueno, y creyó erróneamente que podría merecer la Vida Eterna por medio de sus propias actos

buenos.

Cuánto esto suena como muchas personas de hoy, incluyendo algunos que pertenecen a la religión organizada. Tienen la idea equivocada que tienen que dar a Dios un poco de ayuda en salvarlos. Indirectamente, tal gente están indicando que el Sacrificio de Cristo en la Cruz no es expiación suficiente para nuestros pecados. La idea parece ser que necesitamos agregar nuestros esfuerzos humanos al trabajo terminado en el Calvario. Si Jesús dijo "consumado es", (Juan 19:30), entonces, de hecho fue terminado. No hay necesidad de agregar algo a Su Sacrificio, para que nosotros ganemos la Salvación; nada sino fe en lo que Él hizo para nosotros.

Volviendo a la definición del pecado, en su primera Epístola, el Apóstol Juan nos ofrece un muy corto, bien definido definición del pecado. El indica:

"Cualquiera que hace pecado, traspasa también la ley; pues el pecado es transgresión de la ley."

1 Juan 3:4, RV

¿Qué significa la palabra "transgresión"? En el Nuevo Testamento, es derivado de una palabra griega que significa vivir fuera de la ley, o violar la ley; eso es, quebrar la ley. ¿Exactamente a qué ley se refiere Juan? Obviamente, siendo un Israelita, se refería a las leyes más grandes del conducta humana, que el mundo ha sabido jamás; eso es, las Leyes de Moisés, establecidas en el Antiguo Testamento. La vida Judaica se centró alrededor de las Leyes de Moisés, como es evidente en ambos Testamentos, Antiguo y Nuevo. Como vimos hace un momento, mientras el Antiguo Testamento contiene literalmente cientos de leyes, Jesús las resumió cuando dijo que las leyes, o mandamientos, más grandes, son que amamos a Dios, y que amamos a nuestro prójimo como a nosotros mismos; y de cierto, amamos a nosotros mismos más que cualquier otro. "Yo mismo" es el número uno. La sobrevivencia del ego es la regla que gobierna este mundo actual. Como el Apóstol Pablo escribió:

"Porque ninguno aborreció jamás á su propia carne, antes la sustenta y regala, como también Cristo á la iglesia;"

Efesios 5:29, RV

Si cada uno de nosotros amásemos a nuestro prójimo como amamos a nosotros mismos, el mundo sería verdaderamente un lugar maravilloso en que vivir. Tristemente, la situación es muy diferente en estas épocas modernas. De hecho, Jesús dijo que a causa de la iniquidad, o el pecado, el Tiempo del Fin sería marcado por una falta de amor en el mundo, y Pablo dijo que los ciudadanos del Tiempo del Fin serían amantes de sí mismos, más que amantes de Dios, como vemos por los siguientes dos versículos:

"Y por haberse multiplicado la maldad, la caridad de muchos se resfriará."

Mateo 24:12, RV

"Que habrá hombres amadores de sí mismos, avaros, vanagloriosos, soberbios, detractores, desobedientes á los padres, ingratos, sin santidad . . ."

2 Timoteo 3:2, RV

Así, de nuevo, la más grande de todas las leyes Bíblicas es simplemente el amor, porque todas las otras leyes son abarcadas por ella. Santiago referió al amor como la "Ley Real" en el siguiente versículo:

"Si en verdad cumplís vosotros la ley real, conforme á la Escritura: Amarás á tu prójimo como á tí mismo, bien hacéis:"

Santiago 2:8, RV

Así pues, si de verdad anhelemos complacer a nuestro Rey Celestial, necesitamos obedecer Su "Ley Real": amor. Cuando hacemos algo que no es motivado por nuestro amor hacía Dios, o por amor para nuestros prójimos en alguna forma, pero sólo por un amor egoísta que nos traerá alguna ventaja o ganancia personal, de hecho, estamos quebrando la Ley de Dios. Santiago nos informa que aunque guardemos todas las leyes Bíblicas, y quebramos solamente una de ellas, somos culpables de quebrarlas todas:

"Porque cualquiera que hubiere guardado toda la ley, y ofendiere en un punto, es hecho culpado de todos."

Santiago 2:10, RV

Tal es la inutilidad de intentar de guardar la Ley. Tal es la inutilidad de intentar de lograr la Salvación por medio de nuestros propios actos buenos. No podemos ser lo suficiente bueno por decisión propia. Hemos traspasado la Ley; y eso nos hace pecadores; cada uno de nosotros. No hay ninguna manera de escapar de esta verdad. No hay ninguna forma de sortear la Ley de Dios. No podemos negociar con Dios. Todos somos culpables como hemos sido imputado.

Pero, como ya hemos visto, no todo es perdido. Hay una salida de este aprieto. Hay una manera de ser exonerado de la culpa. Hay una manera de evitar el castigo que merecemos. Hay una perspectiva consoladora al pecado que nubla y oscurece nuestras vidas. La culpa, la condenación, el juicio y el castigo no tienen que ser el fin de este cuento, si no deseamos que lo sea. No estamos sin esperanza. Hay una manera de escape. Como Jesús Mismo enseñó a Sus seguidores:

"Porque no envió Dios á su Hijo al mundo, para que condene al mundo, mas para que el mundo sea salvo por él."

Juan 3:17, RV

Ya hemos sido condenados por nuestros propios acciones egoístas y pecaminosas. Claramente, lo que necesitamos ahora es un Salvador, y Jesús es aquello Salvador. El nos ofrece libertad de la esclavitud del pecado; El nos ofrece la

esperanza de la Redención; y El nos ofrece el obsequio de la Vida Eterna, por Su Sacrificio amoroso en la Cruz. Como el Apóstol Pablo lo explica:

"Porque Cristo, cuando aún éramos flacos, á su tiempo murió por los impíos."
Romanos 5:6, RV

"Que en aquel tiempo estabais sin Cristo, alejados de la república de Israel, y extranjeros á los pactos de la promesa, sin esperanza y sin Dios en el mundo. Mas ahora en Cristo Jesús, vosotros que en otro tiempo estabais lejos, habéis sido hechos cercanos por la sangre de Cristo."
Efesios 2:12, 13, RV

Así ves, por aceptar los sufrimientos de Cristo en la Cruz, como expiación para nuestros pecados, podemos ser reunidos con El Padre. Nuestra comunión and relación íntima con El puede ser restaurado. Es por eso que unos pocos versículos después, Pablo también añade:

"Así que ya no sois extranjeros ni advenedizos, sino juntamente ciudadanos con los santos, y domésticos de Dios;"
Efesios 2:19, RV

¿Por qué Pablo dice esto? Porque eso es precisamente lo que Dios ha querido desde el principio. Ha querido que Sus niños descarriados vuelvan a El, así como en el cuento del Hijo Pródigo que se encuentra en el capítulo quince del Evangelio según San Lucas. De hecho, en el principio del Evangelio de Juan, somos dichos claramente que podemos ser hechos parte de la Casa de Dios; podemos ser hechos Sus hijos adoptados, simplemente por aceptar el Sacrificio de Su Hijo:

"Mas á todos los que le recibieron, dióles potestad de ser hechos hijos de Dios, á los que creen en su nombre:"
Juan 1:12, RV

Así pues, simplemente por creer en lo que Jesús hizo para nosotros, y por arrepentirnos de nuestros pecados, podemos encontrar perdón, y podemos ser reunidos con Dios; ambos en esta vida, y también en la vida por venir. Dios está muy dispuesto a perdonarnos por nuestros errores; El es capaz de raer nuestros pecados del Libro; El puede quitar la mancha de culpabilidad de nuestras vidas, si escojamos creer y aceptar el Sacrificio de Su Hijo como la Expiación Perfecta por nuestros pecados. De hecho, El implora con nosotros que hagamos la elección correcta. Como el Profeta Isaías escribió hace mas de 2,500 años:

"Venid luego, dirá Jehová, y estemos á cuenta: si vuestros pecados fueren como la grana, como la nieve serán emblanquecidos: si fueren rojos como el carmesí, vendrán á ser como blanca lana."
Isaías 1:18, RV

No hay otra manera. Dios sabe que no podemos ser lo

suficiente perfectos; no podemos ser lo suficiente justos; no podemos hacer suficiente actos buenos, para que merezcamos la Salvación y la Vida Eterna. No alcanzaremos la meta cada vez. Nunca cumpliremos Su norma de perfección. Por nosotros mismos, simplemente somos un caso sin esperanza; y siendo que es así, debemos humillarnos, y estar dispuestos a admitir que no lo podemos hacer solos, y que necesitamos Su ayuda. Si clamamos a El, y si confesamos nuestros pecados, y si confesamos nuestra necesidad, El promete que nos oirá, y nos salvará. Otra vez, el Profeta Isaías escribió:

"HE aquí que no se ha acertado la mano de Jehová para salvar, ni hase agravado su oído para oír:"
Isaías 59:1, RV

Como indica los versículos previos de Isaías, podemos ser limpiados de nuestros pecados. Podemos ser lavados limpios, y ser emblanquecidos como la nieve, por medio de la Sangre del Cordero de Dios, que quita los pecados del mundo.

Si nunca lo has oído antes, éste es el mensaje central de nuestra fe Cristiana: Eres un pecador, pero aún Dios te ama. El quiere perdonarte, y te quiere meter en Su Familia, y quiere darte la Vida Eterna; pero primero, tienes que estar dispuesto a cumplir las condiciones que El ha establecido. Eso comienza con la realización de que eres un pecador; y entonces tienes que arrepentirte de tus pecados, sean lo que sean. Si estás dispuesto a hacer esto, y si estás dispuesto a admitir tu necesidad de un Salvador, y si reconocas a Jesucristo como ese Salvador, ganarás ambos el Perdón y la Vida Eterna. Dios está esperando que hagas la elección correcta. Como el Apóstol Pedro escribió hace muchos años:

"El Señor no tarda su promesa, como algunos la tienen por tardanza; sino que es paciente para con nosotros, no queriendo que ninguno perezca, sino que todos procedan al arrepentimiento."
2 Pedro 3:9, RV

En otras palabras, Dios cumple Sus promesas. No es Su Voluntad que alguno de nosotros perezca; y es por eso que nos espera pacientemente a arrepentirnos de nuestros pecados, para que nos pueda extender la Mano de Salvación. En el Antiguo Testamento, durante el tiempo de Moisés y los hijos de Israel, fue dicho por ese gran libertador:

"Dios no es hombre, para que mienta; Ni hijo de hombre para que se arrepienta: El dijo, ¿y no hará?; Habló, ¿y no lo ejecutará?"
Números 23:19, RV

Dios el Padre, y Jesús Su Hijo, han cumplido su parte del trato. Su palabra es segura. Podemos confiar en ella. Entregarán las bendiciones prometidas; eso es, el Perdón, y la Vida Eterna, a los que creen. Jesús pagó con Su vida terrenal como un rescate por nuestros pecados. El murió para tí; para mí; para todos nosotros. Es por eso que en el

Evangelio de Juan, El nos dice:

"Y yo, si fuere levantado de la tierra, á todos traeré á mí mismo."

Juan 12:32, RV

"Todos" significa exactamente eso; todos; porque somos todos pecadores antes de Dios, y todos tenemos necesidad de un Salvador. No importa de que origen nacional seas. No importa de que persuasión religiosa seas en la actualidad, o si profeses ninguna fe. El punto decisivo es que sin Cristo, no tienes esperanza, y eres completamente perdido. Repitiendolo, Jesús cumplió Su Misión en la Cruz. El Hizo Su parte. Ahora te cae hacer tu parte. ¿Lo harás? Si eres uno de Sus hijos, lo sabrás, y oirás la Voz de Su Espíritu hablando a tu corazón a través de este mensaje. Como Jesús dijo también:

"Mis ovejas oyen mi voz, y yo las conozco, y me siguen;"

Juan 10:27, RV

El Apóstol Pablo también nos dice que aquéllos que son llamados, son predestinados y escogidos por Dios desde que antes de la fundación del mundo; y que el Señor sabe aquéllos que son Suyos. Considere estos versículos:

"Bendito el Dios y Padre del Señor nuestro Jesucristo, el cual nos bendijo con toda bendición espiritual en lugares celestiales en Cristo: Según nos escogió en él antes de la fundación del mundo, para que fuésemos santos y sin mancha delante de él en amor; Habiéndonos predestinado para ser adoptados hijos por Jesucristo á sí mismo, según el puro afecto de su voluntad . . . De reunir todas las cosas en Cristo, en la dispensación del cumplimiento de los tiempos, así las que están en los cielos, como las que están en la tierra: En él digo, en quien asimismo tuvimos suerte, habiendo sido predestinados conforme al propósito del que hace todas las cosas según el consejo de su voluntad,"
Efesios 1:3-5, 10-11, RV

"Pero el fundamento de Dios está firme, teniendo este sello: Conoce el Señor á los que son suyos; y: Apártese de iniquidad todo aquel que invoca el nombre de Cristo."

2 Timoteo 2:19, RV

Si sientas el Espíritu de Dios tocando a tu corazón ahora mismo, y si aún no has aceptado a Jesucristo como tu Señor y Salvador, permítame a invitarte a recibirlo ahora mismo. No es aconsejable que vaciles un día más. A fin de cuentas, quizás no tengas tanto tiempo. Como dice el dicho viejo, "Somos todos viejos. Podríamos morir mañana". Que Dios prohíba que esto suceda a tí, pero si lo hizo, ¿puedes decir con toda certeza que tienes la seguridad de la Salvación y la Vida Eterna? Citando del Profeta Isaías, el Apóstol Pablo escribió:

"En tiempo aceptable te he oído, Y en día de salud te he socorrido: he aquí ahora el tiempo aceptable; he aquí ahora

el día de salud:)"

2 Corintios 6:2, RV

En su discurso cerca de la brevedad de la vida humana, el Apóstol Santiago también escribió lo siguiente:

"Y no sabéis lo que será mañana. Porque ¿qué es vuestra vida? Ciertamente es un vapor que se aparece por un poco de tiempo, y luego se desvanece."

Santiago 4:14, RV

Entonces, considerando la incertidumbre de tu futuro, ¿no sería sabio en tu parte, hacer la decisión de aceptar a Jesucristo hoy; de hecho, ahora mismo? Si sientes que estás listo, pero no estás completamente cierto con respecto de como hacerlo, permita que yo sugiera la siguiente oración pequeña como una guía. Recuerde, por favor, que la oración no es solamente un ritual muerto que repites una y otra vez, como es enseñado por algunas religiones. La oración es el acto de hablar corazón a corazón con nuestro Padre en los Cielos. Por medio de la siguiente oración, o una oración semejante, estás expresando tu aceptación de tu condición pecaminosa; estás mostrando tu necesidad de un Salvador; y estás reconociendo que Jesucristo es ese Salvador.

Comprenda, por favor, que la Salvación es una cuestión de fe y de aceptación. Las palabras de esta oración son solamente el vehículo, o el medio, de mostrar esa aceptación antes de Dios. Las palabras por sí no te salvan. Lo que te salva es la fe y la creencia en tu corazón, en las promesas de Dios, como te las he explicado en este mensaje. Quizás quieras a orar algo como lo siguiente:

"Padre Celestial, sé que no soy perfecto. Admito que he cometido muchos errores. Sé que soy un pecador. Creo que Jesús es Su Hijo, y que El dió Su vida en la Cruz por mis pecados. Padre Celestial, le pido que me perdone por mis pecados, por medio del Sacrificio de Su Hijo, y que me conceda la Vida Eterna. Por favor, llene mi vida con Su Espíritu, y ayúdeme a comprender Su Palabra, la Biblia. En cuanto voy, ayúdeme a someterme a Su Voluntad para mi vida. Ayúdeme a vivir una vida que sea agradable en Su vista. Y tanto cuanto está dentro de mí, ayúdeme a comenzar también, a hablar a otros cerca de Su Hijo, Jesús, de modo que ellos puedan tener la Vida Eterna también. Padre, gracias por oír mi oración. En el nombre de Su Hijo, Jesús, le pido con humildad. Amén."

Si acabas de orar esta oración, o una oración semejante con sinceridad, entonces el Espíritu de Jesucristo ha entrado a tu vida, y has sido perdonado por tus pecados. Tu pizarra ha sido limpiado por la Sangre del Cordero, y has sido dado un comienzo nuevo; porque como el Apóstol Pablo escribió:

"De modo que si alguno está en Cristo, nueva criatura es: las cosas viejas pasaron; he aquí todas son hechas nuevas."

2 Corintios 5:17, RV

Jesús Mismo habló de este nacimiento espiritual nuevo, o renacimiento. Una cierta noche, un Fariseo noble vino a Jesús a inquirir de El con respecto a Su doctrina. Durante la conversación, el Señor dijo a Nicodemus:

". . . De cierto, de cierto te digo, que el que no naciere otra vez, no puede ver el reino de Dios. . . que el que no naciere de agua y del Espíritu, no puede entrar en el reino de Dios. Lo que es nacido de la carne, carne es; y lo que es nacido del Espíritu, espíritu es. No te maravilles de que te dije: Os es necesario nacer otra vez."

Juan 3:3b, 5b-7, RV

Por aceptar a Cristo como acabas de hacer, tu espíritu ha sido renovado, y has recibido la Vida Eterna; y algún día pronto, llegará a ser una realidad física para todos nosotros. Sabemos que ésto es así, porque la Biblia lo dice; y eso es todo lo tenemos que saber. Quizás no hayas oído algún trueno alto, o no hayas sentido algún sentimiento grande de emoción; pero todo lo que acabas de pedir, te ha sido concedido por la fe, simplemente porque Dios dice así en Su Palabra; y como ya hemos visto, Dios no es hombre para que mienta. Cumple Su Palabra. Cumple Sus Promesas, más que cualquier ser humano podrás saber jamás.

Así pues, ¡tienes una gran razón para regocijarte, porque acabas de ser admitido en la Familia Eterna de Dios! Perteneces a El por medio del derecho de adopción, a través de Jesucristo. De hecho, ahora mismo, ¡los ángeles en el Cielo están recocijando contigo! Sabemos que es así, porque Jesús Mismo dijo que es así. En el Evangelio según Lucas nos dice:

"Os digo, que así habrá más gozo en el cielo de un pecador que se arrepiente, que de noventa y nueve justos, que no necesitan arrepentimiento . . . Así os digo que hay gozo delante de los ángeles de Dios por un pecador que se arrepiente."

Lucas 15:7, 10, RV

¡Que Dios te bendiga ricamente en tu Vida Nueva con El! Para asistirte en tu fé nueva, sugerimos que comienzas a leer inmediatamente las Escrituras. Siendo un Creyente nuevo en Jesucristo, sería bueno que empiezas por leer los cuatro Evangelios que describen en gran detalle, el Nacimiento, la Vida, el Mensaje, la Muerte y la Resurrección de Jesucristo. También, te animamos a leer los muchos artículos, que están llenos de Escrituras, que se encuentran en nuestro website, endtimeprophecy.net. Estos artículos contestarán muchas preguntas que quizás tengas con respecto a la Biblia. De nuevo, que el Señor te bendiga y enriquezca a tu vida, mientras estudias las muchas maravillas de Su Palabra, y empiezas a compartirla con los demás.

Reina-Valera version de la Santa Biblia.

Este artículo fue escrito en inglés por el WordWeaver, y traducido al Español por el WordWeaver, Carmen y Mario.

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

MONEY-MAKING BIBLE HUCKSTERS AND MAMMON : PART 1

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Online Money-Making Bible Hucksters, Freely Ye Have Received, Jesus' Example Of Freely Sharing God's Truth, Not Infallible, Casting The Bait, Secret Societies, Lure Of Esoteric Wisdom, Worldly Commercial Spirit And What Is In It For Me, Helping Others Because It Is The Right Thing To Do, Jesus' Anger In The Temple, Simon The Sorcerer Tries To Purchase Holy Spirit, Peter Heals Lame Man, Biblical Meaning Of The Word "Publish", A Free Written Record, What If The Original Manuscripts Had Been Sold?, Modern Friends Of Mammon, Abundant Life Doctrine, Lay Not Up Treasures On Earth, We Cannot Serve Two Masters, Dilemma Of Wealthy People, Example Of Moses & Other Examples, Bob Dylan - You Gotta Serve Somebody, Parable Of The Sower, Freely Preach The Gospel, Danger Of Filthy Lucre, Practicing Humility In Our Preaching, Modern Self-Proclaimed Prophets

Some time ago, while scanning various Internet newsgroups, I happened upon one of many messages in which the writer offered some interesting information related to Endtime prophecy. Following the instructions that were provided in the message post, I sent him a reply to obtain additional information. This person responded with an email message which was even more tantalizing than his first newsgroup post. It provided some additional comments on the knowledge which this person claimed to possess, but it didn't contain the actual information. At this point I was beginning to get a better idea of what this man was all about. Following the instructions in the email message, I went to the URL that he had included. You can imagine the deep disappointment that I experienced upon discovering that the message posted in the newsgroup, as well as the private email message, were only bait to lure me, and other spiritually hungry folks, to what amounted to nothing more than a commercial web site, where God's Word, or at least what this person claimed was the proper interpretation of God's Word, was being sold for a profit.

Quite frankly, I find it rather objectionable, and in fact, it really upsets me, that modern Christianity has become so overrun by Bible hucksters who feel that they have the right to convert the sharing of God's truth into nothing more than another worldly business venture. Being a prolific writer myself, I can understand and appreciate that many Christian writers invest a considerable amount of time, energy, thought and money into their writing and research endeavors. However, this is no excuse for anyone to sell the truth, or at least what we believe to be the truth, concerning the Scriptures. Like this person who posted a message in the newsgroup, I've been dedicated to sharing Biblical truth with those who are willing to hear it for many years. However, I do not sell it. I firmly believe in what the Lord taught us in the Gospels when He said:

". . . freely ye have received, freely give."
Matthew 10:8b, KJV

In my view, to put a price on Biblical truth is to indirectly suggest that the only people who are worthy of hearing it, or reading it, are those who are willing to pay for it. This, of course, is in direct contradiction to the whole Spirit of the Bible. This is most definitely not the method which Jesus and His followers practiced. Jesus didn't go around on book tours or speaking engagements in which He charged hefty fees before He would even be willing to speak. He shared God's truth in the open air, for all to hear, freely. Furthermore, being as the ideas of any Christian writer are not infallible, anyone who is foolish enough to pay money for their books, videos or whatever it is that they are selling, is taking a big gamble.

Let us be honest about this. The truth of the matter is that we may truly and sincerely believe in what we are writing and teaching, but to promote such beliefs as some absolute truth which supersedes the writings of all other Christian writers and teachers -- as some of these fast-talking Bible hucksters do -- is simply a product of vanity and pride, and an attempt to enrich oneself by relying upon the gullibility of others. As I said, I often receive emails from some of these crafty characters, and I will sometimes visit their websites. When they make the claim that they are going to reveal something new, some shocking revelation that they have just discovered which has never been heard before, -- for a modest price, of course -- that is when they lose me. I wonder how many people send in money to some of these money-making Bible hucksters, only to be disappointed later when they find out exactly what it is the writers espouse. Perhaps you are one who has been "burned" by some of these scam artists.

You see, this is precisely the gimmick that some writers use in order to attract gullible souls to their lairs. They will tease you and purposely pique your curiosity with some hidden "truth" which they have purportedly discovered; but until you bite the bait and send in your money, they won't let you know exactly what it is. This is the same technique that is used by some individuals who are involved with certain so-called "secret societies", such as the Kabbalists, Freemasons, and other such groups. Even the Roman Catholic Church just loves to surround things in mystery, such as the so-called secrets of Fatima. Certain cults will employ this very same method in order to attract new recruits. They all claim to possess some secret knowledge, or some esoteric wisdom, or some mystical power which is only meant for the "chosen few". You have to go through certain initiation rites and advance one level at a time, until they feel that you are worthy of the "ultimate truth", and the powers which they supposedly possess. This issue is something which I likewise discuss in some of my Endtime and New Age articles.

Well, I am sorry folks -- no, not really -- but it is rather difficult for me personally to believe in the sincerity of some of these money-making Bible hucksters. If their hearts were really right with the Lord, and if they were sincerely interested in enlightening people, instead of in just making money, they would freely share what the Lord has supposedly revealed to them, and not hoard it, and only share it with those people who are willing to pay them money for it. In my view, such "Christian" writers are guilty of yielding to the very same commercial spirit which has polluted the world. It is so sad to see that everything today is based on money and profit. There was a time when good-hearted people did things simply because it helped someone else and because it was the right thing to do. Now, however, everything has a price; and so many people want to know what is in it for them first,

before they are willing to extend a helpful hand to someone.

Many of you reading this will be familiar with the story of how Jesus became upset with the moneychangers and sellers in the courts of the temple in Jerusalem. Those merchants were profiting from the devotion to God of the common people, and Jesus didn't like it one bit, as we see here:

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves."

Matthew 21:12-13, KJV

"And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise."

John 2:13-16, KJV

In another example, which is found in the Book of the Acts, there was an evil sorcerer in Samaria by the name of Simon, who actually thought that he could purchase the power of the Holy Spirit from the Apostles. Consider the following verses:

"But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans."

Acts 8:9-25, KJV

Another interesting example is found in the third chapter of the Book of Acts, where Peter heals a lame man who is asking for alms near the temple in Jerusalem. Peter plainly tells the man that he has no money, and then proceeds to heal the man by the Power of God. Even though Peter obviously has no money, does he ask the lame man for a financial gift before he is willing to heal him? Of course not, as we see here:

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God: And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him."
Acts 3:2-10, KJV

It is plain to see then that Biblical truth, and the Power and the Spirit of God, cannot, and should not, be bought or sold for profit. In my view, there is no difference between what these money-making Bible hucksters are doing today, and what the moneychangers and temple merchants did almost two thousand years ago. Whether you sell doves in the temple, or exchange coins so that people can pay their tithes, or sell books, magazines, tapes or videos which purportedly contain the truth of God's Word, it is all the same selfish spirit of worldly commercialism. It is making a worldly business out of God's Divine Business of winning lost souls to His Kingdom.

On a related note, it may interest you to know that the word "publish" is mentioned eighteen times in the Authorized King James version of the Holy Bible. The word "publisheth" is also mentioned four times. In every instance, these words are not referring to writing and selling books, but rather to verbally proclaiming or declaring something. Following are a few examples which may be familiar to you:

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"
Isaiah 52:7, KJV

"And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"
Romans 10:15, KJV

Notice how the Apostle Paul substitutes the word "preach" in order to show the true meaning of the word "publish", as it was used by the Prophet Isaiah. When Jesus told His Disciples in Mark 16:15 to "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature", that is exactly what He meant: Go preach, or verbally publish, the Good News. Of course, thanks to the Lord's foresight, He gave His followers the wisdom to

eventually write down everything so that future generations of Christians could be spiritually edified by their accounts and teachings. However, when the holy men and Prophets of the Bible did write their various parchments, books, Gospels and Epistles, they did not go around selling them for a profit. They freely distributed them to the Body of Believers. It was probably very similar to a free courier system, to maintain communication between the early Believers. Their intent was to exalt the Lord, and to instruct, strengthen and edify the Church; that is, the worldwide Body of Believers. It wasn't to earn a profit like so many of these money-making Bible hucksters do today.

Imagine if the original writers of the Bible had only sold their works to those who could afford them. Would the truth of the Bible be as widely dispersed as it is today? Probably not. It would probably be similar to when the Roman Catholic Church intentionally kept the Bible in Latin, and out of the hands of ordinary people, so that they could dictate what it meant, and thus maintain control over the consciences of the masses. Is it any wonder then that today the Roman Catholic Church has compromised with the secular world, and continues to be one of the largest and richest commercial enterprises? Sadly, many other denominations have quickly followed in the steps of the Roman Catholic Church, and are equally guilty of the very same things. In our modern day, these money-minded Christians don't even realize that they have fulfilled one of the very things that Jesus warned us against when He said:

"And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

Luke 16:9, KJV

Nowadays, some materialistic Christians claim that the Lord came to give us the abundant life. The Southern Baptists are particularly notorious for promoting this false belief. They will quote all of their favorite verses in their attempts to justify their selfish lifestyle, but they have gotten it all wrong. Jesus was not talking about physical abundance, but rather spiritual abundance; that is, being rich in Spirit. In fact, if we turn to the Sermon on the Mount, we find the following verses:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Matthew 6:19-21, KJV

So tell me; who has really misinterpreted the Scriptures? Those verses certainly don't talk about an abundant life in the flesh as these material-minded Christians like to claim. Only a few verses later, Jesus made it even more clear what He meant when He said the following:

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Matthew 6:24, KJV

That word "mammon" is derived from the Greek "mammonas", and is referring to accumulating physical wealth. As Jesus also stated in several of the Gospels:

". . . Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God . . . And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."
Matthew 19:23-24, 29, KJV

". . . Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!"
Mark 10:24b, KJV

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."
Luke 14:33, KJV

The Apostle James likewise had some rather harsh words for the rich people of the world. In the fifth chapter of his Epistle he wrote the following:

"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."
James 5:1-7, KJV

Why did the Lord teach such difficult things? Quite simply, because He fully knows and understands the heart of man; and He realizes that the vast majority of wealthy people are not willing, or capable, of giving up their riches. They prefer the riches and power of this current temporal world, and not the spiritual rewards and riches of God's Eternal Kingdom. I have often said that we should never forget that such people are in business to make as much money as they possibly can, and at whatever the cost; because they are married to their money. Furthermore, as the Apostle Paul tells us, the love of money is the root of all evil. Why are there so many wars and other evils in the world? In many cases, after we clear away all of the lies and deceptions that are put in place by worldly governments, we discover that it is all about money and profit. Paul wrote:

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
1 Timothy 6:10, KJV

This secular attitude of loving money, power and fame is so unlike that of Moses, of whom we are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that he was willing to forsake it all in order to serve the Eternal God, as we see here:

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

Hebrews 11:24-27, KJV

Moses could have remained in Egypt and continued living the royal life. Perhaps Elijah could have earned his millions by stopping the rain for the enemies of Israel. Jesus could no doubt have been a billionaire in His day, had He charged for His healing services and other miracles. Perhaps the Apostle Paul could have continued to enjoy life as a self-righteous, law-abiding, affluent Pharisee, instead of becoming number one on the Jews' "Most Wanted" list. But that is not what any of these men did, because they all had their eyes on something far greater which transcends this temporal human existence. As Paul so eloquently stated in his Epistle to the brethren at Philippi:

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,"

Philippians 3:8, KJV

As legendary folk singer Bob Dylan proclaimed more than two decades ago in one of his powerful Christian-oriented songs, "Now it may be the Devil, and it may be the Lord, but you gotta serve somebody!" As was to be expected, Dylan suffered some degree of persecution after writing such a hard-hitting song which was so contrary to his Jewish roots. Sadly, it seems that Bob Dylan was like the seed that was sown on the stony ground in the Lord's Parable of the Sower, found in Matthew 13:3-23; and after putting out a few Christian CD's, he returned to his earlier musical roots. As Jesus stated in that Parable:

"Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away . . . But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

Matthew 13:5, 6, 20, 21, KJV

But to reiterate an important point that I made earlier, when a person preaches the Word of God, such as through a public street ministry, singing, passing out tracts, sharing God's Word online, etc., they are fulfilling the actual meaning of the Biblical word "publish", because they are freely sharing the truth of the Scriptures with anyone who is willing to receive it, and not with just a select few who can afford to pay for it. As I explain in a number of my articles, Jesus has already paid the full price for our Salvation by way of His Sacrifice on the Cross; and now we must return the favor by glorifying Him, by allowing Him to use both our bodies and spirits as His vessels to share the Gospel of Salvation with the world. As the Apostle Paul tells us in several of his

Epistles, as well as in the Book of Acts:

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

1 Corinthians 6:20, KJV

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."

2 Timothy 4:2, KJV

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,"

Acts 20:20, KJV

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, 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."

Romans 10:9-10, KJV

As far as I am concerned, when the Lord reveals something to one of His servants, it is that person's responsibility to freely share it with as many people as he can without giving any thought to what he might gain in return. Isn't that what the Bible teaches us? The Apostles of the First Century had some very clear things to say regarding those who preached the Gospel for personal gain -- or "filthy lucre" -- as we see by the following verses:

"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous . . . Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;"

1 Timothy 3:3, 8, KJV

"For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre . . . Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake."

Titus 1:7, 11, KJV

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;"

1 Peter 5:2, KJV

As some of my long-time readers know, over the years, I have devoted a lot of time and energy to this writing ministry. I have likewise invested quite a large sum of money in it as well. However, I really don't care if I never earn any money from it, because I am not trying to. I am not motivated by personal financial gain -- or filthy lucre -- and profit. My primary interest is simply to share what I believe may be the truth concerning the Scriptures. My primary task is to remain faithful to the Lord's command found in Mark 16:15. As I have said before, I believe that we each possess different pieces of the puzzle. No one possesses the entire puzzle or knows it all; not me, not you, not any of us. If anyone believes they do, then they are just deceiving themselves, and are lifted up in their own pride and vanity, and are seriously lacking in Christian humility. As the Apostle Paul also tells us, knowledge can puff us up, or make us proud, and that can be

dangerous:

"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."

1 Corinthians 8:1, KJV

The Book of Proverbs also offers us a stiff warning regarding those who become puffed up in their own pride, as we see by this verse:

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

Proverbs 16:18, KJV

So again, regardless of how much the Lord may reveal to us in His Word, we all need to maintain a level of humility in our preaching. This is not always easy. After all, we're all just humans who are born with a sinful nature, and that old pride just loves to pop up whenever it can, just like one of those stubborn jack-in-the-boxes. As the Apostle James said:

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."

James 4:10, KJV

Sadly, as I mentioned earlier, I've visited certain websites where the author will boastfully exclaim, "Oh, I've got the truth! I've received a special, unique revelation from God! Everyone else is wrong except me! I guarantee that you will not find this kind of information on any other website! I'm unique! I am the one and only! I am God's Prophet!"

That is nonsense! In addition to the many self-proclaimed "prophets" who have established themselves on the Internet, some of those Christian mega-sites are affiliated with some affluent church or religious organization which has piles of money to throw around, and they are simply promoting their particular doctrines. The point is, if they claim, "Everyone else is wrong and we are right", you better be careful; and please don't send them your hard-earned money. It is only in coming together and sharing what we have that we can all get a clearer understanding of God's whole picture. While we may not always see eye to eye on every single point -- because we're all different and our backgrounds and life experiences will affect how we understand the Scriptures -- at least we are talking, and discussing, and making our ideas available for each other's consideration, instead of merely hoarding what we have learned, or worse yet, selling it for a profit.

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series.

Written by the WordWeaver

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

MONEY-MAKING BIBLE HUCKSTERS AND MAMMON : PART 2

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Paul's Counsel In 1 Corinthians, Phony Donations, Charity And Supporting God's Workers, Seek First The Kingdom And God Will Provide Your Needs, The Cheerful Giver, Suffer All Things For The Gospel, Apostle Paul's Example, Lords Over God's Heritage, 1st Century Church Financial Plan, Christian Communal Living, Not For Personal Gain Or Filthy Lucre, Greedy False Shepherds, Modern Commercialized Christianity And Superficial Preachers, Modern Christianity's Dandy Bad Example, Hindering The Gospel, The Antichrist Jewish Leaders, Judged According To Our Works, Church Of Laodicea, Danger Of Materialism, Babylon The Great

I would have been interested in reading some of the material which this man, and others like him, offer; however, I'm not about to encourage any of these money-making Bible hucksters to continue in their practices by sending them money. It is my firm belief that those who preach the Gospel should find some other means of supporting themselves, so that they can deliver the truth of God's Word freely to the spiritually destitute of the world. The Apostle Paul had to deal with this very same problem, and wrote the following in his first Epistle to the brethren at Corinth:

"Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have we not power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

1 Corinthians 9:3-14, KJV

Some people have used the previous verses as a means to try to justify commercializing our Christian faith. There is an old saying some of them use which says something like "The Gospel am free, but it cost somethin' to pipe it to ya!" It does cost money to preach the Gospel of Christ; there is no doubt about that; however, I am by no means convinced that the Apostle Paul was advocating that we should commercialize

our faith, such as by selling books, videos, music CD's and the like, or by charging money for speaking engagements. It also really irks me when some of these Bible hucksters claim that they will give you their book or CD in exchange for a generous "donation". When these hucksters refuse to give you their product unless you "donate", then it really isn't a donation, is it? They are in fact selling you something, and it is hypocritical to try to pretend that it is a donation.

My understanding is that if we faithfully preach the Gospel, then those people to whom we are ministering, who gladly receive the Word, should feel an obligation to help support us in return. In other words, I am talking about good old charity; and I believe that this is what Paul is referring to as well. If we, as preachers of God's Word, provide their spiritual needs, then in return, they should be willing to provide our physical needs. Perhaps someone can offer you a rent-free place to live, or food to eat, or clothes to wear. That is basically all that any of us really needs to survive happily, and of course a computer, if you happen to have an electronic ministry as I do. If you happen to be a traveling missionary, a car or truck with a trailer or camper would take the place of a stationary home. Folks can also donate monetary gifts as well to help pay for utilities, gasoline, etc.

As I point out in "Seek Ye First The Kingdom Of God", all I know is that if we faithfully preach the Gospel of Salvation as we've been called to do, God will provide our every need. He will take care of us, somehow, in some way, even if that means subsisting on donations and charity. He may not provide everything that we want, but He will most certainly provide everything that we really need, and we won't have to sell His Word in order to obtain it either. Jesus promised us this, and other writers in the Bible promised it as well, as we see by the following verses:

"Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart . . . I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Psalms 37:4, 25, KJV

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

Matthew 6:33-34, KJV

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened . . . If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

Matthew 7:7-8, 11, KJV

"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Matthew 21:22, KJV

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more

value than many sparrows."

Luke 12:6-7, KJV

"And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Luke 12:22-31, KJV

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Romans 8:32, KJV

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:19, KJV

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

1 John 5:14-15, KJV

Please notice that in the previous verses, it is emphasized that we should direct our prayers, concerns and needs to God the Father, and then He will provide accordingly. Nowhere in those verses do we find anyone suggesting that we should sell God's Word, or other Christian-related materials, for money, in order to provide our own needs. In short, God will provide for us through those people to whom we preach the Gospel.

Furthermore, as I also point out in the article "The Cheerful Giver: Supporting God's Work", if Christian believers support those who preach the Gospel to them, God will bless them in return; because as the Apostle Paul also tells us, God loves a cheerful giver. In other words, God loves those people who freely give from their hearts, because they want to give, and not because they are forced to give, or feel pressured to give; and they don't grumble about it either, as we see here:

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

2 Corinthians 9:7, KJV

In the previous verses that I shared with you at the end of part one, Paul clarifies that we are not supposed to force people to pay us in any way, before we are willing to share the Gospel with them; yet this is exactly what some of these

modern preachers are doing, such as the person who inspired this series. In their haste to justify their actions, some of these unscrupulous people who commercialize our Christian faith will quote the last verse where Paul says "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel". However, what they neglect to point out is that a few verses earlier, Paul also states "Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ". In other words, Paul is clarifying that while they could use their position as the Lord's Apostles to force people to give them money, or to provide them with whatever other needs they may have, they refuse to exercise this Apostolic authority, because to do this could hinder the furtherance of the Gospel.

A few verses later, Paul again verifies that it is better to suffer personal need for the Gospel's sake, than to exercise his power as an Apostle of Christ, and demand payment for his preaching services. Rather than become a selfish shepherd of the Word who will only share the Gospel with those who are willing to pay for it, Paul clearly states that he prefers to make the Gospel of Christ known "without charge", as we see here:

"What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel."

1 Corinthians 9:18, KJV

Sadly, as we have already seen, to our shame, today there are many of these money-making Bible hucksters who have chosen to ignore everything below verse fourteen; and I suspect that at least some of them do it because they know that those verses expose their sins of selfishness and greed. I encourage you to take the time to read the whole chapter so as to obtain a better understanding of exactly what Paul is saying in these verses.

One thing that is certain, is the fact that because Paul was not willing to charge money for preaching the Gospel, he was willing to "suffer all things", because he simply didn't want to hinder the propagation of the Gospel of Christ. We know from the Book of Acts, as well as from some of the Epistles, that Paul and his companions often suffered as a result of being ambassadors of the Gospel of Christ. Not only was both verbal and physical persecution common, but sometimes, they also lacked their own physical needs. This is made quite clear for us in passages such as the following:

"We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day."

1 Corinthians 4:10-13, KJV

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Philippians 4:11-13, KJV

If Paul was charging money for his preaching services, if he was earning filthy lucre as he shared the Gospel of Salvation with people, why would he even make such statements? He would have all of his needs met all of the time, right? It becomes obvious then that he wasn't asking for anything in return. He was seeking first the Kingdom of God, and simply trusting God to touch people's hearts to share with him, just as he was sharing his spiritual riches with them, as he stated in his Epistle to the Corinthians. It was an exchange of spiritual blessings for physical needs.

What a far cry from the glitzy, well-groomed, fast-talking preachers of our current time! So we see then that people who make such demands on their flocks are in contradiction to the Scriptures. They are not following the financial plan of the First Century Church, and they are abusing their position as ministers of God's Word. In fact, this kind of behavior is probably what Peter was referring to when he stated that we should not be "lords over God's heritage", as we see in the following verses. Please notice again that Peter states that we should not preach the Gospel for personal gain -- or for filthy lucre. Peter is clearly making a connection between preaching for our own personal gain, and being lords over God's heritage:

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

1 Peter 5:2-4, KJV

It seems then that Peter and Paul were very much in agreement regarding this particular issue of commercializing our faith. They shared the belief that fleecing the sheep was not God's financial plan for the First Century Church. So exactly what was God's financial plan for the Early Christians? Well, as the old adage goes, "Where God guides, He will also provide". In looking at the New Testament, we learn that the Disciples of the Early Church made ends meet through a variety of ways. Primary among these was their sharing of the goods or money donated by new Disciples, as well as others who believed in and supported their work. Consider the following verses:

"And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

Acts 2:44-45, KJV

"Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,"

Acts 4:34, KJV

In a later chapter, we discover that when a congregation in one place had more than was actually needed, it would share its surplus with a congregation in another city. For example, consider how Paul and Barnabas were sent to help the Elders in Jerusalem:

"And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his

ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."

Acts 11:28-30, KJV

Thus we see that the early followers of Christ practiced a pure form of Christian communism. They lived communally, and they shared everything according to each person's need. Yet in spite of this straight forward financial plan that's laid out for us in the pages of the New Testament, there are many Christians today who will say "Oh, that was for back then; we cannot possibly live like that today. Life has become far too complicated."

While this may be partially true, I remain convinced that two factors which contribute to this problem, is our own lack of faith and trust in the Lord, as well as the extremely selfish lifestyles that we lead. This makes Christian communal living more difficult to achieve today. There have been Christian and non-Christian organizations which have attempted it; and they have been successful for a number of years. Eventually, however, it seems that selfishness and materialism creep in, and some of them don't last. What likewise hampers Christian communal living is the fact that the secular world frowns upon any group of people who choose to live in this fashion due to their common religious or philosophical beliefs, or simply to save money, or for whatever their reasons. Just try it, and you will quickly be branded as a dangerous cult by "respectable" civic and religious leaders alike. Before you realize it, government agencies like the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Child Protective Services, etc., will be after you, looking for reasons to discredit you.

If you are interested in reading more about the Early Church Plan, I encourage you to read my companion article "Where Are The First Century Churches?" The point is, God can and will provide today, just as He did two thousand years ago, if we only have the faith to believe. After all, as we are told in the Scriptures:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Malachi 3:10, KJV

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."
Hebrews 13:8, KJV

But returning to the main subject of this series, it should be clear to you, the reader, by now, that we are not to seek financial reward for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are not to do it for filthy lucre's sake. If you've felt the call to be an Ambassador of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then I truly hope that you're willing to preach simply out of your love for lost souls, even if you never receive any reward or recognition here on Earth. After all, we have our reward, and it is in Heaven.

So again, these money-minded preachers are misrepresenting the Gospel. They are giving the Gospel of Jesus Christ a very bad name. They are being lords over God's heritage, and living the so-called "abundant life" at the expense of their flocks. They are fleecing their flocks much like the greedy shepherds which

are described in the thirty-fourth chapter of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, as we see here:

"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock . . . Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them."

Ezekiel 34:2-3, 7-10, KJV

What a stinging rebuke to modern day false shepherds who do the very same thing! They wear their fancy clothes and their expensive rings. They ride around in their luxurious cars and build their multi-million dollar mega-churches. Some even own vast amounts of real estate and large companies worldwide. We see flashy preachers making multi-million dollar deals with various facets of the mass media, while others preach a vast array of strange and unscriptural doctrines. These wolves in sheep's clothing preach about living the "abundant life", but they are the only ones who are actually living it! Our faith has also been shamed by preachers and preachers' wives who have been unfaithful to each other, while others have been involved with homosexuality and pedophilia. Yet others are discovered to be entangled in questionable financial deals, and on and on the bad dream goes.

Is it really any wonder then that modern-day Christianity has obtained such a bad image, and a bad name? Is it really any wonder that some people see the superficiality and hypocrisy of some Christian churches and leaders today and say "I don't want any part of that! I'd rather be a Buddhist, or a Muslim or a Wiccan, or a New Ager, or an atheist"? Tragically, while I don't agree with their choices, I can't say that I really blame them to a certain extent. What kind of an example have these people been given by the so-called "leaders" of modern Christianity? I must fully concur then with the Apostle Paul when he states that this kind of abusive behavior has indeed hindered the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It has prevented some people from entering the Kingdom of God, and in some cases, it has made it difficult for some people to believe in God at all. In fact, I am reminded of a similar comment that Jesus made to the self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees of His day when He said:

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

Matthew 23:13, KJV

Of course, in that case, I believe that Jesus was saying that those religious leaders had placed the bar so high, through all of their special laws and requirements, that no one could

have gained Eternal Life even if they had wanted to. Not only that, but it is quite evident that the Scribes and Pharisees persecuted and threatened anyone who dared to believe in and follow Jesus. As I point out in other articles, not only did they murder Jesus in cold blood, but they then proceeded to persecute, incarcerate and kill His followers in the Book of Acts. What some of these church leaders and famous preachers are doing today isn't quite the same, but the end result is still the same; and that is that they are hurting the message of the Gospel, through their dandy bad examples of hypocrisy, materialistic living and superficiality, and they are driving people away from our Christian faith, instead of towards it.

One thing is certain. According to the Scriptures, some day, these shameful and irresponsible Christian leaders will be held accountable for their actions. In fact, we all will; for as it is clearly written in God's Word:

"If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

Proverbs 24:12, KJV

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

Matthew 16:27, KJV

"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:"

1 Peter 1:17, KJV

". . . I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works."

Revelation 2:23b, KJV

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Revelation 14:13, KJV

"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."

Revelation 20:12-13, KJV

As I pondered the previous verses, and wondered what kind of a reward these money-making Bible hucksters might receive on their day of judgment, the verse that came to me was this:

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Daniel 12:2, KJV

I can't begin to imagine what it would be like to be scorned for all of eternity; can you? It would be simply dreadful; yet that is apparently what some people are going to have to endure, as a result of their sins in this current life.

In thinking about the rampant commercialism that's perverted and corrupted our Christian faith, I'm reminded of the Lord's message to the church at Laodicea, as written in the Book of Revelation. In the third chapter, we find the following dire warning:

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."
Revelation 3:15-19, KJV

Such is the danger of being enticed by, and overcome by, the materialistic pleasures of this current world. We become so complacent and spiritually blind that we're no longer capable of seeing our true spiritual condition. The physical comfort that riches bring can draw us away from the Lord without us even realizing it. It is a slow, subtle process. The Apostle John was fully aware of this danger, and thus he warns us:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are 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 for ever."
1 John 2:15-17, KJV

If you would like to learn more about this subject, please consider visiting the "Snare Of Riches" article section of the Endtime Prophecy Net website.

The previous verses from the Book of Revelation concerning the self-confidence of the church at Laodicea remind me of boastful Babylon the Great, which some Christians view as being the false, worldwide religious system of our modern day. In Revelation chapter eighteen, we find the following verse concerning the mystery woman Babylon:

"How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow."
Revelation 18:7, KJV

For more in-depth information regarding this topic, please consider reading my article "Revelation's Babylon The Great".

Please go to part three for the conclusion of this series.

Written by the WordWeaver

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

MONEY-MAKING BIBLE HUCKSTERS AND MAMMON : PART 3

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Mark Of The Beast, What Will You Do?, A Sad Conversation In Heaven, Using Modern Technology To Reach The Lost, Motivated By Love, Money - The Root Of All Evil, Erring From The Faith, Good Samaritan And Spiritual Doctors, A Free Gospel For All, Follow The Example Of The First Century Church, Conclusion

As we have seen, some Christians today have replaced their faith in the true God of Heaven, with faith in the false god of this current world -- Satan -- and his devilish system of money, profit and materialism. They have been enticed by his deceitful offerings, and they have lost their way. They may still proclaim "In God We Trust", but the god in whom they are trusting seems to be the one which is printed or molded on worldly money. However, as I point out in other articles, eventually, even that will be replaced by a more diabolical system. When the time comes, not even credit cards and Smart Cards will suffice then. The god of this world won't be happy until he has everyone worshipping him directly. Ultimately, he will force his loyal followers to receive a unique mark; possibly a biochip implant, similar to the VeriChip, to demonstrate their sole allegiance to him. As we also read in the Book of Revelation:

"And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six."
Revelation 13:16-18, KJV

So we must ask ourselves: What is going to happen to all of these money-making Bible hucksters and wheeler-dealers who currently depend upon filthy lucre -- the unrighteous mammon -- to sustain their "abundant lifestyle"? What are they going to do when there isn't any money left for anyone to buy their books, magazines, tapes, videos, DVD's, CD's, etc.? Will they simply stop preaching the Gospel? Are they simply going to go along with the crowd and accept the Mark of the Beast so they can continue to survive in a Satan-dominated world, and sell their commercialized brand of Christianity? More importantly, if you are such a money-making Bible huckster, what are you going to do when some day you have to face the Lord? I can just imagine a conversation similar to the following:

"Well Lord, I bet you are really proud of me. After all, I sold one million copies of my book on how to be a successful Christian in the modern world, and three million copies of my Endtime video presentation with special emphasis on the Book of Daniel, and five million copies of my tapes on the Book of Revelation with special sound effects. I was a well-respected member of my church, and a pillar of my community. I was an acclaimed Christian writer, I helped to fund our mega-church, and . . ."

And then, after you've explained to the Lord in great detail why you merit your Crown of Life, and entrance into Heaven, maybe the Lord will look at you sadly for a moment, and then say something similar to the following:

"Well son, you know, I really wanted to use you to reach some of those poor folks down there in that poor neighborhood, but you informed them that they couldn't have a copy of your book unless they gave you a "donation" first. You just teased them by telling them about the wonderful things they could learn from reading your book. I had to go and send someone else who had a real love for the lost, and who wasn't just interested in making money or upholding his public image. I am certainly glad to see those folks made it into the Kingdom despite your dismal failure. Depart from me ye worker of iniquity! I never knew you!"

Now, let me clarify here that I am not saying that it's wrong to use all of these different methods -- printing magazines, books and newsletters, producing music and lesson tapes and CD's, making videos, recording MP3's -- in order to preach the Gospel. We live in the modern world, so naturally, we should take advantage of modern technology and use modern methods in order to reach people with the Gospel and to feed God's sheep. Furthermore, we should each do whatever the Lord shows us to do, use whatever method works for us, and do whatever we can afford to do. As we read earlier in the Book of Acts, "every man according to his ability". As Paul explains in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, we each have our chosen ministry, and we each have our particular gifts and talents from the Lord.

However, as I have made abundantly clear, where the problem lies is when these money-making Bible hucksters turn God's business of winning souls to the Kingdom of Heaven into just another worldly commercial enterprise, and they refuse to let people hear the Gospel -- assuming that they're preaching the real Gospel -- simply because people can't afford to pay for it. When they do this, when they put money before the Most High, as many of them now do, it is wrong, wrong, wrong, and it is really time for them to check their hearts, and to see what their real motives are for being in the Gospel business.

After listing all of the different gifts and ministries of the Spirit in chapter twelve, the Apostle Paul concludes by saying the following:

"But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way."
1 Corinthians 12:31, KJV

It is right after this, that Paul expounds on the importance of the gift of charity; that is to say, love. Now, if you are saying, "Pay me first, and then I will send you what the Lord has shown me", then I will tell you here and now that you've got your priorities all wrong! You are not being motivated by God's love! You are not lovingly sharing the Gospel with the Lord's sheep; you are raping them! You are not really serving the Lord, you are serving filthy lucre! Whether or not you have realized it, you have erred from the faith! If you doubt that this is so, then please remember the warning that Paul issued in his Epistle to Timothy:

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and

pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

1 Timothy 6:10, KJV

So as you can plainly see, when you covet money and profit, and place profit above preaching the Gospel and reaching the lost, you have in fact erred from the faith, plain and simple. It's right there in black and white. Furthermore, unless you straighten out, one of these days you are going to face a sorrow which you will wish you hadn't -- shame and everlasting contempt!

I don't know how hospitals operate in your area, but where I live, the hospital is not permitted to turn away anybody if they do not have any money. Of course, I will admit that the local hospital experiences certain financial problems as a result of its adherence to this policy; but quite frankly, I think that they are doing the right thing, and that it is a real sign of compassion. It reminds me of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. As you will recall, the Samaritan also spent money out of his own pocket in order to help a stranger; that is to say, the injured man whom he found lying on the roadside. Along the same vein, aren't we Christians supposed to be spiritual doctors as well? Aren't we suppose to help heal people in a spiritual sense by bringing them to Jesus and sharing the Good News of Salvation with them, whether they can pay us for it or not? That's what my Bible teaches me.

In conclusion, it is my firm belief that no one should ever have to pay a single penny, pound pence or peso in order to hear or read information regarding Biblical truth. All of it should be freely available to all people everywhere, because we have freely received the precious Gift of Eternal Life by Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross, and He has never charged us anything for it, other than our love and devotion to Him.

If you are a preacher of the Gospel, I sincerely hope that this series will cause you to stop and really check your own heart. I hope that you are freely sharing God's truth out of genuine love for the lost, and not for any other reason. I also pray that you will find a way to freely distribute your books, magazines, newsletters, CD's, DVD's, MP3's, etc., to the people of the world, and thus follow the example of the First Century Church leaders and disciples, who were willing to suffer personal discomfort and inconvenience, rather than make a worldly business out of preaching the Gospel. I also hope that you are building upon the right foundation, so that your works will last, and will follow you into Heaven. As it is written:

"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

1 Corinthians 3:14-15, KJV

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

Revelation 14:13, KJV

May the Lord richly bless you as you freely share the Gospel of Salvation with others out of a pure, unselfish heart. If you know of anyone who is not following the Biblical counsel contained in this series, then I encourage you to share this

series with them, so that they may know the truth. Please also feel free to share the URL of this series with all of your online friends far and wide. Thanks so much!

Written by the WordWeaver

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>