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LIVING IN THE STRONGHOLD OF DECEPTION

Part 2
of 8

Fighting the Good Fight

Part two of an eight-part series called *Living in the Stronghold of Deception*.

God's Wisdom

Genesis 3:6: *And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

At that time, the wisdom of this world entered the hearts of mankind. They became self-conscious. They wanted to fix their condition by the wisdom of this world, by sewing fig leaves together and making themselves aprons. To this day, we want to save ourselves by the wisdom of self or of this world. It doesn't matter in what form this wisdom comes, as long as it is not in God's wisdom. *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin [wisdom of this world], that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe (Galatians 3:22).*

Let's speak about the wisdom of this world. This wisdom has caused much discord throughout church history, still stemming from Genesis 3:6. This wisdom has caused many holy men and women to fall and lose their way. This wisdom destroys the family unit. It keeps



the church from coming into *the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).*

In this wisdom, Satan comes as an angel of light. *And no marvel; for Satan*

himself is transformed into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). It looks holy, feels holy, and sounds like the wisdom of God, but it will steal from you, and if not stopped, it will destroy you and kill you. He that has an ear to hear, let him hear. Let's come into the good fight of faith that was made available to us by the working of the cross of Christ in us.

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:18-21)

When we believe on Jesus and call on His name, *we are saved*. What does it mean *to save them that believe*? The carnal Corinthians, baby believers, believed in Jesus, but needed to grow in

maturity in Christ through the foolishness of preaching Christ and Him crucified. It is by this power that we are *being saved*, even our sanctification (we are in the process of being made pure). By the power and operation of the preaching of the cross, we lose our worldly wisdom and come into the wisdom of God. This is true holy salvation!

This is where many men and women of God have lost their way. Because we want to keep our worldly wisdom, which is the fruit of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we eat the wrong fruit. But by continuing in sanctification through the working of the cross, we begin to get a new mind. We lose our old mind, which is the wisdom of this world, and gain a new mind, which is the mind of Christ or the wisdom of God. This is true repentance. It was foreordained by the Godhead for the church to walk in this great salvation. It is God's glorious gift to us of being saved. When this happens to us, we can fight the good fight of faith.

For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness (1 Cor. 1:22-23). In our own lives, the wisdom of God becomes a stumblingblock to the wisdom of the world we were born with (Genesis 3:6). The work of the cross in our lives is foolishness to us, yet is the very work that saves and sanctifies us.

When we start this journey of being saved, we are like a young colt out in the pasture. We run around as free as the wind, doing our own thing. We look at the older horses that have been trained

and are being used by the master. We look at them and say to ourselves that we don't want to be like them. We want to be free in our worldly wisdom. We want to work for the master, but only in our own selfish ways and on our terms. We know how to do it better than anybody else, especially those older horses. Just look at all the young colts who are following us; we must be doing what is right. We have more revelation than others. We are better than they are. Then the time comes when the master says, "My young one, it is time for you to go into training for the master's use."

I was raised around horses and I know what it is like for a young colt to be broken for use. They kick and try to run away. This training becomes a stumblingblock to their way of freedom. They don't want the harness to be put on them, and they put up a big fight.

Finally, by the firm hand of the trainer, who knows what is best for the young ones in order to be used by the master, they start to submit to the training. At first, it becomes a stumblingblock to them, but as time goes on they begin to experience a new kind of freedom. They have never experienced this kind of freedom before. They begin to see and understand that the freedom they thought they had before was not freedom at all, but terrible bondage. They begin to be used by the master. They begin to know and understand the voice of the master. They begin to know the touch of the reins. It becomes a joy both to the trained one and to the master. It is called joy unspeakable and full of glory! God's will is being done on earth as it is in heaven! God's kingdom is coming on earth. Pray for true workers, for few

allow this training in their lives.

But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. (1 Corinthians 1:24-26)

As time goes on, if the young colt refuses to be trained for the master's use and continues in his own wisdom and freedom, it becomes more difficult to train the colt for the master's use, because he has to unlearn all the vanity that he thought was truth. As he gets older and stronger in his worldly wisdom, he gets into training that feeds his worldly wisdom. He gets so strong in it that he will actually give his life for it. He says to himself, "See, I told you. I am right, and all the others that are working for their master in harness are wrong." This horse doesn't know that he is wretched, miserable, poor, and blind. He is of no use to his master, because he has refused the correct training. He will not be chosen by the master. In his worldly wisdom, he does not hear or understand his master's voice. He does not know the true training that would have made him free.

Now the person who is like this colt is in great deception and doesn't know it. He thinks he is doing the Master's work. He was told in his worldly training to wear a certain kind of clothes to please the Master. Maybe he was told to do many good deeds to please the Master. Maybe he was told that if he confesses a certain scripture verse enough, he would come into great worldly wealth; or if he

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gives enough money, he would get the favor of the Master and could get what he wants. Many other teachings feed his worldly wisdom.

All this time he is learning wrong things. The master loves this horse and doesn't want him to continue in this wrong training. He knows it will bring great sorrow in his life and he will never be useful to him. The master asks the trainer to start the true training again. Then, because of the master's love for the horse, the trainer starts to bring in more hurtful ways to correct the wrong training. At first, the horse doesn't know what's going on and does not understand the devastating blows that come from the loving hand of the trainer ordered by the master. He thinks it is an enemy that is attacking him. Not understanding what is happening, he cries out to the true master, "Help me!" The master then begins to show his great love to him. Because of the love of the master, he becomes broken and begins to learn the true way and begins to be useful to the master (Revelation 3:20; Romans 2:4; Hebrews 12:5-8; Proverbs 3:11-13).

But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:27-31)

Dear brothers and sisters, the wisdom of fallen man, or worldly wisdom, always glories in self and self-works (Genesis 3:6). Remember, we are all born in this worldly wisdom. One must be born again of the Holy Spirit and be trained or become a disciple of Jesus Christ, who is our wisdom. This wisdom will always

glory in Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).*

Luke 24 tells us that Jesus has been raised from the dead. He asks His disciples, *Why are ye troubled?* He shows them His hands and feet. They thought they had seen a spirit.

And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. (Luke 24:41-45)

The disciples went from a worldly wisdom of what they saw with their natural eyes to the joy of seeing their Master alive again, but their spiritual eyes were not yet opened to God's wisdom. They still did not believe or come into faith until Jesus opened their understanding. So it is today. We operate in what we see or hear with our worldly wisdom. We go down wrong roads and make wrong choices. We follow a bunch of rules and regulations all in vain, or come into unholy, unhealthy mystical religion, because we have not yet been broken to hear the voice of the Master and to have Him open our understanding. The disciples saw Jesus right before their eyes, yet still did not understand. *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 14:26).*

Now let us look at 1 Corinthians 2:3-9. *And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. [Paul didn't trust himself and was afraid he would operate in his worldly wisdom.] And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. [What was the demonstration of the Spirit and of power?] That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. [This is the power of God that changes us or brings us out of our worldly wisdom and into the wisdom of God, which brings us into the faith.] Howbeit we speak wisdom among them who are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought. [Who are the perfect ones? They are the ones who are growing in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ and are in the faith. Unless we grow in Christ or come into the unity of the faith, we will never understand the true holy wisdom of God. We will be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.] But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. [The wisdom of God is hidden from our worldly wisdom. It is a hidden mystery. This can only be understood as we go into training, by the working of the cross by the power of the Holy Spirit. By the way, the Holy Spirit never works outside of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. God ordained this for us before the world was. It is for us to be created in Christ Jesus into the wisdom of God. It was made possible for us when Jesus was crucified on the cross.] Which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

As we are being trained, the Holy Spirit begins to reveal these things to us,

the church. The wisdom of man cannot understand these things. Jesus Christ is the head of the church! He is the living embodiment of His life in the church!

We can operate in all kind of religious forms with the wisdom of this world and try to fix the fallen state that we were born with by putting on fig leaves, which represent self-righteousness. This includes all self-helps, motivational speaking, and self-improvement. Within ourselves, we cannot improve or fix our fallen sin nature. We must be clothed by God with animal skin, which represents the cross. Without shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22). This was made possible by the shed blood of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. May we not just understand this with our worldly wisdom, but start to understand this with the heart and with the godly hidden wisdom, and come into faith.

Let's move on to 1 Corinthians 2:12-16. *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually

discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ. This can only come by the working of the cross by the power of the Holy Spirit in us.

Remember there are anti-christ spirits in this world, spiritual wickedness in high places, which fight against the true work of the cross by the Holy Spirit. *For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an anti-christ* (2 John 7).

Even today, there are many deceivers and anti-christ spirits in our communities, churches, and the world. They look like truth and feel like truth, but they are religious anti-christ spirits. Those that are not being exercised by the working of the cross by the power of the Holy Spirit and are not walking in the great salvation by God's grace through faith in us will go into great deception of self-works and self-righteousness and into great darkness and blindness to the truth of God. This deception has plagued the church down through the years.

Let's look at those who are walking in the power of the truth, which is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. These are true believers. These believers are the ones that will see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created

all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church [or by these believers], the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him (Ephesians 3:9-12).

Somebody might say, "I have failed too many times. I have done too many bad things. I could never attain to this. I feel like God and people have condemned me." God would say to you, "I had you in training, and you did not know it. Because you now know that you are not worthy, your eyes will now see, or start to see, My great love for you and My great salvation plan. You are the one I will show Myself to. You are the one I will give My wisdom to. You are the one that will walk in this with boldness and confidence, because you now know this did not come from you, but from Me!"

The wisdom of man and the wisdom of this world will never understand this. This wisdom will never understand Ephesians 3:18-19, that says that you *may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fulness of God.*

—D. Wickey

End

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And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. (1 John 1:4)

Do you experience joy in your everyday life?

As believers, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are commanded by the Word of God to rejoice and be joyful. First, let us understand that this joy the Bible describes is not experienced by everyone. It can only be experienced by believers.

Now, what do we mean by the word "believer"?

A believer is not just someone who believes in God and Jesus Christ. The Bible says: *Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble (James 2:19)*. So, clearly, just believing that there is a God does not make us a Christian.

A true believer is one who realizes that he is a sinner (Luke 18:13; Romans 5:8) and that he is lost without Jesus (Ephesians 2:12.) He has repented of his sins (2 Corinthians 7:10), he has been washed by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 9:14), has been born of God (John 1:13), and has been given the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:45). This is very important to understand because we will never experience true biblical joy if we

do not have the Holy Ghost working within us.

So, what exactly is this joy we are talking about?

First of all, it is not just a temporary emotion that comes and goes as our circumstances change around us. We often hear the expression, "happiness is a choice." Is that really true? If that is the case, why are we surrounded by unhappy people? You see, we cannot force ourselves to be happy.

We are surrounded by people who are searching for happiness and fulfillment, yet many never arrive at the point where they say, "I've found it." That's because they are searching in the wrong places. All the pleasures of this world will never bring us complete happiness. They are only temporary, and the more we have, the more we want. That's not to say that we can't enjoy the gifts that God has given to us. We can enjoy the beauties of His creation and all the other gifts He has given. But, again, that kind of happiness will not last; there is still more.

The Bible says that we are to be joyful (Psalm 35:9) Not only are we to be joyful, but we are to rejoice always (Philippians 4:4.)

What are we to be joyful about?

We are told to rejoice in the day that the Lord has made (Psalm 118:24), in the word of God (Psalm 119:162), in the Lord because of His salvation (Isaiah 61:10), that our names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20), in truth (1 Corinthians 13:6), and that our children walk in truth (2 John 1:4).

Now that we've covered a few of the rea-

sons we have to be joyful, let's look at what the Bible says about when to be joyful. We are told to rejoice evermore (1 Thessalonians 5:16.) The Bible even goes so far as to say that we shall rejoice when we are persecuted for Christ's sake! (Matthew 5:12). We are to be joyful in glory and sing in our beds (Psalm 149:5).

When was the last time you were lying in bed and were so full of joy that you started singing aloud to the Lord? How in the world do we do all that? As we said before, we must first have the gift of the Holy Ghost. One of the gifts, or fruits, of the Spirit is joy (Acts 13:52; Galatians 5:22). So when we have been born again by the Spirit of the Lord and we recognize how unworthy we are to be called a child of God, yet, in spite of that, He freely gives to us His gift of salvation and the gift of the Holy Ghost, how can we not be joyful?

As followers of Christ, we are promised that we can have joy unspeakable (1 Peter 1:8), everlasting joy (Isaiah 51:11), exceeding joy – even when we are partakers of Christ's sufferings (1 Peter 1:3), and full joy (John 15:11.) This is a complete and indescribable joy!

Do you experience this joy?

If not, you can today by completely surrendering your whole life and all you have to Jesus Christ; then you are promised from the Bible that you can experience the joy of the Lord and the joy of His salvation!

Romans 15:13 says, *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

—Martin Miller

Isaiah 61:10 — I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.

Feedback and Response Section

1

To the writers of the Amish Voice:

We are sad that a man who was taught the truth about the Scriptures can be so deceiving. Instead of *The Amish Voice*, it is the voice of Satan. It is made up of half-truths and simple lies. Yes, there are some accurate Bible verses, but on the whole, it is very misleading.

It is our fear that at the judgement you will need to answer for all the misleading you are doing and the souls lost. The title should be *The Rebel's Voice*.

—Pennsylvania

Jonas Yoder responds:

Thank you for your feedback about the *Amish Voice*. I appreciate your great concern for lost souls. We truly do live in the last times, of which the Bible speaks that there will be much deception and a

great falling away during this time (2 Timothy 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:3). Because of this, it is very important that we not just follow the teachings of men, but that we search the scriptures like the Bereans of old, who *searched the scriptures daily, to see whether those things were so* (Acts 17:11).

I'm sorry that you felt like the articles in the *Amish Voice* were deceiving, as we try hard to keep them Biblically accurate. We realize that not everyone sees eye to eye on many Bible subjects, which is all the more reason we need to study the scriptures for ourselves and let them speak for themselves without pulling them out of their proper context. It is sad to see how many denominational views claim to be based on scriptures, but have been grossly pulled out of their proper context and made to say something completely different from what the writer intended. I'm afraid one of the biggest

reasons we have so much denominational division is because we tend to filter the scriptures through our preconceived and sometimes traditional thoughts and opinions. It is important that we all become lovers of the truth and be willing to allow the Bible to prove us wrong, no matter which side of the discussion we are on.

Although I am not personally familiar with your situation, my heart goes out to you in dealing with this obviously difficult situation. It is always painful when someone does not live up to our expectations. I want you to know that we here at the *Amish Voice* have a great burden for reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21), first and foremost with God, and then also as much as is possible with man (Romans 12:18).

May God Bless you,

Jonas Yoder

2

Thank you for all your great articles in *The Amish Voice*. I am a born-again Christian, living in an Amish church. And I fully agree, it's time the church understands that we are saved by faith. —Pennsylvania

Joe Keim responds:

First and foremost, I rejoice with you in that you have experienced the event of the new birth. More and more of our people are having their eyes opened to the gospel and getting born again. Since 2000, our ministry has received several thousand testimonies from people in the Amish culture who have experienced the new birth.

The new birth is explained very clearly in John 3:3: *Jesus answered* [Nicodemus]

and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

The first birth allows one to enter the physical world, but not the spiritual world. To enter the spiritual world, one must be born into it, just like the first one.

John 3:6-7: *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.*

Years ago, when I was just a young boy, a neighbor in my community shared how a friend of his got born again, out in the front yard, under the apple tree. When he finished telling the story, he laughed and said there is no such thing as getting born again on the spot and having full

assurance of salvation. He further suggested that the new birth is something that happens throughout a person's lifetime and is based on how well the person followed the church rules and traditions of our Anabaptist forefathers. I remember thinking, "I wonder if he's right."

About ten years went by, and on July 28, 1985, I too experienced the new (second) birth. It was so real – so powerful and so overwhelming! I felt the love and forgiveness of God go through every fiber of my body.

This all took place while a friend of mine shared the following Scriptures with me, and I understood: Romans 3:10-12, 6:23, 5:8, and 10:13.

As my friend explained God's Word, the Holy

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Spirit opened my eyes, just like it says in Luke 24:45: *Then opened He [Jesus] their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures.*

Tears streamed down my cheeks as I called out loud for God to save me from my sins. For the first time in my life, I realized how lost I was and how desperately I needed a Savior. I also realized my utter helplessness in getting right with God by my own good works – I had nothing to offer God for the sins I had committed against Him. Nothing!

Since that day, I have witnessed hundreds of people repent from dead works and self righteousness and turn to Jesus Christ for salvation. I've seen it

take place at the kitchen table, on the couch, in the backyard and out in public.

In Scripture, we can read where people got born again in the desert (Acts 8:26-39), at prison (Acts 16:30-31), in their own home (Acts 10:34-48), and while traveling on foot (Acts 9:1-17). In Acts 2:41, three thousand people got born again at once. In Acts 4:4, five thousand men got born again.

The new birth is not something you schedule, pay for, inherit or manufacture on your own. The new birth is a free gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is supernatural, meaning it is purely and entirely a work of God (John 1:13). Mankind has been given a free will and can choose to accept or reject the

supernatural miracle of the new birth (Romans 10:13).

John 5:24 says: *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.*

1 John 5:11-13 says: *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life. Are you born again?*

—Joe Keim

End

3

Greetings in the name of Jesus. I have for a while had questions about getting your little magazine called *The Amish Voice*. The story by Emanuel Schrock and now the last issue had one from Moses Schrock, both have a ring of gevis der seligkeit (knowing you are saved). That is contrary to what we were taught, and we believe that the Bible supports that teaching of living in der Hoffrung (in hope). Nix fur ungate.

—New York

Jeremiah Zeiset responds:

Thank you for writing to us with your concern. I, at one time, had the same thought, believing we can only hope to

go to heaven. I believed this because I thought my salvation was based on whether or not I lived good enough life. Since then, the Lord, through Scripture, showed me how vain my thinking was.

If my salvation is based on how good a life I lived, then I am surely doomed to hell – because I miserably fail the good-person test. But (and this is very important) Jesus said the only way to the father is through Him (John 14:6), and I now know that I am not saved by works.

Since I've placed my faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and because I know God keeps His promises, I know I'll indeed be saved, though not of works lest I should boast. This is not a bold claim, but it is a biblical, faith-based claim.

Also (this, too, is very important), we are to live clean lives for the Lord. But this is only our reasonable service (Romans 12:1) and does nothing to add or subtract from this most important biblical truth of salvation by faith.

Good works are what saved-by-faith Christians do because they love God. And if I only hope to have salvation, it means I do not really believe in Jesus Christ as my savior, as He clearly promises salvation to those who believe (John 3:15); and I believe the Bible to be true.

This is a very important topic, and I'm very glad you wrote in.

—Jeremiah Zeiset

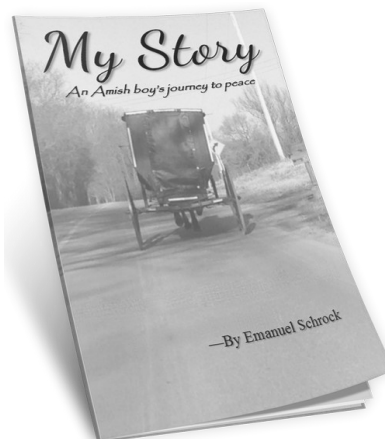
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Men and Women of Integrity

Don't you love hanging around people of integrity? They are always honest—even in the little things. They are fair, sincere, and faithful. They are trustworthy and upright. They have good morals and defend the truth.

Men and women of integrity are not always liked, particularly not by those who live ungodly lifestyles, who follow the lusts of their flesh and justify their sinful behaviors.

Will you strive to be a person of integrity today? I hope so. This world desperately needs men and women of integrity. —Joe Keim



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Jesus told this parable:

When thou art bidden [invited] of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. (Luke 14:8-10)

We love these stories. We love to hear about good and humble people being rewarded. We love to hear about the proud and arrogant being humbled. We love stories like those from the book of Esther about wicked Haman getting what he deserved and Mordecai being raised up to take his place. We love stories like those of David, the young shepherd, being disregarded by his family as someone too insignificant to even be considered as being a possible candidate for king, while God looked at his heart and had other plans, and God chose young David to rule all of Israel.

We love to read these kind of stories, like another parable Jesus told:

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:10-14)

It is easy for us to think of ourselves as the humble ones deserving God's reward. Most people do not think of themselves as proud, self-righteous people who deserve God's punishment. Consider the apostle Paul. We like stories of God's grace and how God took the Christian-persecutor Pharisee Saul and transformed him into the apostle Paul, one of the most Christlike followers of all time. We like to hear about the down-and-out drug-and-alcohol-addicted person who meets Jesus and is rescued from sin and shame and begins a new life in Jesus Christ. We feel good when we think of the undeserving being helped or the poor and afflicted finding comfort and joy.

We all like to think that we deserve God's blessing and help. There are not many people who think that they are not pleasing God and will not be accepted by Him. The Pharisees were dedicated religious people who thought that if anyone deserved God's blessing and reward, it was certainly them. Yet Jesus told them, *Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15).*

We need to meet God's standards. We do not always see ourselves as God sees us. Whether a drug-addicted alcoholic wife-abusing adulterous lying thief or a nice religious person, we are all on the same level in God's sight. We are sinners with deceitful hearts who need a Savior. If we do not realize that we are lost, we will not realize that we need to be rescued. If we do not realize that we have corrupt and

desperately wicked hearts, we will not realize that we need new hearts. Peter cried out, "Lord, save me," because he realized that he was in trouble. Have you ever cried out to the Lord to save you?

How is it with you? Are you walking around thinking that you are good and right in God's eyes, never having realized that your heart is sinful and that you need new life? We like to think that God raises others up to our level, but rarely do we think that until we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, we are actually

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

(Philippians 3:9)

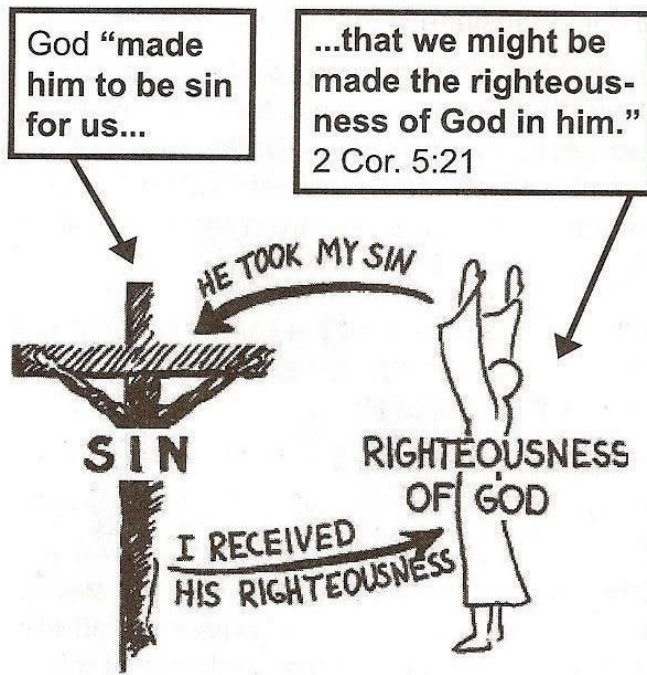
on the same level as the worst of the worst. We expect other people to cry out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," but as for ourselves, we note how much religion we have and how good we are and how much we do for others.

Which are you? Are you a sinner in need of a Savior, or are you a good religious person who has never seen his sinfulness in the light of God's holiness? Do you cry out for God's mercy because you are a condemned sinner, or do you hope that you will make it to heaven because you think of yourself as a good person? There are two categories in God's sight. There are the lost and the saved, the holy and the unclean, those who trust in Jesus and His righteousness and those who trust in themselves and their own righteousness. Are you justifying yourselves before men, or are you justified in God's sight? Do you see yourself as too good to be condemned or do you see yourself as too wicked to be accepted as you are?

Adam and Eve sinned and made their own covering, thinking that was good enough; but they did not understand that their own covering was no good without

the shedding of blood. Are you trying to cover your sinfulness in your own goodness and religion, or do you realize that no matter how much you do and no matter how hard you try, unless you are trusting in the shed blood of Jesus, your hope is futile? We either wear the righteousness of Christ or we wear our own filthy garments. We cannot combine the two types of garments. *We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).*

Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused



thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment (Zechariah 3:3-4).

Has God taken away your filthy garments of sin and self? You cannot

clean up your old garment. It is stained with sin. You must be given a new garment – a new heart – by God’s Spirit through the blood of Jesus.

Do not be deceived. Do not be content in your sin-stained garments of the flesh. Seek God. Turn to Him with all your heart. Do not hope in religion or self, but turn to Jesus Christ and trust in Him alone. Only then can you say:

I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels (Isaiah 61:10).

—Paul Miller

End

A Real Person

—by Norma Miller

- ◆ That girl who irritates you:
She's a real person.
- ◆ That brother who left the path you thought was right for him, who does things you can't stand:
He's a real person.
- ◆ That person who hurt you once, perhaps intentionally, perhaps not:
He's a real person.
- ◆ That father who seems emotionless and cold:
He's a real person.
- ◆ That mother who you couldn't seem to please no matter how hard you tried:
She's a real person.
- ◆ That fashion diva with the face of an angel:
She's a real person.
- ◆ That homeless man on the street who seems to not care about getting his act together:

They are real people:

- ◆ A real person with real feelings.
- ◆ With a heart that longs to be heard and understood.
- ◆ A person who has real longings and goals and dreams they are afraid they will never realize.
- ◆ A heart that can feel rejected and hurt.
- ◆ A heart that shrinks inward with each new rejection.
- ◆ A heart that can beat and melt and throb and break.
- ◆ A spirit that can be encouraged and lifted with one kind word.
- ◆ A soul that can be crushed by lack of compassion.
- ◆ A heart that can be changed.
- ◆ A real person with good points and value and great worth.

Part 14

AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS

As the world continues to turn its back on God, we want to take a look at what the future holds according to the One who is the Beginning and the End—God! We hope you enjoy and benefit from this series, courtesy of Middletown Bible Church. Follow along, fill in the blanks, and look up! May we all be ready for the return of Jesus Christ!

You will need a Bible for this lesson.

Hell

The dictionary says that HELL is "the place where wicked people are punished after death." There are many people today who do not believe in a real hell. They might say something like this: "I do not believe that a loving and kind God would ever punish people in hell!"

God is very loving and God is very kind, but God is also very HOLY, JUST and RIGHTEOUS. "For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in _____: neither shall _____ dwell with Thee" (Psalm 5:4).

Who is God angry with (Psalm 7:11)? _____

How often (Psalm 7:11)? _____

We must never forget that God is HOLY and He hates sin (compare Psalm 5:5)!

Consider a human judge. A judge is supposed to be fair and just and to make right decisions. A judge is supposed to abide by the LAW. If a person has broken the law he is guilty and should be punished. If a person has not broken the law he is innocent and should not be punished. A fair and righteous judge should "justify the righteous and _____ the wicked" (Deut. 25:1).

What would you think of a judge who said this: "Even though you robbed the bank and shot the female teller at the window, I am going to pretend that you never did this and I am going to let you go unpunished because I am such a loving judge." Would this be the right thing to do? Would this judge be doing his job in the right way? Is it really fair and just to let criminals go away unpunished? _____

God is the PERFECT JUDGE. In Nahum 1:3 we read, "The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will _____ at all acquit the _____." This means that the LORD will not let the guilty go unpunished. He must punish the guilty ones!

How many people are guilty before God (Romans 3:19, 23)? _____ How many people are innocent before God (Romans 3:10-12)? _____ What about you? Are you innocent or are you guilty? _____ Do you deserve to be punished? _____

Everyone deserves to go to hell, but the amazing thing is that "God so loved the world" (John 3:16) that everyone who believes on His Son will not perish in hell. God has provided a way for sinful men to be saved from hell's punishment! He sent His Son to be punished for us! Jesus Christ was made sin F_____ U_____ (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus Christ once suffered for S_____, the Just (that's Jesus Christ) for the unjust (that's us, the unrighteous ones!) that He might bring us to G_____ (1 Peter 3:18).

What Did Jesus Teach About Hell?

Did the Lord Jesus Christ believe in a real hell (read Mark 9:43-48)? _____ Did Jesus Christ believe that there will be a real place of fire and punishment (Matthew 25:41,46)? _____

Yes, Jesus Christ believed in a real hell. In fact, Jesus said more about hell and taught more about hell than did Moses or Isaiah or Peter or Paul or any other person in the Bible. He warned men about the dangers of hell and about the dangers of future punishment.

Suppose you were walking along a road late at night and you see a fire burning in the basement of a house. Suppose that the

people who live in the house are sleeping upstairs. If you really love these people would you warn them? Would you try to let them know about the danger they are in? If you really love them, what would you do?

The Lord Jesus really loves us and that is why He has warned us about hell. What are you going to do with the warning? Think of the people in a burning house. Suppose you shout to them: "FIRE! FIRE IN THE BASEMENT! WAKE UP! GET OUT OF THE HOUSE BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE! HURRY UP! FIRE!" What will these people do? They can believe your warning and believe that there really is a fire and run out of the house or they can say, "WE DON'T BELIEVE YOU! YOU ARE JUST PLAYING A JOKE ON US! WE ARE GOING BACK TO SLEEP!"

They can believe and be saved or they can refuse to believe and perish. The same is true with Jesus warnings about hell.

Life Beyond the Grave

Man does not know what lies beyond the grave. We do not know what happens after death. We have never died ourselves and we have never talked to anyone who has died!

Suppose there were an island in the ocean called "THE ISLAND OF NO RETURN." When people go to visit this island, they never return! Suppose you had never been to this island. How would you find out what this island is really like? Could you talk to someone who has been there? There is no way to learn about this island unless you go there yourself! The same is true with the place people go after death. People do not know what this place is like because they have never been there. Are they able to talk to people who have been there?

There is Someone who does know what lies beyond the grave! There is Someone who does know about the place people go after they die! This Person is God Himself! God is the only Person who can answer man's questions about life after death. So if we really want to know about where men go after death, what should we read (circle the correct answer):

a. The newspaper	b. The encyclopedia
c. The Bible	d. Magazines
e. Internet websites	f. Science-fiction books

God's answers are found in the Bible. The Bible is the only Book which can answer man's questions about life and death, heaven and hell. Let's open the Bible and find some of these answers:

The Place Called Hades

In Luke 16:19-31 we learn about a poor man who was saved

(Lazarus) and a rich man who was not saved (his name is not given). When Lazarus died he was carried by the angels to a place of comfort and happiness where Abraham and the other saved people were (Luke 16:22,23,25). But when the unsaved rich man died, in what place did he find himself (Luke 16:22-23)? _____ Was he happy or miserable in this place (Luke 16:24)? _____ Was he comfortable there (Luke 16:25)? _____ Did he want his five brothers to come to this same place of suffering (Luke 16:27-28)? _____

The word HELL in Luke 16:23 is the Greek word HADES. HADES is the place where this unsaved rich man went when he died. Jesus called HADES a "place of T_____ (torture)" (Luke 16:28). We are also told that it is a place where people suffer in some kind of fire (see Luke 16:24--"flame"). Jesus described Hades as a terrible place of suffering and misery. It is also a place where people can get no relief from their suffering (Luke 16:24-26). The rich man wanted just ONE DROP of water (the amount of water that a tip of a person's finger would hold--Luke 16:24), but he did not get any relief.

Actually Hades was the place where the dead went and it included both the place of torment (Luke 16:23-24) and also the place of comfort where Lazarus and Abraham were (also called "Abraham's bosom").

Where Do People Go When They Die?

In the days before the cross, people would go to HADES when they died. In HADES there was be a place (compartment) for the saved and a place (compartment) for the unsaved:

Hades (the underworld)		
PLACE FOR SAVED Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22) Paradise (Luke 23:43) LAZARUS and ABRAHAM	GREAT GULF FIXED (Lk.16:26)	PLACE FOR UNSAVED Place of Fire (Luke 16:24) Place of Torment (Luke 16:28) RICH MAN

Now that Christ has died, risen again, and ascended into heaven, things are different. Today when people die, they go straight to heaven (Philippians 1:21,23; 2 Corinthians 5:8; 12:2,4). When Christ ascended up to heaven he took Lazarus and Abraham and all the saved people with Him (compare Ephesians 4:8-10). But when unsaved people die today, they still go to the same place. They still go

Cont. next page

to HADES, the same place the rich man went in Luke chapter 16.

The Place Called Gehenna

There is another word for HELL which is found in the New Testament in Mark 9:43-48 and other places. It is the Greek word GEHENNA.

In Old Testament times GEHENNA was a place located outside the city walls of Jerusalem. It was also called the Valley of Hinnom. It was at this place that children were sometimes sacrificed and burned in flames. Children would be passed through the flames (see 2 Chronicles 28:3), and this wicked practice took place at Gehenna. In Old Testament times when people thought of this place they thought of bodies being burned in fire!

Years later, Gehenna became the city dump! The Jews living in Jerusalem would throw their garbage and worthless things into this valley. Even the bodies of dead animals would be thrown into this place to be devoured by the maggots and the flames. Sometimes the bodies of unburied criminals were thrown into Gehenna after they were executed or crucified. A fire was kept burning in this valley in order to consume the waste and rubbish and dead bodies that were thrown there. It seemed that the fires in this valley never went out. The place even came to be called THE GEHENNA OF FIRE.

Jesus used the word GEHENNA to describe HELL (the place of everlasting fire—see Matthew 25:41). In Matthew 5:29, this word is used (the word HELL is the word GEHENNA). How horrible it would be to have one of your eyes plucked out! Just think of the pain and agony! Jesus was saying that Gehenna is much worse than that! If you had to make a choice between plucking out your eye and going to Gehenna, it would be much better to have your eye plucked out!

How would you like to have a huge rock tied to your neck and then be thrown into the ocean (see Mark 9:42)? Jesus taught that this is much better than going to HELL (Gehenna — compare Mark 9:43-44). Do the fires of GEHENNA ever go out (Mark 9:43-44)? _____

Down through the centuries many Christians have been put to death by being burned at the stake. These Christians knew the fire which they had to go through would only hurt them for a brief moment. But their enemies who put them to death would someday have to suffer in flames that would last forever!

Polycarp was a Christian who lived a long time ago (in the second century A.D.). His enemies decided to burn him at the stake if he did not deny Christ. One of these men said, "I will have you consumed with fire unless you change your mind."

Polycarp replied, "You threaten fire which burns for an hour and is soon quenched; for you are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment reserved for the wicked" (see Matthew 25:41,46). The fire that Polycarp suffered through for a brief moment was nothing compared to the fire that the unsaved must suffer through forever!

The Temporary Prison and the Final Prison

When an unsaved person dies, he goes to HADES (as we saw in Luke chapter 16). HADES is like a temporary prison. Unsaved people will not be in Hades forever. They will only be there until the Great White Throne Judgment. After the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15), they will be cast into the FINAL PRISON which is called the _____ of _____ (Revelation 20:14-15; see also Revelation 21:8). This is the place that Jesus meant when he used the word HELL or GEHENNA. It is the place where the fire never stops burning.

The lake of fire is the final place where the unsaved will be for all eternity. Those who go into the lake of fire never come out! They will suffer there forever! The fire will never go out. They must stay in this prison forever! The lake of fire is also called the S _____ D _____ (Revelation 20:14 and see 21:8). Death means SEPARATION. The second death is when a person is separated from God forever. Someone has once said, "Those who are born twice (that is, born again) die once; those who are born once die twice" This means that those who are born again only have to die once (they die physically). Those who are not born again will not only die physically but they will also be cast into the lake of fire which is the SECOND DEATH. The SECOND DEATH is for all that have never been born again into God's family. This is one of the reasons Jesus said, "Ye _____ be born again" (John 3:7).

Why Do People Deny the Reality of Hell?

Hell is a terrible reality and we don't like to think about it. But God's Word, which is absolute TRUTH (John 17:17) tells us about hell. God wants us to understand hell, and Christ died to save us from it. People deny hell for two main reasons: 1) They don't understand the terribleness of sin in God's sight; 2) They don't understand the awesome holiness of God. If we really understood these twin truths, we would not have a problem understanding why the wicked must suffer in hell forever.

What is Hell?

When you think of HELL you should always think of two things: 1) Separation from God; 2) Punishment by God. Look up the following

verses and see if you can find these two things:

1. Matthew 25:41

SEPARATION _____

PUNISHMENT _____

2. Matthew 25:46

SEPARATION _____

PUNISHMENT _____

3. II Thessalonians 1:9

SEPARATION _____

PUNISHMENT _____

4. Names for Hell:

SEPARATION:	Hell is called " THE SECOND DEATH " and this reminds us of separation.
PUNISHMENT:	Hell is called " THE LAKE OF FIRE " and this reminds us of punishment.

Jesus Suffered Hell for Us!

What happened to Jesus when He died on the cross? Read Matthew 27:46. Was He separated from God? _____ Read Isaiah 53:4-6, 10 and 1 Peter 3:18. Was He punished by God? _____

Indeed, this is the good news found in the Bible! Jesus Christ was separated from God so that we would never have to be separated from God! Jesus Christ was punished by God so that we would never have to be punished by God! Jesus Christ died so that we would never have to be hurt by the second death (Revelation 2:11)! Christ died to save us and deliver us from so great a death (2 Corinthians 1:10)!

Have you really believed that Jesus Christ did this for you? Have you thanked Him for being willing to be separated from God so that you could have fellowship with God? Have you thanked Him for being willing to be punished by God so that you could be forgiven by God?

HELL IS VERY REAL, but what Christ did on the cross is also very real. God's hatred of sin is very real and God's love for sinners is very real.

THE CROSS will forever prove that God loves sinners. HELL will forever prove that God hates sin! BELIEVERS IN HEAVEN will forever prove how gracious and kind God is towards those who have received His Son as Saviour. Have you done this?

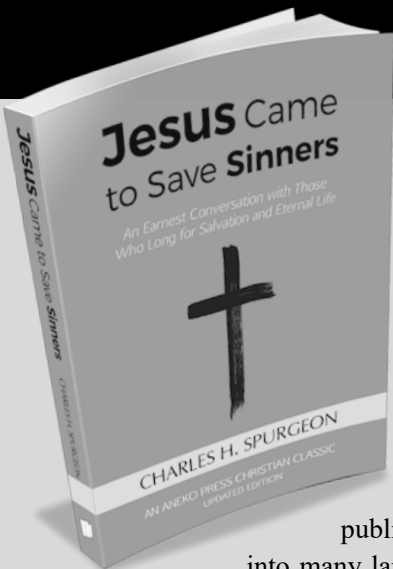
Are you REALLY saved or are you REALLY separated from God? Are you safe in Christ right now (Romans 8:1; John 5:24) or are you under the wrath of God right now (John 3:36)?

Heaven is REAL. Hell is REAL. Your choice is REAL. Your decision will determine your eternal destiny.

END

Jesus Came to Save Sinners

By Charles H. Spurgeon



Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was a British Baptist preacher. He started preaching at age 16. He quickly became popular, frequently having more than 10,000 people present to hear him preach at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London. His sermons were printed in newspapers, published in books, and translated into many languages. He is still known as the Prince of Preachers.

This book, *Jesus Came to Save Sinners*, is a heart-level conversation with the reader. Every excuse, reason, and roadblock for not coming to Christ is examined and dealt with.

If you think you may be too bad or if you are full of sin, you will discover that life in Christ is for you.

You can reject the message of salvation by faith. You can falsely profess faith in Christ while you remain in sin. You cannot, though, change God's truth. As such, you and your family have a logical duty to embrace truth, claim it for your own, and be genuinely set free for now and eternity. Come and embrace this free gift of God and live a victorious life for and in Him.

Through the generosity of the publisher, this book is available to you for FREE. To get a copy, contact us at:

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July

Encouraging Your Husband to Lead

Barbara Rainey invites young women to encourage their husbands to lead, and follow when they do. She recalls the disappointment she experienced early in her marriage as she discovered that Dennis Rainey led differently than she expected. What she thought was failure was just a different way to lead.

Following Your Husband's Leadership

Barbara Rainey helps wives understand that a husband is designed to be the leader of the home, and a wife is called to follow him. A wife needs to know what to say, how to say it, and discern the best timing.

The Book that Changed the World

Dr. Rogers begins a powerful series on one of his favorite books of the Bible—Romans, the “Magna Carta” of the Christian faith. Many books have affected the course of history, but here is one that changed the world.

The Devil's Religion

This generation needs to be warned against false religion. What do you think Satan's stand is on religion? It's not what you think., and it goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. But his religion will always oppose truth faith in Christ.

Our Time

The way we use our time reveals what we really believe to be important in life. The Lord Jesus Christ spent time alone with God the Father, no matter how packed His schedule. Do you spend enough time with God?

August

How to Weather the Storms of Life

Adrian Rogers tells how life is like a voyage. We sail on the sea of time between two eternities. The circumstances of life are like the weather. Sometimes there's smooth sailing; other times, storms. You will face storms. Adrian Rogers shares three glorious truths that will help you weather the storms of life.

The Blame Game

It began in the Garden of Eden when Adam said, "It's her fault," and Eve said, "It's the serpent's fault." Yet we've continued that same game to this day --- blaming others and not accepting

responsibility for our lives. How do we break out of this cycle of blame? Listen to Adrian Rogers explain the answer.

Understanding the New Birth

Did you know there are six ways that your spiritual birth is like your natural birth? In this message, Adrian Rogers teaches some things that you likely didn't know about the new birth as we listen in on the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus.

Why Pray, 1-2

Why Pray? Now that's a loaded question. We often will pray for comfort when we are hurting, God's strength when we face tough situations, provision when we are in need, and we'll pray a prayer of thanksgiving in victory. But what does the Bible say about why we should really pray? Pastor Jeff Schreve explores some key reasons for why we should pray in ALL situations and how prayer is so vital to our relationship with God.

September

5 Love Languages

Gary Chapman discusses the foundation to the relationship between parents and children.

The Danger of Comparison

It is human nature to compare. But is it wise? Author and mother of five Kay Wills Wyma joins Dennis Rainey from FamilyLife Today and shares what the Bible says about "obsessive comparison disorder" and how to diagnosis it in yourself as well as in your kids.

How to Raise Godly Children

What is your greatest desire for your children? Success? Fame? Adrian Rogers shares the secret to raising truly successful children and reveals how he and Mrs. Rogers pray for their children. Practical and timely tips you don't want to miss.

Overcoming Failure, 1-3

Pastor Chuck Swindoll explains that down deep in our souls lies a little rebel that sometimes whispers and yells for us to go our own way. Inevitably, when we do, we stumble into more and more trouble. It may begin with our thought life, but then can quickly spiral into all-out rebellion against God that promises only devastation. Thankfully, God's Word offers hope and healing for all who would turn back in genuine repentance.

Walk in the Light,
cont. from back cover

not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. —1 Samuel 16:7

A while back, I walked out of a business, and as I was preparing to leave from the parking lot, I noticed a man ready to take off on a huge decked-out motorcycle. He was dressed in typical motorcycle garb. To be polite, I said, “Nice bike.” I don’t know much about bikes, but this one looked nice to me.

A bit more small talk and he asked my name. Then he said, “I will add you to my prayer list.” I jumped back and exclaimed, “Wow!” We stood there and we talked. We connected. He told me that he pastors a small group of believers. They often meet in bars and share God’s Word. He said those people need the

Lord, and if we don’t take it to them, who will?

I have since often pondered that meeting. Isn’t that exactly what Jesus did? He went right to the worst of sinners, prostitutes, etc. to share His good news. Isn’t that what God wants us to do?

That man and I stood in the parking lot of that bank and we had fellowship. It was a glorious time. He shared how he had lived a rough life until the day the blood of Jesus set him free. Now he is spreading the word to the lost. I thought of the words of Jesus from Luke 5:32: *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Let us, therefore, follow Jesus and call sinners to repentance.

—John Weaver, Taylorsville, NC

END

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If you missed any of our previous conference call discussions, dial **(641) 715-3800**, enter code **89752**, and listen to the recordings.

We are currently discussing the book of Ephesians, and so call in and listen to our recordings as we discuss the first four chapters of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

UPCOMING DISCUSSIONS

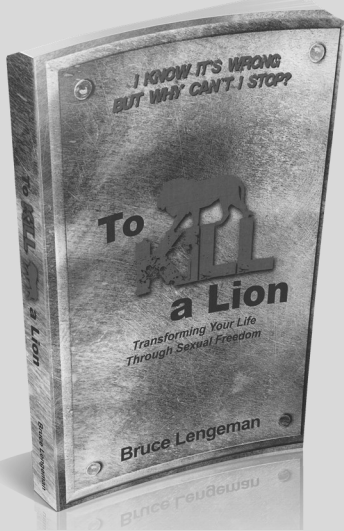
1. **Sunday Night, August 06:** Ephesians 5
2. **Sunday Night, September 03:** Ephesians 6
3. **Sunday Night, October 01:** Paul Helmuth plans to his testimony

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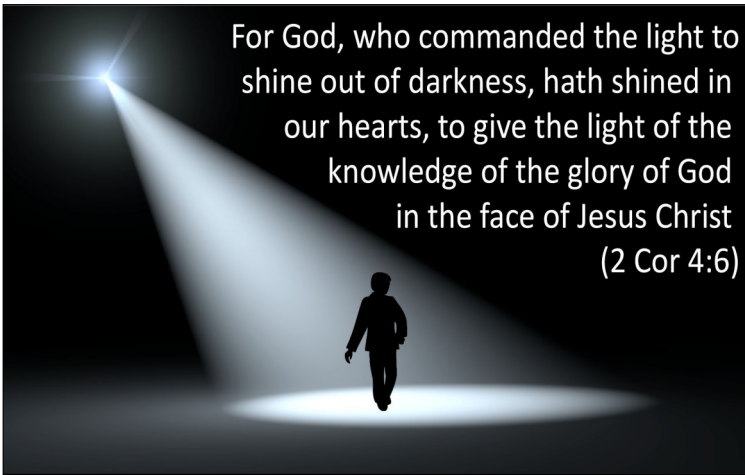
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If We Walk in the Light

—By John Weaver



For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6)

relationship with Him, we will have fellowship one with another. The family of God is big – really big. By being drawn to God, we are being drawn to God’s family. This fellowship we have with each other is never limited to the ones in a particular church or denomination or (our) churches, etc. No. We have fellowship with each other because of one thing. We have fellowship with any and all who have been washed in the blood of Jesus – all who have applied the blood.

There is a bond, a connection, when we meet someone who has been transformed from darkness into His marvelous light. In my travels, in any part of the world, I have been privileged to meet with people from all walks of life, from different local bodies and many different cultures. If they have applied the blood and are walking in the light, we immediately can fellowship. It is like finding a long-lost brother or sister.

Never ever try to limit your fellowship to a certain group or certain groups of churches. The family of God is way bigger than just us or our group. Jesus told his disciples in John 10 that He has other sheep that are not of this fold. He will bring these other sheep. They will also hear His voice, and there will be one fold and one shepherd. Some of these other sheep do not always look like we may think a sheep should look, but God sees the heart. We look on the outward, but God looks on the heart.

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. Those are powerful words found in 1 John 1:7. It is a verse that tells us a lot about God.

First, God wants us to walk in the light. What light? Him. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). God is always light. The path we walk on is always lit if we walk with Him. If we walk with God, we will have fellowship with Him. Always remember, when we are walking with God, that He does not need us; rather, He wants us. He wants our fellowship, and our companionship. Amazing, isn't it?

Then this verse says that as we walk with God and we have a

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