

I Hope God Will Save Me

By Harold Camping

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INTRODUCTION

Many people say, "I want to be saved." And so, in this booklet, we will attempt to face, with complete honesty, the question: What must I do to be saved? Because we will learn that no one can do anything to become saved, it will quickly discourage many readers who will conclude that the situation is hopeless and no one will be saved. But the fact is, the situation of people becoming saved in our day is far from hopeless. Indeed, as we carefully study the Bible we find that the Biblical evidence shows us that there is a great harvest of people becoming saved at this time in history.

The Biblical evidence is that in our day, far more people are becoming saved than at any time in history. But they are not becoming saved by following the salvation plan of any local church or evangelist who subscribes to the salvation plan of a local congregation. We will learn that it is super important that those who teach God's salvation program do so with utmost faithfulness to the salvation plan instituted by God as it is recorded in the Bible.

I Hope God Will Save Me

God created this world about 13,000 years ago. At that time, beginning with our first parents, Adam and Eve, He created mankind in His image and likeness. But mankind rebelled against God, and as a punishment, all of mankind came under the wrath of God. This rebellion was so serious that according to God's law, man would not only lose his eternal existence with God but would also be destroyed forever by annihilation on the last day of this earth's existence. And so, many people cry, "I desperately want to be saved from that sentence of eternal destruction."

Every human being knows there is a God who holds him accountable for his sins. This is because mankind was created in the image and likeness of God. And even though he is estranged from God because of his rebellion against God, the knowledge of God and his accountability to God are present within his personality. We read in Romans 2:13-15, and in these verses the word "Gentiles" is pointing to all of the people of the world who have no knowledge of the Bible:

For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;

All mankind, therefore, intuitively knows it is sin; that is, a transgression of God's law, to murder, to steal, to commit adultery, etc. He also intuitively knows that God requires punishment for his sins. Therefore, every human being tries to find a way by which he can be reconciled to God. That is, he wishes to find a way whereby he can escape the awful punishment of his sins.

Some try to solve this awful problem by convincing themselves that there is no God to whom they must answer. In that case, they try very hard to be an atheist or an evolutionist or an agnostic.

Others have designed gods that they worship. They make a god of wood or stone, like the Buddhist, or, like the astrologist, they look upon the planets and stars as some kind of god, or like many people, they find some religion with which they can be comfortable. That religion may have no connection at all with the Bible or it may utilize some Bible verses to support it. So, they find the religion that they believe can best reconcile them to God.

The fact is that today about one-third of the population of the world call themselves "Christian." This means that they identify with a religion that uses parts of the Bible to support its claim that it is the Gospel that will bring people to God. Each and every religion, whether very slightly related to the Bible, or whether apparently quite true to the Bible, claims that it has the most correct way to become reconciled to God. This is true of well-known denominations such as Roman Catholic, Baptist, Reformed, Presbyterian,

Seventh-Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, etc. Sadly, none of these denominations has a sufficient understanding of the nature of what is required for an individual to become reconciled with God, that is, to become saved from the wrath of God, which is the punishment for their sin.

Unfortunately, those who have placed their trust for their salvation in any of these religions are still in deep trouble with God because their religion cannot save them.

Unfortunately, those who have placed their trust for their salvation in any of these religions are still in deep trouble with God because their religion cannot save them, and they are not listening carefully to the only source of truth, the Bible.

In this booklet, we will attempt to set forth, as accurately as possible, the Bible's teaching concerning God's plan wherein many people do become reconciled with God and do escape the terrible judgment that will be visited upon the human race at the end of the world.

We must remember that the Bible, in its original languages, was written by God, but God used human scribes, as II Peter 1:21, tells us:

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The words that they penned were dictated by God Himself (Jeremiah 36:1-4). Therefore, by reading and studying the Bible we have the ultimate and final source of truth. Therefore, each and every conclusion concerning God's salvation plan must be altogether faithful to the teachings of the Bible. Thus, we must be ready to scrutinize any conclusion that is set forth by man in the light of any verse of the Bible.

What Did God Have to Do to Save Anyone?

We will continue our study by carefully determining what the Bible declares concerning the solution to the terrible predicament that mankind faces. We will find that mankind's situation is so horrible that only God Himself can provide a way of escape.

We must remember that the whole Bible is a law book, written by God Himself, to which all of mankind is subject, and also, to which God Himself is subject (Psalm 138:2). Therefore, the solution to mankind's terrible problem must meet all the legal requirements set forth in God's law book, the Bible.

There are three exceedingly important actions taken by God Himself that are absolutely required before anyone can experience salvation in his life. These three actions are required for every person who becomes saved. There are no exceptions.

Chosen of God

The first action performed by God on behalf of all the individuals who would be saved was that before the creation of the world, God chose every person that He would save. We read in Ephesians 1:3-5:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

As God prepared to create this world and its billions of human inhabitants, He looked down the corridors of time and saw a miserable mass of humanity that was altogether in rebellion against Him. Even though God created mankind as perfect beings, in the image and likeness of God, the Bible is clear that God knew that mankind would rebel against God, and that rebellion would result in all of mankind becoming spiritually dead and thoroughly infected with sin. God also knew that mankind would desperately try to become reconciled to God by seeking God through various plans that are designed by human minds, which are completely infected by sin, but no one would seek God altogether on God's terms.

God also knew that mankind would desperately try to become reconciled to God by seeking God through various plans that are designed by human minds.

In Romans 3:10-12, God describes the pitiable condition of mankind. There we read:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

And yet, in spite of the total disaster of mankind's rebellion against God, God made the amazing decision that He would forever have with Him many of these rebellious people. But how could He have these people with Him forever? The punishment of their sin was enormous. How could God have people with Him forever who legally, because of their sins, must be destroyed? The punishment of sin is horrendously awful because the sin of the human race is horrendously awful. This is the astonishing setting of the amazing salvation program that God planned for the human race.

And so, from before the foundation of the world, God not only chose those whom He wished to sanctify for Himself (Ephesians 1:4), but He also made payment for their sins. His choice had nothing at all to do with any action or desire of mankind. God declares in Romans 9:15:

. . . I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

By informing us of this all-important first action of God, God provides an enormous hope to every unsaved person. God insists that He is not a respecter of persons (Romans 2:11, Ephesians 6:9, Colossians 3:25). No nationality or class of people is likely to include more of God's elect than any other group. No class of sinners is farther outside the possibility of containing elect people than any other class.

The Bible records the salvation of the adulterous woman in John 8, and it records the salvation of the criminal who was crucified alongside Jesus in Luke 23:9-43. Therefore, regardless of how great our sins may be, if we have a deep desire for salvation on God's terms, there is a definite possibility that we could be among God's elect. Given the fact that today a great multitude is to be saved, it is possible that, I, too, can be one of them. And that is a great encouragement.

The Chosen Ones Were Given to Christ

Those whom God chose to be redeemed or saved were given to the Lord Jesus Christ, as we read in John 6:37:

All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

However, for Jesus to have these chosen ones as His eternal possession, something had to be done about their sins. The perfect law of God, which was written by God Himself, decrees that because mankind was created in the image of God, every individual must pay the penalty demanded by God's law for their sins. Therefore, even though they were elected by God and given to Christ to become His eternal possession, Christ could not have them unless the penalty for their sin was paid. God's law decrees that the penalty for sin is death, so effectively, those who were chosen and given to Christ would never be able to come into Christ's possession because they could never pay the penalty. That brings us to another dramatic action that God took on behalf of all those who become saved.

The Sin Bearer

When God viewed the universe, which He planned to create at the beginning of time, He saw that there was no one He could utilize to bear the wrath of God on behalf of the elect, those chosen by God who were given to Christ as His eternal possession. This is taught in Isaiah 63:5 and Ezekiel 22:30. However, God's perfect law decreed that the penalty of death must be paid before any individual could be allowed to enter into God's holy Heaven. Every aspect of God's perfect law had to be satisfied perfectly.

Therefore, in an act of mercy and love that is unparalleled, Christ Himself became the sin bearer on behalf of those individuals who had been given to Him.

Therefore, in an act of mercy and love that is unparalleled, Christ Himself became the sin bearer on behalf of those individuals who had been given to Him. We read in Isaiah 53:6:

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The word "all" in this verse is speaking of all the elect, that is, all those whom God chose before the foundation of the world to become saved. He actually did make payment for their sins before He created the world. In a series of tableaux (three-dimensional historical parables) Christ demonstrated to the world how He suffered in making payment for the sins of the elect. This was especially seen in the demonstration of His suffering when He was crucified. For example, He was shamefully hung on the cross to demonstrate that when He made payment for our sin He had to become a curse. "Cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree." When His body was put in the grave and He arose on Sunday morning, it was a demonstration that when He actually made payment for our sins before the foundation of the world He indeed had to die as a whole personality, body and soul, and rise again to show the payment for our sins was entirely complete. (See *To God Be the Glory*).

When Christ provided for the salvation of the elect, each and every sin of each and every person He planned to save had been placed on Him. And then, with this enormous load of sin, He stood on trial before God, the Judge, and He was found guilty. To satisfy the demands of the law, He then had to endure the full penalty required by the law on behalf of each one He planned to save. That penalty was death: "...the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4b). Thus we also read "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hell (death)." This indicates Christ died and rose again from death before He created the world. How all of this was accomplished is locked into the mystery of all that God is.

So now, there are many individuals in this world who, from before Creation, were chosen to salvation and who have been given to Christ as His eternal possession. Their sins have been totally and eternally covered because Jesus became their Savior by paying for their sins even before the world was created.

A Great Multitude of Yet Unsaved People Whom God Cannot Destroy

Today, throughout the world, there is a great multitude of people who are not saved, and yet, God cannot punish them for their sins. How can that be?

It is because these individuals have been elected by God to become saved. Therefore, long before they were born, all the dirty ugly sins that these elect individuals would commit throughout their lifetime on earth were laid upon the Lord Jesus. Jesus, as their substitute, as their stand-in, stood in their place before the judgment throne of God. And because of these sins, Jesus had become guilty before the righteous law of God, and God punished Him for their sins.

Thus, the individuals for whom He had endured the wrath of God as payment for their sins were now justified. That is, for each one of them, regardless of the grievousness of their sins, the wrath of God, which is demanded by the law as penalty for these sins, had been fully satisfied. These individuals were made just.

Therefore, as each one of these people were born into this world, it was guaranteed that they would never be punished for their sins. Instead, at some point in their life, it was guaranteed that God would apply the Word of God, the Bible, to their life, and they would receive a brand new resurrected soul. This could happen at any time that God chose to make it happen. It could occur while they were still in the womb of their mother or a few minutes before they died. It could occur if they were severely mentally handicapped or if they had a brilliant adult mind. These individuals had been justified long before they were born.

It could occur while they were still in the womb of their mother or a few minutes before they died.

But nobody except God Himself knows who they are. Only after they receive their new resurrected soul, that is, after they have become saved, will they begin to understand that God had saved them. But the fact is that they were justified from the beginning of time because Christ is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

However, when they have become saved, they will know that they had become saved only because God in His sovereign grace had elected them and paid for their sins. And salvation became a reality in their life at the moment God saved them by giving them eternal life and a new resurrected soul.

Thus, at this time in history, in the world today, there is a great multitude of people who will never have to pay for their sins but who are still living in sin, as the rest of the world is living in sin.

All Mankind by Nature Is Spiritually Dead

We must be aware that unsaved mankind, whether chosen by God to become saved or not chosen to become saved, is spiritually dead. Both in body and soul they are thoroughly infected by sin. That is why we read in Matthew 15:19:

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:

God describes those whom He planned to save, as to how they lived before they were saved, in Ephesians 2:3 where we read:

Among whom also we all had our conversation [conduct or behavior] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

According to God's righteous law, the penalty for sin must be paid, and the payment demanded by God's law is destruction.

We must always remember that according to God's righteous law the penalty for sin must be paid, and the payment demanded by God's law is destruction. Only after that payment has been satisfied can God give life, eternal life, to the sinner. And because the payment required for sin is destruction, unsaved man will be eternally destroyed and annihilated, and never live again. God describes this total destruction and annihilation in Revelation 20:14-15, where He says:

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Once a person is cast into the lake of fire, he is annihilated, destroyed forevermore. There is no possibility that he will ever exist again. This is the essence of the "second death".

However, long before he was born, Christ paid for the sins of all the elect, and thus that person has become judicially justified (that is, legally he is no longer guilty of sin). But before God actually applies the Word of God to him and gives him a new resurrected soul, he lives under the wrath of God. That is, he still carries the infection of sin, and he is still altogether spiritually dead. He is still like a stinking corpse (John 11:39) and a valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-2). There is no possibility that he could change the spiritually dead condition of his whole personality any more than a physically dead person can somehow become physically alive.

We Must Be Given a New Soul

God alone can give life, as witnessed by the birth of a child. That child cannot assist in any way in order to obtain that physical life. Likewise, anyone whom God has elected to become saved, even though Christ has already paid the penalty for his sins, must still be given spiritual life. In John 3, verses 3 and 7, God speaks of this as being "born again." The Greek word that God uses here literally means "born from above." Also, in I Peter 1:23, God emphasizes that this new birth is to be "born again."

This new birth, which is from above, that is, from heaven, is not just a seed of life that over a period of time must develop within the personality of the one who is saved. It is instantly an entirely brand new soul or spirit essence. The seed is Christ Himself who indwells the saved person (John 14:23). God assures us that it is a brand new soul as He uses the analogy of trying to patch an old garment by putting a piece of new cloth on the rent or tear (Matthew 9:16). It must be an altogether new garment. Likewise, He gives the analogy of trying to put new wine in old bottles. The new wine must be put in new bottles (Matthew 9:17). This is further emphasized in other Biblical passages, such as II Corinthians 5:17, where we read:

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

The part of the personality of the person that instantly became a new creature is the new spirit (new resurrected soul), that God gave him at the moment He applied the Word of

God to his life (Ezekiel 36:26). Likewise, at the end of time, this elect person will be given a brand new resurrected spiritual body, "**In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed**" (I Corinthians 15:52).

Thus, significant parables that illustrate the complete incapability of mankind to become spiritually alive, that is, to become saved, are given in the Bible. This is set forth in Ezekiel 37, where God typifies unsaved mankind as dry bones, and yet, God shows that when God acts, those dry bones were brought to full life. Another historical parable is recorded in John 11, where we read that the stinking corpse of a man named Lazarus came to life at the command of the Lord Jesus. Likewise, God is the only one who can bring eternal spiritual life to mankind who by nature is spiritually dead.

We can be sure that there are two kinds of unsaved people in the world.

We can be sure that there are two kinds of unsaved people in the world. There are spiritually dead persons who were elected and who judicially are no longer under the wrath of God, and there are those who are not included with the elect, and therefore, for certain, they will never have eternal life and will suffer the final wrath of God. In either case, even though they are spiritually dead, God's law to some degree is written on their hearts. Thus, they know, and their conscience will witness to them that they should obey the laws of God.

Moreover, an integral part of their personality is their soul or spirit essence wherein God can guide them to a greater desire to be obedient to God's laws, or Satan can guide them to greater wickedness. In addition, inherent within their whole personality there is a wickedness, a spiritual deadness, that needs no help from Satan to find expression in their thoughts, words, and actions.

The Reality of the Salvation of the Elect

As was already noted, there is one more great act of God that is required. The individuals who were chosen to salvation are sinful humans. They do not know anything about God's plans for them. The actuality of God's salvation plan for them must be applied to their lives.

Before salvation no one in the entire human race knows whether he was chosen by God to become saved. It is only after God has saved us that we recognize that the only reason we were included in God's salvation plan is because God in His sovereign good pleasure had chosen us before He even created the world. Like the rest of the human race that will never become saved, the saved are essentially a body and soul. Their body is that part of their personality that is buried at the time they die. In the case of a saved person, at the moment of his physical death, the soul or the spirit essence (which is just as real a part of the personality as the body) leaves his body and is taken into heaven where he lives and reigns with Christ. Then at the end of the world, when Christ returns, He will resurrect that body (II Corinthians 5:8, I Thessalonians 4).

However, before salvation, the chosen individual lives in this world like any individual who is not chosen to salvation.

We read of the chosen in Ephesians 2:1-3:

And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Before he is saved, in this body he lusts after sin, and in his soul he lusts after sin. He is as spiritually dead as any individual who will never be saved.

That brings us to the third giant act of God which He does on behalf of those whom Christ came to save.

The Miracle of the New Birth

The third act performed by God on behalf of those who were given to Christ as His eternal possession is that He performs the miracle of giving the elect person a brand new resurrected soul. Jesus speaks about this in John 3:5, where we read:

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

Ahead of that, we read in John 3:3:

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

To be born of water and of the Spirit means to be born of the Gospel (water), by the action of God the Holy Spirit (John 4:10-15, John 7:38). God speaks of this action in Romans 10:17, where He says:

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

In God's divine arrangement, He established the environment in which He saves people.

In God's divine arrangement, He established the environment in which He saves people. That environment is the Bible, which is the only Word of God. Therefore, it is impossible for anyone in the world to become saved unless they hear words from God, and the only Word of God is the Bible. That is why throughout the church age God commanded the local congregations to send the Gospel into all the world. That is why in our day we are

to continue to zealously send the Gospel into the world, but now we do so as individuals instead of as a church organization. We individually serve as Christ's ambassadors.

We should be aware of the fact that today no one can be saved in the churches. According to God's timetable, the church age has come to an end, and the Holy Spirit has abandoned the churches. However, the Bible instructs us that outside of the churches a great harvest of true believers is being brought into the kingdom of God. (You are invited to contact Family Radio and request the free books, *The End of the Church Age and After* and *Wheat and Tares*.)

God does the entire work of saving, and therefore He can save an elect individual at any time during that person's life. The only requirement is that the individual be under the hearing of the Bible. At the moment of salvation, God gives that individual spiritual ears and a new eternal soul. Thus, as we noted earlier, a baby can be saved as readily as a mature adult. A person with the mind of a two-year-old can be saved as readily as a college professor.

At the cross Christ demonstrated how He had suffered before He created the world, when He paid for all the sins of the elect person. So, what remains to be done is that at an appropriate time known only to God, God will cause this person to actually experience the wonderful fact of salvation.

Thus far in our study we have begun to learn what the law of God, the Bible, required God to do. The question may still hammer in our minds: what can I do to become saved? Is there any way that I can make sure that I will be included among those who were elected to salvation? In our study, we will address these enormously serious questions.

The Biblical Definition of Spiritual Work

At this point in our study we should introduce a concept that bears heavily on the subject of becoming saved. It has to do with the Biblical definition of spiritual "work." The Bible repeatedly insists that our salvation can never be a result of any work that we do (Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 2:16). Therefore, we must know how God defines spiritual "work."

In Jonah 3:10, God declares:

And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.)

In Matthew 7:22, God declares:

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?

Any time we obey God's commandments, we are doing work that is pleasing to God.

From these and other Bible verses, we learn that any time we obey God's commandments, we are doing work that is pleasing to God. When we disobey God's commandments, we are doing work that is displeasing to God. For example, the Bible commands all mankind to believe in Christ. Is believing a work that we do? Indeed it is. The word "believe" is the verb form of the noun "faith." The Bible speaks plainly in both I Thessalonians 1:3 and II Thessalonians 1:11 of the "work of faith."

I Thessalonians 1:3, tells us:

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

And in II Thessalonians 1:11, we read:

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power:

Significantly, God speaks of the work of faith and also of the labor of love. Therefore, we can clearly understand that both the exercise of faith and of love are works that we do. Likewise, obedience to any of the commands of the Bible is work that we are commanded to do. Therefore, we must firmly keep in our minds that when God commands us to pray, to seek Christ, to become saved, to call upon God, to wait upon God, to read and study the Bible, etc., in each of these commands, God is commanding us to do work. That is why God defines "love" as keeping God's commandments, for example. When we love God and our neighbor, we are doing spiritual work. This principle, that obeying any commandment is work that we do, is an exceedingly important principle that we should never forget as we carefully study Bible verses that relate to becoming saved.

Christ Did All the Work Required for Our Salvation

There is another immensely important principle that we must always remember. It is that the work required to save a person can be done only by God. The election of those whom God planned to save, the payment Christ made on behalf of those He came to save, the new soul that God gives to those whom He saves: these are all works that only God can perform.

The work required to save a person can be done only by God.

The fact is, the election was made before any humans existed. Moreover, the payment for the sins of the elect was completed from before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). Thus, it is absolutely impossible for any human being to do anything at all to assist in the slightest degree in obtaining salvation.

Why Then Does God Give Us These Commands?

God gives us these commands, to believe, to pray, etc., but how can we even begin to obey these commands? We are spiritually dead. God typifies unsaved mankind as a valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14) and as a stinking corpse (John 11:39). And God insists in Romans 3:10-12:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Indeed, the Bible clearly emphasizes the total deadness of unsaved mankind. We must remember that mankind, beginning with the fall of Adam, is spiritually dead in view of the fact that God does not indwell him, and he is not spiritually energized by God. And because of man's sins, he is under the wrath of God, and that means that at the end of the world he will be destroyed and never live again. As we noted previously, in his whole personality he is grossly infected with sin.

However, even though he is spiritually dead, he is still capable of being somewhat obedient to the laws of God. Thus, he can believe in Christ to some degree, he can pray, he can seek God, and he can turn away from some sins, such as drunkenness, lying, etc. He is able to do this because of at least two reasons.

The first reason is that he still has a conscience that can convict him of sin (Romans 2:14-15, John 8:9). This is so because mankind is created in the image of God, and even though he has become completely estranged from God, God's law to some degree is still within his personality.

A second reason is that God can work His will in the life of an unsaved person even though it may not be God's intention to save that person. We see this principle in action in the lives of wicked Balaam (Numbers 22:12-13), and in the life of Saul, the first king of Israel (I Samuel 10:9-12).

Furthermore, if God has elected that unsaved person and has already paid for all his sins, before God actually gives that person a new heart, a new resurrected soul, God the Father may be drawing him (John 6:44).

However, as this person is trying hard to obey God's commandments, he absolutely cannot know which if any of the above reasons is causing him to try to obey God's commands. That is, he has no proof, nor should he think even for a moment that his obedience is guaranteed to result in salvation.

God's Mysterious Relationship to Mankind

Moreover, there is a mysterious, dynamic personal relationship that exists between God and each and every person in the human race. This is true not only between God and those whom He has elected to salvation, but it is also true between God and those whom He has not elected, and who, therefore, will most certainly be destroyed.

We see this in the fact that Jesus wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), even though the evidence given in the Bible tells us that most of the Jerusalem that He had in view will be destroyed. We see it in the fact that the Bible declares that God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). We see it in the fact that to some degree, God's law is written on the hearts of all mankind (Romans 2:15).

We see it in the fact that by God's law, a murderer must die because he has murdered a human being who was created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 9:6). We see it in God's command that we are to love our enemies. We must remember that any non-elect person is the enemy of God, and yet there is no human being whom we are not to love. We see it in the warning God gives in Matthew 5:22 that we are not to call anyone "Raca," that is, worthless or fool. We never look upon any living person as being without hope of salvation.

From the above evidence we may conclude that although mankind became spiritually dead because of his sin, and he is no longer energized by God nor indwelt by God, he was not thrown away nor cut off from God. In his spiritually dead unsaved condition, he still has complete responsibility in that he is to obey God, and indeed, he still has some ability to obey God. It is only on the last day that he will be completely cut off from God (Isaiah 66:24, Jeremiah 23:39-40, 24:10).

Thus, each and every human being can be expected by God to do the work of believing God so that they will try to some degree to be obedient to the commands of the Bible. As noted earlier in our study, this obedience can be enhanced by God Himself working in the life of an individual, which was the situation of wicked Balaam (Numbers Chapters 22 and 23), or it can be God working in the life of someone who is elect of God but who has not yet been given a new eternal soul (John 6:44).

God has a legal right to command mankind to obey His laws.

We must also remember that God has a legal right to command mankind to obey His laws. Because mankind was created in the image and likeness of God, mankind, like God Himself, is completely subject to God's law book, the Bible. Therefore, we should understand that the work of believing on Christ can be seen in the life of an unsaved person who may or may not have been elected to become saved. As he believes in Christ, he will try hard to follow the Biblical command of Luke 13:24, where God says:

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

And in Hebrews 4:11, we read:

Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

However, again it must be soundly emphasized that none of this work of believing can guarantee or contribute in any way to his becoming saved because all the work required for salvation was fully performed by Christ long before the person was born.

None of this work of believing can guarantee or contribute in any way to his becoming saved because all the work required for salvation was fully performed by Christ long before the person was born.

Wonderfully, as an unsaved person strives to do God's will two great blessings are accomplished.

The first blessing is that as the unsaved person attempts to obey God's commands, it will be necessary for him to become increasingly better acquainted with the Bible. This will enrich his life as he learns about important truths such as the awfulness of sin, the penalty for sin, the justice of God, and the mercy of God.

Secondly, it will place him in the environment of hearing the Word of God. Thus, if God plans to save him, he is in the proper environment for God to apply the Word of God to his heart.

God Tests Mankind

There is a third reason why God commands people to do the work of believing. It places that individual on trial or tests him. Will he begin to think that his efforts to obey God's commands are assisting in his salvation?

God constantly tests mankind. Adam and Eve were tested in the Garden of Eden. They failed the test and sin entered the world. Abraham was tested by the command to sacrifice his son (Genesis 22). He did not fail the test. The Israelites were tested in various ways during the 40 years they were in the wilderness. They failed the tests. The true believer is tested every day because he still has a body that lusts after sin. Jesus was tested by God allowing Satan to tempt Him. Wonderfully, He did not fail the test.

So, too, the command to do the work of believing and the work of calling upon God for salvation is a test. Will we fully recognize the fact that while these are commandments of God, which must be obeyed, obedience to these commands can never be a cause of our salvation?

This testing program is exceedingly serious. Mankind by nature is proud, and he is anxious to receive some credit and glory for anything that he has accomplished by his actions.

Moreover, effectively, and maybe without realizing it, many people do not trust that God will save them unless they themselves initiate the salvation process by their own action.

We are not to think even for a moment that any work on our part could possibly assist, even in the tiniest way, in getting us saved

But God is righteously jealous. God did all the work to save us. Therefore, we are not to think even for a moment that any work on our part could possibly assist, even in the tiniest way, in getting us saved.

The Extreme Importance of the Seventh-Day Sabbath

This all-important truth is demonstrated in dramatic fashion in the Old Testament. We must remember that the seventh-day Sabbath was to be strictly observed by the congregation, which was the nation of Israel. It was a ceremonial law that pointed to the truth that the work of salvation is done entirely by God. Even as Israel was to do no work of any kind on the seventh-day Sabbath, so, we are not to do any work of any kind to try to assist in our salvation. In Exodus 31:13-14, God declares:

Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it *is* a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I *am* the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it *is* holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth *any* work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

In these revealing verses, God is setting forth the super-important principle that God has done all the work to sanctify us. The word "sanctify" means to become set apart for the service of God. We are spiritually set apart for His service when we become saved. In this passage, God insists that He did all that was required to sanctify or save us.

As a sign that pointed to this extremely important teaching, God commanded that no work was to be done on the seventh-day Sabbath. Someone who did some work on the seventh-day Sabbath was like someone who believed that his own spiritual work assisted in some way to accomplish his salvation. Such a person was to be put to death, that is, such a person is still going to experience the wrath of God.

God gives us an example to illustrate the seriousness of this truth. In Numbers 15, verses 32-36, God tells us of a man who picked up sticks on the seventh-day Sabbath. This was a very tiny, almost incidental infraction of the command to refrain from any work on the Sabbath.

And yet, when Moses asked God what the penalty should be for this exceedingly minor violation of the command concerning the Sabbath, God instructed that this man was to be stoned to death. This dramatic event illustrates the absolute seriousness of the truth that

we want to be absolutely certain that we understand that salvation is only through the work of Christ.

THERE IS NO MERCY FOR THOSE WHO THINK THAT THEY CAN INITIATE OR ASSIST IN ANY WAY IN THEIR SALVATION.

We must never think that we assisted in our salvation by being obedient to the law of God. Remember, any obedience to the law is spiritual work that we do. Effectively, by means of the historical parable of the execution of the man who picked up sticks on the seventh-day Sabbath, God is shouting at us: THERE IS NO MERCY FOR THOSE WHO THINK THAT THEY CAN INITIATE OR ASSIST IN ANY WAY IN THEIR SALVATION.

The Blessings of God's Testing Program

This testing program is a great blessing to those who believe they have become saved. In II Corinthians 13:5, God commands:

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

How can we prove to ourselves that we are truly saved? One major thing we can do is examine how we believe we became saved.

We want to be sure that we altogether abandon any ideas or thoughts that we might have that we have done this or that, and thus, we have initiated or assisted in some way in our salvation. We must be certain that we clearly hold the Biblical principle that if, indeed, we are saved, all the work of saving was done by Christ long before we were born. Salvation was accomplished entirely by the work of Christ, and we can do absolutely nothing to assist us in becoming saved. We must understand that not even the slightest work, that is, obedience to any command of God, can help us to be saved. The judgment that fell on the man who picked up sticks on the seventh-day Sabbath should ring in our ears.

Additionally, we test ourselves by examining ourselves in the light of the language of

I John 2:3-6, where we read:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Every person who has truly become saved has been given a brand new resurrected soul, and therefore, he will have a constant delight in doing the will of God. Indeed, like the psalmist in Psalm 139:23-24, he will pray:

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

God Intensifies the Difficulty of His Testing Program

The test brought about by these commands is made more difficult because even though the unsaved person is spiritually dead and under the wrath of God, he is still capable of obeying God's commands, to some degree. Earlier in this study, we learned the following.

1. The unsaved person still has a conscience that can convict him of sin. This is because God's laws to some degree are written on his heart (John 8:9, Romans 2:14-15).
2. God can cause a spiritually dead person, for example, Balaam and King Saul in the Old Testament, to do His will even though God does not intend to save that person (Numbers 22:12-13, II Peter 2:15-16, I Samuel 10:9-12, I Chronicles 10:13).

Thus, even though an individual is trying hard to obey God's commands, he cannot know whether it is God working in his heart or whether it is his own conscience that is convicting him. And he cannot know whether he is trying to obey God with his whole heart. But he must know that none of his efforts to please God can initiate salvation or guarantee salvation or meet any requirement that will cause him to be saved.

He could also wrongfully think that because he is obeying these commands, God will save him.

When an unsaved person begins to be obedient to God's commands, he can easily fall into the trap of thinking that his obedience is evidence that God has already saved him. He could also wrongfully think that because he is obeying these commands, God will save him. In either case, he is violating God's law that declares that no work that anyone does can make a contribution to his salvation. And while it is God's plan to test man as to whether he will be obedient to all of God's commands, except for God's mercy, mankind will fail the test.

This is seen dramatically in the conduct of ancient Israel. God told them that if they obeyed all of God's commands, He would eternally bless them (Deuteronomy 28:1, 28:15, 30:6-16).

Therefore, they tried to be as good as possible, trusting that by this means they were assured of salvation. However, God sadly informs us in Romans 9:31-32:

But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because *they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;*

When an individual strives diligently to be saved, he can easily fall into the snare of thinking that his obedience is guaranteeing or initiating salvation. It is like he was working on the seventh-day Sabbath, as was the man who picked up some sticks.

Our position must only and always be that of the Ninevites, which was, as we read in Jonah 3:9:

Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

We may never presume that anything we have done or are doing will initiate or guarantee salvation

Therefore, we may never presume that anything we have done or are doing will initiate or guarantee salvation. This is true whether we believe it is God who is working in our life to do His will or whether we are attempting to obey because our conscience is convicting us.

The prayer of the unsaved suppliant must be, "Oh, God, have mercy on me. I do not deserve salvation. I am thankful that as I diligently strive to do Thy will, I know that only God can qualify me so that I will be seeking God with all my heart and soul, and this can be true only when I have been given a new heart, that is, when God has already saved me."

The example of the publican of Luke 18:13 should be in our thoughts. There we read:

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.

We should be reminded of the words God speaks in Joel 2:12-14:

Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth *if* he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; *even* a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

And so, this is the path through which God brings His people, and it is further described in Jeremiah 31:8-9, where we read:

Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, *and* with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim *is* my firstborn.

Can We Hear the Bible But Not Hear?

In many places in the Bible, God sounds the warning of Jeremiah 29:17-19, where we read:

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them: Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending *them*; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

To hearken is to listen with a view of trying to understand what is commanded and trying to be obedient.

To hearken is to listen with a view of trying to understand what is commanded and trying to be obedient. However, if we come to the Bible with a preconceived understanding of truth, we will not hearken to the truth, and therefore, according to this passage, we will not hear the Word of the truth.

For example, an individual who takes a fatalistic position or is convinced that his do-it-yourself, free-will gospel is correct, or someone who willfully disregards God's commands to diligently strive to become saved, is not listening to the Word of God. The moment he reads something about salvation in the Bible, in his mind he twists it and tries to change the meaning so that it will agree with his preconceived idea. For him, the truth of the Biblical statement is destroyed by his rebellious man-made ideas. Effectively, he has placed himself outside of the hearing of the Word of God. Thus, he has placed himself in a most dangerous position because faith (Christ as Savior), can come only by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

It is true that theoretically, God can save anyone, regardless of the intensity of their rebellion against God, even as they stubbornly refuse to listen to the Word of God. However, the Bible gives no encouragement or assurance to those who refuse to hear the Word of God, and so, we should ponder carefully the warning of Jeremiah 29:18-19, which is quoted above. Such a person, unfortunately, and to a high degree, fits the awful description of the Pharisees spoken of throughout Matthew Chapter 23.

However, there is hope, wonderful hope, for those who humbly admit their sins, and who turn away from their preconceived ideas, who earnestly strive to be obedient to all of the Bible, and who humbly cry to God for mercy.

As we approach the Bible, we must come to it with no preconceived ideas, however reasonable and logical they may appear to be.

As we approach the Bible, we must come to it with no preconceived ideas, however reasonable and logical they may appear to be. We must approach the Bible with the attitude that, "I know nothing. Oh, God, You must teach me." And as we diligently strive to obey God's commands, our attitude must be that even though we do not in any way deserve salvation, we have a great hope that maybe God will save me, too (Jonah 3:9).

Compare Scripture with Scripture

We must always remember a fundamental Biblical rule that must be followed as we attempt to learn from the Bible, and that rule is that we are to compare Scripture with Scripture (I Corinthians 2:13). That is, as we study the Bible, we must be sure that our conclusions, each and every one of them, are harmonious with all of the Bible.

With these truths in mind and utilizing the principles we have already learned in this study, we will look at a number of verses that speak directly to the matter of becoming saved. We will begin with the well known verse, Romans 10:13, where God declares:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Immediately, a red flag is seen, that is, we must be careful. Obeying the command to call on God is work that we do. This verse appears to teach that if we do the work of calling upon God, it will result in our salvation, but that is impossible because God did all the work to save us. Thus, we know that we cannot understand this verse without seeking more information from the Bible.

In our search for more information, we come to Jeremiah 29:11-13, where God says:

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find *me*, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

The same truth is expressed in Deuteronomy 4:29, where we read:

But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find *him*, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

God is giving us the important information that as we call upon God or seek Him for salvation, we are to seek Him with all our heart.

But that is an impossibility because the Bible tells us about the condition of the heart of the unsaved individual. We read in Jeremiah 17:9:

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

And we read in Mark 7:21:

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

Before anyone can call upon God with all their heart, they must be given a new heart

Therefore, before anyone can call upon God with all their heart, they must be given a new heart, that is, they no longer have a wicked heart. And this is precisely what the Bible teaches, for example, in Ezekiel 36:25-27, where God says:

Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

In these verses, God clearly teaches that a new heart is given to us by God. Through the tremendous miracle of giving us a new heart, also called a new spirit, He will cause us to walk obediently before Him. Incidentally, in this study we speak of the new heart or the new spirit as our brand new resurrected soul, which we receive when we become saved. These verses in Ezekiel describe how God makes us saved individuals, and it is God alone who does all of the work of saving us.

All of Mankind Are Commanded to Call Upon God

We read in Romans 10:13 that "**whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved,**" but we cannot come to a conclusion regarding salvation until we include the required additional information that we are to call upon God with all of our heart to become saved. We know that simply calling upon God will not result in salvation. And we will not call upon Him with all our heart until God has already saved us by giving us a new heart, that is, until God has already done all the work of saving us.

But that introduces another problem. Romans 10:13 declares that those who call upon God "shall be saved." The words "shall be saved" are a Greek verb that indicates that salvation is a future event resulting from having called upon God. We have just learned that the Biblical understanding of the first part of the verse is that we are to call upon God with all of our heart. We also learned that we can call on Him with all our heart only because God has saved us and given us a new heart.

Therefore, since "shall be saved" is a result of calling upon God with all our heart, we have a problem. How can a person who is already saved become saved?

This problem can be resolved when we realize, as we learned earlier in this study, that the reality of salvation in the life of one of God's elect is a several step activity. The first step was the election of that person to become saved. The second step was that at the moment Christ made the payment demanded by God for our sins, at that moment, legally, the penalty for our sins was paid.

The third step occurred when God gave a new heart or a new spirit to the elect individuals, those for whom Christ had already endured the wrath of God to pay for their sins. This third step is the one we usually have in mind when we speak about having become saved.

But our salvation is not yet complete. We still have a sinful body that must be saved. And that brings us to the fourth step, and that will occur on the last day when Christ returns and gives all true believers their brand new resurrected bodies (I Corinthians 15).

Thus, it is Biblically correct to declare, "we have become saved," and also, "we shall become saved." That is why the Bible can assert that a person who already had become saved "shall be saved." That is why we read, for example, in I Peter 1:5:

Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

And that is why we read in Mark 13:13:

And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.

Only at the end, when God gives us a glorified resurrected body, shall we become saved in every part of our personality.

We endure to the end because we already have become saved. But only at the end, when God gives us a glorified resurrected body, shall we become saved in every part of our personality.

Thus, we learn from this verse that if we do not follow the Biblical instruction to compare spiritual things with spiritual, we can easily fall into a trap that will blind us to the truth of the Bible. Therefore, we do not arrive at any conclusion until the whole Bible has been consulted.

Thus far we have learned a number of very important truths. Among them are the following.

1. Christ alone has done all the work that is required to save an individual.

2. Any time we obey a commandment, we are doing spiritual work. Even while a person is unsaved, he can, to some degree, do spiritual work, like believing on Christ, but this work can never initiate salvation or assist anyone in becoming saved.

With these Biblical principles in mind, we are warned that even though a verse in the Bible may appear to teach that our salvation is in some way a result of our believing or obeying the commandments of the Bible, immediately we know that that is an altogether wrong understanding of that verse. We know that we must search the Scriptures and pray for wisdom so that we might properly understand that verse.

The Work of Believing

When speaking about salvation, perhaps the most important word that must be correctly understood is the word "believe." As we have learned, "believe" is the verb form of the noun "faith." We also learned that faith is work, and therefore, "to believe" is spiritual work. And we learned that there is no work that we can do that can initiate or assist in our salvation.

Mankind, apart from being saved, can do the work of believing to some degree because he has a conscience, and to some degree, God's law is written on his heart. In fact, as an individual seeks diligently to enter the Kingdom of God, that is, become saved, he will obey that commandment because he is capable of believing. But that kind of believing is not the kind of believing that is associated with salvation. God speaks of saved people believing from the heart in Romans 10:9-10, where we read:

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

However, we learned that the heart of man is terribly wicked (Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 15:19). Thus, it is impossible to believe from the heart until God gives us a new heart. And when God gives us a new heart, it means that He has saved us (Ezekiel 36:24-27). Therefore, when we believe before we are saved, it is not from the heart, and therefore it cannot associate with salvation.

On the other hand, if we believe with all our heart, it means that God has already saved us by giving us a new heart. Our believing is altogether a result of the fact that God has saved us. Therefore, the word "believing" and the phrase "having faith" can never be identified as a means or an instrument by which we become saved.

We read in Acts 8:13-23, that Simon the sorcerer believed and was baptized, but later verses clearly show that he did not become saved. Abraham believed for it was God (Christ) who was accounted unto him for righteousness. Simon believed as an unsaved man. Abraham believed as a saved man. However, neither in the life of Simon nor in the life of Abraham was believing an assist to salvation.

Thus, we can confidently conclude that doing the work of believing before we are saved can never assist in any way with our salvation. Doing the work of believing after we are saved is always entirely a result of the fact that God has saved us.

Obeying the command to believe identifies with a desire to try to be obedient to all of God's commands.

However, the word "believe" indicates the value and importance of believing before we are saved. Obeying the command to believe identifies with a desire to try to be obedient to all of God's commands. These commandments include loving God, seeking salvation, waiting upon Him, repenting of our sins, and praying for salvation. Obeying these commands is work that we are doing, but it can never bring us into salvation. Nevertheless, this kind of obedience will cause us to listen to the Bible more and more carefully. Thus, we will be in the right environment to be saved if God plans to save us.

How can we believe if we are spiritually dead? Remember, God typifies unsaved mankind as a valley of dry bones (Ezekiel 37) and as a stinking corpse (John 11:39). God declares that there is none that seeketh after God, no, not one (Romans 3). These statements emphasize the fact that before salvation, every human being is spiritually dead. In both body and soul he is spiritually dead, and God does not indwell him. Because of his sins, judicially, he is presently under the wrath of God, and he is headed for destruction.

Each and every sin results in the penalty of destruction, and therefore, without God's intervention, every individual is guaranteed to be destroyed. Even though God's law, to some degree, is within him, and he has a conscience so that he knows right from wrong, nevertheless, without help from God, his situation is utterly hopeless. Thus, as unsaved mankind does the work of believing in Christ, he is still a stinking corpse, a valley of dry bones. He cannot seek God with all his heart or believe with all his heart because his heart is desperately wicked. Only if God gives him a new heart, that is, when God saves him, will he seek and believe God with all of his heart. When he is given a new heart, in his soul, in his spirit, he has become eternally alive.

All of Mankind Are Commanded to Believe God

We read in Acts 16:31:

And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

We know that only believing in our heart relates to salvation. And when we believe in our heart, we already have been saved because God must give us a new heart in order for us to believe in our heart (Ezekiel 36:26). A new heart signifies the fact that we have become saved.

We read in the well-known declaration of John 3:16:

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.

Now, we know that the word "whosoever" can only include God's elect. We also know that an unsaved person whom God never intends to save can believe on Him, to some degree. And we know that those who do become saved are not saved because they did the work of believing on Christ. The truth is that they believe on Him because God has given them everlasting life. Their believing is a result of the fact that God had saved them.

The truth is that they believe on Him because God has given them everlasting life.

Christ Did All the Work-Was Faithful-to Save Us

As God wrote the Bible, He did not make it easy to find truth. He keeps us very humble as He causes us to patiently and diligently analyze these difficult verses while constantly asking God for wisdom. We are to always remember that until we find harmony with all that the Bible teaches, we have not yet understood the verse being studied.

One puzzle that the Bible presents is that which is found in many verses in Galatians 2 and Galatians 3. For example, God insists in Galatians 3:2:

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit [*did you become saved*] by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Remember that faith is work. But who did all the work of saving us? Jesus did all the work. He was completely faithful to all of God's commands and He brought salvation to us. Thus, we could paraphrase Galatians 3:2, this way, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith (the work that Jesus did to save us)?" That is why His name is Faithful (Revelation 19:11). He is the very essence of the work of faith.

Galatians 2:16, declares:

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith, the work, of Jesus Christ. He was faithful to do all the work required for our salvation.

Frequently, we can more easily understand verses that have the word "faith" in them when we substitute the word "Christ," whose name is "Faithful." Thus, Ephesians 2:8, can be understood this way, "By grace you have been saved through faith (Christ)." And Galatians 3:11, this way, "The just shall live by faith (Christ)." And Galatians 3:2, would be understood this way, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith (or by hearing of Christ, the Word of God)?"

The Act of Sealing Is Always God's Work

Incidentally, a serious wrong teaching of the Bible is committed by the theologians and churches that teach that water baptism seals a person into the covenant or into righteousness.

They base this wrong conclusion on Romans 4:11, where we read:

And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

The act of sealing is an official legal act that can be done only by God. For example, God describes the salvation of one of His elect in Ephesians 1:13, where we read:

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,

In this verse, God indicates that they heard the Word of God (faith comes by hearing), they began to trust the Bible, they believed (Jonah 3:5), and because they were elect of God and God had already paid for their sins, God sealed them by giving them the Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee that God had saved them. Thus, God teaches us that sealing is identified as the act of God giving a person a new soul.

Therefore, we must understand Romans 4:11 to teach the following:

And he received the sign [*the miracle*] of circumcision [*spiritual circumcision, which is salvation (Deuteronomy 30:6)*] , a seal [*a guarantee*] of the righteousness of the faith [*Christ*] which *he had yet* being uncircumcised [*physical circumcision*]: . . .

With this understanding, we know it is harmonious with all that the Bible teaches about salvation.

Rarely, the Translation Must Be Corrected

Generally, we can trust that the translators who brought forth the King James Bible, which is the most trustworthy of all translations, did accurate work in translating from the original Hebrew and Greek into English. However, they were not inspired by God as were the holy men of God, the scribes, who wrote the original Bible from the mouth of God, and therefore the translators could have made some errors. And when we carefully study some verses that are concerned with becoming saved, we find that, indeed, their translation must be corrected. Remember, the translation must be corrected, but never the original Hebrew or Greek.

The fact is, in our desire to carefully harmonize all Scriptures, a very serious problem in Bible translation has been uncovered. Usually, the Bible translators, and this is especially true of the King James Bible translators, were quite accurate in their endeavor to be as faithful as possible to the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament and the Greek text of the New Testament.

However, there are some verses in the Bible that appear to harmonize together perfectly in the way they are translated, but in actuality, they have produced a major catastrophe insofar as God's message of salvation is concerned. They pertain to the idea of how believing relates to becoming saved. Please note the agreement that exists between the following verses.

Genesis 15:6: **And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.**

Romans 4:3: **For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**

Romans 4:9: **Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision *only*, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.**

Galatians 3:6: **Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.**

These verses apparently teach very conclusively that salvation will come to someone as a result of that person believing in Jesus as their Savior, and that conclusion is the foundation of the doctrine that is taught as God's salvation program in virtually every church and denomination.

Any time we obey any command of the Bible, including the command to believe in Christ, it is a work that we do.

But that conclusion is an impossible conclusion. Believing on Christ is a work that we do. Remember, any time we obey any command of the Bible, including the command to believe in Christ, it is a work that we do. And as we have learned, all the work to save a person was done by Christ. There is, therefore, no work we can do that will initiate or assist in any way to obtain salvation. Believing is to have faith, and the Bible says very plainly that faith is a work.

We read in I Thessalonians 1:3:

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

And we read in II Thessalonians 1:11:

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of *this* calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of *his* goodness, and the work of faith with power:

The conclusion that simply believing in Christ will result in salvation is completely impossible.

Thus, the conclusion that simply believing in Christ will result in salvation is completely impossible. Unfortunately, the teaching that believing will somehow assist in our salvation sets forth a salvation plan that is equivalent to the work of the man of Numbers 15 who picked up some sticks on the Sabbath day, and therefore, by God's command, was stoned to death. Remember, the seventh-day Sabbath, in which no work of any kind was to be done, is a picture of the principle that we are not to think for a moment that any work that we do can assist in any way in our becoming saved.

Immediately, we see the catastrophe that has developed in virtually every church. They teach a salvation plan that places every individual who thinks he has become saved because he began to believe in Christ in the same position as the man who picked up some sticks on the Sabbath day. That individual is still under the wrath of God. What a terrible situation has developed!

How, then, should these verses have been translated? We shall look at each one of them while keeping in mind the truth that believing is a work.

Did Abraham Believe God and Therefore Become Saved?

First, we will look at Genesis 15:6. In the King James Bible, the translation is as follows:

And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

This verse appears to be assuring us that the faith of Abraham was counted or reckoned to him for righteousness; that is, because he believed, God saved him.

Believing is a work that we do, and our work can never be a part of our salvation.

But as we have learned, that conclusion is impossible because believing is a work that we do, and our work can never be a part of our salvation. The context in which this verse is found tells us that Abraham's believing was the believing of someone who had become saved. We must remember that when God has saved us, we will do good works, but in no way have these good works, which include believing, helped us to become saved. They are always a result of having become saved.

We should be aware of the fact that in the Hebrew, the conjunction "and" is sometimes also translated "for." Therefore, in this verse, the conjunction "and" should have been translated "for."

The second problem is with the understanding of the pronoun "it." The pronoun "it" is correctly translated, but to what noun does it refer? Does the pronoun "it" refer to Abraham's faith? Impossible, for two huge reasons. The first is that Abraham's faith could never be counted for righteousness.

The second big reason is that in this context the pronoun "it" is grammatically a singular feminine word. That is, it has to refer to a noun that grammatically denotes the feminine gender. The noun "faith" is a masculine noun. Therefore, grammatically, the pronoun cannot refer to Abraham's faith.

On the other hand, the word "righteousness" is a feminine noun, and it fits perfectly into this verse. We should, therefore, understand Genesis 15:6, to say:

And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD [Jehovah]; for [not "and"] He [God] counted it [the righteousness of God] to him [Abraham] for righteousness [the salvation of Abraham].

Similarly, in Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6, and in James 2:23, the King James translation is, "**Abraham believed God, and it was imputed [accounted] unto him for righteousness.**" As translated, these verses appear to teach that Abraham's faith was the cause or means or instrument through which God saved him. But as we have repeatedly stated, that is impossible. Therefore, we must make sure these verses are properly translated.

There are two words in the translation that should be corrected so that the verse is in harmony with the Biblical principle that God did all the work of saving. Again, the first word that should be changed is the conjunction "and." It should be translated as the word "for." Even as it is true in the Hebrew language, the Greek word translated as "and" is also at times translated as the word "for".

The second word that needs to be corrected is the pronoun translated as the word "it." Grammatically, it is third person, singular. In this context "it" should be translated as the pronoun "he." Thus, to reiterate, Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6, and James 2:23 should be translated, "Abraham believed God (he became saved), for He (God) was accounted to him (Abraham) for righteousness (for Abraham's salvation)."

When We Believe Christ, He Might Save Us

Now that we have learned that all the work of salvation was done by Jesus our Savior, and under no circumstances are we to believe that any work that we do can make the slightest contribution to our salvation, we can better understand some verses that seem to teach otherwise.

For example, in Galatians 2:16, God declares:

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

The first part of this verse is quite clear. We are not saved by obeying any commands of the Bible (that is, by keeping the law), but by the faith (the work of faith), that Jesus did to save His elect.

But the second part of this verse can be easily misunderstood. It appears to teach that if we have believed in Christ, God will then justify (save) us. This misunderstanding is possible even though God reiterates in the last part of the verse, "**by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.**" And believing is a work of the law.

Since believing is a work of the law, how then are we to understand "**we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified**"? According to Greek grammar, the words "might be justified" are in the subjunctive passive mood. In the Greek language, a subjunctive verb can be used the same way it is used in the English language. It indicates an intention with a good probability that it might happen. Many subjunctive verbs in the Biblical Greek are used in this way.

However, in the Greek language, they also are used to indicate purpose or command. For example, this kind of verb is normally used in the New Testament to indicate that a prophecy of the Old Testament has been fulfilled. Thus, we read that the Scriptures "**might be fulfilled**" (Matthew 4:14, 8:17, 12:17). The verb "**might be fulfilled**" is a subjunctive verb. In these instances, there is no doubt or uncertainty suggested by the use of a subjunctive verb. The prophecy has been fulfilled.

When we return to Galatians 2:16, we know that inasmuch as believing is a work that we do, our believing can never guarantee salvation. Our believing may cause us to try to obey the Bible's commands to become saved, to pray, to repent, etc., but we know that our salvation depends altogether upon God and whether He has elected us and paid for our sins.

Our salvation depends altogether upon God and whether He has elected us and paid for our sins.

Therefore, the subjunctive verb "**might be justified**" must be understood to mean that justification (salvation) is a possibility, but in no way is it a guarantee for those who do the work of believing on Him. The Ninevites of Jonah 3 truly believed that God was going to destroy them in 40 days. Therefore, they obeyed God's command to repent (Jonah 3:8-10). But they fully realized that they did not know whether God would have mercy on them or not. Maybe, God might save them. There was a possibility that they would be saved from destruction. Thus, Galatians 2:16 is teaching that as we, that is, as unsaved people believe God's law, God might possibly save some of us.

Remember, this same truth, that no one can know whether he is one of God's elect until after he has become saved, is emphasized in Joel 2:13-14:

And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him; even a meat offering and a drink offering unto the LORD your God?

It is also emphasized in Zephaniah 2:3:

Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

Incidentally, in passages such as II Corinthians 2:4 and II Corinthians 11:7, God uses a subjunctive verb that is grammatically structured the same as the verb "**might be justified**" in Galatians 2:16. In II Corinthians 2:4, the verb is translated "**should be grieved**," and in II Corinthians 11:7, the verb is translated "**might be exalted**." In both verses, the context indicates that the verb is used to indicate a possibility rather than a certainty.

Confusion in Understanding the Word "Believe"

One big lesson we are learning is that God did not make it at all easy to understand His salvation program. God has placed the verb "believe" and the noun "faith" in a great number of verses, and it is only by very carefully following God's rules of comparing Scripture with Scripture, and by seeking wisdom from God, that we can begin to harmonize these difficult verses.

God did not make it at all easy to understand His salvation program.

Several principles about believing that especially stand out are as follows.

1. The verb "believe" and the noun "faith" must always be recognized as work that is being done. This is because Jesus did all the work required to save the elect and because his name is "Faithful" (Revelation 19:11). He is the very essence of the work of faith.
2. When a person believes, to any degree, his believing is work that he is doing that can never be part of the work required for his salvation. When he believes, it may be because his conscience is causing him to believe or it may be God working in him. However, there is no way that he can know which possibility is true because unless he becomes saved, his heart is desperately wicked, and he cannot believe with all his heart.
3. When a person believes after he has become saved, that also is work that he is doing. However, his believing will be with all his heart because at the moment God saved him, he was given a new heart. Believing with all his heart (having become saved), means that

his salvation will be fully completed at the end of the world when he is given his eternal resurrected spiritual body. This is so because the work that Christ did to save us accomplished and guaranteed the salvation of our whole personality. Therefore, the Bible's use of the words "believe" and "faith," as applied to the action of any person, can never be associated in any way with a method or means or instrument by which we initiate or assist in our becoming saved.

4. Any salvation program that does not follow these principles will effectively place the person trying to follow that salvation program in the same position as the man who picked up sticks on the Sabbath (Numbers 15). He will be executed. The only way to avoid that horrible end of his life is to turn away from that man-made salvation program and wait upon God to do all the work of saving him, if, indeed, God so wills to save him.

Satan Comes as an Angel of Light

Now that we have learned, from the Bible, of the awful consequences of trusting in any salvation program except the salvation plan given in the Bible, we should be very careful about who teaches us. This is the arena in which Satan can come as an angel of light and his ministers as ministers of righteousness (II Corinthians 11:13-15).

Many preachers and evangelists are highly regarded for their faithfulness to the Bible. They are highly accredited. They have a fine reputation as servants of God. They teach that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. Their sermons are preached right from the Bible. And then, concerning the importance of salvation and the blessings that come with salvation, they say, "You, too, can be saved tonight. Believe on Jesus as the Son of God and accept Him as your Savior." They declare these things as encouragements in a loving, caring way. There appears to be all kinds of evidence that they are true servants of God. Are they not preaching in the name of God right from the Bible?

They have been deceived into following a salvation program that is guaranteed to destroy them.

And the salvation program they offer seems so beautiful because people think that, "I, too, right now, can know my sins are forgiven, and I will be eternally secure in Christ." So, those who trust these Bible teachers and follow their direction become convinced that they are eternally secure in Christ. They have been deceived into following a salvation program that is guaranteed to destroy them. They have been deceived into believing a false gospel. And sadly, they are like the man who picked up some sticks on the Sabbath.

In II Corinthians 11:14, God warns that Satan comes as an angel (messenger) of light. Christ is the true messenger of light. But Satan, through his ministers of righteousness, looks just like Christ. These ministers are pseudo-christs, counterfeit christs. They truly believe they are serving Christ, but in reality, their master is the antichrist, Satan.

Their kind of preaching, which is typical of so many highly regarded Bible teachers, can be found everywhere. But in every case, there is a gross violation of the fact that Christ

did all the work required to save an individual, and long before that individual was born, Christ paid for all his sins. Indeed, this is what the Bible teaches, and it is imperative that we listen to the whole Bible and realize that all the glory for our salvation must go to Christ and none to ourselves.

These preachers and evangelists truly believe that they are competent, faithful servants of Christ, but the fact is that they are Satan's "**ministers of righteousness**" (II Corinthians 11:15). They are coming in the name of Jesus Christ, but in actuality, they are servants of Satan who comes as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14). In their do-it-yourself salvation plan, they are bringing a huge lie because their master, Satan, is the father of lies (John 8:44). How terrible! Think of all the dear people who listen to them and believe them, and as they accept these lies as truth, they are being locked into a path where there is no hope.

And so, please, this is very important. Maybe for many years you believed you were saved because you were taught that if you "accepted" Jesus as your Savior, you were saved. Maybe you served as a confessing member of your church, and so, for years, you were convinced that you were safe in the arms of Jesus.

And now, to your utter dismay, you find that you are in the same situation as the man who picked up some sticks on the Sabbath day. You are still under the wrath of God, waiting for your time of destruction. It is even worse if you have been a Bible teacher and taught many people, and snared them into the same do-it-yourself salvation plan, and led them to their destruction.

And so, these questions seemingly will not leave you: "Can there be any hope for me? Could it be that God will forgive all my sins and save me, too?"

The answer from the Bible is, Christ came for sinners. You have just as much hope of salvation as any other unsaved person. You, too, should repent of the sin of following a wrong gospel, and pray, and hope that maybe God in His great mercy has elected you to salvation.

Amazingly, these do-it-yourself salvation programs are present in virtually every congregation. How can that be? The problem is that these churches are not using the whole Bible, and they are not carefully following the Bible's instruction to compare Scripture with Scripture. Moreover, they do not understand that the Bible is written in earthly language, but we cannot understand the big message of the Bible until we find the spiritual teaching that is given in these earthly historical statements. In other words, they have the wrong hermeneutic, the wrong method of Bible interpretation (Mark 4:33-34). However, there is another practical reason why these wrong gospels, these unbiblical salvation programs, are so prevalent amongst the churches.

Could the Churches Have Been Kept Pure?

Each and every congregation has fallen into a snare, and this is what has happened. The spiritual rulers of the congregations may have had a proper desire to keep the church as pure as possible, and thus, they wanted to have only truly saved individuals as members of their church. To assist them in this endeavor, every church or denomination established a structure, a method, or a plan by which they hoped to achieve this goal. Their structure or plan could have been as simple as a requirement that the prospective member make a confession of faith, or confess that he believed in Christ as his Savior. Normally, however, the church rulers also required the person to be baptized in water and to promise that as a member of that congregation, he would faithfully follow all the teachings of that church.

Their development of a structure or a procedure that they say must be followed in order to assure salvation actually produces the opposite result

Unfortunately, the structure or system that was adopted by the churches does not include a basic Biblical principle; that is, when we obey any command of God and believe that obedience will assist in our salvation, we are like the man who picked up some sticks on the Sabbath day (Numbers 15). We are still under the wrath of God. Thus, their development of a structure or a procedure that they say must be followed in order to assure salvation actually produces the opposite result. It helps to keep individuals in their unsaved condition.

This sad situation helps to account for the fact that in our day, in almost every church, the vast majority of the people are giving no heed to the warning that Satan now rules in the churches and that they are to flee from the churches so that they will not be spiritually serving Satan there. And they are giving no heed to the solemn warning that the end of the world is almost here. (For more information on these topics, please contact Family Radio and request the free books: *We Are Almost There*, *To God Be the Glory*, *Time Has An End*, *The End of the Church Age and After*, and *Wheat and Tares*.)

In spite of the unbiblical salvation structure or salvation plan that is common in the churches, a small number of individuals throughout the church age did become saved. They may have had very little or considerable understanding of the teachings of that church, but God saved them because they were elected to salvation. They were under the hearing of the Bible, and God saved them. Thus, they had an intense and continuous desire to be obedient to any and all of the teachings of the Bible. This was so even though their knowledge of the Bible may have been minimal.

We are to teach that unsaved mankind should attempt to obey God's laws while hoping and praying that they, too, may be included in God's salvation plan.

The churches have failed to understand that no structure or plan developed by man, even if it is followed diligently, can assure a person of salvation, and their failure should be a great warning to us. As we send the Gospel into the world, we must never present a man-made plan or a structure and say that if this plan is followed carefully, it will assure

salvation. We are to teach that unsaved mankind should attempt to obey God's laws while hoping and praying that they, too, may be included in God's salvation plan.

A Mighty Transformation

Now, the question must be asked: How does salvation affect a person's life? And what does it mean to be born again?

Remember, before someone was saved, in his whole personality he was exactly like all the non-elect people who will never become saved. In body and in soul, he lusted after sin and was in rebellion against God.

But now, when he is saved, he has been given a new resurrected soul. In that part of his personality, he is a new creature in Christ. When he was born physically, he was a baby with a personality that consists of a body and a soul. At the moment of salvation, he is born again; that is, he is given a new soul. It is a miracle that our human minds cannot understand, and there is no physical evidence of this transformation.

However, the result of the miraculous transformation of his soul can be seen; that is, a brand new soul in a person's unchanged body will seriously impact his life and change his behavior.

This is proven by God's declaration in I John 3:9, where He says:

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

God teaches us that at the moment of salvation, an enormous change occurs in the saved individual's personality.

In this verse, God teaches us that at the moment of salvation an enormous change occurs in the saved individual's personality. In his new resurrected soul, he cannot sin. Since sin is a transgression of God's law, it means that in the soul part of his personality, he cannot initiate sin. It means that in the soul part of his personality, he loves God and God's laws. It means that he has a constant and great desire to be obedient to all the commandments of the Bible. It means that in his new soul, he is now spiritually alive.

Since God has done everything to accomplish his salvation (elected him, paid for his sins, and given him a new resurrected soul, all of which are necessary for the salvation of all the elect), that person can be certain that he can never lose his salvation. The seed that remains in him is Christ (Galatians 3:16). Once he becomes saved, he has eternal security. God has already accomplished everything necessary to give him eternal life. Therefore, a true believer can never lose his salvation. The Bible says there is no sin, nor anything else, that can separate a true believer from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39).

The Saved Person Lives in an Unsaved Body

In his new soul, the believer still must live in his old body that was not at all changed at the moment of his salvation. Therefore, he has become a personality with two mutually exclusive desires. On the one hand, he always wants to be obedient to God's laws, and on the other hand, he still lusts after sin. God describes this awkward situation as the Apostle Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, declares in Romans 7:21-24:

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

To be free of our sinful body is the continuing desire of every true believer. However, the tug of war that goes on within the saved personality is not static. There will be progress towards an increasingly victorious life for the person who has a new resurrected soul (II Peter 3:18). This is true because in addition to the fact that he has been given a new resurrected soul, one other wonderful event occurred in that individual's personality at the moment of salvation; that is, God the Holy Spirit has begun to indwell the life of that person. We read in Romans 8:9 that if we do not have the Spirit of God, we are "none of his."

We do not understand how Almighty God can dwell in a saved person's life. We must admit it is a complete mystery to us. But because we absolutely trust the Bible, we know that it is a fact; it is mysterious and true. The indwelling presence of God Himself in the life and personality of the saved person further stimulates him to obey God, and he desires only that which is pleasing to God.

The saved person has been taken out of Satan's dominion, and he has become an eternal citizen of Christ's kingdom.

Moreover, the saved person has been taken out of Satan's dominion, and he has become an eternal citizen of Christ's kingdom. God tells us about this in Colossians 1:12-13, where we read:

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son:

In Philippians 3:20, we read that our "conversation," which is better translated "citizenship," is in heaven. This is true for every individual who becomes saved.

The Desires of the Saved Person

At the moment of salvation, many factors are at work in the believer's life that cause a very decided and important change in his conduct and desires. He will understand and identify with statements such as those found in Psalm 119 and elsewhere in the Bible.

The following are a few samples of the beautiful language found in Psalm 119 that demonstrate the true believers' love and respect of the Bible.

Verse 10: **With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.**

Verse 11: **Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.**

Verse 16: **I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.**

Verse 24: **Thy testimonies also *are* my delight *and* my counsellors.**

Verse 47: **And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.**

Verse 77: **Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law *is* my delight.**

Verse 97: **O how love I thy law! *it is* my meditation all the day.**

These kinds of statements can be found all through the Bible. Anyone who has truly become saved will increasingly experience these desires and motivations in his life. Thus, he will recognize and identify with the truth expressed in I John 2:3-5, where we read:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

The true believer knows that the commandments of God include the whole Bible. He also knows the awful feeling he has when he allows the lustful desires of his body to cause him to sin. He empathizes with that true man of God, David, who fell into grievous sin. And then David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, recorded his heartfelt remorse, which we read about in Psalm 51.

Fear and Trembling

One aspect of the truly saved person's character is his recognition of the holiness and righteousness of God, and the fact that God is the righteous judge of all the earth. In Philippians 2:12, God declares:

... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

The salvation that the believer is to "work out" in his life is the salvation that God has given him. But as he grows in grace (II Peter 3:18), that is, as he increasingly lives to God's glory and away from following the sinful desires of his unsaved body, he does so with fear and trembling.

To still tremble and fear before God might appear to be altogether alien to the wonderful security the saved person has been given.

This is a surprising statement because we might expect that as a result of our salvation, all fear of God would be removed. To still tremble and fear before God might appear to be altogether alien to the wonderful security the saved person has been given. For example, he knows that Christ has paid for all his sins, and he knows that he will never be threatened by the possibility of total destruction.

We must remember, however, that the saved person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. And the true believer has begun to increasingly love and respect everything the Bible teaches. Therefore, he learns and becomes increasingly aware of the greatness of God. He knows that God is the almighty God who spoke and brought this tremendous universe into existence. He knows that God is the almighty judge who is completely aware of even the smallest sin in every human being. He knows that God is so righteous that even the smallest sin is sufficient to cause a person to be under God's wrath. The true believer is aware that he himself still has sins even though he is now dramatically more obedient to God's laws than he was before he was saved. He is thoroughly aware of the fact that except for the mercy and grace of God, he deserves destruction.

On the one hand, because of his intense love and trust in the Bible, the true believer increasing knows he is eternally secure in Christ, and he knows that he can never be threatened by destruction. He knows that all of his sins have been covered by Christ. On the other hand, the more he becomes acquainted with the teachings of the Bible, the more he recognizes that he rightly deserves the awful wrath of God as payment for his sins. He knows that it was only God's mercy and grace that caused or brought about his salvation. Therefore, he trembles in fear and awe before God. He recognizes the fact that his salvation was entirely undeserved.

That is why the Bible states that the truly saved person fears God, which is what we read, for example, in the following verses.

Psalm 34:9: O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is no want to them that fear him.*

Psalm 112:1: Praise ye the LORD. Blessed *is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.*

Proverbs 3:7: Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.

This principle also emphasizes the truth that those who are not hearing God's Word do not fear God. The Bible declares this in the following passages.

Jeremiah 44:9-10: Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the

land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? They are not humbled *even* unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers.

Jeremiah 5:24-25: **Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.**

Isaiah 57:11-12: **And of whom hast thou been afraid or feared, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me, nor laid it to thy heart? have not I held my peace even of old, and thou fearest me not? I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.**

Ecclesiastes 8:13: **But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.**

But Perfect Love Casts Out Fear

It is true that the Bible teaches that perfect love casts out fear. We read in I John 4:18:

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

We might conclude that because the true believer has experienced the perfect love of Christ, he should no longer fear. True, in one sense, we can understand the word "fear" in this verse to be speaking of the fear of eternal destruction. The perfect love of God for the true believer removes this fear. The big promise of salvation is eternal security in Christ.

However, we still must reckon with all the verses that teach that a characteristic of the believer is that he fears God (Acts 9:31, 10:35, Philippians 2:12, I Peter 2:17, Proverbs 1:7, Ecclesiastes 8:12-13). How then are we to understand I John 4:18, which teaches that perfect love casts out fear? The solution comes when we learn the Biblical definition of love. In John 14:21 we read:

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

This law of God is reiterated in John 14:23, where we read:

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

In other words, love is altogether identified with obedience to God's commandments, the Bible. Regardless of how convincingly an individual tries to proclaim his love for Christ,

the litmus test, or true test, of his love is his fidelity, his obedience to God's law book, the Bible.

Perfect love would require perfect obedience

But that means that perfect love would require perfect obedience. Perfect obedience, however, is impossible until we receive our new resurrected bodies, and they will not be given to us until the day of the Rapture. In the meanwhile, in our new resurrected souls, which we received at the moment of our salvation, we live in a body that still lusts after sin. Therefore, at the present time, we do not have perfect love, and therefore, we cannot live without fear.

Earlier in our study we learned one reason why we fear and tremble before God, but more should be said about that. When David, a man after God's own heart, a man greatly loved by God, committed sin, God tells us about the reaction of this man's heart in Psalm 51. The entire Psalm records David's reaction, but we will quote only one verse, Psalm 51:11, where we read:

Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

David had received eternal life. He was eternally secure in the kingdom of God. How could he say the words of this Psalm, which God the Holy Spirit gave him to say? The answer comes when we realize the enormous punishment for sin. Every sin requires payment. Therefore, when the true believer sins, two truths should permeate his whole personality.

The Lord Jesus Christ had to pay for all our sins, including the sins that the believer commits after he has become saved.

The first truth is that the Lord Jesus Christ had to pay for all our sins, including the sins that the believer commits after he has become saved. It is true, of course, that God knew from the beginning that the true believer would commit these sins, and therefore, God had already laid them on Jesus, and Jesus paid for them long ago. But that does not change the fact that these sins are being committed by a person who has learned how dreadful sin is and the enormous payment for sin that is required by God's perfect justice. Thus, the true believer fears and trembles as he realizes that each time he sins, this sin, too, had to be laid upon our blessed Savior.

The second truth is that the true believer becomes increasingly acquainted with the seriousness of sin and the awful penalty that God's perfect justice demands as payment for sin. He also knows that each time he sins, he is engaging in an act of rebellion against his beloved Savior. On the one hand, he knows that his sin is covered by Jesus' shed blood and will never be counted against him. On the other hand, he knows that the forgiveness of his sin is only because of the completely undeserved mercy and grace of God. Therefore, the fact that he dared to sin causes him to live his life in fear and

trembling before God, and that stimulates his desire to not sin, but that, indeed, he might live more and more obediently to all of God's laws.

Thus, we understand that the saved person will have an entirely different lifestyle and an entirely different attitude toward sin, God, and the Bible, from that which is found in the life of the unsaved.

Is There Hope for Me?

Does what we have learned so far mean that the possibility of becoming saved is hopeless? Yes, it is indeed hopeless if we are depending in any way upon our efforts, our faith, our desires, or our obedience, to provide even the smallest contribution to our salvation. This is because to think that we can contribute anything to our salvation is evidence of an arrogant disregard for all that the Bible teaches about the astounding, sublime provision of God. It means that we are trusting in a salvation plan that can never save anyone, and it actually makes a mockery of God's perfect salvation plan.

We are living in a day when God is saving a great multitude, which no man can number.

But when we understand God's salvation plan, when we understand that He is the only one who can do all the work required for our salvation, then we can have hope, abundant hope. We are living in a day when God is saving a great multitude, which no man can number (Revelation 7:9). Moreover, the Bible declares that God has elected certain individuals and given them to Christ, and that Christ has paid for all their sins, and that provides enormous hope to unsaved individuals.

Any unsaved person who has an intense desire to become saved, and realizes that he can become saved only on God's terms, possibly could be one of God's elect or chosen ones. Since God's election plan has nothing to do with our personal worthiness (we have none), and regardless of how great and terrible an individual's sins have been, he or she could just as readily be one of God's elect as any saved individual. Indeed, God's elective plan gives great encouragement to the unsaved person who begins to earnestly desire that he, too, might become saved.

There are at least seven truths revealed in the Bible that should be of great encouragement to the individual who truly wishes that his sins were covered by the blood of Jesus. We have already made reference to some of these truths. However, they are so important that we will briefly outline them again. They are as follows.

1. Presently, it is the day of salvation. We have learned that God is no longer saving people by utilizing the efforts of the local congregations, their leaders, or their people. However, a striking and emphatic teaching of the Bible is the fact that today, God is bringing a great harvest of people into the kingdom of God. While it is beyond the scope of this booklet to develop this truth, we can at least quote a few verses that assure us that this is so.

In Joel 2:24 we read:

And the floors [the threshing floors] shall be full of wheat [true believers], and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil [salvation].

And the Bible says in Revelation 7:9:

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

And then Revelation 7:13-14 tells us:

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

In Habakkuk 2:14 we read:

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

In Jeremiah 33:22 we read:

As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.

These verses as well as many others give great hope to any unsaved person who humbly goes to God and beseeches Him for His mercy.

Thus, we can be assured that a great multitude is being saved today. Any unsaved person potentially could be one of that great multitude. What a blessing to know that we are living at a time when, all over the world, so many individuals are becoming saved.

2. The setting or the environment in which God saves is the hearing of the Word of God, the Bible. The Bible declares in Romans 10:17:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Today, more than ever before in the history of the world, a higher percentage of people are literate, and the Bible is available to them in their native language. What an enormous encouragement it is that anyone can place himself and the saved and unsaved members of his family under the hearing of the Bible. He can do this by personally reading the Bible. In many instances, he can listen to the Bible being read and faithfully taught on radio broadcasts such as those of Family Radio. Indeed, the environment for God to save

people is greater and more hopeful than ever before in history. And so, we parents want our babies and all our children to be under the hearing of the Word of God. And that is one reason why radio is an especially valuable and important tool that can be used to make the Gospel available in our community and to large multitudes of people around the world.

3. Christ came to save sinners. Christ did not come to save the self-righteous, those who think of themselves as decent, moral people who trust that their righteous conduct is an inducement for God to look favorably upon them. Christ came to save sinners!

What an encouragement to read about the criminal who was crucified alongside Jesus.

What an encouragement to read about the criminal who was crucified alongside Jesus. At first, this criminal showed his utter contempt for Jesus. We read in Matthew 27:41-44:

Likewise also the chief priests mocking *him*, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

And yet, marvelously, just a few minutes or hours before this crucified criminal died, he asked Jesus for mercy, and he received the answer that assured him and assures us that in that most improbable time and location, he had become saved. We read in Luke 23:39-43:

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

This grievous sinner was under the hearing of the Word because he heard Jesus speak to Mary, to the Apostle John, and to God Himself. And right then and there, this despicable sinner was given eternal life. Thus, anyone who is still unsaved, regardless of how great his sins may be, can know that Jesus came for sinners. What a magnificent encouragement!

4. Jesus is not a respecter of persons. This means that no class of people is more likely to become saved than any other class or group of people. A person may be shunned by society, and he may be regarded as one of the "untouchables" by his fellow humans, but in the Bible God tells us about individuals who became saved who were scorned and despised by the congregation of Jesus' day. Examples of this are the salvation of the Samaritan woman (John 4:4-42), the tax collector Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2-8), the leper

(Luke 17:12-19), the criminal who was executed for his crimes (Luke 23:39-43), and the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11). All of these people were looked upon as the scum of society, but God saved each one of them. Thus, we see clearly that He is not a respecter of persons. How wonderful this fact should be to any unsaved person.

5. God is merciful. It is true that mercy is no longer found in the local congregations where their pastors, elders, deacons, and Bible teachers minister to those poor people. And what a terrible truth that is! But outside the local congregations, throughout the world, God continues to demonstrate His unfathomable mercy. God is a God of mercy.

We read in Psalm 103:8:

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

And in Lamentations 3:31-32, we read:

For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

And God beautifully and compassionately declares in Joel 2:13:

And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

6. We can personally make known to God our intense desire to become saved. We can beg, beseech, and plead with God for salvation. Praying to God is work that we do, so we know that praying to God will not guarantee or contribute to our salvation. But we can know that as we cry to God, He will know of our desire to become saved.

Jesus gives us the illustration of the publican who prayed for God's mercy, which we read about in Luke 18:13-14:

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.

7. We need never lose hope for salvation. If God plans to save us, He will do so in His own time. He may save us early in our life or salvation may come hours before our death. We are never to attempt to dictate to God the time frame of our salvation, if, indeed, it is God's intention to save us.

If God plans to save us, He will do so in His own time.

We read in Lamentations 3:26:

It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

And God gives us so much comfort in Psalm 62:5-8, where we read:

My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him. He only *is* my rock and my salvation: *he is* my defence; I shall not be moved. In God *is* my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God. Trust in him at all times; *ye* people, pour out your heart before him: God *is* a refuge for us.

As a person patiently waits upon the Lord, he may be filled with great anxiety. To become saved is a serious and important matter. To remain unsaved is awful.

Wonderfully, God gives us much comfort by the promise of Philippians 4:6:

Be careful [*anxious*] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Then God gives us the assurance of Philippians 4:7:

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Thus, God is comforting us by encouraging us to rest entirely in Him. He is encouraging us to tell Him all about our anxiety. Marvelously, He is absolutely faithful and trustworthy to do His perfect will. We are to rest in His almighty arms.

In the meanwhile, we can hear from God as we continue to carefully and prayerfully read the Bible. And each time anxiety strikes us, again and again we can go boldly to God's throne of grace to tell God all about it. How merciful God is!

God gives the unsaved great encouragement in Zephaniah 2:3, where we read:

Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek [*humble*] of the earth, which have wrought his judgment [*which have been doing His law*]; seek righteousness, seek meekness [*humility*]: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S [*Jehovah's*] anger.

And so, perhaps, God may save you.

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