

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED

What God's Word teaches about

FAITH

Gordon Lyons

KJV Edition

Important Notice

The series *Bible Truths Explained*
may be downloaded, printed and used free of charge
by individuals, groups, and institutions

However, none of these Doctrinal Notes
may be offered for sale or for commercial publication

Bible Truths Explained: Faith
Revised: 1987, 2000, 2005
First published: 2005
1-word.com web site publication

Copyright Notices

Bible Truths Explained

Faith

Copyright © 2005 Gordon Lyons
All Rights Reserved

Limited extracts from this work may be quoted elsewhere, on condition that the name and author of the original work is acknowledged in a format similar to the following:

'Quoted from
Bible Truths Explained: Faith
Copyright © 2005, Gordon Lyons
Used by permission'

Scripture quotations taken from
The HOLY BIBLE
KING JAMES VERSION
unless otherwise stated

Principal Works Consulted

- Barnes, Alfred *Notes on The Bible*, Electronic edition (public domain)
- Berkhof, Louis *Systematic Theology*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1939, 1941 reprint.
- Calvin, John *Bible Commentaries*: Rio, WI, USA: Ages Software, Inc., The John Calvin Collection, 2000, Electronic edition (CD).
- Calvin, John *Institutes*: [Beveridge Translation, 1800, Battles Translation Vols. 1-4, 1960] Rio, WI, USA: Ages Software, Inc., The John Calvin Collection, 2000, Electronic edition (CD).
- Clarke, Adam *Commentary on the New Testament*: Electronic edition (public domain)
- Dabney, R. L. *Systematic Theology*, [St. Louis: Presbyterian Publishing Company of St. Louis, 1871, second ed. 1878] Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust edition, 1985.
- Danker, Frederick William;
Based on Bauer, Walter A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, (Third Edition BDAG) Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Pink, A. W. *The Doctrine of Sanctification*: Fearn, Ross-shire, UK, Christian Focus Publications, 1998.
- Gill, John *Exposition of the Entire Bible*, Electronic edition (public domain)
- Hodge, Charles *Systematic Theology*, Vols. 1-3; Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977 reprint.
- Hodge, Charles *Princeton Sermons*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1879, 1979 reprint.
- Jamieson, Fausset &
Brown *Commentary on The Whole Bible* (Revised edition, 1961): Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing House, 1991.
- Murray, John *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955.
- Poole, Matthew *A Commentary on The Holy Bible* Vols. 1-3 (1685-1700): Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1878, 2000 reprint.
- Ryle, J. C. *Holiness*: Darlington: Evangelical Press, 1879, 1999 reprint.
- Ryle, J. C. *Practical Religion*: Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1939, 1941 reprint.
- Robertson, A.T. *Robertson's Word Pictures*, Electronic edition (public domain)
- Vincent *Vincent's Word Studies*, Electronic edition (public domain)
- Westminster Confession of Faith*, Inverness: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1976 reprint.

Special Acknowledgement

I must acknowledge a genuine debt of gratitude to the work of Dr. Charles Hodge. The writings of this theologian from a previous generation have helped considerably in preparing this work. On a number of occasions—as will be seen when reading these studies—I have cited or alluded to Dr. Hodge’s remarks in his three-volume *Systematic Theology*. These references have been acknowledged in the footnotes to the study text.

Faith

Contents

BIBLE TRUTHS EXPLAINED	i
FAITH	i
Principal Works Consulted	iv
Contents	vi
Part 1	1
Synopsis: Faith	1
Note 1	1
True Faith versus Temporary Faith, Assent, and Misplaced Faith	1
Note 2	2
Faith in Religion Cannot Save	2
Note 3	3
Faith is God's Gift	3
Note 4	3
Men and Women Must Seek the Lord	3
Note 5	4
Faith Acceptable to God	4
Part 2	6
Doctrine of Faith	6
Preliminary Remarks	6
Basis and Nature of Faith	6
Part 3	9
The Parable of the Sower	9
The Parable of the Sower Explained	9
Part 4	15
Falling Away from the Faith	15
No True Faith Without Regeneration	16
To Repudiate the Gospel is to be Lost	16
To Turn Back is to be Lost	17
Many Who Acknowledge Christ will be Lost	18

Part 5	21
Backsliders and Unbelievers	21
The Backsliding Christian	21
Part 6	27
Danger of Unbelief	27
Without Faith, Man is Condemned	27
God's Wrath Remains Upon Unbelievers	27
Christ is Either Saviour or Judge	27
God's Wrath Revealed	28
Upright People Guilty Before God	28
Without the Gospel, Man will Perish	29
Part 7	31
Genuine Faith	31
Whoever Believes has Everlasting Life	32
Delivered from Condemnation	32
Part 8	35
Saved by Grace	35
Faith is God's Gift	35
Neither is there Salvation in Any Other	36
Multitudes will Perish	36

Part 1

Synopsis: Faith

Faith is that gift of God's grace which, at the proper time, he freely bestows upon all the elect by the working of his Holy Spirit in effectual calling. God does this with the intent that those who receive the gift of faith might be enabled—*freely and willingly*—to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. All who believe are delivered from the punishment due to sin, and saved from the wrath of God. Faith includes wholehearted trust in, and commitment to, the Son of God as one's personal Saviour and Lord. Everyone who repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ does so because he or she has been effectually called and regenerated by the Holy Spirit (i.e., born spiritually anew from above). Regeneration is not effected through water baptism, but through the almighty inward working of the Holy Spirit in a sinner's life. Upon their regeneration, God justifies (or declares righteous) all those who believe on his Son. Every believer's new life in Christ must be characterised by holiness.

Note 1

True Faith versus Temporary Faith, Assent, and Misplaced Faith

The faith of which the Bible speaks is distinct from all other forms of faith. Other forms of faith include temporary faith, and assent. Temporary faith is counterfeit faith (see further on *Counterfeit Faith* below). Assent is the mere outward agreement with a system of teaching or doctrine, or the outward acceptance of a particular religion. A marked characteristic of assent is that it lacks any inward change of heart. Also included in other forms of faith are those beliefs that do not rest unreservedly on Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of men and women, and the only Mediator between God and man.

Scripture References

Acts 17:22-23

⁽²²⁾ Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. ⁽²³⁾ For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. (See vv.16-31)

Acts 17:34

⁽³⁴⁾ Howbeit certain men cleaved unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. (See vv.32-33)

Romans 10:2-4

⁽²⁾ For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. ⁽³⁾ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. ⁽⁴⁾ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (See vv.5-10)

1 Timothy 2:5-6

⁽⁵⁾ For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; ⁽⁶⁾ Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. (See vv.1-4; cf. John 14:6; Heb. 8:6; 9:15)

Note 2

Faith in Religion Cannot Save

Millions of people claim to believe in Christ—but the faith they possess is not true faith. Their faith is in the religion to which they belong, and to its teachings, rather than in the Person and redemptive work of Christ as revealed to us in the Bible. The faith of which the Bible speaks is associated only with those whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated. Faith in any religion that differs from the teaching of the Bible is not genuine God-given faith. Similarly, the demons have faith. They believe in Christ—and tremble at the prospect of their final doom. Their faith—which although based on a clear knowledge of the truth—differs fundamentally from true faith. They are utterly convinced of the consequences of their sin and of their final judgement. However, their complete faith or belief in their eternal destiny can never be associated with their salvation—for there is no possibility of salvation for the devil and his (fallen) angels. So it is with all those who do not possess true spiritual and God-given faith, or who place their entire confidence in any form of truth that is different from the Word of God—the Bible.

Scripture References

Matthew 7:21-23

⁽²¹⁾ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ⁽²²⁾ Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ⁽²³⁾ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (See vv.13-20)

Galatians 1:6-9

⁽⁶⁾ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁽⁷⁾ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁽⁸⁾ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

⁽⁹⁾ As we said before, so say I now again, if any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (See vv.10-12)

Galatians 4:4,6

⁽⁴⁾ But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law... ⁽⁶⁾ And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (See vv.1-15)

James 2:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. (See vv.14-26; cf. Matt. 8:29; Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34)

Note 3

Faith is God's Gift

Faith is the gift of God. Men and women cannot exercise this kind of faith of their own free will. This is because the Fall has left man's nature (including his will) depraved or corrupted. It is also because—by nature—fallen mankind is totally opposed to, or at enmity with God, and is spiritually dead. Therefore, although fallen man has a degree of free will and *moral* ability, he lacks entirely the necessary *spiritual* ability to repent and believe. This situation cannot be resolved by fallen man himself. Only by the work of the Holy Spirit can he be granted new spiritual life and enabled to respond. In his great mercy, however, God regenerates and grants faith to all those whom he has predestined unto life eternal. The Holy Spirit effectually calls them, creates within them new spiritual life (the new birth), awakens them to their great spiritual need and danger, and grants them the necessary ability and willingness to exercise faith in the Son of God. All whom the Holy Spirit thus draws to the Lord Jesus Christ respond with a grateful heart to the offer of salvation, and no one is ever turned away.

Scripture References

Ephesians 1:11-13

⁽¹¹⁾ 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: ⁽¹²⁾ That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. ⁽¹³⁾ In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, (See vv.4-14)

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁽⁸⁾ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁽⁹⁾ Not of works, lest any man should boast. (See vv.1-10)

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: ⁽¹⁴⁾ Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note 4

Men and Women Must Seek the Lord

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Those who come to God must believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who diligently seek him. Although true faith is God's gift, God still requires mankind to exercise the utmost diligence in seeking to know his ways, and to repent of their sinful way of life. Man cannot claim to be excused on the grounds of inability. His inability to respond to God's commands or to his offer of salvation is rooted in his own sin, for which man himself remains responsible. Although devoid of *spiritual* ability, fallen man has sufficient *moral* ability to seek to know the ways of the Lord, and it is his responsibility to do so. This is why God commands all mankind to seek him while he may be found. God's sovereignty in election does not absolve man of his responsibility or accountability to God.

Scripture References

Isaiah 55:6-7

⁽⁶⁾ Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: ⁽⁷⁾ Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (See vv.1-3)

Acts 17:26-28

⁽²⁶⁾ And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; ⁽²⁷⁾ That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: ⁽²⁸⁾ For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. (See vv.22-29)

Acts 17:30

⁽³⁰⁾ And the times of this ignorance God winked at [overlooked]; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (See v.31)

Acts 26:19-20

⁽¹⁹⁾ Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: ⁽²⁰⁾ But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. (See vv.13-18)

Hebrews 11:6

⁽⁶⁾ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (See vv.1,3)

Note 5

Faith Acceptable to God

Those whom the Holy Spirit makes willing and able to exercise genuine faith are those whom God justifies and to whom he grants the gift of life eternal. No-one who comes to Christ is ever turned away. In effectual calling, the Holy Spirit makes a person aware of their very great spiritual need and danger: i.e., he convicts, convinces and converts them. All that God then requires the sinner to 'do' is to believe wholeheartedly on the One who is able to heal and deliver—the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in this sense—the sense of total dependency and absolute trust in the Lord—that the Bible so often commends people for their faith. This applies both in relation to healing of the soul and healing of the body.

Scripture References

Matthew 8:10-13

⁽¹⁰⁾ When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. ⁽¹¹⁾ And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. ⁽¹²⁾ But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁽¹³⁾ And Jesus said unto the

centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour. (See vv.5-9)

Romans 3:20-25

⁽²⁰⁾ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

⁽²¹⁾ But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ⁽²²⁾ Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: ⁽²³⁾ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ⁽²⁴⁾ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ⁽²⁵⁾ Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; (See vv.26-28)

Hebrews 11:39-40

⁽³⁹⁾ And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: ⁽⁴⁰⁾ God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (See entire chapter)

Related Bible Truths

Closely allied to the doctrine of faith are the doctrines of predestination, repentance, regeneration, and justification. All those whom God has predestined to eternal life are effectually called by the Holy Spirit, through whom they are granted the gifts of repentance and faith. Everyone who thus comes to Christ is born again or regenerated spiritually, and justified with the imputed righteousness of Christ.¹

¹ See *Bible Truths Explained: Predestination; Repentance; Regeneration; Justification*, by the same author.

Part 2

Doctrine of Faith

Preliminary Remarks

The Visible and Invisible Church

- The *visible* church is the world-wide company of *professing* believers. When we use the term, the ‘visible church’, we are making and implying no distinction between *true believers* and *false professors* within the church. Anyone who claims to belong to Christ—whether that claim is genuine or not—is designated as a member of the visible church.
- The *invisible* church is the world-wide company of *true* believers. We refer to it as the ‘invisible church’ because it is composed exclusively of genuinely regenerated believers—many of whom are known only to God. Numerous people say that they belong to Christ—but, in fact, they do not. These people are false professors or counterfeit believers. Sometimes, only God is able to distinguish between these false professors and his own people. Only God’s redeemed people constitute the true or invisible church. Frequently, the Word of God refers to these as the members of Christ’s body, or the redeemed of the Lord.

Basis and Nature of Faith

Faith Rests on the Authority of God

We do not rest our faith on our feelings, nor do we base it on our moral and intellectual apprehension of the truth. Again, we do not found our faith on any rational or persuasive human arguments—however valid these arguments may appear to be. Biblical faith is founded on the *authority and testimony of the living God*, and it is attested to by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit.

By faith in the testimony of the Bible, we are convinced that God created the world. By faith in that same infallible testimony, we are convinced that God created Adam; and that—by his fall—Adam involved the whole human race in sin and misery. By faith, we are convinced that God destroyed the world by a deluge. By faith, we are convinced that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he has appointed.

Faith, therefore, rests on the authority of God, and on the solid and incontrovertible evidence revealed to us in the Word of God—the Holy Bible. The facts of the Bible or Scriptures are more to be believed than any facts of history or science: for, in their original forms, the Holy Scriptures were the infallible Word of God. This inerrant Word has now been handed down to us in the form of translations. *The Word of God cannot err or be mistaken in its declarations, until the day that God can err or be mistaken in his pronouncements.*

Such is the nature of our faith. Its foundation is the authority of God. Its framework is the testimony of God. To disallow God’s authority is to show contempt for God. To disbelieve God’s testimony is to make God a liar.

The Holy Spirit Testifies to the Truth (Scripture References)

Concerning the inward witness of the Holy Spirit to the truth and authority of God's Word, the Scripture says:

John 14:26

⁽²⁶⁾ But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

John 15:26

⁽²⁶⁾ But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: (See v.27)

John 16:13-15

⁽¹³⁾ Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. ⁽¹⁴⁾ He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show *it* unto you. ⁽¹⁵⁾ All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show *it* unto you. (See vv.7-12)

1 John 5:6-8

⁽⁶⁾ This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. ⁽⁷⁾ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. ⁽⁸⁾ And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

1 John 5:9-12

⁽⁹⁾ If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. ⁽¹⁰⁾ He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. ⁽¹¹⁾ And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ⁽¹²⁾ He that hath the Son hath life: *and* he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (See v.13)

Consequences of Rejecting God's Testimony (Scripture References)

Concerning the serious consequences of refusing to believe the Word that God has spoken, that Word says:

Hebrews 12:25

⁽²⁵⁾ See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: (Cf. 2:2-4; 3:15-19; 10:28-31)

Hebrews 12:29

⁽²⁹⁾ For our God *is* a consuming fire. {*Deut. 4:24*} (See vv.18-28; cf. Exodus 24:17; Isa. 66:15-16)

True and False Faith

As has been indicated in Notes 1 and 2 above, not all faith is associated with salvation. There are several different *kinds* of faith (as distinct from *degrees* of faith). The various kinds of faith include mere assent; i.e. the mental or intellectual acknowledgement given to a set of doctrines, or to a system of religion. However, giving one's assent to a set of doctrines, or to a particular religion, is not the same thing as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith that consists only in mental assent is not true biblical faith. A person may believe earnestly in his religion; in the doctrines of his church, or in the form of church to which he belongs. However, if he does not centre his faith on Christ as his living personal Redeemer, then that person's faith is of no avail. Again, if his faith does not involve the regeneration, justification, and sanctification of that person's life, then the faith he possesses is worthless. It is a dead faith.

Dead faith is a false or counterfeit form of faith. It is a nominal faith—a faith in name only. As such, it cannot benefit those who profess it. They are still in their sins; and, unless they realise their danger and truly repent, they will certainly perish.

Counterfeit Faith

Except under very close and expert examination, many counterfeit banknotes can rarely be distinguished from genuine banknotes. So it is with the Christian faith. There is a form of faith that is counterfeit. It has many of the outward appearances of being genuine—but it is not.

Many people claim to have accepted Christ. They may show many of the outward evidences of belonging to Christ. They may attend church services regularly, and they may take part in these services. They may speak as though truly converted, and they may give a testimony of their 'conversion'. They may even witness openly of Christ to others—and yet not be truly saved. These people have tasted of the Holy Spirit in his 'common' operations. However, the Holy Spirit has never renewed their souls by his regenerating and sanctifying power. Their faith is counterfeit: and if counterfeit, it is dead. These people are yet in their sins. As such, they remain under the wrath and curse of God.

Let us remember that not all of Jesus' disciples belonged to the Lord. In common with others, Judas Iscariot associated with the Lord's followers. He sat under the teaching of the Lord Jesus. He preached the Gospel to the people, in common with the other disciples. He held a position of trust and responsibility among the Twelve, for he was their official treasurer. As far as we know, and in common with the other disciples, Judas performed miracles in the name of the Lord, and cast out evil spirits in Jesus' name. Yet, as we know only too well, Judas Iscariot never belonged to Christ. He associated with the Lord's people, but he was a child of the devil and a son of perdition. Therefore, we must realise that such people will always be found in the church. Like Satan and his messengers when they appear to God's people as though they were angels of light (i.e., holy angels), such evil individual within the church can appear to other people as holy, righteous and good. But God knows the truth, and he will judge them as their attitudes, thoughts and deeds deserve.

Not all who profess faith in Christ belong to Christ. The Lord Jesus makes this truth very clear in his teaching on this subject. On the pages that follow, we will consider one of these teachings in detail.

Part 3

The Parable of the Sower

The radically differing types of faith are clearly demonstrated in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23; Mark 4:2-20; Luke 8:4-15).

In this parable, it becomes evident that a person may say he believes, and yet be lost. He may claim allegiance to Christ, and yet not belong to Christ. He may follow Christ for a while; he may become involved in Christian service, and yet he may apostatise² or renounce his profession of faith.

The Parable of the Sower Explained

The correct understanding of this parable is basic to all that the Lord Jesus teaches about those who profess faith in his name. Failure to understand the significance of the Lord's teaching will lead to mistaken ideas about who is truly saved and who is not.

In view of its importance, we will consider separately each of the four groups mentioned in the parable of the sower. Note carefully the profession that each group is represented as making, and the actual state or condition of each group—whether justified and saved, or condemned and lost. Comparison should be made of the three accounts given by Matthew, Mark and Luke.

1a. Seed by the Wayside

Matthew 13:4

⁽⁴⁾ And when he sowed, some *seeds* fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:

Mark 4:4

⁽⁴⁾ And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.

Luke 8:5

⁽⁵⁾ A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it.

1b. The Lord's Explanation of the Seed by the Wayside

Matthew 13:19

⁽¹⁹⁾ When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.

Mark 4:14-15

⁽¹⁴⁾ The sower soweth the word. ⁽¹⁵⁾ And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.

² *apostatise*: to fall away from, or abandon completely and finally, one's beliefs.

Luke 8:11-12

⁽¹¹⁾ Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ⁽¹²⁾ Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.

1c. Comment

This is the first group mentioned. These people hear the gospel, but they fail to understand it. Before they can think seriously about what they have heard, Satan snatches away the seed sown in their hearts. The Word, therefore, makes no lasting impression on the lives of these people. They continue as they were before—in their lost state. Such are they who receive the seed fallen by the wayside.

1d. Profession

Each of the individuals in this group heard the gospel, but none of them embraced the message nor did they profess faith in Christ.

1e. State

Condemned and lost.

2a. Seed in Stony Places

Matthew 13:5-6

⁽⁵⁾ Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: ⁽⁶⁾ And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

Mark 4:5-6

⁽⁵⁾ And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth: ⁽⁶⁾ But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.

Luke 8:6

⁽⁶⁾ And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture.

2b. The Lord's Explanation of the Seed in Stony Places

Matthew 13:20-21

⁽²⁰⁾ But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; ⁽²¹⁾ Yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.

Mark 4:16-17

⁽¹⁶⁾ And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness; ⁽¹⁷⁾ And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.

Luke 8:13

⁽¹³⁾ They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

2c. Comment

This second group of individuals who hear God's Word, receive it and continue in the way of the Lord for a while. However, eventually, it becomes evident that their faith was not true or genuine faith, and that they have never truly been converted. This becomes evident by their failure to persevere under difficulty or persecution. Ultimately, these people abandon their profession of faith and return to the world.

2d. Profession

Each of the individuals in this group did profess faith in Christ—perhaps in response to an emotional appeal or need. When put to the test, however, they fell away and abandoned their profession of faith in Christ.

2e. State

Condemned and lost.

3a. Seed among Thorns

Matthew 13:7

⁽⁷⁾ And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:

Mark 4:7

⁽⁷⁾ And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.

Luke 8:7

⁽⁷⁾ And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it.

3b. The Lord's Explanation of the Seed among Thorns

Matthew 13:32

⁽³²⁾ Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

Mark 4:18-19

⁽¹⁸⁾ And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word,
⁽¹⁹⁾ And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

Luke 8:14

⁽¹⁴⁾ And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection.

3c. Comment

This third group of individuals hears the Word of God, and they make a profession of faith in Christ. For a time, they continue in the faith, and may appear to everyone to have experienced a genuine spiritual conversion—especially since they appear to be making progress in the things of the Spirit.

These people may continue in the services of the church for many years. Eventually, however, becoming overwhelmed with the cares or riches of this world—or preferring to seek fulfilment in this life's fleeting pleasures—they prove spiritually unfruitful. Ultimately, they abandon their profession of faith. These were never true believers. They had all the outward signs of being Christians, but they lacked the regenerating, sanctifying and sustaining power of the Spirit in their lives.

Such are all who make a profession of faith and who follow the Lord outwardly, but who do not produce in their lives the fruit of a regenerated and sanctified heart.

3d. Profession

Each of the individuals in this group did profess faith in Christ. They continued in their profession—perhaps over a prolonged period. Ultimately, however, they proved spiritually barren. Those who do not continue to bring forth fruit to the glory of God, prove that they do not possess the Spirit who produces that fruit.

3e. State

Condemned and lost.

4a. Seed in Good Ground

Matthew 13:8

⁽⁸⁾ But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.

Mark 4:8

⁽⁸⁾ And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some a hundred.

Luke 8:8

⁽⁸⁾ And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

4b. The Lord's Explanation of the Seed in Good Ground

Matthew 13:23

⁽²³⁾ But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some a hundredfold some sixty, some thirty.

Mark 4:20

⁽²⁰⁾ And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive *it*, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.

Luke 8:15

⁽¹⁵⁾ But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep *it*, and bring forth fruit with patience.

4c. Comment

In the parable of the sower, only the fourth group of individuals proves to be genuine believers. These alone have been born again or regenerated by the Spirit of God, and are being sanctified by God's Spirit. The evidence that they truly belong to God is the fruit they continue to produce in their lives. Not all produce the same measure of spiritual fruit—but all produce some fruit: some, a hundred times as much; some, sixty times; and some, thirty times.

4d. Profession

Each of the individuals in this group did profess faith in Christ. The validity of their profession is being confirmed by the continual evidences of a spiritually fruitful and holy life.

4e. State

Justified and saved.

Part 4

Falling Away from the Faith

We should observe that the people who constitute the first three groups in the parable of the sower did not experience the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration (the new birth). Those whom the Holy Spirit truly regenerates, and who are continually bringing forth the fruit of a renewed and sanctified life, cannot finally apostatise or fall away. The Holy Spirit has sealed them unto the day of redemption, and they cannot renounce their profession of faith or lose their salvation.

Concerning those who belong to the Lord, Jesus himself says:

John 10:27-30

⁽²⁷⁾ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ⁽²⁸⁾ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. ⁽²⁹⁾ My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

⁽³⁰⁾ I and *my* Father are one.

Romans 8:14-17

⁽¹⁴⁾ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.
⁽¹⁵⁾ For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.
⁽¹⁶⁾ The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ⁽¹⁷⁾ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. (See vv.18-25)

2 Corinthians 1:20-22

⁽²⁰⁾ For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us. ⁽²¹⁾ Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, *is* God; ⁽²²⁾ Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. (See vv.15-19)

2 Corinthians 5:5

⁽⁵⁾ Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. (See vv.1-8)

Ephesians 1:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, ⁽¹⁴⁾ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (See vv.11-12)

1 Peter 1:2-5

⁽²⁾ Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

⁽³⁾ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁽⁴⁾ To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁽⁵⁾ Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (See vv.6-9)

No True Faith Without Regeneration

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and who possess the indwelling Holy Spirit, are eternally secure. However, those whose faith is not of God, can and do fall away from their profession. Those who profess faith in Christ, but who do not continually bring forth the fruit of a renewed and holy life, do not belong to Christ.

It is to such people that the Scriptures refer when they speak of falling away or apostatising from the faith. God's Word warns that these people cannot be renewed again unto repentance. They have experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in his common operations, although, not in regeneration. They have tasted of the heavenly gift, although they have not inwardly received that gift. They have participated in the things of God and of the Spirit, although not with a renewed and sanctified heart.

To Repudiate the Gospel is to be Lost

Those who have had such great privileges—and who have been brought to the very threshold of God's kingdom—if, at this point, they fall away, they cannot be restored again to the point of repentance. They have thrown away the opportunity of grace. They have trodden underfoot the blood of Christ: that blood which had a sanctifying effect on them insofar that they knew and understood the message of the Cross—and yet rejected it. Having come thus far, and yet to repudiate the gospel message and apostatise, is to be lost. Such, in Jesus' day, were many of the religious leaders. They had received a full and accurate knowledge of the truth, but they rejected it—wilfully and inexcusably.

Concerning those who knew the elementary truths of God's Word, but who showed little or no signs of true spiritual progress, the writer to the Hebrews warns:

Hebrews 6:4-6

⁽⁴⁾ For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, ⁽⁵⁾ And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, ⁽⁶⁾ If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame. (See vv.1-3; cf. 2 Pet. 2:20-22)

Hebrews 6:7-8

⁽⁷⁾ For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh off upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: ⁽⁸⁾ But that which beareth thorns and briars *is* rejected, and *is* nigh unto cursing; whose end *is* to be burned. (See vv.9-12)

Taken in context, the following passage refers to believers. The writer is warning the Hebrew Christians of what would happen if (hypothetically) they should sin wilfully against the truth. However, what applies here as a solemn warning to believers, can be applied in principle to those who have known

about the way of salvation, who have come to the very threshold of God's kingdom, and yet who have repudiated the Gospel message and have despised the Spirit of grace and of glory, of whom they had sufficient knowledge in his common operations.

Hebrews 10:26-27

⁽²⁶⁾ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, ⁽²⁷⁾ But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Hebrews 10:28-29

⁽²⁸⁾ He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: ⁽²⁹⁾ Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Hebrews 10:30-31

⁽³⁰⁾ For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. {*Deut. 32:35*} And again, The Lord shall judge his people. {*Deut. 32:36; Psalm 135:14*}

⁽³¹⁾ *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (See vv.32-36)

To Turn Back is to be Lost

Only those who possess a substantial knowledge of God's ways, and who have experienced something of the Holy Spirit's working in their lives (although, not in regeneration), are capable of apostatising. (And, incidentally, it is only such as those who are capable of committing the unforgivable sin—i.e., blasphemy of the Holy Spirit—as the Pharisees very nearly did.³)

For such a person to turn back to sin and to the world—after having professed faith in Christ—is to be lost. It is the clearest indication that the person professing faith did not in fact possess genuine faith. This is an example of counterfeit and temporary faith, or, as James says, dead faith. Such a condition applies to multitudes of people throughout the world. These people come to know of spiritual things. They may 'make a decision' for Christ. They follow him for a while. Ultimately, however, they abandon their profession and turn back to the world.

Unlike these false professors, true believers have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. Those whom the Spirit has regenerated, persevere in their faith and in holiness of life. At times, true believers may backslide. However, they do not finally return to the world, nor can they continue to live to satisfy their sinful desires.

Those who apostatise were never true believers. They apostatise from their profession of faith and from their outward association with the church, but they were never true members of the church—which is Christ's body. The Holy Spirit had never regenerated their souls. Although, while associated with the church, they may have made an open profession of faith, their subsequent manner of life showed that they were without Christ and lost.

To those who were not prepared to become wholly committed to him, the Lord Jesus said:

Luke 9:62

³ *Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, or the unforgivable sin:* For further details on this topic, see on *Bible Truths Explained: Sin*, under *The Unforgivable Sin*, by the same author.

⁽⁶²⁾ And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. (See vv.57-61; cf. 1 Kings 19:19-21)

Remember Lot's wife. To *look back*—instead of *pressing forward*—is to be lost. (Gen. 19:26)

Again, the Scripture says:

Hebrews 10:38-39

⁽³⁸⁾ Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. {*Hab. 2:3-4*}

⁽³⁹⁾ But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. (See vv.32-37)

Many Who Acknowledge Christ will be Lost

Not all false or counterfeit 'believers' abandon the faith, or rather, their profession of faith. Many remain within the visible church, claiming allegiance to Christ and making an outward show of religion. The false believer may resemble the true believer in all his outward appearances; and, at times, it may be virtually impossible for anyone to distinguish between them. God, however, can and does distinguish between them. They may deceive others. Outwardly and publicly, they may acknowledge Christ as Lord. They may do many commendable works of service in the Lord's name. Yet, ultimately, they will fail to enter his kingdom. For, although they may claim Christ as Lord, they do not know him with the faith that proceeds from a spiritually renewed heart.

To this end, the Lord Jesus himself says:

Matthew 7:21

⁽²¹⁾ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. (See vv.13-20)

Those who profess faith in Christ, but whose heart is not right with God, will be excluded from God's kingdom. Such are not true believers; for their faith does not result in a life that is pleasing to God and that is fruitful in the things of God.

The Lord Jesus continues:

Matthew 7:22

⁽²²⁾ Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Many who preach the things of Christ will be lost, for they did not preach the things of Christ from a regenerated and sanctified heart. Many who cast out demons in Christ's name will be lost, for they did not cast out demons from a renewed and cleansed life. Many, who perform numerous commendable works in the name of the Lord, will never experience heaven's glory, for they did not know the Lord of Glory as their Saviour. They assented to the truths of God, but they were strangers to the grace of God.

On the Day of Judgment, many people will plead earnestly for recognition as having belonged to Christ. However, the Lord himself is very clear about what he will say to people who professed his name, but who did not know him with true sanctified faith:

Matthew 7:23

⁽²³⁾ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Cf. Matt. 25:41; Luke 13:23-30)

The Lord will consider all their good endeavours in his name as works of iniquity. Why? Because, although they professed faith in Christ, they did not know Christ personally as Saviour and Lord. They were still in their sins; still at enmity with God by wicked works, and still under the wrath and condemnation of God. They had an outward appearance of piety, but no inward change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. It is a fearful thing to profess faith in Christ, and yet not to know Christ or his redeeming love and power.

Part 5

Backsliders and Unbelievers

The Backsliding Christian

Are Backsliders Lost?

At this point, we must distinguish between a true believer who backslides, and a person professing to be a believer who later abandons his profession and returns to the ways of the world.

We freely acknowledge that a true believer can backslide. We also acknowledge that—while in a backslidden state—this person may commit some very serious sins. There is, however, a world of a difference between a backslidden Christian, and someone who abandons his profession and returns to his old way of life. The backslidden Christian is and remains a child of God. The false professor never was a child of God.

Since he is God's child, the backslidden Christian cannot continue in sin indefinitely. His conscience accuses him. God's indwelling Holy Spirit convicts him of his sin. Ultimately, a backsliding believer sees the error of his ways, and he comes back to God in contrition and repentance. Like the prodigal son, he returns eventually to his Father. (Luke 15:11-24)

On the other hand, the false professor or counterfeit believer is not a member of God's family. There is, therefore, no indwelling Holy Spirit to convict him of his sin in the same sense, and to the same extent, as with a true believer. The false professor may feel remorse at times. Eventually, however, he hardens his conscience against the things of God. Ultimately, he reaches a state where he has no desire to repent or to turn to God. His element is this world and its sinful way of life—and there he chooses to remain.

Backsliders Disciplined, But Not Disinherited

A backsliding believer may stumble in his faith, but he cannot fall away from grace. He may disgrace the name of Christ for a time, but ultimately he will abhor and forsake his sin, truly repent, and seek the Lord's forgiveness. Unlike the false professor, the backsliding Christian has no lasting desire to remain in his sinful way of life. His element is the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Once more, he must return to holiness of life.

God, however, may severely discipline a backsliding Christian for the sins he has committed, and for the dishonour he has brought upon the Lord's name. Even so, the believer's salvation remains eternally secure. Although he may forfeit certain of God's blessings, for a time at least, he cannot forfeit God's salvation. He is God's child, and God will not disinherit anyone whom he has called and made his own.

Although the Lord will discipline his backsliding children, he will never disown or disinherit them. Thus, God's Word says:

Psalms 89:30-34

⁽³⁰⁾ If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; ⁽³¹⁾ If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; ⁽³²⁾ Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. ⁽³³⁾ Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. ⁽³⁴⁾ My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. (See vv.27-37; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14-16)

Psalms 94:12,14

- ⁽¹²⁾ Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law... ⁽¹⁴⁾ For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.

David Disciplined After Backsliding

Concerning sin and discipline, we need only consider the example of the psalmist David. David belonged to the Lord. Yet, while in a backslidden state, he committed adultery and was directly responsible for another man's death.

There can be no condoning what David did. His sins were among the most heinous imaginable. He had degraded himself as a man. He had defiled another man's wife. He had attempted to deceive this other man (Uriah the Hittite) by endeavouring to cover up his adulterous relationship with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba. When this attempt at deceit failed, however, David arranged to have Bathsheba's husband posted to the front line of battle. There—in the thickest of the fighting—Uriah fell slain.

Thus, God's Word tells us:

2 Samuel 11:1-2

- ⁽¹⁾ And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth *to battle*, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.
- ⁽²⁾ And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. (See vv.3-13)

2 Samuel 11:14-15

- ⁽¹⁴⁾ And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. ⁽¹⁵⁾ And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die. (See vv.16-25)

2 Samuel 11:26-27

- ⁽²⁶⁾ And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. ⁽²⁷⁾ And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased ⁴ the LORD.

David's sins had been deliberate and calculated. He knew what he was doing—and he did it wilfully. Above all, David had sinned against the Lord. He had dishonoured God's holy name, and he had given occasion to others to speak evil of the Lord's people.

When the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to confront David with his sin, David truly repented of his evil deeds. He frankly acknowledged his sin and guilt when Nathan declared to him, "*You are the man...*" (2 Sam. 12:7)

Concerning this matter, God says to David through Nathan the prophet:

2 Samuel 12:9

⁴ displeased: Heb., *was evil in the eyes of...*

⁽⁹⁾ Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife *to be* thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. (See vv.1-8)

2 Samuel 12:10

⁽¹⁰⁾ Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. (See vv.11-12)

At this point, David acknowledged his sin:

2 Samuel 12:13-14

⁽¹³⁾ And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.
⁽¹⁴⁾ Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die. (See vv.15-21)

Then, when David was asked why he had stopped grieving for his child shortly after its death:

2 Samuel 12:22-23

⁽²²⁾ And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?
⁽²³⁾ But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. (See vv.24-25)

David had returned to the Lord with a humble and contrite heart, seeking forgiveness and cleansing. God forgave, cleansed and restored David to fellowship with himself. Nevertheless, God punished David for his sins. According to the word of the LORD, the child born to Bathsheba died. Although David had pleaded earnestly with God to spare the life of his child, God took that child from him. It is no light matter to sin against the Lord, or to despise his holy commandments.

David's Plea for Forgiveness (Psalm 51)

Psalms 51:1-19

⁽¹⁾ To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

⁽²⁾ Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

⁽³⁾ For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me.

⁽⁴⁾ Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

⁽⁵⁾ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

⁽⁶⁾ Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

- (7) Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- (8) Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.
- (9) Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.
- (10) Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.
- (11) Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.
- (12) Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit.
- (13) *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.
- (14) Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.
- (15) O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.
- (16) For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering.
- (17) The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.
- (18) Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.
- (19) Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar. (See also 2 Sam. 11:1-27; 12:1-25)

This is the kind of heartfelt plea that God expects to hear from his backsliding people. A true, full and frank acknowledgement of sin, and a full confession before God, seeking mercy at his hands, and being prepared to accept the discipline of the Lord wherever that is appropriate. Those who thus return to the Lord in godly sorrow and genuine repentance will surely experience the love, mercy and grace of God in restoring them to full fellowship with himself and with his Son. (Isaiah 1:18-20; 1 John 1:9)

Part 6

Danger of Unbelief

Without Faith, Man is Condemned

Many unbelievers think that it is a matter of indifference whether they believe in God or not. However, there is no such thing as a neutral or indifferent position. All mankind is guilty of sin. They have offended a holy and righteous God—a God who will by no means clear the guilty. Their sin—original sin, and actual sin—has alienated them from God. Unless, therefore, they repent and return to God, they will one day be judged and consigned to hell.

The way of redemption and reconciliation is through faith in God's Son. When the Holy Spirit convicts, convinces, and brings a person to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God forgives, justifies that person and reconciles him to himself. In this person's case, the sentence of condemnation, and the wrath of God against sin, has been borne by Christ, who suffered and died in the sinner's place.

However, if a person does not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, then God has not forgiven or justified him. That person, therefore, remains at enmity with God, and God remains at enmity with him. This means that that person still remains under God's condemnation, and is presently abiding under the wrath and curse of God.

No-one should consider such a situation a matter of indifference. Because, if that person does not repent and seek deliverance from his present rebellious and lost condition, God will impose upon him at the Final Judgment the full rigour of his justice and wrath.

God's Wrath Remains Upon Unbelievers

There is, therefore, no possibility of remaining neutral or indifferent to the things of God. To this end, God's Word declares:

John 3:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 3:36

⁽³⁶⁾ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

Christ is Either Saviour or Judge

If men will not have Christ to be their Saviour, then assuredly, they must have him to be their Judge. The Scripture warns:

Acts 17:30-31

⁽³⁰⁾ And the times of this ignorance God winked at [overlooked]; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: ⁽³¹⁾ Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (See vv.22-29)

Hebrews 9:27

⁽²⁷⁾ And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:
(See v.28; cf. 2 Pet. 3:3-10)

God's Wrath Revealed

There will be no sparing those who have not believed on the Son of God. They will pay the due penalty—and that penalty will be everlasting torment. Even in this life, God's wrath is judging those who refuse to acknowledge him. As the Scripture says:

Romans 1:18-20

⁽¹⁸⁾ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
⁽¹⁹⁾ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed *it* unto them. ⁽²⁰⁾ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: (See vv.21-32)

Romans 2:5-6

⁽⁵⁾ But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; ⁽⁶⁾ Who will render to every man according to his deeds: {*Psalm 62:12; Prov. 24:12*} (See Rom. 2:1-12)

Romans 2:16

⁽¹⁶⁾ In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

Upright People Guilty Before God

Even the most upright person in the world is guilty of ungodliness, if he has not believed on the Son of God. Even the most upright person in the world, therefore, is—at this moment—abiding under the wrath of God. Living a good, decent, honest, upright life will never make a person godly. Until the Holy Spirit leads him to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that person remains in his sins and therefore is at enmity with God.

Those who are at enmity with God cannot please God by living upright lives. First, they must be reconciled to God through faith in his Son. While, however, they remain at enmity with God, their lives are ungodly and the Lord considers their 'virtuous deeds' as no better than works of iniquity. Why? Because their good deeds proceed from an unregenerate and evil heart: a heart that is in rebellion against God, by refusing to believe on God's only Son.

The Scripture solemnly warns all those who remain in this impenitent and ungodly position:

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

⁽⁶⁾ Seeing *it is* a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; ⁽⁷⁾ And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, ⁽⁸⁾ In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: ⁽⁹⁾ Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; ⁽¹⁰⁾ When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to

be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Without the Gospel, Man will Perish

Such will be the destiny of the unbeliever when the Lord comes in his glory. God will pour out in full measure his righteous wrath upon the ungodly. This is why it is essential to preach Christ to all nations, and to call upon all people everywhere to repent and believe the gospel.

The gospel is not something a person may accept or reject at their pleasure. It is a solemn declaration of the good news that all who come to Christ will be fully, freely, and forever justified—and no one who comes will ever be turned away. But it is also a message of condemnation and judgment for those who refuse to heed the external call to repentance.

If such be the dreadful consequences of remaining in unbelief, what degree of responsibility attaches to the Christian to make Christ known to those around him? Will not God hold him accountable if he fails to tell others that—even now—they are under the wrath of God? Will not God hold his people responsible if they fail to make known to a lost world the only way of salvation from the coming Final Judgment?

Part 7

Genuine Faith

The kind of faith associated with the grace of God in salvation is the only kind of faith that is genuine. This kind of faith, however, does not originate from within the person himself. This faith is entirely a gift of God's grace; bestowed at his pleasure upon whom he will. To this end, the Lord Jesus declared:

John 5:21

⁽²¹⁾ For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth *them*; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. (See vv.22-23)

John 5:25

⁽²⁵⁾ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. (See v.24; cf. vv.28-29)

The gift of life—spiritual and eternal life—includes the ability to repent and believe.

Again, knowledge—knowing on whom to believe—and confessing Christ as Saviour and Lord, are essential elements of true faith. This knowledge is imparted through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit brings it home to the soul by his operations in effectual calling and regeneration.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Matthew 11:27

⁽²⁷⁾ All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and *he* to whomsoever the Son will reveal *him*. (See vv.25-26; cf. Luke 10:21-24)

Regarding the work of the Spirit, the Scripture says:

John 6:63

⁽⁶³⁾ It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. (See vv.41-66; cf. 2 Cor. 3:3,6)

Those born of God's Spirit are enabled to receive Christ by faith. Thus, the Scripture says:

John 1:12-13

⁽¹²⁾ 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: ⁽¹³⁾ Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (see vv.10-11)

When God bestows the gift of eternal life, the Holy Spirit enables a person to rest his faith wholly on Christ, and on the work he accomplished for the sinner at Calvary. Whoever thus believes on Christ, is exercising genuine faith. We refer to it as 'true' or 'genuine faith' because it is the only kind of faith that accompanies salvation and life eternal.

Whoever Believes has Everlasting Life

No-one can come to Christ unless God the Father draws him. However, all whom God has given to his Son will certainly come to his Son. The Father has assuredly promised full salvation to all who look to the Son, and who come to him repentant and believing.

To this end, the Scripture says:

John 3:16

⁽¹⁶⁾ 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. (see v.17)

John 3:18

⁽¹⁸⁾ He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (See vv.19-21)

John 3:36

⁽³⁶⁾ He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (See vv.31-35)

All unregenerate mankind is abiding under the wrath of God. Even so, God still loves sinners of every nation, race, creed and colour on earth. God must, and will, punish sin. However, out of his infinite love and mercy, he has provided a means of atonement for the sins of all his people. This means every person who repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, through faith in Jesus' atoning sacrifice, God reconciles to himself men and women from every tongue, tribe, people and nation. God has promised that he will forgive, justify, and grant life eternal to everyone who comes to Christ in repentance and faith—and no one who comes will ever be excluded. In addition, God will grant them the inward peace that passes all understanding, in the knowledge and assurance of their sins atoned for and forgiven.

Delivered from Condemnation

God justifies (or pronounces righteous with the righteousness of Christ) all those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. By God's grace, and by their faith in the Son of God, they are justified and delivered from the wrath and curse of God against sin, and upon the unrepentant sinner. They each have this certain assurance from the Word of God:

John 5:24

⁽²⁴⁾ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (See vv.21,25)

God will not condemn the believer for his sins, for he has justified him. He has pronounced the believing sinner righteous in his sight. God has imputed the perfect righteousness of his Son to the believing sinner's account. The believer, therefore, has passed from death to life. God has delivered him from the sentence of eternal death or hell, and has granted him a title to eternal life in Christ.

Thus, the Scripture says:

Romans 8:1

⁽¹⁾ *There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Those whom God has justified through faith, are no longer under the sentence of condemnation and judgment. However, the same passage of God's Word declares:

Romans 8:4b

^(4b) ...who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Those whom God has justified cannot continue to live according to the dictates and desires of their old sinful nature. The sinful nature has been crucified with Christ. The believer has been born again from above—born to a new spiritual life. By the Spirit, he must learn to put to death the desires of the sinful nature. There is no such thing as justification without sanctification. Godly and holy conduct must follow regeneration and justification.

Faith must result in good works, and a spiritually fruitful life. Only those who are bringing forth fruit in their lives—fruit issuing from a truly regenerated and sanctified heart—will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Part 8

Saved by Grace

The Word of God reminds all those who belong to Christ of the nature of their salvation. It reminds them also of their total inability to co-operate in effecting their redemption (except insofar as they willingly receive the gift of salvation freely offered to them). Again, it reminds them of their deliverance from condemnation and judgment: a deliverance that has been effected for them through the blood (or atoning and redeeming death) of Christ.

To this end, the Scripture says:

Romans 5:6-9

⁽⁶⁾ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁽⁷⁾ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. ⁽⁸⁾ But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

⁽⁹⁾ Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. (See vv.10-11)

Faith is God's Gift

The Scripture says:

Ephesians 2:8-9

⁽⁸⁾ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁽⁹⁾ Not of works, lest any man should boast. (See v.10)

Salvation is the gift of God—but so also is faith.

If God should freely bestow such vast riches of mercy and grace on those who justly deserved eternal condemnation—and if he did not withhold the life of his own Son for our redemption—what right have we to withhold any part of our lives from God?

Our lives are not our own. They are the redeemed possession of the Lord, our Sovereign God. As God's own Word says:

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

⁽¹⁹⁾ What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ⁽²⁰⁾ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (See vv.15-18; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:18-19)

Neither is there Salvation in Any Other

Such, then, is the way of salvation—through faith in Christ. There is no other way. There is no other plan of redemption. There is no other means of being reconciled to God, except through faith in his Son. Thus, God's Word says:

Acts 4:12

⁽¹²⁾ Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (See vv.7-11; cf. 1 Tim. 2:5-6)

Those who seek salvation (or the mercy and favour of God) in any other way will surely perish. If they do not seek to know the only true God and Jesus Christ his Son, these people will be lost eternally. They are neglecting or rejecting God's only appointed way of salvation. They have refused to believe that God's way is the only acceptable way. They have set at naught the one whom God set forth to be a propitiation for sin.

Those who will not be saved through Christ will not be saved at all.

Multitudes will Perish

Unless they turn to Christ in repentance and faith, multitudes will perish for all eternity. By their rejection of God and his truth, they will find themselves consigned forever to endure the miseries and torments of hell. There, they will be forever separated from God and from all hope of redemption.

Many of these people may have sincerely practised some devout form of religion. They may have attempted to worship God according to their own beliefs and culture. But this will not avail them in the day of judgment. On that day, God will ask them but one question: 'What have you done with my one and only Son?'

If those will perish who do not know Christ, what responsibility lies upon the believer to make Christ known?

If we fail to tell them what we know, will not God hold us accountable for their blood? Thus, to his servant Ezekiel, the LORD God said:

Ezekiel 3:17-18

⁽¹⁷⁾ Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.
⁽¹⁸⁾ When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. (See vv.19-21)

And again, the apostle Paul declares:

Acts 20:26-27

⁽²⁶⁾ Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. ⁽²⁷⁾ For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. (See vv.17-25)

Acts 20:28

⁽²⁸⁾ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (See vv.29-31)

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Romans 10:17

⁽¹⁷⁾ So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Let us hold fast that Word and proclaim it in all its power, that the Spirit may convict, convince and convert people to God through faith in his Son—all to the glory of his magnificent and most holy Name.