

# Understanding the Gospel

## I. The Gospel Message

### A. Defining the gospel

1. Romans 1:16 says, *"For I am not ashamed of the **gospel**, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."* What is the gospel? The word *gospel* (EUAGGELION) means good news. Galatians 1:6-9
2. The gospel is the good **news** about the work God did for our salvation through Jesus Christ on a weekend in history nearly two thousand years ago. It is a message that must be believed. The four gospels give extensive explanation of that world changing event, but in brief, here are some verses that explain it.
  - a. 1 Peter 2:24a – *...[Christ] Himself bore our **sins** in His body on the cross.*
  - b. Acts 5:30 – *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a **cross**.*
  - c. Acts 13:28-29 – *And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a **tomb**.*
  - d. Acts 13:30-32 – *But God raised Him from the dead; and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. And we preach to you the good news of the **promise** made to the fathers.*
  - e. The results of believing the gospel are found in Acts 13:38-39 – *Therefore, let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is **freed** from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.*
3. Paul explained the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 – *For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He **rose** again the third day according to the Scriptures.*
4. Concisely speaking, the message you must believe in order to be saved has to do with a particular person (Christ) and what He did on your behalf: Christ **died** for your sins and rose again.

## B. The gospel is an objective message

1. The gospel is an objective message about the most important historical event that ever took place. It is the news report concerning what Jesus Christ **did**: He died on the cross and rose again three days later. He did this to forgive us of our sins, save us from God's just wrath and provide us with eternal life.
2. The gospel is not a subjective, how-to message or a step-by-step **method** used to herd people through a process that leads to salvation.
3. The gospel does not change from person to person. It is the historically verifiable **account** of how God brought salvation to mankind through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

## C. Essential components of the gospel from 1 Corinthians 15:3-11

1. 1 Corinthians 15:3a – **Christ died**... Christ is the person in whom you must believe for salvation. 1 Timothy 3:16
  - a. Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah from the Old Testament. He is the principle **person** of the gospel message. In order to be saved, a person's faith must rest exclusively on Jesus Christ. Luke 24:44-48, Romans 1:2-4, Hebrews 2:10
  - b. *Christ*, or CHRISTOS in Greek, is the translation of the Hebrew word **Messiah**. The term *Christ* has both deity and humanity built into its meaning. John 7:41
  - c. God foretold that the Christ would be a **human** being, the Seed of the woman. Genesis 3:15, John 1:14
  - d. God also foretold that the Christ would be **deity**. He was Emmanuel, God with us. Isaiah 7:14, 9:6; John 8:23-24; Titus 2:13
2. 1 Corinthians 15:3b – **Christ died**... This describes the work of Christ for our salvation. Colossians 2:14, Hebrews 2:9, 1 Peter 2:24
  - a. Christ suffered **spiritual** death for us on the cross in that He was separated from God the Father when He took all the sins of mankind on Himself. In Matthew 27:46 we read, *"About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?'"*
  - b. Christ suffered **physical** death on our behalf when His soul and spirit were separated from His body. 1 Peter 2:24 – *He Himself bore our sin in His body on the cross. Acts 13:29b – They took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. Luke 23:46, Hebrews 10:10*
  - c. Christ suffered the implications of **eternal** death. Whether Christ was separated from His Father for one minute or one million years made no difference, since God lives outside the realm of time. Hebrews 9:26, 10:12, 1 Peter 3:18

3. 1 Corinthians 15:3c-4a – *Christ died for our sins*. Christ's died on our behalf in order to save us from the penalty we deserved for our sins. By suffering death for us, Christ saved us from having to face the death penalty ourselves and being separated from God for all eternity. Paul gave **two** very important verifications of Christ's death.
  - a. Proof #1 – Detailed prophecies fulfilled: 1 Corinthians 15:3d – *Christ died...according to the Scriptures...* The death of Christ was a prophetic **event** that happened exactly as the Old Testament foretold. Psalm 22:17-18, 69:11; Isaiah 53:3-6; Zechariah 12:10; Luke 24:46; Acts 10:43; Romans 1:2-4
  - b. Proof #2 – The burial of Christ: 1 Corinthians 15:4a – *Christ died...and was buried*. The burial of Christ provides enduring proof of His death. The living are not buried. Acts 13:29
  
4. 1 Corinthians 15:4-10 – *...and that He was raised on the third day...* The resurrection of Christ is an integral part of the gospel message that must be believed for a person to be **saved** from the penalty of sin. The resurrection validated Christ's victory over both sin and death. Paul provided two important verifications for the resurrection. Romans 4:23-25
  - a. Proof #1 – Detailed prophecies fulfilled: 1 Corinthians 15:4b – *...and that He was raised according to the Scriptures...* Just as precisely fulfilled prophecies prove the validity of Christ's death, precisely fulfilled prophecies also **prove** the resurrection of Christ. Job 19:25-26; Psalm 16:9-10; Isaiah 25:8, 53:10
  - b. Proof #2 – Multiple eye-witnesses: 1 Corinthians 15:5-9 – *...and was seen...* More than 500 eyewitnesses are presented as conclusive proof for the resurrection. 1 John 1:1-2
    - 1) 1 Corinthians 15:5a – *...and that He appeared to Cephas...* Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends and one of the most well-known Christians of all time, saw the risen Christ. Later, Peter was martyred because he believed Jesus died for our sins and **rose** again.
    - 2) 1 Corinthians 15:5b – *...then to the twelve [disciples]...* While still doubting Christ's resurrection, the twelve **disciples** saw Him. This statement may include Matthias from Acts 1:26, who also witnessed Christ's resurrection.
    - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:6 – *After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep.* Christ appeared to over 500 people at one time. Most of these witnesses were still **alive** at the time 1 Corinthians was written and could have been questioned for verification.
    - 4) 1 Corinthians 15:7a – *...then He appeared to James...* The James referred to here is Christ's half-**brother**, who saw Jesus after He rose from the dead. Having grown up with Jesus, James could easily confirm or deny Christ's identity. It is significant that he did not call the resurrected Christ a fraud, but instead became a believer.
    - 5) 1 Corinthians 15:7b – *...then to all the apostles...* The **apostles**, the ones Christ personally commissioned to tell the entire world about his death and resurrection, saw the resurrected Christ. Revelation 21:14

- 6) 1 Corinthians 15:8-9 – *...And last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God... The apostle **Paul**, formerly a blasphemer and destroyer of the church, also saw Christ alive and believed in Him.*

#### D. The only requirement for salvation: faith in Christ

1. It is significant that more than 160 verses in the New Testament show faith, or **belief**, in Jesus Christ as the only prerequisite for salvation.
2. Acts 16:30b-31 – *He said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They said, “**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”*
3. John 3:16 – *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*
4. John 6:47 – *Truly, truly, I say to you, he who **believes** has eternal life.*
5. John 8:24 – *Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you **believe** that I am He, you will die in your sins.*
6. John 11:25-26 – *Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and **believes** in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”*
7. John 20:30-31 – *Therefore, many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.*

#### E. Biblical facts about faith, or belief, in Christ

1. It is important to understand that the words **faith** and belief are synonyms in the Bible. In Greek, believe (PISTEUO) is the verb while faith (PISTIS) is the noun. Both words (PISTEUO and PISTIS) have the same basic meaning: to trust in, to rely on, to have faith in or to believe.
2. It is not the size of a person's faith that matters; the important thing is the object in whom a person is trusting. Your faith is only as good as its **object**. Jeremiah 17:5-8
  - a. Matthew 17:20 – *...for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard **seed**, you will say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you.*
  - b. 1 Peter 1:8 – *And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in **Him**, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.*
3. Faith is not some illusive concept. Faith is based on knowledge that comes from the Word of God. Romans 10:17 – *So, faith comes from **hearing**, and hearing by the word of Christ.*

4. Faith is **not** a work, and therefore it is not based on merit. Since faith is not a work, and grace is God's favor apart from works, faith and grace fit together perfectly like a hand in a glove.
  - a. Romans 4:5 – *But to the one who does not **work**, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.*
  - b. Romans 4:16a – *For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with **grace**.* Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:8-9
5. It is important to know the Bible does not make a distinction between **head** faith and heart faith.
  - a. In New Testament times, the **mind** of a person was considered to be a part of the heart, and the heart was the place in which faith occurred. Romans 10:10a – *For with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness.*
  - b. Obviously, someone can intellectually know the **facts** of the gospel without personally relying on Christ's finished work for salvation. In that case, such a person is not saved.
    - 1) However, we should be careful to **not** measure a person's sincerity by using terms such as head faith, heart faith, true faith or saving faith.
    - 2) Some of these terms have been added to recent Bible translations including the NLT, WNT, ABPE and CEV, but these qualifiers are not found in the original manuscripts of Scripture and can produce confusion and even paralyzing **doubt**.
  - c. Biblically, a person either believes or does not believe. Belief in the gospel is personal reliance on Jesus Christ, on who He is and what He did to save you. If you have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, you are **saved**, and if not, you are still dead in your sins.
    - 1) John 8:24 – *Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will **die** in your sins.*
    - 2) 1 John 5:13 – *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may **know** that you have eternal life.*

## F. Why it's important to present a clear gospel

1. Most believers nod in agreement when they hear the **true** gospel, but when you point out unclear gospel presentations, you may get many different responses, including shock, sadness, guilt, or even denial of the truth of the gospel.
2. The intent of this section is not to criticize but rather to challenge our thinking. This section is presented with the confidence that as Christians, we all want to be clear and **faithful** with the most important message on earth.
3. Since many of us were saved despite **unclear** gospel presentations, we might be tempted to think accuracy is not that important and that the unclear presentations we grew up with are acceptable, even though they are not entirely accurate.
4. However, we should strive to present the gospel message as **clearly** as possible.

- a. Referring to clarity, in 1 Corinthians 14:7-8 Paul said, “Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be **known** what is played on the flute or on the harp? For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?”
- b. Similarly, in Ephesians 6:19-20 Paul said, “And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak **boldly**, as I ought to speak.”
- c. In Acts 18:25-26 Priscilla and Aquila helped Apollos to be more accurate – *This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; ...he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus... But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God **more** accurately.*
5. The Scriptures are bold in stating what the gospel is and what it is not. Here are a few examples of this fact.

SAVED BY:		NOT SAVED BY:	
Ephesians 2:8-9			
<i>For by grace you have been saved through faith</i>		<i>and that not of yourselves</i>	
<i>it is the gift of God</i>		<i>not as a result of works, so that no one may boast</i>	
Acts 13:39			
<i>and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things</i>		<i>from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.</i>	
Titus 3:5			
<i>He saved us</i>		<i>not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness</i>	
<i>but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit</i>			
2 Timothy 1:9			
<i>He has saved us and called us with a holy calling</i>		<i>not because of our own works</i>	
<i>but by His own purpose and by the grace He granted us in Christ Jesus before time eternal</i>			

SAVED BY:	NOT SAVED BY:
Galatians 2:16	
	<i>Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law</i>
<i>but through faith in Christ Jesus,</i>	
<i>even we have believed in Christ Jesus</i>	
<i>so that we may be justified by faith in Christ</i>	<i>and not by the works of the Law</i>
	<i>since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.</i>

## G. Unclear Gospel Presentations

### 1. Confusion: Believe and do good works

- Almost all **false** gospels require the sinner to do some work for salvation, but the gospel is not faith in Christ plus good works.
- The Bible teaches that salvation is the work of God. Revelation 7:10 – *And they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation [belongs] to our **God** who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."* Psalm 3:8, Jonah 2:9b
- We can add nothing to Christ's **work** on the cross. He achieved complete and full salvation for all mankind, without the help of anyone. By faith we rely on what He already accomplished. Hebrews 1:3, 10:12
- Ephesians 2:8-9 – *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not **of works**, lest anyone should boast.*
- Titus 3:5 – *Not **by works** of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

### 2. Confusion: Believe and keep the Ten Commandments

- Confusion about keeping the Ten Commandments to earn God's acceptance is still prevalent in our world today. The Bible speaks plainly against this **wrong** gospel.
- Galatians 2:16 – *Knowing that a man is not justified by the **works** of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law, no flesh shall be justified.*
- Acts 13:39 – *Through Him, everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the **Law** of Moses.*

- d. Romans 3:20 – *Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law, we become conscious of sin.*
- e. Galatians 3:11 – *Clearly no one is justified before God by the law because “The righteous will live by faith.”*
- f. We remember from the “Law school” section of this curriculum that the Law was given to be our school master to teach us to recognize our need for salvation, but it was never given to save us. Only Jesus Christ can save.

### 3. **Confusion: Believe and be baptized**

- a. Water baptism is a public testimony of salvation for people who have believed in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, but it is not a requirement or the means of salvation for the unsaved. Acts 8:26-40, 10:43-48
- b. If water baptism was required for salvation, Paul made a major blunder when in 1 Corinthians 1:17 he said, *“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.”*
- c. The thief on the cross was unquestionably saved without getting baptized in water, which is another confirmation that the ritual of baptism is not necessary for salvation. Luke 23:42-43

### 4. **Confusion: Believe and be circumcised**

- a. Although this false gospel is not common today, it was a problem in the early church when the majority of Christians were still Jews. Many of these Jewish believers felt that in order for Gentiles to be saved, they also needed to be circumcised.
- b. Acts 15:1 – *Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”*
- c. Galatians 5:2-3 – *Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.*
- d. God made it clear that if a person was relying on circumcision to be saved, he would need to keep the entire Law, not just the circumcision requirements. Since no one has ever been able to keep the entire Law, any effort to gain eternal life through circumcision falls miserably short.
- e. Circumcision was a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant which was an agreement between God and Abraham dating to the time when Israel first became a nation. All Israelite boys were required to be circumcised eight days after birth. This ritual, however, did not save anyone from their sins. Genesis 17:9-14



## 5. Confusion: Believe and confess your sins

- a. Confession of sins is not a requirement for salvation. However, while confession of sin is not a requirement for salvation, all people must understand they are **sinner**s in need of the Savior. Recognizing you are a sinner prior to salvation is not the same as confessing your individual sins.
  - 1) First of all, no one can possibly remember **every** sin he or she has ever committed. In fact, most of us have a hard time remembering what we had for supper last night!
  - 2) Secondly, trying to confess all your sins would cause distressing soul searching and doubt. If you think you have to confess all your sins in order to be saved, you will **never** be secure in your salvation, knowing you have forgotten many of your sins.
- b. Unbelievers will be condemned to the Lake of Fire because they did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, not because they failed to confess their sins. John 3:18 says, *“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not **believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*
- c. Confession of sin is for the saved person, one who is already a child of God. Knowingly committing a sin causes the child of God to lose fellowship with God. In such occasions, believers are to confess their sins in order to **restore** their fellowship with God.
  - 1) 1 John 1:9 – *If we [believers] confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous [just] to **forgive** us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
  - 2) The Greek word translated *confess* (HOMOLOGEO) is from HOMO, meaning the same, and LOGEO, meaning to speak. To confess is to say the **same** thing. It means to agree with God concerning your sin.

## 6. Confusion: Believe and ask for forgiveness

- a. God does not require a person to **ask** for forgiveness in order to be saved. This is similar to the previous confusion of requiring confession of sins for salvation.
- b. The truth is, the moment we believe in Christ, we are totally forgiven even without asking for forgiveness. Ephesians 1:7 says, *“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the **riches** of His grace.”*
- c. Forgiveness comes as a **result** of believing the good news of Christ’s death and resurrection, not because we asked God for forgiveness. Forgiveness is a byproduct of believing the gospel. It is granted to us the moment we believe in Jesus Christ.
- d. Colossians 2:13-14 says, *“When you were dead in your transgressions ...He made you alive together with Him, having **forgiven** us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”*

## 7. Confusion: Repent from your sins (See pages 43-46 for more information)

- a. God's Word does not command repentance from **sins** in order to be saved.
  - 1) The phrases repent **of** your sins and repent **from** your sins are not found anywhere in the Bible (although there is an exception in the New Living Translation where the phrase "of your sins" was added by the translators).
  - 2) At the same time, with that said, **every** person who has ever believed in Christ for salvation has repented of something. As 2 Peter 3:9 teaches, "*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*"
- b. In order to properly understand the biblical usage of the words repent (verb) and repentance (noun), we must look at the original **Greek** word as it was used in the New Testament and not at the modern English dictionary definition.
  - 1) The Greek word repentance (METANOIA) literally means afterthought, change of mind or change of thinking. META means change and NOIA means mind. What we repent of, or change our minds about, can vary. We can repent of good things or bad things. Repentance in and of itself is **neutral**.
  - 2) Unfortunately, our modern understanding of repentance was not derived from the Greek word METANOIA, which was the word used in the Bible. Instead, it was derived from the Medieval Latin word REPOENITĒRE, which means to be **sorry** or feel regret. REPOENITĒRE is an alteration of a previous Latin word PAENITĒRE, which meant to be penitent.
  - 3) This confusion concerning the meaning of the word repent began with **Jerome** (AD 347–420) when he chose to use the Latin word for penance (PAENITENTIAM) to translate the Greek word for change-of-mind (METANOIA) in the Latin Vulgate translation of the New Testament.
  - 4) Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation became the standard Bible of Christians for many centuries, causing a shift in the common understanding of repent from a change of mind to doing penance or feeling **sorrow** for sin. This mistranslation affects our understanding even today.
  - 5) Biblical repentance is a change of mind, not a change of conduct. Repentance is not a **work** an unbeliever must add to salvation. This would not be consistent with salvation by grace alone, apart from works.
- c. **How repentance relates to salvation.**
  - 1) All unbelievers in the world have some **false** hope they are relying on for eternal salvation or some false idea that allows them to ignore the subject all together. Hebrews 6:1
  - 2) When unbelievers **trust** in Christ for salvation, it is because they have changed their minds. Instead of trusting in the false hope they previously held, they now trust in Christ alone for salvation. Acts 20:21

- 3) When we share the **gospel**, we need to encourage unbelievers to change their minds about what they have been trusting in (a religion, philosophy, or self-effort) and urge them to believe exclusively on Jesus Christ. Acts 11:18
- 4) In Acts 19:4 Paul said, “*John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to **believe** in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.*”
- 5) While it is not necessary to repent of your sins to be saved, you must repent (**change** your mind) in order to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. As Acts 17:30 states, “*Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent.*”
- 6) Repentance must not be taught as an **extra** requirement for salvation.
- 7) Repentance is not a change of **life** or a change of direction. A person does not need to somehow clean up his or her life in order to be saved. God does not require this extra step, or human work, for salvation. Isaiah 64:6 calls our righteousness “*filthy rags.*”

#### 8. **Confusion: Invite Christ into your life; Ask Jesus into your heart**

- a. The gospel is not about inviting or asking Jesus to **come** into your life or heart. The proper response to the gospel is simply to believe in Christ and His work, that He died for your sins and rose again.
- b. You are not saved by begging, inviting or persuading Christ to come into your life. The moment you believe Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again, you receive eternal life as a totally free **gift**. At that moment, you are placed into union with Christ and the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you.
- c. Ephesians 1:13-14 – *In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also **believed**, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.*
- d. Whenever a person trusts in Christ as Savior, God the Holy Spirit comes to live in his or her life, but the Bible does not teach us to **ask** Jesus to live in us. He does not come because we ask. He comes because we believe.
- e. It is important to understand the proper meaning of Revelations 3:20 – *Behold, I stand at the **door** and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.*
  - 1) This verse is often quoted in support of having the unsaved ask Jesus to come into their hearts for salvation. First of all, this verse was not addressed to unbelievers, and secondly, the words **ask** and **heart** are **absent**.
  - 2) This verse was written to Christians in the **church** of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22). Audaciously, these believers had excluded Christ, of all people, from their meetings. As believers, they needed to reopen the door of fellowship to Him.

9. **Confusion: Give your life to God; Give your heart to Jesus; Make a commitment to Christ**

- a. The gospel is not about **giving** your life, your heart or anything else to God in exchange for eternal life. In fact, salvation is just the opposite. The direction of salvation is from God to man, not man to God.
- b. If salvation (being saved from the penalty of our sin) is received through some type of bargain or exchange we make with God, it is no longer a **free** gift.
- c. Romans 11:6 – *But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer **grace**.*
- d. The good news of the gospel is that **Christ** gave Himself for our sins, dying for us as our substitute on Calvary. We don't give ourselves to God; He gave Himself for us.
  - 1) Ephesians 5:2 – *...as Christ also loved you and **gave** Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*
  - 2) Galatians 2:20b – *...the Son of God, who **loved** me and gave Himself up for me.*
- e. God does not accept **anything** whatsoever from you in exchange for salvation, no matter how sincere you may be. We make no contribution or payment in exchange for salvation. From beginning to end, salvation is a totally free gift, given to us by God's grace alone when we believe.

10. **Confusion: Come forward and make a public profession of faith**

- a. This confusion implies that you must make a **verbal** public profession of your faith in Christ in order to complete your salvation.
- b. If this were required, Christ's work on the cross to pay for your sins was not **enough**. To complete your salvation, you would need to add your imperfect work of public confession to His already perfect work of dying for your sins.
- c. Christ **alone** gained our complete salvation. Nothing more can be added to improve on what He did. Ephesians 2:9, Titus 3:6-7
- d. It is true, that before God in heaven, you will either receive rewards for publicly confessing Christ or be denied rewards for denying Him, but testifying publicly does not **earn** or ensure your salvation. Matthew 10:33
  - 1) It is important to understand the proper meaning of 2 Timothy 2:11-12 – *It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will **deny** us.*
  - 2) What this verse is saying is that He will **deny** us rewards, crowns or ruling authority for unfaithfulness, but He will not deny us entrance into heaven. 1 Corinthians 3:15
  - 3) 2 Timothy 2:13 – *If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown **[deny]** himself.* Even if we became totally faithless, He would remain faithful to us His children.

- e. Romans 10:9-10 is often **cited** to support the concept that an unbeliever must proclaim Christ publicly in order to be saved.
- 1) First of all, the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of Romans were written specifically to address the past, present and future spiritual condition of **Israel**. These chapters were not written with unsaved Gentiles in mind.
  - 2) Romans 10:9-10 – *That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be **saved**; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.*
  - 3) In the context of this passage, if an Israelite called on the name of the Lord with his voice, it would be because he had **already** believed on the Lord in his heart. Romans 10:14 confirms this, saying, *“How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?”*
  - 4) Even to this day, Jewish people will not confess that Jesus Christ is the **LORD** Yahweh of the Old Testament unless they have already believed on Him in their hearts.
  - 5) Confession merely confirms verbally what has already gone on in the privacy of the **heart**, but it is not a requirement for salvation. 1 Corinthians 12:3

#### 11. Confusion: Pray the sinner’s prayer

- a. A person is saved based on **faith** in Christ and not because of praying a prayer. Acts 16:30-31 says, *“And after he brought them out, he said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ They said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household’.”*
- b. There is no **example** in the Bible of a person being required to pray a prayer in order to be saved. If prayer were required for salvation, God would have plainly communicated that to us. Prayer is a good work, and we already know we are not saved by doing works. Titus 3:5
- c. Are we implying that prayer is wrong? **Never**. The Bible urges believers to *pray without ceasing* (1 Thess. 5:17) and to *pray at all times* (Eph. 6:18), but prayer is not a requirement for salvation for unbelievers. Faith in the gospel is what saves, not being led by someone to pray a prayer.

#### 12. Confusion: Just say yes to Jesus

- a. While this may seem like a very **positive** response to the gospel message, it is not synonymous with *“believe on the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.”* Acts 16:31
- b. This statement is confusing, as it does not specify that we are to believe in Christ’s death and resurrection for salvation. Many well-meaning people easily become convinced they are going to heaven based on a positive **attitude** towards Jesus.

- c. Salvation is not based on a “**yes**” statement to the Lord. What exactly would a person be saying yes to? If saying yes to the Lord were part of some kind of promise or vow to the Lord, then it would be a human work. We know from the Word of God that our works do not save us. Titus 3:5
- d. In fact, Matthew 7:22-23 speaks of people who were very positive towards the Lord and yet were not saved. To these kinds of people Jesus will say, *“Many will **say** to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me...’.”*

### 13. Confusion: Love God

- a. This confusion teaches that you can earn salvation by loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself. In reality, it is impossible to produce this kind of **love** before salvation. Ephesians 2:1-3
- b. This **false** gospel message comes out of Deuteronomy 6:5 – *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*
- c. Although **Jesus** said this was the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:38), He did not imply that a person could earn salvation by obeying it.
- d. There are many similar commands given in the Word of God, but these are for God’s **children** to obey, not unbelievers.
- e. It is believing the good news about Jesus that **saves** a soul, not loving God and others.

### 14. Confusion: Follow Jesus; Bear your cross

- a. It is important to understand the **context** of Matthew 16:24-26. *Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”*
- b. The key to understanding this passage is to understand that Jesus was addressing believers: *Jesus said to **His** disciples.* Since Jesus was talking to His disciples, we know this is a sanctification passage rather than a how-to-be saved passage.
- c. When Jesus spoke of someone losing their life and forfeiting their soul, He was not talking about believers forfeiting their souls in **hell**. If that were so, it would contradict many verses on the eternal nature of our salvation, as we will see.
- d. Jesus was warning believers to not **miss** out on the abundant life and become unfruitful in service here on earth. He was speaking against the believer selling out to the world. Romans 12:2, 1 John 2:15-17

### 15. Confusion: Make Christ Lord of your life; Submit to the lordship of Jesus.

- a. It is true that in order to be saved you must believe Jesus is the **Lord** God. John 8:24 says, *“Therefore, I said to you that you will die in your sins for unless you believe that I am [He], you will die in your sins.”*
  - 1) Jesus’ **title**, Christ, signifies that Jesus is the Lord. In Matthew 16:16, when Jesus asked His disciples who He was, *Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’* Acts 2:36, Luke 2:11, John 4:25, 1 John 2:22-23
  - 2) It would be nonsensical to trust in Jesus for salvation if you thought He was merely an ordinary, sinful **human** like yourself.
- b. However, while you must believe Christ is the Lord God in order to be saved, making Him Lord of your life will not save you. If that were the case, your salvation would not be based on Christ’s finished work but on the addition of **your** work of making Him your Lord. Salvation would be based on your frail efforts to submit to Him. Titus 3:5-6
  - 1) Making Christ Lord of your life is not a decision you make moments **before** you believe.
  - 2) How can an unbeliever who is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-3), under Satan’s control and without the Spirit of God in his or her life ever honestly and successfully promise **submission** to the lordship of Jesus Christ? If making Jesus the Lord of your life were a requirement for salvation, no one could ever be saved.
- c. Lordship is a discipleship issue for the **believer** not a salvation issue for the unbeliever.
  - 1) We know the Lord Jesus Christ wants to be Lord of every member of His **body**. He initiates this lifelong process the moment a person believes in Him and He promises to continue working toward this goal until the second we die. Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:13-16
  - 2) As believers, we all struggle with sin and at times **find** ourselves fighting the lordship of Christ in some area of our lives. Romans 7:18, 1 John 1:8
  - 3) However, as we consistently **present** the members of our bodies as instruments of righteousness to the Lord, Christ’s lordship over our lives increases. Romans 6:19-22

### 16. Confusion: Just have faith

- a. To tell an unbeliever to just have faith, meaning a positive **vibe** toward God or toward life, is confusing because the **object** of faith is not stated or clearly defined. Many people mistakenly believe they will be saved because they have positive optimism about life or about God. Sadly, this is a fatal mistake.
- b. The concept of having faith is biblical, but for salvation, faith must be in Christ specifically. John 6:29 – *Jesus replied, “The work of God is this: to believe in the **One** He has sent.”*

- c. To many modern thinkers, Jesus is an undefined good man or good example. Christ becomes an **ideal** to ultimately achieve by simply having a good outlook on life. Many of these people see faith as a mystical type of Karma or holy cosmic force.
- d. Because the statements “just have faith” or “believe” do not describe a faith placed in the Lord Jesus Christ’s death for our **sins** and resurrection, this is a misleading message. Acts 16:29-34, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

#### 17. Confusion: Keep the faith

- a. This false gospel message implies that salvation is about maintaining your faith in Christ. If you happen to **stop** believing, then you’ll lose your salvation and go to hell.
- b. In this scenario, the reason people go to heaven is because **they** faithfully upheld their faith and not because of the reliability of Christ to uphold them. The object of their faith for salvation is their own ability to hold or maintain their faith.
- c. In 2 Timothy 1:12 the apostle Paul stated, “*I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that **He** is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*”
- d. This error boils down to reliance on your own **faith** rather than on Christ’s finished work for salvation.

#### 18. Confusion: The cross-less gospel; The promise-only gospel

- a. This false gospel invalidates faith in who Christ is (the God-Man) and what He did (died for our sins and rose again). These essential details are viewed as **extra** information and unnecessary truths for salvation.
- b. Some cross-less gospel preachers go so far as to say that if you require faith in Christ’s person and work, you are actually **adding** to the gospel.
- c. Proponents of this false gospel **claim** that these are nonessential truths for eternal life. They often call the message to be believed for eternal life the “saving message,” saying that the word gospel refers to the entire Bible.
- d. This **false** gospel teaches that for salvation a person must believe in the promise of Jesus to give us eternal life. To these teachers, all that is essential for salvation is faith in eternal security through a man named Jesus.
- e. While it is true that Christ gives us eternal life when we believe in Him, we are not told to believe merely in Christ’s **promise** to give us eternal life.
- f. Peter and Paul both preached the person and work of Christ when they shared the gospel with the **lost**.
  - 1) When Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:23-24, 36), he preached the deity, death and resurrection of Christ: *This Man...you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again.... Therefore ...know for certain that God has made Him both **Lord** and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.*



- 2) Paul preached the cross to the unsaved. 1 Corinthians 2:2 – *And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him **crucified**.* 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23; Galatians 1:1-9, 3:1
- 3) Paul preached the resurrection to the unsaved. Acts 17:32 – *Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to **sneer**.*

## H. Summarizing what the gospel is not

1. The gospel is not a subjective message.
  - a. The gospel is not something we say or do in our **hearts**.
  - b. The gospel is not an **experience** we have had.
2. The gospel is not a formula.
  - a. The gospel is not repeating some **phrase**.
  - b. The gospel is not what we say or what someone **leads** us to say.
3. The gospel is not saying the so-called “sinner’s **prayer**.”
4. The gospel is not an emotion.
  - a. The gospel is not a **show** of remorse or beating oneself up.
  - b. The gospel is not a display of tears, **joy** or sorrow.
5. The gospel is not some ecstatic or mystical experience.
  - a. The gospel is not speaking in **tongues**.
  - b. The gospel is not being **slain** in the spirit.
  - c. The gospel is not some sort of **magical** incantation.
6. The gospel is not a promise or commitment we **make**.
7. The gospel is not something we **do** for God.
8. The gospel is not some **deal** we make with God. God does not say,
  - a. “If you’ll **make** me Lord, then I’ll save you.”
  - b. “If you’ll **give** me your life, your heart or your all, then I’ll give you salvation.”
9. The gospel is not something we have to ask or beg God for.
  - a. The gospel is not asking Christ into your heart or **life**.
  - b. The gospel is not **begging** for forgiveness or confessing your sins.
10. The gospel is not your ability to believe.
  - a. The gospel is not trusting in your **faith**.
  - b. The gospel is not your ability to be **sincere**.

- c. The gospel is not your ability to **cast** out all doubts.
11. In summary, the **gospel** is not doing good works, keeping the Ten Commandments, being baptized, being circumcised, confessing your sins, asking forgiveness, repenting from your sins, inviting Jesus into your heart, giving your life to God, making a public profession of faith, praying the sinners prayer, saying yes to God, loving God, following Jesus, making Christ Lord of your life, having faith in yourself or keeping the faith.
    - a. How could the gospel possibly be **all** these things?
    - b. Who could ever satisfy these requirements? We would surely **fail** if even one of these were required.
  12. Plain and straightforward, the gospel is the objective message that Christ **died** for your sins and rose again on the third day. Do you believe in Christ and what He did for you? If so, you are saved. 1 John 5:13

### I. Beware of preaching any other gospel. Galatians 1:6-9

1. Galatians 1:6 – *I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel.* Sadly, a believer can **desert** the gospel, as was happening in the Galatian churches.
2. Galatians 1:7 – *...which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.* The gospel is that Christ died for your sins and rose again. No other gospel **exists**. Unfortunately, deceivers constantly disturb us with distortions of the simple, but destiny-changing gospel message.
3. Galatians 1:8 – *But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel **contrary** to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!* Paul stated that anyone, angels or otherwise, who preaches another gospel, should be accursed.
4. Galatians 1:9 – *As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!* The fact that Paul repeated his strong hostility toward **false** gospels and those who preach them shows how serious this is to God.
5. Galatians 1:10 – *For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.* We must **resist** at all costs the temptation to preach a popular, watered-down or appealing gospel message, because if we do, we are no longer serving Christ.

### J. Are you convinced Jesus is the only way?

1. In John 14:6 Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”* Do you believe Jesus? Do you believe He is the **only** way to God? Or was He mistaken? Is there another way?

2. Are there many doors or pathways to God? No! In John 10:9 Jesus did not give room for any exceptions, but exclusively specified, *“I am the **door**; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.”* There are not multiple doors.
3. We need to remember salvation cannot be both God’s **work** and ours at the same time. It cannot even be 99% Christ and 1% us. Salvation is 100% God’s free gift. Ephesians 2:8-9, Isaiah 42:8
4. We must rely solely on the work of Christ; there is no middle **ground**. It is not Christ plus anything. Acts 4:12 says, *“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”* Isaiah 42:8
5. The reason we must be **accurate** with the most important message on earth is because it is a matter of life and death.
  - a. If you had a malignant brain tumor, for example, you would want only a qualified surgeon to do the surgery and you would want him to use great precision.
  - b. The gospel is even more important than brain surgery because it has **eternal** consequences.
6. For these reasons, we seek to be concise and clear with the gospel message. Our goal in this teaching is not to judge, belittle or discourage God’s children. If you have been guilty of being **unclear** with the gospel message, trust the Lord and ask God to make your presentation of the gospel clearer than ever before. 1 Thessalonians 2:4, 2 Timothy 2:15

## K. Christ’s calls to us to share a clear gospel everywhere.

1. In Mark 16:15, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded, *“Go into **all** the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.”*
2. Christ called us to make disciples in all nations. Matthew 28:19-20 says, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the **nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*
3. In Acts 1:8, just before returning to heaven, Jesus added, *“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My **witnesses** both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest part of the earth.”*
4. Because it’s a matter of life and death, let’s make sure we are accurate and **precise** in teaching others the good news that Christ died for their sins and rose again on the third day.

## II. Secure Forever (Eternal Security)

### A. God’s role in saving us and keeping us saved

1. It is God who **saves** us. Revelation 7:10b says, *“Salvation [belongs] to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”* We do not save ourselves. That is God’s job. Isaiah 45:22

2. God, the **author** of our salvation, says salvation is everlasting. Hebrews 5:9a says, *“And having been perfected, [Jesus] became the author of eternal salvation.”* Isaiah 51:6b
3. Since salvation is God's work, the only way a believer could ever lose their salvation would be if God somehow failed. But God will not fail. The apostle Paul was **certain** of that. He wrote, *“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”* Philippians 1:6
4. The Bible teaches that God's protection keeps believers **safe** and secure all the way through to eternity.
  - a. Hebrews 13:5b – *I will never **desert** you, nor will I ever forsake you.*
  - b. John 10:28 – *I give eternal life to them, and they will **never** perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.*
  - c. Hebrews 7:25 – *Therefore He is able also to save **forever** those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.*
5. In His mercy, God Himself preserves and maintains our salvation completely **apart** from our good works. Titus 3:5 says, *“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”*
6. Our salvation is secure based on **God's** promises, not on our successes or failures. 1 John 2:25 says, *“This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.”*
7. Although God is the one who maintains and preserves our salvation, a believer may still have doubts regarding this issue. We should always let the Bible, not our personal opinions, experiences, feelings, dogma or denomination be our guide. The Word of God has to be the **final** authority on the matter of the security of our salvation. Acts 17:11
8. You are responsible to search the Bible to make sure this teaching is truly what the Bible says. Do as the Bereans in Acts 17:11, *“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures **daily** to see whether these things were so.”*

## B. Secure eternally

### LOGICAL ARGUMENTS FOR ETERNAL SECURITY

1. A **definition** argument: How long does **eternal** life last? Eternal means forever. If salvation could be lost, God would have called it temporary or short-term life. Instead, the Bible insists salvation is eternal and that all believers have everlasting life. John 3:16
  - a. John 3:15 – *So that whoever believes will in Him have **eternal** life.*
  - b. John 3:36 – *He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the **wrath** of God abides on him.*

2. A **biological relationship** argument: John 1:11-13 states, *“He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”*
  - a. When you were born into this world, your mother did all the work. Similarly, when you were born-again, **God** gave you new birth by the action of the Holy Spirit at the moment you believed in Christ. John 3:6-8, Galatians 3:26
  - b. Birth is a one direction event that can never be reversed. Just as it is impossible to become unborn physically, it is impossible to become unborn spiritually. Once you are born again, you are God’s offspring and forever a **member** of His family.
  - c. In 1 Peter 1:23 Peter said, *“You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.”* God gave us new birth by means of *imperishable* seed. God’s seed cannot be corrupted.
  - d. Figuratively we now possess divine DNA. And just as it is impossible to remove your parent’s DNA, it is impossible to **remove** God’s spiritual DNA, so to speak, or His imperishable seed, from within us.
3. A **family-ties** argument: If God did so **much** for us by sending Jesus to die for us when we were guilty criminals, dead in our trespasses and sins, children of Satan, what makes us think He will do less for us now that we are his very own dear children?
  - a. Romans 8:32 – *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*
  - b. Matthew 7:11 – *If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!*
  - c. James 1:17 – *Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*
4. A **gift** argument: Ephesians 2:8-9 says, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*
  - a. You cannot **earn** salvation by good works or by a holy life. Salvation is a free gift from God.
  - b. If you could earn your salvation, you would have something to be proud of, but you cannot. Only God deserves to be praised and thanked for His **gift** of love and kindness, called salvation.
5. A **lasting gift** argument: When God gives a gift, He does not take it back. All God’s gifts are **permanent**.

- a. Romans 11:29 – *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* When God gives a gift, He will never **take** it back. When He gives you a gift, it is yours forever. It is permanently yours.
  - b. James 1:17 – *Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.* No *variation* means God does not **change**. Malachi 3:6
  - c. Romans 6:23 – *For the wages of sin is death, but the **free** gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Eternal life is a free gift. It depends on God’s faithfulness, not yours. God did not give it to you because you deserved it and you do not have to continue to deserve it in order to keep it.
6. A **faith** argument: We are saved by faith, not by works. Titus 3:5 says, “*He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness.*” Just like we did not do works to gain our salvation, good works do not keep us saved, and a lack of good works does not cause us to lose our salvation.
- a. Galatians 3:3 – *Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the **flesh**?*
  - b. Romans 4:5 – *But to the one who does not work, but **believes** in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.*
  - c. Galatians 2:16 – *Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through **faith** in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.*
7. A **promise-keeper’s** argument: Even if you are unfaithful to Christ, He will remain **faithful** to you forever. He cannot break His promises.
- a. 2 Timothy 2:13 – *If we are faithless, He **remains** faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.*
  - b. Titus 1:2 – *God ...cannot **lie**.*
  - c. Hebrews 10:23 – *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who **promised** is faithful.*
8. An **anchor-for-the-soul** argument: God is faithful to fulfill all His salvation pledges to the believer. He protects all who have taken refuge in Him. Our hope is so sure it is like an anchor fastened to solid **rock**.
- a. Hebrews 6:18-19 – *So that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. This hope we have as an **anchor** of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil.*
  - b. Psalm 62:6 – *He only is my **rock** and my salvation, my stronghold; I shall not be **shaken**.*  
Psalm 118:8-9

9. A **written-word** argument: 1 John 5:13 – *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.*” You are eternally secure because the Bible says so. Without arrogance, you can truly know you are safe and secure in Christ because God’s **Word** says so.

#### LEGAL ARGUMENTS FOR ETERNAL SECURITY

10. A **deletion** argument: John 1:29 says, *“Behold, the Lamb of God who **takes away** the sin of the world!”* Jesus was indeed God’s sacrifice to take away our sins. Your sins, past, present, and future, were erased by Christ. If you were later judged for your sins, His work would have been incomplete, and that is not possible. Hebrews 10:12
11. A **sins-forgotten** argument: God forgave and **forgot** all your sins forever. If sin could keep you out of heaven, God didn’t completely forgive you.
- a. Psalm 103:10-12 – *He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He **removed** our transgressions from us.*
  - b. Colossians 2:13 – *When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having **forgiven** us all our transgressions.*
  - c. Hebrews 8:12 – *For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and I will remember their **sins** no more.*
12. An **immunity** argument: God promises that in Christ you will be saved from future condemnation. But if you could lose your salvation, you would once again be condemned to hell. In that case, Christ’s promises would become **untrue**.
- a. John 3:18 says, *“He who believes in Him is not **judged**; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*
  - b. In John 5:24 Jesus said, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has **passed** out of death into life.”*
13. An **innocence** argument: No accusations can incriminate us eternally now that we are in Christ. Romans 8:33-34 says, *“Who will bring a **charge** against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies.”* Romans 8:1
14. An **arbitrator** argument: Since Jesus Christ sits at the Father’s right hand and constantly **arbitrates** for us, no one can ever go before God and bring a charge against us that would cause our condemnation.

- a. Jesus Christ is our defense attorney who always mediates with God the Father on our behalf. Not only is He the best **attorney** ever, He can boldly and legally defend us because He, the perfect God-Man, fully paid the penalty for our sins.
- b. Romans 8:34 – *Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also **intercedes** for us.*
- c. Hebrews 7:25 – *Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always **lives** to make intercession for them.*
- d. 1 John 2:1b-2 - *And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation [satisfactory payment] for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.* Revelation 12:9-10

#### REALITY ARGUMENTS FOR ETERNAL SECURITY

- 15. A **present possession** argument: John 3:36a says, *“He who believes in the Son has eternal life.”* If you have believed in God’s Son, Jesus Christ, you already **own** eternal life. Eternal life is your possession and that cannot change. 1 John 5:11-12
- 16. An **accomplished fact** argument: If you could **lose** your salvation, Christ’s work on the cross would not have been completed, but we know that is absolutely not the case. Christ’s sacrifice was a finished work.
  - a. John 19:30 – *Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is **finished!**” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.*
  - b. Hebrews 7:27 - *Who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did **once** for all when He offered up Himself.*
  - c. Hebrews 10:10 – *By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for **all**.*
  - d. Hebrews 10:14 – *For by one offering He has perfected for all **time** those who are sanctified.*
  - e. Hebrews 10:18 – *Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no **longer** any offering for sin.*
- 17. A **finished product** argument: We know God finishes everything He starts. Since He started our salvation, He will continue it until Christ returns. Philippians 1:6 says, *“Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perform it **until** the day of Jesus Christ.”* 1 Corinthians 1:8
- 18. A **have or have-not** argument: You either already **possess** eternal life, because of Christ, or you are still dead in your sins. 1 John 5:11-12 says, *“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.”*



**COMPLETENESS ARGUMENTS FOR ETERNAL SECURITY**

19. A **fully satisfied** argument: If you could lose your salvation, you would again become spiritually hungry and thirsty, but Christ promised that no one who believes in Him will ever **thirst** or hunger again.
- a. John 4:14 – *...but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal **life**.*
  - b. John 6:35 – *Jesus said, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will **never** thirst.”*
20. A **fully accepted** argument: Jesus Christ promised to never drive away anyone who came to Him in faith. If you have trusted in Christ, He will never cast you off or **reject** you. Never!
- a. In John 6:37 Jesus said, *“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will **certainly** not cast out.”*
  - b. John 6:39a – *This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me, I lose **nothing**.* Christ will never lose even one of God’s children.
21. A **fully belonging** argument: You are fully blessed in Christ, apart from any personal merit. Ephesians 1:6-7 – *To the praise of the glory of **His** grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.*
22. A **fully protected** argument: If you could lose your salvation, you would perish, but Christ promised that no believer will ever **perish** or be stolen. John 3:16
- a. God **always** keeps His promises. Romans 3:4a says, *“Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar.”*
  - b. John 10:27-28a – *My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will **never** perish.*
23. A **fully defended** argument: No one, not even you or **Satan**, can snatch you from Christ’s protection.
- a. Christ protects you in His hand. John 10:28b states, *“And no one will **snatch** them out of My hand.”*
  - b. God the Father protects you in His hand as well. John 10:29-30 adds, *“My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s **hand**. I and the Father are one.”*
  - c. Colossians 3:3b states, *“Your life is **hidden** with Christ in God.”*
24. A **fully loved** argument: If we could lose our salvation, we would be removed from God’s love, but God promised that nothing can separate us from His love in Jesus Christ. Not even **you**, a created thing, will be able to separate [yourself] from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. God’s power will not allow this.

- a. Romans 8:35, 37 – *Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? But in all these things, we overwhelmingly **conquer** through Him who loved us.*
  - b. Romans 8:38-39 – *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other **created** thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
  - c. 1 Peter 1:5 – *...who are protected by the **power** of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
  - d. Jude 1:24 – *Now to Him who is **able** to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.*
25. A **fully victorious** argument: Speaking of weak Christians in Romans 14:4, Paul asserted, *“Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is **able** to make him stand.”*
- a. Philippians 2:13 – *for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Although you may sometimes **fall** down, you will never “fall out” of salvation.*
  - b. Jude 24-25 – *Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and **authority**, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*
  - c. God promised to keep us from falling and present us before His throne in eternity. 2 Corinthians 4:14 – *...knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will **present** us with you.*
26. A **fully owned** argument: God **owns** us because we were bought with a price. He will faithfully protect what belongs to Him.
- a. John 6:39 – *This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me, I **lose** nothing, but raise it up on the last day. John 6:37, 6:54*
  - b. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a **price**, therefore glorify God in your body.*
27. A **fully guarded** argument: He will **guard** your soul until death or the rapture. 2 Timothy 1:12 says, *“For this reason, I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.”*

28. A **never forsaken** argument: Christ promised He will **never** leave you or forsake you.
- Hebrews 13:5b-6 – *For He Himself has said, “I will never **desert** you, nor will I ever forsake you,” so that we confidently say, “the Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?”*
  - In order to lose your salvation, God would have to leave you and forsake you. Since our Lord Jesus will never **abandon** us, we can rest in His loving protection.

#### RIGHTEOUSNESS ARGUMENTS FOR ETERNAL SECURITY

29. A **perfect righteousness** argument: Salvation is based on Christ’s righteousness and not ours. Philippians 3:9 says, *“And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of **my** own, derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”* 2 Corinthians 5:21
30. An **imputed righteousness** argument: We are not kept saved on the **basis** of our righteousness, but on the basis of God’s righteousness, and His righteousness will always be good enough. Galatians 3:6
- 2 Corinthians 5:21 – *He made Him who knew no sin to **be sin** on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*
  - At the moment we believed, Christ’s righteousness was transferred to us. Instantly we became fit to **stand** in the presence of the holy and perfect God of the universe. Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:8
31. A **declared righteousness** argument: Because we have been declared righteous, we do not have to pay the just penalty for our sins and be separated from God forever. According to the truth of justification, this **legal** verdict cannot be reversed.
- Romans 5:1 – *Therefore, having been **justified** by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
  - Romans 5:9 – *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the **wrath** of God through Him.*

#### IDENTITY ARGUMENTS FOR ETERNAL SECURITY

32. An **identification in Christ** argument: We cannot be condemned to judgment in hell because of who we now are in Christ. Our **identity** is wrapped up in Christ’s identity, so that whatever is true of Him is now true of us. He is our victory. Since spiritually we are settled and secure in the heavenly places in Him, we cannot be lost.
- Romans 8:1 – *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are **in Christ** Jesus.*
  - Ephesians 1:3 – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places **in Christ**.*

- c. Ephesians 2:6 – *And raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places **in Christ** Jesus.*
33. A **hidden-in-God** argument: Colossians 3:3 says, “*For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*” If your life is **hidden** with Christ in God, who could sneak into God, find you, and then wrestle you away from Christ? Could Satan? Could you do that to yourself? The answer is an emphatic, “No one could!”
34. A **membership** argument: Each of us is one part of the **body** of Christ. If we could lose our salvation, Jesus’ body would lose an arm or a leg. That just is not going to happen to our Lord.
- a. 1 Corinthians 12:12 – *For even as the body is one and yet has many **members**, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.*
- b. Colossians 1:18 – *He is also **head** of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.*
35. The **indwelling Spirit** argument: The Holy Spirit will be with us **forever**. If we could end up in the Lake of Fire someday, the Holy Spirit would likewise have to suffer together with us there. If we became condemned, He would have to become condemned together with us forever.
- a. John 14:16-17 – *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you **forever**, that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.*
- b. Romans 8:9 – *However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God **dwells** in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.* Ephesians 1:13-14
36. A **union** argument. 2 Timothy 2:11 says, “*It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him.*” As odd as this may sound, the fact that you **died** with Christ guarantees you will live with Him.
- a. Romans 6:5 says, “*For if we have become **united** with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.*” Since at salvation we were crucified with Christ, we will also live with Him one day. Galatians 2:20
- b. God’s promises are guaranteed. In 1 Kings 8:56 we read, “*Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has **failed** of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.*” The same God will keep His promises to you.

**VICTORY ARGUMENTS FOR ETERNAL SECURITY**

37. A **resurrection** argument: A Christian cannot lose his or her salvation because God promised to bodily resurrect every person who has come to Him in faith. Every believer will live with God forever. He will not **default** on this promise.
- a. John 6:39b-40 – *...I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. “For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will **raise** him up on the last day.”*
  - b. 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 – *Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to **meet** the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.*
38. An **immortality** argument: In John 11:25-26 Jesus said, *“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”* Even though everyone dies physically, Christ promised that those who believe in Him will not face the second death in **Hell**.
39. A **hand-held** argument: God promised that He will sustain you by His own **hand**.
- a. Psalm 37:23-24 – *The steps of a man are established by the LORD, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the LORD is the One who **holds** his hand.*
  - b. Even if you fall, you will never be forsaken or left helpless. This is **grace**, and grace is undeserved kindness. You are never worthy of God's grace, not even on your best day.
40. An **amazing grace** argument: Paul told the believers in the Corinthian church, the most carnal church in the New Testament, that they would one day be found blameless in God's presence in heaven. Clearly our salvation is **kept** by God and not by us.
- a. 1 Corinthians 1:8-9 – *Who will also **confirm** you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*
  - b. 2 Corinthians 4:14 – *Because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and **present** us with you in His presence.*
41. A **saved-through-the-fire** argument: Even if you lose all rewards because of unfaithfulness, God guarantees you will remain saved because He is always faithful. In 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 we see that *if any man's work is burned up, he will suffer **loss**; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*
42. A **glorification** argument: Romans 8:30 says, *“And these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also **glorified**.”* Our future glorification is stated in the past tense because it is certain. We can rest, knowing we will not become lost again.

43. A **sealed deal** argument: God has given us the Holy Spirit as a down payment on our salvation. This **deposit** is God's way of guaranteeing that He will not back out on the contract promises of our salvation. He is now legally bound to keep us saved.
- a. Ephesians 1:13-14 – *...after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a **pledge** of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*
  - b. Ephesians 4:30 – *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption. God the Holy Spirit has sealed you until the day of redemption. The Bible does not say you are sealed only until you fail or sin.*
44. An **overcomer's** argument: By faith in Christ, we are declared to have **overcome** the world. Christ is the ultimate overcomer and we are victorious in Him.
- a. Romans 8:37– *But in all these things, we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. If it were possible to lose your salvation, this broad and **emphatic** statement would be unreasonable.*
  - b. 1 John 5:4-5 – *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? Our faith in Christ has already deemed us to be **victors** over this world.*

#### INCLUSION ARGUMENTS FOR ETERNAL SECURITY

45. A **divine appointment** argument: God unequivocally declares that we will be revealed with Christ in eternity. Colossians 3:4 says, *“When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall you also appear with Him in **glory**.”* If we could lose our salvation, this promise would be empty.
46. A **transferred citizenship** argument: To God, you are already a **citizen** of heaven. Your heavenly citizenship endures forever.
- a. Philippians 3:20-21a – *For our citizenship is in **heaven**, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory.*
  - b. Colossians 1:13 – *For He rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the **kingdom** of His Beloved Son.*
47. An **inheritance** argument: God has reserved an inheritance for you. He could not **reserve** it for you if there was the possibility you would not be glorified.
- a. 2 Corinthians 1:22 – *Who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a **pledge**.*
  - b. Ephesians 1:14 – *Who is given as a **pledge** of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

- c. 1 Peter 1:4-5 – *To obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, **reserved** in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.*

### C. What is at risk if you do not teach that salvation is everlasting?

1. God's **honor** is at risk
  - a. If salvation could be lost, God would be a **liar** when He promises that all who believe in Him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16
  - b. If salvation could be lost, salvation would not be by grace after all. God would be dishonest when He offers salvation as a free gift in His Word. The gospel message would no longer be good news, because it would actually be an earned **reward** and not a free gift. Romans 11:6, Hebrews 13:5b
  - c. If salvation could be lost, Christ's death was not **enough** to pay for our sin. If we had to add our works to Christ's sacrifice, then He may as well not have died at all. Galatians 2:21 – *I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.*
  - d. If salvation could be lost, what would that say about Christ's declaration, "It is finished?" (John 19:30) Was it really finished? **Yes**, it was indeed finished!
2. **Your** own spiritual well-being is at risk
  - a. If we could lose our salvation, we could not legitimately call salvation a **free** gift. Ephesians 2:8-9, Hebrews 7:25
  - b. If we could lose our salvation, would we really have hope? What do we have to **offer** to the world if we believe salvation can actually be lost in the end by our failure to keep it? Speaking of those who doubted the resurrection, Paul said, "*If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.*" 1 Corinthians 15:19
  - c. If we could lose our salvation, did Christ really **gain** forgiveness for us through His death on the cross? Matthew 1:21, 1 Peter 1:3-5
  - d. If we could lose our salvation, we would need to be **honest** when sharing the gospel with an unbeliever, explaining that salvation is not actually guaranteed and heaven will ultimately depend on one's own efforts. This would not be good news. Titus 3:5-6
  - e. If we could lose our salvation, we would need to present the fear of **hell** as the motivation for living. 1 John 4:18 says, "*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.*" Fear of the Lake of Fire is not a valid motivator for the Christian.
  - f. If we could lose our salvation, Christ's love would be conditional. Uncertainty of this kind is debilitating, but Christ's love is a motivator. The Bible says, "*The love of Christ controls [or **compels**] us.*" 2 Corinthians 5:14a

- g. If we could lose our salvation, we would grow old, and even go to our deathbed, with paralyzing **doubts**. How could you ever know for sure if you were truly saved if salvation depended, even in part, on your works or conduct? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17
- h. Teaching that salvation can be lost exposes a person's **true** beliefs about salvation.
  - 1) By teaching salvation can be lost, you are saying it is up to you to **keep** your own salvation and that your works are good enough to deserve God's favor.
  - 2) If this is what you believe, you are saying that ultimately you can save yourself.
  - 3) This would negate your **need** for the Savior (Gen. 3:15, Gal. 2:21) and would take away all that the Bible teaches about the depravity of man. Ephesians 2:1-3
- 3. The security of our salvation is an important issue for the believer. It is important to accurately understand biblical facts about the eternal nature of your salvation so you can **avoid** confusion that might hinder your growth and result in debilitating problems for yourself and others. Be sure you are precise and accurate with biblical facts on this issue.

### III. Five People You Should Know

#### A. The natural person

1. The natural person does not **possess** the Spirit of God. This person is lost in sin, separated from God and not a part of God's family.
  - a. Romans 8:9b – *...But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not **belong** to Him.*
  - b. Jude 18b-19 – *In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts. These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, **devoid** of the Spirit.*
2. The natural person has not been born **again**. This person is spiritually dead, trapped in the world's system and under the control of sin, Satan, and his or her fleshly nature.
  - a. Ephesians 2:1-2 – *And you were **dead** in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*
  - b. Ephesians 2:3 – *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of **wrath**, even as the rest.*
3. God's Word **seems** foolish to the natural person because natural people cannot comprehend the teaching of the Holy Spirit. The natural person also considers Christ's sacrifice foolish.
  - a. 1 Corinthians 1:18 – *For the word of the **cross** is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*



- b. 1 Corinthians 2:14 – *But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he **cannot** understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*

## B. The babe in Christ

1. The babe in Christ describes a new believer. This young believer has not yet had time to **grow** into maturity.
  - a. At first, the new believer might seem fleshly or worldly because of not knowing the Bible and not yet having a consistent walk by means of the Holy **Spirit**.
  - b. Thankfully, new believers are born again with an innate desire for the Word of God. 1 Peter 2:2 says, *“Like newborn babies long for the pure **milk** of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”*
2. The new believer needs time to get to the point where he or she will be mature enough to ingest the **meat** of the Word of God.
  - a. Ephesians 4:14-15 – *As a result, we are no longer to be **children**, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ.*
  - b. Hebrews 5:14 explains, *“But **solid** food is for the mature, who because of practice, have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”*
3. It would not be right for a believer to remain a **child** in the faith like we see in the following examples of believers in Corinth and Jerusalem.
  - a. 1 Corinthians 3:2 – *I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were not yet **able** to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly.*
  - b. Hebrews 5:12-13 – *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need **again** for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant.*
4. God would advise the babe in Christ to **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:18a

## C. The spiritual Christian

1. The spiritual Christian is the believer who has all his or her known **sins** confessed. Simply put, you are spiritual the instant you confess all your known sins. Whenever you harbor sin in your heart, you are not spiritual at that moment. Psalm 66:18, John 9:31
  - a. The babe in Christ, the carnal Christian and the maturing Christian all become spiritual the moment they **confess** their known sins. To confess (HOMOLOGEO) your sin is to say the same thing as God says about it. 1 John 1:6-10

- 1) Because of immaturity, the babe in Christ **easily** regresses into sin.
  - 2) The carnal Christian easily regresses into a long-term state of rebellion and stays there until some crisis occurs.
  - 3) A maturing Christian more consistently **abides** in fellowship with Christ, giving time and opportunity for Christ-likeness to be cultivated in his or her life.
- b. A **person** is spiritual whenever he or she is not grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19
- 1) A spiritual believer maintains his or her spirituality by dependently **walking** by the Spirit. This means he or she lives dependently on the Lord, trusting in the Lord for wisdom and strength to live each day. Galatians 5:16, Romans 6:10-11, Colossians 3:1-3, 1 John 1:7
  - 2) When a believer is in fellowship with God, having confessed any known sin and not presently quenching the Holy Spirit, he or she is in a **position** to grow.
  - 3) Romans 6:22 – *But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your **benefit**, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.*
  - 4) Ephesians 4:20-22 – *But you did not **learn** Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit.*
  - 5) Ephesians 4:23-24 – *And that you be renewed in the spirit of your **mind**, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*
2. Paul explained the advantages of being spiritual **versus** carnal.
- a. 1 Corinthians 2:15a – *...he who is spiritual appraises [judges] all things...* Being properly related to the Holy Spirit, a spiritual Christian is able to evaluate and **discern all things**, including doctrine, situations and people. This is because the spiritual believer is being graciously led by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:14, Hebrews 5:14
  - b. 1 Corinthians 2:15b – *...yet he himself is appraised [judged] by no one...* An additional benefit spiritual Christians have is that since they are being led by the Holy Spirit they do not need to be concerned about the scrutiny of **others**. Romans 6:22
    - 1) When you are spiritual, you are not breaking God's **laws**. Romans 8:4
    - 2) Instead, you are bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. This, of course, **pleases** God and no one can justifiably disapprove of you. Galatians 5:22-23
  - c. 1 Corinthians 2:16b – *...but we have the mind of Christ...* The spiritual Christian benefits from having the **mind**, or thinking, of Christ.

## D. The mature Christian

1. The mature Christian is a believer who has learned to consistently **walk** by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Colossians 2:3-7
2. This believer is on the road to being conformed to the **image** of Christ in daily conduct and life. Romans 12:1-2
3. The mature believer has grown up, spiritually speaking, by clocking **time** in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Hebrews 5:14 says, *“But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”*
4. Spiritual maturity ought to be the **goal** of every believer.
  - a. 2 Peter 3:17 – *You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and **fall** from your own steadfastness...*
  - b. 2 Peter 3:18 – *But **grow** in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*
5. The mature believer is able to readily understand and accept the deeper **truths** of God’s Word. 1 Corinthians 2:6 says, *“Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away.”*
6. The mature believer steadily grows in intimacy with the **Lord**. In the book of 1 John, the apostle gives stages of maturity, represented by young men and fathers.
  - a. In 1 John 2:14, speaking of the less mature, John said, *“I have written to you, young men, because you are **strong**, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”*
  - b. In 1 John 2:13, speaking of the more mature, John said, *“I am writing to you, fathers, because you **know** Him who has been from the beginning.”* To get to know God more intimately is spiritual maturity.

## E. Differences between the spiritual Christian and the mature Christian

1. We must not confuse being spiritual with being mature. The moment you confess your **known** sins, you are no longer governed by the flesh; and thus, at that moment, you are no longer carnal and are therefore spiritual. By confession of known sins (1 John 1:9), you become instantaneously spiritual, but no one is instantly mature.
2. Spiritual maturity takes time. Spiritual growth comes from consistently walking according to the Spirit **day** after day as one progresses through life. Romans 8:12-14, Galatians 5:16, Hebrews 4:1-2
3. As we consistently walk by faith through the **daily** ups and downs of life, God’s Spirit uses His Word to conform us to the image of His Son. Romans 8:12-13, 28-29; 2 Corinthians 3:18
4. You might say spiritual maturity takes time, plus the Word of God, plus a walk of faith, plus the **grace** of God. This person is abiding in Christ.

- a. John 15:4 – *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.*
  - b. John 15:5 – *I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*
5. Some of the most immature Christians are longtime church **goers** who only confess their sins before taking communion, or on a Sunday morning, but do not choose to consistently walk in fellowship with the Lord the rest of the week. Hebrews 6:1

## F. The carnal Christian (the fleshly Christian)

1. A carnal believer is a Christian who is spiritually immature because he consistently **walks** according to the fleshly nature. (Carnal and fleshly are synonymous terms.)  
1 Corinthians 3:1-4
2. Sometimes a carnal believer is hard to distinguish from an unbeliever in attitude, actions and speech. While God knows the difference, the distinction may not be clear to us as humans. Ephesians 4:17-24
3. A carnal Christian remains a babe in Christ by **choice**. Though this person should have already grown spiritually, he or she wastes away. 1 Corinthians 3:1, Hebrews 5:12-13
  - a. 1 Corinthians 3:2 – *I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able...* This Christian continues drinking spiritual milk instead of consuming the **solid** truths of God's Word, as a more mature Christian is able to do.
  - b. 1 Corinthians 3:3a – *For you are still fleshly.* Because the flesh dominates the carnal believer, he or she **thinks** like an unbeliever and may act like one too.
  - c. 1 Corinthians 3:3b – *For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?* The carnal Christian is characterized by envy and **broken** relationships. Galatians 5:19-21
  - d. 1 Corinthians 3:4 – *For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?"* A carnal believer is a people-follower rather than a Christ-follower.
4. The characteristics of carnality from Romans 8:5-13
  - a. Romans 8:5 – *For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.* The mind of the carnal or fleshly person is **set** on the desires of the flesh. Galatians 5:17, 19-21
  - b. Romans 8:6 – *For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.* The carnal person does not **enjoy** a fulfilled and joyful life. Nehemiah 8:10b, Romans 6:21

- c. Romans 8:7a – *...because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God. Carnal people are hostile toward God. They often complain about God being distant and uncaring, when in reality their own fleshliness has distanced them from God.*
- d. Romans 8:7b – *...for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so. Fleshly people do not submit to God’s commands. They are disobedient and proud.*
- e. Romans 8:8 – *...and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Just as the unsaved cannot please God, the fleshly Christian cannot please God either.*
- f. Romans 8:12-13 – *So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh – for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die. The fleshly person is about to die, either by sin’s built-in destructive mechanism, by suffering the consequences of sin, or through discipline. Romans 6:23, 8:2*

## IV. Results of Consistently Living a Carnal Life. What is at Stake?

### A. Salvation and grace are not at stake

1. We have already determined that, according to the Bible, believers cannot lose their salvation.
2. Since grace is unmerited favor, it is easy to think believers will abuse grace if they are taught they cannot lose their salvation. However, since it was God’s idea to give salvation as an irrevocable gift, we should not shrink back from believing or teaching this truth. God knew what He was doing by ensuring our salvation based on Christ’s work and not ours.
3. In 1 Peter 5:12b the apostle Peter said, *“I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!”* Always remember: true biblical grace does not produce disgrace. We need not fear God’s grace – His undeserved favor.

### B. Although as a Christian you cannot lose your salvation, if you choose to walk according to the flesh, rather than by the Holy Spirit, you will lose. As you can see from the following losses, being carnal comes with a high price tag.

1. Loss: **Assurance of salvation** – Carnal believers can become so spiritually confused they may lose all personal assurance and certainty of their salvation.
  - a. Although your salvation cannot be lost, you can begin to struggle with doubts. You can lose your knowledge of the truth and forget about [your] *purification from [your] former sins*. 2 Peter 1:8-11
  - b. God’s will for you is to be fully assured of your salvation so that you can benefit from *all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding* (Col. 2:1-2). Doubt nullifies this blessing and ends in insecurity and a lack of assurance. 2 Peter 3:17

2. Loss: **A hopeful outlook** – A believer who lives by the flesh **loses** confidence concerning the future. The Lord commands us to look unto Jesus, but the carnal believer loses that focus and as a result can become very pessimistic and dreadful of the future. Hebrews 12:1-2.
  - a. The believer who refuses to live by the Spirit loses his or her eternal perspective and **suffers** from spiritual nearsightedness. 2 Peter 1:9a says, *“For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted.”*
  - b. Having a solid future **hope** allows you to enjoy each new day. Romans 15:13 says, *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* Ephesians 1:18-20
3. Loss: **Fellowship with God** – If you live by the flesh, you lose out on walking in fellowship with **God**. The Christian who continually walks according to the flesh has no intimacy with Christ. Luke 15:11-24
  - a. 1 John 1:5b – *God is light; there is no darkness in Him.* If we walk in the light, by means of the Holy Spirit, we have fellowship with God; but if we **walk** in darkness, according to the flesh, we do not enjoy fellowship with Him.
  - b. 1 John 1:6 – *If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.* Ephesians 5:6-10
  - c. Revelation 3:14-22 shows how the believers in the church of Laodicea became lukewarm. They were religious, yet **carnal**. They no longer had sweet communion with Christ. Your goal should be to grow in grace and in intimacy with our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:18
4. Loss: **Zest for living** – Being carnal will **rob** you of joy and victory in the Christian life.
  - a. King David did not lose his salvation when he sinned by committing adultery and premeditated murder, but he did lose his joy. In Psalm 51:12 he prayed that God would **restore** to him the joy of his salvation. Romans 8:13, Galatians 6:7-8
  - b. A carnal believer has returned to eat his or her own vomit and wallow once again in the **mud**. The prodigal son remained a son, even when he was with the pigs, but he is an example of this terrible reality. Luke 15:11-24, 2 Peter 2:18-22
5. Loss: **Capacity to serve** – If you walk by the flesh, you will lose your capacity to **serve** the Lord. God saved you so that you would serve Him (Eph. 2:10, Titus 3:8). If you live carnally, you will not bear the fruit of the Spirit or please God. John 15:4-5; Galatians 5:16-23, 6:7-9
6. Loss: **Christian testimony** – If you walk according to the flesh, you will **lose** your Christian testimony. In 2 Corinthians 5:20 Paul said, *“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”*
  - a. As a Christian, you represent Christ to the world. When you walk by the Spirit, unbelievers easily **see** Christ in you. John 13:35; Acts 4:13; Philippians 2:14-15; 1 Peter 2:12, 3:13-15

- b. A believer who walks according to the flesh, looks and **acts** exactly like an unbeliever and becomes totally ineffective in his or her witness for the Lord. 2 Peter 2:2 shows this in action: *“Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them, the way of the truth will be maligned.”* Matthew 5:13-16
7. Loss: **Rewards in heaven** – If you live carnally, you will lose rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:10, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his **deeds** in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”* Romans 14:7-12
- a. On that day, God would like to say to you what Luke 19:17 says, *“Well **done**, good and faithful servant.”* But if you walk by the flesh, you could enter heaven with nothing of value to show for your life. 1 Corinthians 3:15, 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 5:9-11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8
- b. God wants every believer to get a **full** reward, but carnal believers will be ashamed at Christ’s appearing. 1 John 2:28, 4:17; 2 John 1:8
8. Loss: **A clear conscience** – Carnal believers **taint** their own conscience. In pride, they rebelliously do what they know to be wrong. In rebellion, they walk away from what they once believed. 1 Timothy 3:9 – *...holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.*
- a. Hymenaeus and Alexander are examples of two people who suffered the consequences of walking away from what they once believed. They did not lose their salvation, but 1 Timothy 1:19-20 shows how, through church discipline, they were *turned over to **Satan** for the destruction of their bodies (not their spirits) in order to be taught not to blaspheme.*
- b. Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 5 we see an example of a believer who blatantly did what he knew to be wrong. Paul told the church to expel him from their congregation. In doing so they would **deliver** such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 Corinthians 5:5
9. Loss: **Knowledge of Truth** – Sadly, carnal believers can **forget** the truths of God’s Word and regress in their Christian lives. 2 Peter 1:12-15
- a. In Colossians 2:8, Paul warned, *“See to it that no one **takes** you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.”*
- b. In 1 Timothy 6:20-21, Paul warned his spiritual son saying, *“O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called “knowledge” — which some have professed and have thus gone **astray** from the faith.”*
10. **Final counsel:** 1 Timothy 6:11-12 – *But **flee** from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness. **Fight the good fight of faith**; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.*

## V. The Gospel (From Making Disciple-Makers Curriculum DM2)

### A. What the Gospel *is*:

1. The Gospel message that must be believed for salvation is “**Christ died for our sins and rose again.**” *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”* 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
2. The Gospel is an historic event; it is about a **work** God performed for mankind, through Jesus Christ, on a weekend in history over two thousand years ago.
  - a. The Gospel is *not* a subjective how-to event that happens in your heart, nor is it your personal testimony of **how** you came to believe.
  - b. The Gospel is the objective message about an event that happened in **time** past.
    - 1) The Gospel is the most unique and important **news** report in the world. It is the news report concerning a person: the Lord Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah.
    - 2) It is the news report concerning what Jesus Christ did **for** us: He died on the cross for our sins and then rose again three days later.
  - c. God desires the whole world to **hear** and believe this most important message. *“who desires **all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”* 1 Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:11
  - d. Everyone who personally believes this news report is saved. Paul stated *“The gospel is the **power** of God for salvation to everyone who believes.”* Romans 1:16
  - e. Whoever believes this message is transferred by God from death into **life**. *“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”* John 5:24
3. When a person believes the Gospel, he or she is legally declared righteous by God and made a **new** person.
  - a. *“Therefore, having been justified **by** faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,”* Romans 5:1
  - b. *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new** creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”* 2 Corinthians 5:17

### B. What the Gospel *is not*:

1. People easily nod their heads in agreement when they hear the one **true** Gospel, but when you stipulate what the Gospel is *not* they often strongly disagree.
  - a. The apostle **Paul** had no problem stating both what the Gospel is and what it is not.
  - b. Salvation cannot be both Christ’s **work** and ours at the same time. It cannot be 99% Christ and 1% us. Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5-6, Galatians 2:16



- c. We either rely solely on the **person and work of Christ** or solely on ourselves; there is no middle ground. *“I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give My glory to another...”* Isaiah 42:8, Ephesians 2:8-9
2. The Gospel is not faith in Christ plus good **works**.
- a. Paul states that salvation is entirely a **work** of God.
- 1) We can do nothing to add to what Christ accomplished; He achieved complete and **full** salvation for mankind.
  - 2) *“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the **works** of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.”* Galatians 2:16
  - 3) *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, **not** of works, lest anyone should boast.”* Ephesians 2:8, 9
  - 4) *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to **His** mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”* Titus 3:5
3. The Gospel is not faith in Christ plus, “**give** your life to God.”
- a. The saving message of the Gospel concerns the fact that Christ **gave** Himself for us.
- 1) *“...as Christ also loved you and **gave Himself up for us**, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”* Ephesians 5:2
  - 2) *“The Son of God, who loved me and **gave Himself up for me**.”* Galatians 2:20b
- b. The saving message of the Gospel does not involve giving something to **God** in return for salvation.
- 1) The Gospel is not about **you** giving your life, your heart, or anything else, to God in exchange for eternal life.
  - 2) Rather, the Gospel is that God freely gave Himself for your sins and died as your substitute on Calvary. God does not accept anything from us in exchange, or in payment, for salvation. Salvation is by **grace** alone.
  - 3) If salvation is attained through an exchange of any type, then it is no longer a **free** gift but something bargained for. *“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace.”* Romans 11:6
4. The Gospel is NOT faith in Christ plus, “**ask** Jesus into your heart.”
- a. The Gospel is not asking Jesus into your **heart**. The Gospel is not asking for anything. The proper response to the Gospel is to believe the message of what Christ did for you.

- 1) You do not have to beg, invite, or coerce Christ to come into your **life**. The moment you believe that Jesus Christ died for your sins and rose again, you receive eternal life as a free gift, are placed into union with Christ, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within you.
  - 2) First you believe the Gospel; then Christ comes into your life in the person of the Holy Spirit. *“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of **truth**, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”* Ephesians 1:13
- b. When you trust in Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to **live** in you, but nowhere in the Word of God are you told to ask Jesus to live inside you as a part of salvation. Revelation 3:20 does not teach the sinner to “ask Jesus into your heart.”
5. The Gospel is NOT faith in Christ plus, “Confess your **sins**.”
- a. Confession of sins is not a requirement for salvation; you do not have to confess your sins in order to be **saved**.
    - 1) First of all, it would be impossible to remember **every** sin you ever committed. Most of us cannot even remember what we had for supper last night.
    - 2) Secondly, it would invite disconcerting introspection. You would never be secure in your salvation for **fear** you had forgotten some sin.
  - b. Individuals will be condemned to the Lake of Fire, not because they failed to confess all their sins, but because they did **not** believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. *“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because **he has not believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God”* John 3:18
6. The Gospel is NOT faith in Christ plus, “make Christ **Lord** of your life” or “submit to the lordship of Christ.”
- a. It is true that if you **deny** Christ is God, or Lord, you cannot be saved. More than likely, you would not trust in Jesus to be your Savior if you did not believe He is God, the Lord.
    - 1) It is necessary to believe Jesus is **God**, or the LORD, for salvation. The title Christ has deity built into it. *“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”* John 8:24
    - 2) To believe that Christ is the Lord God is necessary for salvation, but to **make Him Lord** of your life is not necessary for salvation, because that would mean your salvation is based on your good deed of making Christ your Lord, or on your submission to Christ, and not on Christ’s finished work. Titus 3:5-6
  - b. How could an unbeliever, **dead** in his or her trespasses and sins, under Satan’s control, and without the Spirit of God present in his or her life, ever honestly and effectually make the choice to be *submissive to the lordship* of Jesus Christ, and thus, qualify for salvation? Ephesians 2:1-3

- c. You do not have to make Christ the Lord of your **life** to be saved. That is a sanctification issue for the Christian, not a justification issue for the unsaved.
- 1) No one has ever yet **made** Christ the complete Lord of his or her life. The only way to ever be completely under the lordship of Jesus Christ is to be completely sinless. 1 John 1:8-10
  - 2) Whenever we sin, at that moment we are not **under** the lordship of Jesus Christ, and all believers sin sometimes. 2 Thessalonians 3:13
  - 3) Becoming submissive to Christ's lordship through our holy living takes **time** and spiritual growth. Romans 6:19-22
- d. Jesus Christ our Lord wants to be Lord of every member of his body, and that is a lifelong process that He initiates at salvation and continues to perfect until **death**. 1 Peter 1:13-16; Philippians 2:12-13
- 1) This is accomplished over the course of the believer's life, and is **not** a result of a decision made moments or seconds just prior to believing. Philippians 1:6
  - 2) Obviously, every believer struggles daily with this issue of lordship and will continue to do so until his death. Every time we sin, at that **very** moment we are in rebellion to Christ's Lordship. Romans 6:11-23
- e. Therefore, we conclude that lordship is a sanctification issue for the believer and **not** a salvation issue for the unbeliever.
7. The Gospel is NOT faith in Christ plus, "repent of your **sins**."
- a. It may surprise you to learn that the phrase "repent **of** your sins" or "repent **from** your sins" is not found anywhere in the **Bible**.
  - b. The Word of God does not demand repentance **from** sins in order to be saved, although **every person who has ever believed has repented of something**.
  - c. What does it mean to repent?
    - 1) Repent in Greek METANOIA means change your **mind** or change your thinking.
    - 2) Every passage in the Bible that uses the word "repent," tells you **who** specifically needed to change his mind or thinking.
    - 3) Each passage also tells about **what** the individual(s) needed to change his mind or thinking about.
    - 4) In our studies, we must correctly examine each passage where repentance appears in light of the biblical meaning of the **word** and not the modern dictionary meaning.
  - d. At the moment you believed, you changed your mind about what you used to believe in, or rely on, and you trusted exclusively in Jesus Christ. That is biblical repentance, followed by **faith** in Christ alone.

- e. Repentance implies that no person is a blank **slate** before salvation, and this is true.
- 1) Every person in the world either has some false **hope** he relies on for salvation, or else he has a false hope that gives him freedom to ignore the issue of salvation all together.
  - 2) Therefore, a change of mind will occur **prior** to someone trusting exclusively in Jesus Christ.
  - 3) Repentance is not a “**work**” you add to your salvation. Repentance is a change of mind and not a **change of conduct or direction**. A change of conduct or direction would be a work that you add to Christ’s work on the cross.
  - 4) As we share the Gospel, when it becomes apparent that someone needs to change his or her mind about something (religion or self-effort), we should **tell** that person to change his or her mind about that issue and believe exclusively in Jesus Christ.
- f. In order to properly understand the New Testament use of the word repent (verb), or repentance (noun), we must **stick** to the meaning of the word in the original language rather than the modern “religious” meaning of the word.
- 1) Simply put, the word for repent in Greek is METANOIA which literally means, “change of mind” or “after-thought” (META, change – NOIA, **mind**).
  - 2) A meaning change of the word repent occurred around the **time** of Jerome, (AD 347–420) when he chose to translate the Greek word METANOIA using a Latin phrase PAENITENTIAM AGITE. Jerome’s translation, called the Latin Vulgate, became the leading Bible used by the Christians for nearly 1000 years.
    - a) Our modern meaning of repentance comes largely from this Latin phrase “PAENITENTIAM AGITE” which means “**do** penance.”
    - b) The modern English **word** “repentance” is derived from yet another Latin word REPOENETIT which means to regret or to be sorry.
  - 3) Jerome’s Latin Vulgate translation caused a shift in the meaning of **repent** from “change of mind” to “do penance” to “sorrow for **sin**.”
  - 4) This has also given way to a myriad of meaning modifications to the word repent, all of which you can **see** and hear in modern Christianity.
- g. Here are many common **incorrect** definitions of repentance that you will have heard. You should note that each of these requires an effort or **work** on the part of the sinner and not simply a **change in thinking** and faith alone in Christ alone.
- 1) All of these were adapted from websites from teachers who were trying to define **biblical** repentance.
  - 2) There is the **conduct** change error!
    - a) *This error says* repent means you must **change** your life.

- b) *This error says* repent means you have to amend your way, because you are unhappy with how you behaved in the **past**.
  - c) *This error says* repent means the sinner must turn **away** from sin, resulting in a changed heart or a change of behavior before God.
- 3) There is the **sin** removal error!
- a) *This error says* repent means you must **stop** doing sin, or evil.
  - b) *This error says* repent means you must stop your rebellion and **yield** or surrender to God.
- 4) There is the direction **change** error!
- a) *This error says* repent means you have to change your thinking, which must **result** in a changed life.
  - b) *This error says* repent means you must **make** the effort to turn away from sin to God.
  - c) *This error says* repent means you must turn your life around. You must do a 180 degree about **face**.
  - d) *This error says* repent means you have to forsake your sin and determine **never** to return to it.
- 5) There is the **show** of remorse error!
- a) *This error says* repent means you have to be **sorry** for the sins you have committed in the past, and you must desire not to sin any more ever again.
  - b) *This error says* repent means that you **shed** tears or show great contrition.
  - c) *This error says* repent means you intellectually, or even verbally, condemn yourself for what you have **done**.
- 6) There is also the confession of **sins** error!
- a) *This error says* repent means you have to take the **blame** for your sinful condition before God.
  - b) *This error says* repent means you must sorrow for your sin, which **leads** to the confession of your sin.
  - c) *This error says* repent means you are to hide nothing and **pour** out your sinful condition to God in prayer.
- h. Remember that according to the New Testament, repentance is a ***change of mind*** about whatever you have been trusting in and to **trust** in Christ alone.
- 1) The unsaved should change their minds concerning **God**. Acts 20:21 says *“solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of **repentance toward God** and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

- 2) The unsaved should change their minds about **idols**. As in Revelation 9:20 the people *“did not **repent of the works of their hands**, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.”*
  - 3) The unsaved should change their minds about good works, which are really **dead** works, since they cannot be saved by them. Hebrews 6:1 says, *“...not laying again a foundation of **repentance from dead works** and of faith toward God.”*
  - 4) The unsaved should change their minds about Jesus Christ and heed the message of John the Baptist to **believe** in Him. Acts 19:4 Paul said, *“John baptized with the **baptism of repentance**, telling the people to **believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.**”*
8. The Gospel is NOT faith in Christ plus, “**pray** a prayer.”
- a. The Gospel is not praying a prayer. There is not **one** instance in the Bible where someone is required to pray to receive salvation. If praying were a requirement for salvation, the Lord would have made it abundantly clear.
    - 1) *...he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” They said, “**Believe** in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”* Acts 16:30b, 31
    - 2) You were not saved by walking a church **aisle** or praying the “sinner’s prayer.” Nowhere does the Bible even suggest such a requirement as a means of salvation.
  - b. The parable of the tax collector who called out to God (Luke 18:13) does not teach you must **pray** to be saved.
    - 1) This is the parable of two **men** who prayed in the temple.
    - 2) In this account, a tax-collector cried out to God for **mercy** because of his sinful condition. Romans 10:13
    - 3) It is important to recall that Scripture says that you only **call** on the one in whom you have already believed. Romans 10:14a
      - a) It is a fact that you believe first before you **speak**. 2 Corinthians 4:13; Romans 10:10
      - b) This man was saved before he spoke. His prayer did not save him rather his **faith** in God was counted to him for righteousness. Romans 4:5
      - c) The **words** in his prayer confirmed what was going on in his heart but were not that which saved him. Ephesians 2:8-9
    - 4) What this parable does **not** teach.
      - a) This does not teach you must pray for salvation. There is no account in the Scripture where we are **told** to pray for salvation. This story does not give a command to the sinner to pray in order to be saved.

- b) If this passage teaches that you must pray to be saved, then it also teaches you must **beat** on your chest, in a temple, in order to be saved.
  - c) Biblically, we are repeatedly told to simply believe in Christ who **died** for our sins and rose again on the third day. Acts 16:31
9. The Gospel is NOT faith in Christ plus, “**public** profession.”
- a. This error implies that in order for you to be saved you have to make a verbal, **public** profession of faith in Christ.
  - b. If this were true, then Christ’s work on the cross to pay for our sin was not enough. You would have to add your **work** of “public confession” to Christ’s work in order to complete your salvation.
  - c. It is true that public confession will be rewarded in eternity and that denial will exclude you from reward, but confession does not **earn** you salvation. (2 Timothy 2:11-12) That was accomplished completely by Christ alone and cannot be undone. 2 Timothy 2:13
  - d. Romans 10:9-10 does not teach that one must proclaim Christ publicly in order to be **saved**.
    - 1) It does teach that when an Israelite publicly proclaimed Christ as **LORD** it was because in the privacy of his heart he had already believed in Jesus Christ.
    - 2) Even today Jewish people do not proclaim Christ as the LORD of the Old Testament without **first** having believed in Him. 1 Corinthians 12:3
    - 3) It is important to remember that belief always comes first and *only then* does one confess what he has believed. Belief and confession are two different **issues**. 2 Corinthians 4:13

### C. Understanding the Gospel Dynamics:

- 1. Salvation is of the **Lord**.
  - a. As **sowers** of the Gospel message, we are required to take utmost care in how we plant and water, but ultimately God saves people. *“So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.”* 1 Corinthians 3:7
  - b. The Bible emphatically says that no one **seeks** God. From birth onward, all humans are dead in sins, hopelessly swept away by the current in the world’s system.
    - 1) *“All we like **sheep** have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way.”* Isaiah 53:6.
    - 2) *“There is none who understands; there is **none** who seeks for God;”* Romans 11:6
  - c. Natural man does not come to God on his **own** accord. He always comes in response to God’s overtures. God works tirelessly to draw people - all people - to Himself.
    - 1) *“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me **draws** him.”* John 6:44
    - 2) Jesus came *“to **seek** and to save that which was lost.”* Luke 10:19b

- 3) *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for **all** to come to repentance.*  
2 Peter 3:9
  - 4) *“Who wants all **people** to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”*  
1 Timothy 2:4
2. How does God **draw** men to Himself?
    - a. What are the dynamics that God has in place to **bring** people to the point of salvation?
    - b. Does God **force** people to believe against their will?
    - c. These questions are answered by examining the dynamics God has in place to **woo** us to Christ.
  3. Itemizing God’s **Gospel** dynamics
    - a. There is an inborn understanding of God that **every** person has.
      - 1) God has created in every human heart the innate ability to **know** that God exists.  
Ecclesiastes 3:11
      - 2) Those who do not believe must deny what they instinctively **know** to be true.  
Romans 1:19
    - b. God has designed the world so that creation testifies day and night that He **exists**.  
Psalm 19:1, 97:6
      - 1) Creation shows God’s divine nature and eternal power so clearly that **all** people are without excuse. Romans 1:20
      - 2) If humankind responds to these natural revelations of God, God **will** respond to it.  
Hebrews 11:6; Acts 17:25-27
      - 3) This is *not* to say that because someone is sincere in his religion, God will **save** him. (**Universalism** is an unbiblical teaching.)
    - c. God gave the Ten Commandments to show all people (Romans 3:19) their sinfulness and **need** for salvation. Hebrews 7:19
      - 1) The correct **use** of the Law is a dynamic God uses to bring people to Christ for salvation. 1 Timothy 1:8-11
      - 2) The Law was given to leave the whole world **guilty** and accountable to God.  
Romans 3:19-20; 5:20
      - 3) The Law serves as a school master to **bring** a person to Christ. Galatians 3:23-26
    - d. Probably, the greatest of all overtures on the part of God to draw people to Himself is the work of God the **Holy** Spirit.
      - 1) The **work** of the Holy Spirit is to convince and not to condemn the world. His job is to show the world its need for salvation through Jesus Christ. John 3:17-21



- 2) The Holy Spirit is in the world to convict **all humanity** of **three** critical problems and direct them to Jesus Christ as their only answer. *“And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of **sin**, and of **righteousness**, and of **judgment**...”*  
John 16:8-11
  - 3) Why convince the world of **sin**?
    - a) An unbeliever must recognize his sin, and the consequences thereof, in order to understand his **need** for salvation.
    - b) People will never accept Christ’s **gift** of salvation if they do not realize their own sinful condition and corresponding need. John 3:18,36
  - 4) Why convince the world of **righteousness**?
    - a) Unbelievers must understand they fall **short** of God’s righteous standards.
    - b) Humanity’s unrighteousness prevents it from ever being able to **enter** Heaven and live in the presence of a perfect and righteous God. Romans 3:10-12,23
    - c) Remember that *“...All our righteousnesses are like filthy **rags**.”* Isaiah 64:6
  - 5) Why convince the world of **judgment**?
    - a) Unless a person understands the penalty for sin, the Gospel means **nothing**.
    - b) The prince of this world, **Satan**, has already been judged, condemned, and by implication, defeated.
    - c) Therefore, human beings must understand they too cannot ever expect to **escape** God’s judgment. Romans 2:1-3.
- e. The Word of God
- 1) God has given His Word as the **Sword** of the Spirit to do His bidding. Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12.
  - 2) When we preach the Word of God, we wield the Holy Spirit’s weapon, and God uses it to pierce the hearts of the hearers in order to **lead** them to Christ. Romans 10:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:23.
  - 3) God said; My Word *“...shall not return to Me **void**, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it”* Isaiah 55:11; Jeremiah 23:29.
- f. God has given us the Gospel, which is *“the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”* Romans 1:16; John 3:16
- 1) Whenever Christ is preached, God works mightily through the Gospel to bring people who **hear** to Himself. 1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 2:12
  - 2) Jesus said, *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw** all peoples to Myself.”* John 12:32
  - 3) In our preaching we **lift** Him up before our hearers’ ears and eyes. Galatians 3:1

- g. God, in His infinite wisdom, has amazingly chosen to use human beings as instruments to **reach** the world rather than doing it Himself or using angels. 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21
- 1) The Great Commission was given to **human** beings. Matthew 28:19-20
  - 2) God has given every individual believer the **duty** of reaching the lost for Christ. Romans 1:14; 1 Corinthians 9:16-17, Ephesians 6:19-20
  - 3) We are workers together with **God** in this job. 2 Corinthians 6:1
- h. God has divinely ordained the **means** of preaching as the delivery system to communicate His message of salvation. Romans 10:14-15
- 1) God sovereignly decided to use the seemingly weak method of “preaching” to be the vehicle through which people would **hear**. 1 Corinthians 1:21
  - 2) “...**Faith** comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. How shall they hear without a preacher...?” Romans 10:17-18
- i. God is not willing that any should perish. (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9) Even though only a few respond, it is God’s earnest desire to reach the whole **world** with this saving message.

#### D. Satan’s Many Anti-Gospel Tactics

1. As in the beginning, Satan is still in the business of promoting death by putting every imaginable **evil** enticement before the lost. Matthew 13:19; Acts 26:18
2. Sometimes Satan also tries to **block** God’s servants from being able to preach. 1 Thessalonians 2:18
3. Satan does everything he can to **blind** people to the truth of salvation. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Hebrews 2:14-15
4. Satan has built a deadly **web** around the world to poison people everywhere. Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 1:13; 1 John 2:16
5. Day after day, people haplessly remain trapped in his **snare** because of their unbelief. 2 Corinthians 2:11; 1 Peter 5:8
6. All people are **born** under the dominion of the prince of this world. Ephesians 2:1-3
7. Obviously, in such a state, it is impossible for any person to contribute in **any** way to his salvation.

#### E. The Response to the Gospel Dynamics

1. It is crucial to remember that when a person believes, it is in response to the dynamics God used to **draw** that person to Himself.
2. God doesn’t give a so-called gift of faith in order to be able to believe, yet He does **use** these dynamics to draw people to Himself.

3. For that reason, we should remember that when a person believes in the work of Christ on the cross, his **faith** is not some exertion or work; rather it is a non-meritorious response to the work of God on his or her behalf.
  - a. The Gospel is designed to **bring** people to the place where they decide either to believe what God has provided and by faith accept His grace, or to ignore Him.
    - 1) The Gospel is a message of **hope** and life to some and a message of death to others, depending on their response.
    - 2) *“For we are to God the fragrance of Christ **among** those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.”* 2 Corinthians 2:15
    - 3) *“To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of **life** leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?”* 2 Corinthians 2:16
    - 4) Every human being is **faced** with the same life and death decision Adam and Eve faced. The presentation of the Gospel message should always bring people to one of these two extremes, belief or disbelief.
  - b. In order for a person to be saved, the Gospel **must** be believed.
    - 1) *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to **those** who **believe** in His name.”* John 1:12
    - 2) *“So they said, ‘**Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you **will** be saved...’”* Acts 16:31a
    - 3) *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes in** Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* John 3:16
    - 4) *“He who **believes** in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not **believed** in the name of the **only** begotten Son of God.”* John 3:18
    - 5) *“These things I have written to you who **believe** in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you **have** eternal life.”* 1 John 5:13a

## F. Summarizing God’s Gospel Dynamics

1. Clearly, God uses **many** dynamics to draw people to Himself.
  - a. In order to reach the world with the Gospel, we do not **rely** on ourselves, but on His great power as expressed in these Gospel dynamics.
  - b. *“...namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the **word** of reconciliation...”* 2 Corinthians 5:19
2. Salvation is made possible only through the awesome work of God on a person’s **behalf**. But God does not force anyone to believe, nor does God believe for anyone.

- a. The **gift** of God is eternal life (Romans 6:23) or salvation, and not faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9). No one is ever coerced against his will to believe.
- b. Just as in the Garden of Eden, today there are still **two** options: believe God's word and live or disbelieve and die.