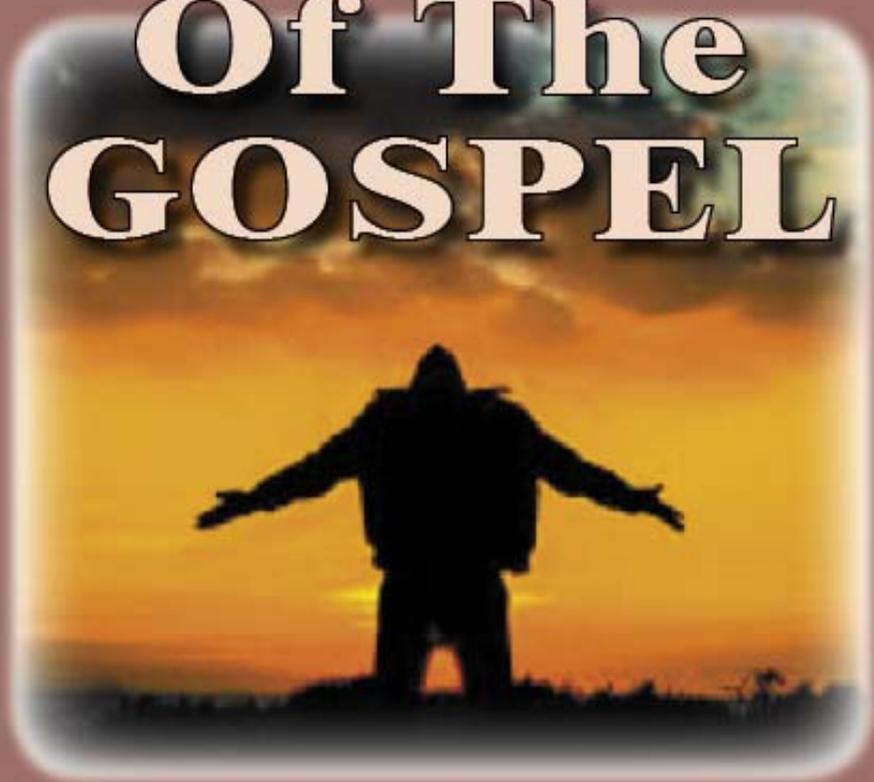


LIVING The Truth Of The GOSPEL



**True Worship From A Heart
of Gratitude For His Forgiveness**

DICKSON

LIVING

The Truth Of The Gospel

Roger E. Dickson

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PREPARATION FOR ONE'S JOURNEY

Martin Luther (1483 - 1546) was an Augustine monk and the great reformer of the sixteenth century. However, he was eventually in trouble with the religious establishment because he studied his Bible too much. In 1517 he published his *Ninety-Five Theses* wherein he disputed many teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, specifically the sale of indulgences—the right to sin if enough money was paid to the Church.

After publicly publishing the results of his personal studies, he was immediately called before the authorities of the church, put on trial, and then demanded that he repudiated what he believed and had published in the *Ninety-Five Theses*. He refused. Consequently, he was excommunicated from the Catholic Church. He was condemned as an “outlaw” by the Emperor of Rome.

Since those days, Luther has gone down in history for the last five centuries as one who stood up for what he believed the Bible taught, though we would dispute some of his conclusions. But in taking a stand for what he believed the Bible taught, he suffered the consequences that many Bible students endure today when through their personal studies they come to conclusions that are contrary to the existing doctrines and traditions of the religious establishment to which they belong. In other words, if one is a Bible student, then he or she should be prepared for judges to arise among the religious establishment in order to intimidate conformity to all theological norms that are taught by each person's particular religious group.

You may think that this book reveals some new thing in reference to Bible teaching. But it does not. What Luther discovered was that there were Bible truths that had long been forgotten in the quagmire of accepted “church teachings,” and specifically, the religious traditions of men. Bible students must always understand that in their personal studies of the word of God, they will discover teachings that have often been buried in the swamp of the misguided religious heritage of the particular religious group to which they belong. It is at this moment of discovery that one's love for the word of God is to be tested.

If one is bold and dedicated to the study of the word of God, then he or she will have no apprehensions about teaching what has been learned from personal studies, always being open for correction from anyone who may have studied a particular subject more comprehensively. This is why we encourage open Bible classes wherein Bible students come together in order to discuss the results of their own personal Bible studies. Any church that does not have such group studies has opened the door for the need of future Luthers to stand up in their midst and reveal that the church has gone astray on certain

points of teaching. After all, all religions are established on some erroneous teachings, at least teachings that have no biblical foundation.

It is in situations as this that many faithful Bible students find themselves today throughout the world. The world is filled with religions, and every religion is a testimony to the fact that people have more confidence in their religious heritage than in open Bible study, since Bible study is usually a threat to those who defend religious heritages. Nevertheless, there are many people of faith who are in the bondage of religion who seek freedom to think.

This brings us to the theme of this book. Religion is based on a systematic catechism of theology to which all the adherents of a particular religion must conform. Inherently, therefore, religion is a system of spiritual and intellectual bondage. Religious groups are subsequently denominated from one another because of either a dynamic personality who promotes each particular religious group, or the members' loyalty to the heritage of each particular religious prison. Since each religious prison has a captive "membership" that is locked down by the theology that is unique with each particular institution, then the prisoners must adhere to either the warden leader, or the accepted theology or heritage of each particular institution. If they do not, then they are forced into solitary confinement by the authorities of the church prison. They are not invited to preach meetings or teach any Bible classes. Fortunately, the internet has freed inmates from solitary confinement who are still studying their Bibles.

And herein begins our challenge to maintain an open mind in studying the Bible. We seem to have great difficulty in being objective in our Bible studies because of our innate desire to be accepted. We thus content ourselves to sit silently in the midst of those who seem to be maintaining the prisoners, particularly the prison warden who reminds every prisoner every Sunday morning that this is his prison. We all quietly sit as mute inmates in our own religious prison, allowing the Bible to gather dust under the pulpit of the prison warden. We close our mouths, shut our eyes, and plug our ears.

There seems to be too much theological baggage that distorts our understanding of the text of the Bible. And if we do understand or discover something new, then we find it difficult to be brave stalwarts of the gospel. We must never forget that the key to our religious prison is right there in our hands. That key is the Bible.

As Bible students we must determine if our motive is to lead a rebellion or a restoration. If we are simply rebellious, others will write us off because we may be somewhat cantankerous. The rebellious are often accused of taking every opportunity to attack the establishment. However, if we are sincere in our studies of the word of God, then we are always restorationists. We seek

to lead people in a prison break out of bondage and through the maze of misguided religious heritage. We seek to lead people straight through the forest of accepted religious traditions and misguided doctrines. We seek to lead people out of religious prisons and into the open fields of freedom. It is on this journey that all of us must seek to go, for it is on this exciting journey that we humbly offer to others the fruits of our own personal studies.

On the way out of any theological prison, we must remember that religion is substantiated and promoted by unique names, doctrines and traditions of men that bring into bondage the minds of people of faith, and thus sets each religious prison apart from one another. One may be deeply religious in his prison cell, but sincerely wrong in reference to allowing himself to be confined to the authority of a unique religious heritage.

The Muslim is deeply religious, but sincerely wrong. Likewise, is the Hindu. And in the world of Christendom, religious prisons are full of those who are deeply misguided because the security of each prisoner is in the bondage of one's favorite denomination, or some twisted theology that sets each particular religious group apart from others. So the Holy Spirit would admonish all of us to flee theological prisons: *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage"* (Gal 5:1). In other words, once Christ has delivered us from the prison of religion through obedience to the gospel, then we must not seek to go back into the prison from which we were set free by faith in the truth of the gospel.

Going back into the prison of religion would be a rejection of the gospel. It would be a slap in the face of Jesus on the cross. It would be a rejection of the love that was illustrated at the cross for us. Returning to prison, therefore, would be incomprehensible, and thus unforgivable. There would no longer be any forgiveness of sins if we go back into the prison of religion (Hb 10:26).

We must challenge the behavior of the adherents of each religious group. Our inquiry must begin with what Jesus said concerning the true mark of those who would be His disciples: *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. **By this will all men know that you are My disciples**"* (Jn 13:34,35).

Love is the first mark of identity of a disciple of Jesus. Over thirty years after Jesus made the preceding statement, the aged apostle John wrote, *"Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth ... by this we know that we are of the truth"* (1 Jn 3:18,19). This was the message of love that the disciples had heard from the time when Jesus began His earthly ministry (1 Jn 3:11). Love is a relational matter in our connection with God and others. Our love for God is expressed by our willingness to be obedient to His will and the needs of others (1 Jn 5:2). *"If God so loved us, we ought also to love one*

another" (1 Jn 4:11). This is not the business of religion. Religion focuses on what we want in order to maintain our own identity. Gospel focuses on what we can do for Him because of all He did for us.

And herein is the shining star of that about which Jesus spoke and John wrote: *"He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen"* (1 Jn 4:20). Those who construct a system of legal commandments by which they assume that they have proved their love for God—this is religion—have fallen short of the Holy Spirit's explanation of true love. Love must be expressed as a relational connection between ourselves and God. The connection is based on our love for one another because of His love for us.

This love encounter is not measured by legal obedience to law. Legal meritorious obedience to law is minimized by love simply because we cannot write off our responsibilities to love when we have supposedly completed all legal requirements of law, which when performed, we have supposedly self-sanctified ourselves before God. Our relationship with God is not based on our supposed self-sanctification through good works. That behavior again slaps His Son on the face on the cross by which He sanctified all of us through His blood offering.

Neither is our relationship with God so arrogantly assumed by our self-justification through perfect keeping of law. That too was accomplished in full at the cross by the Son. Therefore, understanding the full implications of the work of the Son on the cross is paramount to our relationship with the Father who put His Son there. If that love offering stimulates only love by law, then no amount of law-keeping will either justify or fill in the gap between us and God.

A loveless law-keeper is useless to God.

One may wonder why there is so much in the New Testament concerning the behavioral fruits of the Spirit. It seems that every letter that the early writers wrote by the direction of the Holy Spirit was focused on godly behavior. Specifically, instructions are repeated throughout the New Testament in reference to our godly relationships with one another. This godly behavior is the result of the Father's love for us through His Son. This is gospel behavior: *"In this the love of God was manifested to us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him"* (1 Jn 4:9). We must view our love for others in the same way.

The gospel of the Son of God coming into the world is the fuel that motivates love and godly behavior on our part. It is a guarantee that God has forgiven all those who respond to His love offering. This is the definition of true Christian faith and behavior. This is the motivating power of the truth of the gospel about which we read throughout the New Testament. It was some-

thing so dramatic that centuries before the gospel was revealed, prophets who spoke of it, searched diligently their own Spirit-inspired prophecies (See 1 Pt 1:10-12).

Too often in the past we have read the New Testament as a source book to establish church catechisms. We have searched through the pages of our New Testaments and come up with a legal outline of law for obedience in order to self-justify ourselves before God when we have faithfully complied with our outline of law. In all our searching, unfortunately, we have often failed to discover the One about whom all the prophets spoke. We have often become as the Pharisees who could not see the Christ of the Scriptures because they were so caught up in their "proof text" hermeneutics to manufacture their own system of law. Jesus was correct in reference to these self-righteous law makers, as well as those today who likewise construct legal systems by which they would justify themselves before God: *"You search the Scriptures because in them you think you have eternal life. It is these that testify of Me"* (Jn 5:39). If our search (study) of the Scriptures does not lead us to the Savior, then we know that we are searching for the wrong motives.

Unfortunately, many of us are as guilty as the Pharisees. We use the Scriptures as a legal document to prove ourselves to be the correct church in a world court of legal litigation. We arrogantly approach the Judge with our plea that we "speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where it is silent." But the Judge knows that while we plead such a case on the foundation of law-keeping, we at the same time are hypocritically speaking where the Bible is silent in order to validate ourselves as His people through our own devised system of meritorious law-keeping. We have even legalized our worship to the performance of fabricated acts of worship, and then litigated before the Judge that we are true worshipers of Him according to law.

We search the supposed legal document of the Scriptures in order to construct a system of law by which we can self-sanctify ourselves into eternal life. But as the Pharisees, we fail to discover the Savior of the Scriptures. We forget that we should be in court pleading for mercy because of our lack of performance in reference to law. If we are there on the basis of our self-righteous legal performance of law, then we have already lost the case. There is none righteous before the Judge, no, not one.

It is my prayer that this short book will at least shake up some of the orthodoxy of the past in order to stimulate us to be more open minded for the future. The reader will discover many challenging concepts in this book that are written in order to alert us to discover the Christ of the Scriptures. We do not want to miss the Christ in our efforts to debate over manufactured theological outlines. The gospel is about the Christ. The New Testament is the

Spirit-inspired report of the historical revelation of the Son of God into this world, as well as instructions from the Father as to how we should keep ourselves out of the prison of religion in our response to the gospel. The gospel of the grace of God should inspire a changed life that is drastic in comparison to the ways of this world. It is for this reason that the Holy Spirit focused on life-style behavior for those whom He knew would respond to the love of God that was nailed to the cross of Calvary.

INTRODUCTION

What is unfortunate about losing moral standards in a society is that the society as a whole does not realize the loss of the standards one by one throughout its decades of existence. But unfortunately, sometimes events occur in a society that remind us of the loss of those essential moral codes that are necessary in order to preserve a healthy society. When we recognize the loss of a particular moral code, it is almost impossible to restore it because society as a whole has accepted a new moral order and moved on.

In 1994 the country of South Africa could have imploded into a blood bath of civil war. If it were not for one personal moral code of one man in reference to his thinking and behavior, the 1994 first all-racial election of the country could have gone terribly wrong. But because of a specific godly moral principle of this one man, a country was spared a civil war, and a people marched into a peaceful transition of power.

Before we speak of the preserving moral principle of this one man that saved South Africa from tragedy, we must first review a brief history of this man. History determines who we are, and thus history had made this man who he was purposed for the right time in history. Nelson Mandela was the first all-race elected president of South Africa in 1994. He had previously spent almost twenty-seven years in prison, and then as “fate” would have it, he came forth from behind the closed bars of a prison cell in order to transition a divided country into a new and exciting future.

About two years after his historical election, and before his moral principle had time to graft itself into some of the more radical groups of his political party, the rumor went out one day that Mandela had died. Because Mandela’s moral principles were such a stabilizing factor in the transition of power to a different political party, those of the former dominant and ruling party went into hysteria. In fact, some of the farmers (Boers) had formerly organized themselves that if Mandela were to die, they would assemble armed groups at designated farms in

order to mount, not a resistance, but a defense for their wives and children.

These same people, the Afrikaner race, had about one hundred years before had a bad experience during the Anglo/Boer (farmer) War. In order to bring that war to an end, the newly appointed British Commander Earl Kitchener rounded up the wives and children of the farmer soldiers and interned them in “concentration camps.” He then burned their homes and crops.

In these camps thousands of women and children perished from diseases because of the lack of sanitation. When news of the “concentration camps” of Kitchener eventually filtered back to the people of England, the British people were horrified. The British people then went into action for the people of South Africa. Through pressure that was brought on British politicians in England, the British army general Kitchener was told to negotiate peace with the Boers. The feeling of resentment that this tragedy produced lingered on for a century in South Africa among Afrikaners. (We are reminded that the atrocities of war do not easily fade away in the memories of the people after the signing of peace accords.)

So you can imagine that as soon as the rumor was spread throughout the country that Mandela had supposedly died, many of the “Boer brigade” went into action in order to resist retaliation that they had supposed would be launched against them for their own sins of the past. They had erroneously projected their oppressive government behavior of the past on to the future government of the African National Congress (ANC). They believe—and probably correctly so—that the stabilizing character of Mandela would preserve the country. But when Mandela was gone, they supposed that reprisals would be launched against them.

At the time, we remember that fear was in the air. Guns were secured, and loyalists to the former government organized at designated farms in order to fight off any attempts to make war against them as the former government. It was a time for serious protectionism against any imagined retaliation. Some of the now ruling party of the ANC still harbored a spirit of retaliation against the loyalists of the former

Nationalist Party government. The former government had implemented apartheid (separation) policies in the past against the now new ruling party that they had formerly suppressed. They thought that the same would be done to them. If there were no forgiveness on the part of the new government, such would probably have taken place.

But the retaliation never had an opportunity to happen. Within a couple days after the supposed death of Mandela was rumored here and there throughout the country, it was immediately squashed. Realizing the sensitivity of the moment, President Mandela immediately appeared alive and well on national radio and television. Everyone subsequently took a deep breath, and the armed brigades who sought to defend and protect their families went back home to their tractors and plows.

They did so because everyone knew that if the one godly characteristic of Nelson Mandela did not prevail, and eventually make its way into the culture of the new South Africa, a nation would not be spared national tragedy. At the time, we were all awe struck to first realize that the smooth transition from the past into the future depended on the character of just one man. And because it did, a new South Africa was born.

This personal characteristic of Mandela that was so crucial to the preservation of a nation that was in traumatic transition was vividly portrayed in a Clint Eastwood produced Hollywood film in 2009 entitled *Invictus*. The script writers knew that the film, starring Morgan Freeman and Matt Damon, had to portray accurately on screen this historical transition in South Africa that depended on the principle character of Nelson Mandela. The film was about the election and transition of power from the former Nationalist Party government to the newly elected ANC government. Of all the scenes of the film that beautifully portrayed the election and transition of power, one significant scene was embedded in all our minds. It was a scene that would serve well for all government officials throughout the world who would seek a smooth transition of power after any elections in their countries.

In one particular screen setting, the script writers brilliantly revealed the true character of Mandela. The descriptive scene in the movie took place only a few weeks after the election. The newly elected presi-

dent, Mandela, walked into the administration offices in Pretoria, the capital, where sat all the staff of the former Nationalist Party government of former President F. W. de Klerk. There was total silence in the room as every eye was transfixed on Mandela's humble, but commanding presence. A dropped hair could have echoed throughout the chambers. As all eyes were fixed on the giant stature of Nelson Mandela, he made a panoramic glance around the room. While sensing the tension, he essentially said to everyone, "Though I am the newly elected president of the country, I need your help. I want to invite everyone in this room to please stay on and help us transition this nation into a new future."

No one was to be fired. No one was to be replaced by any favorites of the newly elected ANC Party as a repayment for those who were loyal to the former government. Mandela was wise enough to know that the powerful economic status of the past must be preserved for the sake of the future. We remember that one woman of the former government, Zelda la Grange, did stay on and remained Mandela's personal assistant unto the day of his death.

The script writers of *Invictus* revealed the character of Mandela. It was a character that saved a nation in order to work toward the building of the new and better "rainbow nation." This single godly character of forgiveness made it possible to spare South Africa from a blood bath in the transition of power. It is identified throughout the Bible, and in particular, in a New Testament quotation of an Old Testament statement in reference to God: "***Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more***" (Hb 10:17; see Jr 31:34). Mandela imposed on himself the godly principle of forgiveness. He refused to react in retaliation against the sins of the past government. He moved on with a spirit of forgiveness.

Nelson Mandela has subsequently gone down in history as a forgiving person. During those years at the end of the last century, there seemed to be no end to his willingness to forgive the sins of others in the past. Though he had previously spent years in the prison of the former government for his political views and actions against an oppressive government, to him there was no justification for resentment

and retaliation. Forgiveness, not retaliation, was deep in the recesses of his soul. That moral virtue saved a nation.

Mandela's spirit of forgiveness was a good example for others who would seek to implement a paradigm shift in a government that represents two vastly different societies within one nation. Mandela spoke for all Africans on the continent in reference to this particular personality principle of forgiveness. And in order to reveal his lack of thirst for revenge and retaliation through power, he set the example for a nation to go forth for the people. Those politicians who have suffered the ordeal of losing an election would do themselves a favor by researching the character and behavior of the late South African President Nelson Mandela.

One thing that Mandela did in order to emphasize the point that elections should not be about power, was that he made a decision to be in office for only one five-year term. And during this term, he asked the former president of the Nationalist Party he had defeated in the election, F. W. de Klerk, to co-president the country with him through the transition, which thing de Klerk did for two years. After two years, however, de Klerk moved on to rebuild the Nationalist Party. Mandela later said that he wished that de Klerk would have stayed with him longer as co-president.

Mandela did not want to endanger in any way the strong economy that the previous Nationalist Party had built over the last several decades. Neither was it his desire to presumptuously make any claim for the existing strong South African economy—he was in prison during those years of nation building. He was wise enough to know that if the country was to go successfully into the future, then the new ANC government had to preserve the economic strength of the past government.

De Klerk later stated, and correctly so, that any healthy democracy cannot survive as a one-party state. There must always be a vibrant opposition to any ruling party if a nation is to remain free as a democracy. Otherwise, the one-party state becomes dictatorial and oppressive to the people. The politicians of one-party states are only fooling the people if they assert that they are a democracy, but at the same time, do not allow a two-party state to exist. It is the political philosophy of

Marxism that all the citizenship speak the same thing. But if everyone speaks the same thing, then no one is thinking. This is exactly what Marxist demigod leaders want. Opposition parties must not exist. Therefore, in order that a people not be ruled by a power-hungry despot, only revolution will solve the problem if a country seeks to be free.

Mandela was a forgiving president for the people, by the people, and of the people. His legacy was his spirit of forgiveness. He lived long enough for many in the country, who did seek retaliation, to have the opportunity to calm down, grow up, and move on in building a new South Africa. This spirit of forgiveness was expressed by one of the ANC party members who had been locked up in jail for three months by the former government during the campaign of 1993. He was never given a reason why he was jailed.

A few years after the 1994 election, he was once touring the South in America. He took a guided tour through one of the museums that staged the relics of the former years of America in the South, particularly during the years of the marginalization of African Americans. The curator of the museum was giving his normal presentation of all the injustices against African Americans before they too were racially suppressed. After the curator had carried on for some time, emphatically emphasized the injustices of the past as if they occurred yesterday, our former jailed ANC party member innocently raised his hand and asked, "When did all this discrimination carry on in America?" The curator replied, "This all took place in America during and before the 1950s."

Considering the "unforgiving" spirit of the curator, our surprised ANC member was somewhat taken back. So he politely responded to the curator, "We suffered all these same injustices and more in our country up until the release of Mandela from prison and the 1994 election that was only a couple years ago. But we have all forgiven all that systematic discrimination and moved on." The spirit of Mandela had prevailed, and the curator had little to say in response.

As we have said before in other documents, we would not have wanted to live in any other country of the world during the transition before and after the 1994 election than in South Africa. It was indeed a thrilling time to experience the birth of a new nation that will carry on

into the future. When the virtue of forgiveness prevails, any society that may have lost that cultural trait can upon its restoration experience a beautiful metamorphosis into a new world.

Those days were indeed times to witness national forgiveness in action. There was no time for a spirit of retaliation to be revealed through post-election marches and building burning. It was a time to burn divisions, build cultural bridges, and march for national forgiveness and reconciliation. If a people cannot forgive the sins of the past, then certainly they can no longer claim to be a “Christian nation.” They have forgotten the number one moral standard that defines those who would walk after the character of the God in whom we believe. We believe in a God of grace and mercy. When these moral motivations characterize a nation, then the nation can experience a bright future. But subtract the morals that are encouraged by grace and mercy, and a nation is doomed to chaos, if not termination.

You can now understand why we use the word “godly” in reference to this reconciliatory character of a leader who took his nation into a new world order for the people. Leaders who do not have this reconciliatory spirit are not fit for leadership. If their thirst for power, respite and retaliation compels them to spew out hatred and revenge on those of the past government, then they have lost their moral compass, if indeed they had a godlike spirit before their election into power. Likewise, if the old outgoing leadership portrays a spirit of unforgiveness after being voted out of power, then they should never have been in power in the first place.

We are of those after the One who set the character for all those who claim to be Christian. The last words of our “President” (King) who was voted out of an office on earth by the “political religionists” of the Jews of His day set the moral standard for our character forever: *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (Lk 23:34). This defined the character of the early disciples. As Stephen laid down his head in sleep from thrown stones of retaliation from the “political” opposition, he cried out, *“Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge”* (At 7:60). We know that we have morphed into a godly moral paradigm when we say this in reference to those who have or will op-

pose us. If we would claim to be of Christ (Christian) in any way, then we must be known for being those of a forgiving spirit.

Godly means that we live after the behavior of God. And in reference to the behavior of God, it is by grace that we receive an unlimited measure of His forgiveness. We will never forget that *“He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 Jn 1:9). *“For if you forgive men their trespasses,”* our present King Jesus said, *“your heavenly Father will also forgive you”* (Mt 6:14). Paul emulated for all of us the character that should be typical of every person who would claim to be a disciple of the Son of God:

To whom you forgive anything, I forgive also. For indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven in the presence of Christ for your sakes” (2 Co 2:10).

So by now you may be wondering why we would introduce a book on the truth of the gospel with the preceding legacy of a former president of South Africa. The theme of any study concerning the gospel is about forgiveness. Grace is defined by forgiveness. If we would obey and live by the gospel, the first moral principle that we should emulate in our lives is the spirit of forgiveness. Jesus said, *“But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (Mt 6:15). This is a mandate and a condition for God to extend His grace to us. The gospel is God’s forgiveness of our sins. If we would be disciples of Jesus, therefore, then it is without question that we would be godly after our Father who has forgiven us all our sins.

Chapter 1

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL

Thirty years after our King was voted into their hearts, the Holy Spirit realized that within the society of the Roman Empire there was a growing political uprising building among the Jews. The problem was not directly related to Christians, but was greatly affecting them throughout the Empire because the church was composed of many members with Jewish heritage. The problem that was rising in the political area of the Empire was the rise of Jewish nationalism, which political movement indirectly affected the church.

During the decade of the 60s that led up to the consummation of national Israel in A. D. 70, insurrectionist Jewish leaders were diligently moving among the Jews of the Roman Empire in order to stir up an insurrection against Rome. These insurrectionists eventually influenced many Jewish Christians. From the book of Hebrews, it is evident that many Jewish Christians had already joined the ranks of the rebels, or were on the verge of doing so. It was then that the Holy Spirit selected some specific Jewish Christians to write documents to combat this political influence that was affecting the fellowship of the disciples.

One of the most shocking contexts of Holy Scripture on this political uprising are the pronouncements by the Holy Spirit in **Jude** and **2 Peter 2**. In all the Bible, what is stated in these similar contexts by the Holy Spirit is harsh, direct and needs little interpretation. Both Jude and Peter addressed problems that invaded the fellowship of the church, and thus both texts were not directed to unbelievers, but believers. The texts speak of the political environment at the time the two writers inscribed their letters, as well as the demise of moral standards that were being violated by some in the church during those days of tremendous political upheaval throughout the Roman Empire. Jude and Peter spoke of the social and political environment of the in-time judgment that God was about to bring upon national Israel in order to fulfill all those prophecies that were made in reference to the consum-

mation of Israel, especially the prophecy of Jesus that was recorded in Matthew 24.

Unfortunately, the political upheaval of the day drew out of some Jewish Christians a behavior that was totally contrary to “the faith” that the apostles and early evangelists had given their lives for forty years to preach across the Roman Empire. We believe that there is no greater contexts of Scripture, therefore, that we should reconsider in view of the world in which we now live, particularly in those democratic governments throughout the world wherein free speech is a “human right” that is now under attack. What transpired during the decade of the 60s would certainly illustrate what often occurs when civilizations are suffering from a moral implosion through the loss of a moral compass that once made them great.

The direct reprimand of the texts comes alive when we consider the historical setting in which the Holy Spirit made these stark pronouncements. Jude was possibly the brother of James, and thus, the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, as well as Peter, had personally heard Jesus speak of these things about thirty years before. When Jude thus spoke of “the faith” in verse 3, he was speaking in reference to faith in his brother Jesus who was executed on a cross outside Jerusalem about thirty years before. Therefore, Jude at the time of writing was an old man, possibly in his late sixties, or even into his early seventies. We would also assume that Peter would possibly be older, or at least the same age as Jude.

The date of writing is only a few years before the social and economic calamity that eventually befall the Jews in the destruction of their cultural and economic center of Jerusalem and the temple. This calamity occurred in A. D. 70. Leading up to the calamity as a whole, the Jews had generated a cultural insurrectionist movement throughout the Roman Empire in order to rid themselves of Roman oppression. The driving force of the movement was to once again restore Jewish pride as an autonomous nation in the glorious days when their great kings ruled Israel a thousand years before.

- **Seizing the opportunity for a power grab:** *“Beloved, while I*

was giving all diligence to write to you about our common salvation, I felt it necessary to write to you, exhorting that you earnestly contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jd 3).

The political upheaval that was occurring throughout the Roman Empire at the time both Peter and Jude inscribed their documents, laid the foundation for the nationalistic Jews to seize the opportunity for their own political and nationalistic ambitions. In A. D. 68, Nero, the Caesar of the Roman Empire, committed suicide. After the death of Nero, there were four Caesars who came to power in Rome in one year. Galba first claimed the throne of Rome in A. D. 68. But after only three months as Caesar, in January 69, he was assassinated. Otho was then proclaimed Caesar by his army. Unfortunately, he lasted only until April of 69 before he was eliminated. Then came Vitellus who was assassinated in December of the same year. Vespasian was then anointed Caesar and some stability was restored to the Empire.

During this year of political turmoil in Rome, there were civil wars cropping up throughout the Roman Empire because different political groups sought to take the opportunity to be independent from Rome. Therefore, it was a time for Jewish insurrectionists in Palestine to also seize the opportunity to establish their own political ambitions. While Rome was preoccupied with their troops scattered throughout the Empire in an effort to put down civil wars, the nationalistic Jews intensified their efforts in Palestine to also free themselves from the control of Rome. They thus self-deceived themselves into believing that they could free themselves from the Roman occupation of Palestine. Great political upheaval throughout the Roman Empire became the opportunity for power-hungry politicians to take control over their own suppressed nationalities. It was a time when the arrogant Jewish anarchists sought to do the same.

The political frenzy of the time was generated by a spirit of anarchy against centralized government control. Anarchists throughout the Empire subsequently arose to the occasion to rebel against Rome. This infectious rebellious spirit also found its way into the society of the nationalistic Jews, thus inspiring the Jewish rebellion that was eventu-

ally put down in A. D. 70. The Jewish spirit of anarchy was so embedded in the culture of the Jews during those years that it even found its way into the fellowship of the Jewish members of the church.

- **The obsession with politics:** The threat to the church was so grave that the Holy Spirit changed the theme of the book of Jude. Jude originally wanted to write concerning the common salvation we all enjoy in Christ through the gospel of grace. But the Holy Spirit changed his theme to something that was more urgent at the time (Jd 3). Upon possibly hearing reports that some Jewish brothers and sisters had been influenced by the spirit of anarchy that prevailed among the nationalistic Jews, Jude wrote, *“I felt it necessary to write to you, exhorting that you earnestly contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”* (Jd 3). In other words, some of the Jewish Christians at the time were in danger of losing “the faith” of the gospel because of the political turmoil of the times. The politics of the times were drawing their attention away from the gospel. Some Jewish Christians became more involved and concerned about politics than they did about Christ.

“The faith” in this statement was not some canonized legal list of doctrines that they may have failed to memorize during their diversion to political matters. This “faith” was the very foundation upon which they existed as Christians. This was their faith in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which faith, if compromised, would lead to their termination as the people of God. In other words, some in the church had in mind and behavior possibly considered joining some of their fellow unbelieving Jewish relatives in the insurrectionist movement against the rule of government. These Jewish insurrections had been “marching” in the streets and assassinating Roman soldiers in Palestine for years. They now supposed that it was time they should rise up in open rebellion against Rome (See At 5:36,37; 21:38).

Knowing that some Jewish Christians might buy into this anarchist venture, which anarchy would eventually be squashed in A. D. 70, the Holy Spirit had a few years before warned those Christians who lived in the very seat of government in Rome with the following words: *“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is*

no authority except from God. The authorities that exist are ordained by God” (Rm 13:1). In democratic societies around the world, it is often easy to forget this admonition, especially in those democracies where free speech is judged to be a “human right.” The problem that now prevailed when both Jude and Peter wrote, was that the free speech written on placards during the “marches in the streets” for the last few decades was now about to be implemented into a full blown armed rebellion to free the Jews from Roman occupation.

- **Christian and political insurrectionists:** Some of the Christians in Jude’s readership had forgotten the Holy Spirit’s admonition through Paul in the Roman letter a few years before. They had forgotten his point in Romans 13 to the extent that some were joining in with the anarchist speech and behavior against the rule of the government of Rome. We must not miss this point. **If a Christian behaves in an anarchist manner in reference to the authority of government, then he or she is denying “the faith.”** Jude goes even further in explaining this point. **If a Christian’s speech is characterized by railing against the authorities of government, then such speech is anarchist, and thus contrary to godliness.**

In order not to be misunderstood on this point, we would add that if a brother or sister either behaves or speaks in an insurrectionist manner of anarchy against an existing “ordained government” of the land, **then he or she has denied the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.** In other words, this denial of the faith is not in reference to doctrinal beliefs, **but specifically in reference to speech and behavior that is contrary to living the gospel of grace and mercy in a nation that is governed by civil law.** This is ungodly speech and behavior of which one must repent.

This brings us to what God the Holy Spirit said on this matter in the two strikingly clear mandates of 2 Peter 2 and Jude, particularly in Jude. In Jude 3, Jude gave only the introduction to how some in those times denied the faith by their anarchist speech and behavior. In verse 4 he carried on in order to identify such people, and to remind all of us today how serious God is about not allowing such anarchist speech and

behavior to destroy the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Devoured by unspiritual zombies:** *“For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who were long before marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”* (Jd 4).

What Paul had previously written concerning those who sought to devour was written in specific reference to those who came into the fellowship of the church (See Gl 2:4). These were those Jewish members who denied the truth of the gospel by their anarchist speech. However, by the time both Peter and Jude wrote about twenty years later, these devouring zombies were using the close fellowship of the church as an opportunity to entice Jewish Christians to participate in the nationalistic insurrection that was building among the Jews throughout the Roman Empire.

At the time Jude wrote, the political environment was far different than the days of Paul. Both Peter and Jude wrote to those Jewish Christians who were living in the final days of national Israel, just a few years before the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple in A. D. 70. However, both Peter and Jude reached back to Paul’s writings in order to glean concepts that were relevant to those to whom they wrote directly.

Peter warned, *“Be sober; be vigilant. Your adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Pt 5:8). This is exactly what Satan tried to do as soon as the Son of God was incarnate into the flesh of man on this earth (See Rv 12:4). If Satan sought to devour the Son of God as soon as He was born into this world, then certainly he would seek to do the same with those who were born again by their obedience to the gospel of Jesus. And such was happening in the first century when the Holy Spirit turned the thoughts of Peter and Jude to alert the church to the fact that there were unspiritual zombies wandering among the fellowship of disciples, devouring their faith.

The devouring work of Satan in reference to another matter was

happening among the Gentile disciples in Achaia two decades before Jude and Peter penned their warnings in reference to devouring Jews. Paul rebuked the faithful disciples in Achaia for allowing themselves to be devoured by unspiritual thieves: “*For you tolerate it if one [the spiritual thief] brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes [contributions] from you, if one exalts himself [to be your leader], if one strikes you on the face*” (2 Co 11:20). As Diotrefes, these devouring religious zombies throughout the province of Achaia were bringing the disciples into the bondage of their own control (See 3 Jn 8,9). They were profiteering unspiritual zombies who were extracting money from the members as they roamed from one group of disciples to another throughout the province. They were allowed by the church in Achaia to exalt themselves as want-to-be leaders. And in some cases, they were physically striking the disciples in order to subjugate the disciples to their control. (We have witnessed this same ungodly behavior in some assemblies where the preacher sought to subjugate an individual in the audience in order to strike some demon out of a supposedly possessed person.)

There were unspiritual zombies roaming among the disciples throughout the province of Achaia. These were the same devouring zombies about whom both Peter and Jude wrote who were in the midst of the disciples of their readership. Jude alerted his readers, “*For certain men have crept in unnoticed*” (Jd 4). Since these were those who “crept” in, we would assume that these were friends or relatives of those who were already “in.” And by being “in,” we assume that Jude was opening up the discussion here concerning those who were of the faith, and thus in the fellowship of the church. It may be as those spies in Jerusalem whom Paul identified as “false brethren.” These spies “*sneaked in to spy out our liberty that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage*” (Gl 2:4).

Jude seems to be speaking on the front side of those who “*were not of us,*” about whom John wrote: “*They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us*” (1 Jn 2:19). Jude spoke of these unspiritual intruders who came in the front door, and John spoke of some, and possibly the same,

who went out the back door. Between their entrance and exit they devoured members of the body by bringing some into the bondage of their religious fantasies. In other words, on their way out they took with them those whom they had brought into bondage by their political persuasion.

If we connect the dots between Jude and John, then we would conclude that those about whom Jude spoke were never molded after the heart of God in the first place. They gave the pretense of being of the faith, but they were just passing through the fellowship of the saints in order to satisfy their desire to lord over the sheep of God. They were baptized, but never understood the transforming power of the grace of God. They never understood the grace of the cross, and thus never behaved with gratitude for the grace by which they were saved (See 2 Co 4:15). They were unforgiving when they came in, and they remained unforgiving until the time when they went out. The fact that they were not transformed by grace was revealed in the fact that they were simply passing through the fellowship of those who were truly of “the faith.”

Unspiritual zombies behave in this matter. They simply pass through in order to consume, and then go on their way. They never come to a knowledge of the power of the grace of the gospel. Paul spoke of such people who are “*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth* [of the gospel]” (2 Tm 3:7). They never grew in the grace that was revealed at the cross (2 Pt 3:18).

- **Turning from the gospel is ungodliness:** As we continue to journey through the revealing text of Jude, we must not forget that it was the Holy Spirit who inspired these very words to be written. Therefore, we must not take lightly Jude’s use of the word “ungodly.” He was definitive in reference to the loss of their moral compass when he used the word “licentiousness.”

Those who would behave in a manner that portrays an anarchist spirit against government, are ungodly. And all ungodly people are destined for condemnation. They are so destined because the grace of God that they presume to have accepted, did not lead to any change in their hearts. They subsequently “*turn the grace of our God into licen-*

tiousness” (Jd 4). Their behavior reveals that “*they deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ*” (Jd 4). Jesus is no longer the Master of their lives. They refuse to have Him as their Lord. And because He is neither Master nor Lord in their lives, they presume that they can speak and behave as an anarchist against government, and above all, against King Jesus in heaven. They live without fear of both King Jesus in heaven and God-ordained government on earth.

- **Destruction of the supposed saved:** “*But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe*” (Jd 5).

We must connect the dots. The preceding individuals came “in” because they were baptized into Christ in order to be saved (See Mk 16:16; At 22:16). It was as the time when God delivered the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity fifteen hundred years before. Those who were delivered “*all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from a spiritual Rock that followed them. And that Rock was Christ*” (1 Co 10:4).

Those unspiritual zombies who came into the fellowship of the church likewise drank from the spiritual Rock of Jesus Christ. However, they were spiritually unaffected, and thus there was no change in their lives because there was no change in their hearts. Therefore, “*God was not pleased with many of them, for they were scattered in the wilderness*” (1 Co 10:5). But before those Jews were scattered, many of them were destroyed in the rebellion of Korah (Nm 16). The earth swallowed them up. The remainder who were twenty years of age and older died in the sands of the Sinai Peninsula. They were not allowed into the promised land because they had a heart of rebellion that was unaffected by the grace of God by which they were delivered out of Egyptian bondage.

Though the Lord had saved “*the people out of the land of Egypt,*” He later destroyed those who were not spiritually fit to enter into the promised land (Jd 5). This is indeed a most frightening statement. It is

true that one can be a baptized believer, and saved in Christ, but later be destroyed by the Lord because there is no repentant life change in one's heart. These are the ones upon whom Jesus will take vengeance when He comes again (2 Th 1:6-9).

Through the writing of the epistle of Jude, God the Holy Spirit wanted to warn those brothers and sisters who would engage in anarchist speech and behavior. Their ungodly behavior was a denial of the power of the grace of God to change lives. And because it was a denial of the grace of God, they too, as the rebellious Israelites, would be destroyed from the presence of God when the Lord Jesus Christ returns with His mighty angels. On that great and final day, He will say to these unchanged souls, *“Depart from Me you cursed into everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Mt 25:41).

It is certainly worth noting in reference to those who crept in, and then moved out from the fellowship of the disciples, that the Holy Spirit did not directly subjugate their hearts to be spiritual. There is a serendipitous lesson in reference to the licentious behavior of the spies on their way out from the fellowship. **The Holy Spirit does not work on the heart of an individual in a manner whereby He makes one holy against his will.** At least He did not make these brute beasts among the disciples spiritual. If it was His duty to supposedly make us spiritual, then He failed with those who simply passed through the fellowship of the saints without directly changing their hearts. The fact that Peter concluded his narrative on this matter with the mandate that each disciple must take ownership of growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus assumes that the Holy Spirit will not steal this responsibility away from Christians (See 2 Pt 3:18).

- **Destiny of those who align themselves with the devil's angels:** *“And the angels who did not keep their first domain, but left their proper abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day”* (Jd 6).

So speaking of those angels who will be condemned to everlasting fire when Jesus comes, in their company will be all those who would

behave as anarchists. In other words, if one who involved himself or herself in the behavior of anarchy through social media and political debates, or out on the streets marching against a God-ordained government, then their end is the same as the devil's angels for whom is reserved everlasting destruction. If they heeded Jude's warning not to behave as a rebel against Rome, then they would possibly save their own lives.

These angels had been created to dwell in a spiritual realm of existence. This was *"their first domain"* (Jd 6). As the anarchists of Jude's day, these angels had previously committed the sin of rebellion. Subsequently, the Lord *"cast them down to pits of darkness and reserved them for judgment"* (2 Pt 2:4). Those brothers and sisters who have engaged themselves in speaking evil against government officials—more on this later—have forfeited their right to the fellowship of Christians who will eventually transition into eternal glory.

It is simply a fact of Christian behavior that the Lord will under no circumstances tolerate anarchist behavior that is revealed through either speech or actions. The speech and behavior of the anarchist reveals a heart that is not submissive. And because these anarchists do not have a submissive heart, as the angels of Satan that were cast down, so will every insubmissive person not be allowed into the realm where all submissive people will be going for eternity. They will not be as the four creatures about whom John wrote: *"And they do not rest day and night, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come'"* (Rv 4:8; see Rv 4:9-11). If one is not of this worshipful nature on earth, then certainly he or she will not be such in heaven.

• **Immoral behavior reveals the demise of godly moral standards:** *"Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire"* (Jd 7).

Jude used the phrase *"in like manner"* in order to connect the dots between the moral standards of the cities of the plain that God destroyed with the same moral behavior of those anarchists in the context of in-

surrection against Roman government (See Gn 10:19; 14:2).

The loss of moral standards reveals a society that is no longer interested in moral controls that preserve society. In this cast, sexual dysfunction within the society (fornication) led to all sorts of immoral behavior. “*Going-after-strange-flesh*” identified the dysfunctional relationships of homosexuality of men with men and lesbianism of women with women. Paul explained that such people become fools because they believed that the sexual dysfunction on the part of individuals would preserve a free society. On the contrary, such sexual individualism destroys society (Rm 1:22). For this reason ...

... God gave them up to vile passions, for even their women changed the natural use of the body into that which is against nature. And also in the same way the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one [man] toward another, men with men working what is indecent and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error that was due” (Rm 1:26,27).

Such is a moral picture of the decrepit social behavior that was characteristic of those who lived before the flood of Noah’s day. This was the socially dysfunctional society of Sodom and Gomorrah in which Lot lived (2 Pt 2:6). Lot a “*righteous man living among them, was vexed in his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds*” (2 Pt 2:8). God allowed the righteous Lot to be vexed for a period of time. But when God’s patience ran out, He brought down destruction on the cities of the plain. God will allow Christians to live in a chaotic environment wherein their souls are vexed. But eventually, He will terminate the environment (See Mt 25:41; 2 Th 1:6-9).

• **Politically bankrupt anarchists:** “*Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignitaries*” (Jd 8).

It is a frightful thing to understand the conclusion to both Peter and Jude’s judgments as they revealed the moral degradation of the

political opportunists of their day who would live rebelliously against God's ordained authority of government. If a brother or sister would in any way identify themselves with such a dysfunctional social order, then they have denied the faith. They have crucified to themselves the Lord Jesus Christ who died in order to cleanse them of such behavior (See Hb 6:4-6). It is for this reason that we today through the social media, should be quite cautious about posting those opinions that would identify ourselves with an immoral political opposition that has set itself against government, since it is government that must bring stability to any society. Jude, as well as Peter, moved into this political field of behavior by identifying what people do when they lose their moral compass.

Peter introduced the political behavior of these immoralists. These are *“those who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority”* (2 Pt 2:10). They are quick to condemn the existing president, hypocritically accusing him because he would disagree with their beliefs and behavior. Peter continued to define what he meant in the statement that they “despise authority.” ***“They are presumptuous and self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries*** [Caesars and Presidents]” (2 Pt 2:10). Sound familiar?

Those who reject any moral codes that would be pressed on them by any authority also reject all authority. They are thus quick to write and propagate statements that rail against any existing government official. They “speak evil” in the sense of trying to discredit the moral integrity of those who would lead in government. They would accuse government authorities (dignitaries) to be “racist,” or “narcissistic” or “self-centered” or “liars.” They attack character, not policies.

When one is self-righteous concerning his or her own established moral standards, he or she is quick to accuse the leaders of violating some moral standard that they have established for themselves. Those who crucified Jesus had established a moral standard that it was fine to murder an innocent man. Those today who do the same have established a moral standard that it is fine to murder unborn children (See Mt 1:18,20,23; Lk 2:5).

We have discovered that in the modern political world of democ-

racies around the world that those who seek power for themselves are often quick to attack the character of their opponents, and not their policies. Since it is the nature of the accuser to have few moral standards upon which to base policies, the best way to win an election is to attack the moral character of one's opponents.

Jude simply calls these political opportunists dreamers who “*defile the flesh*” by their behavior (Jd 8). They “*despise dominion, and speak evil of dignitaries* [government officials]” (Jd 8). In the last few years we have witnessed no few Christians who have involved themselves in such behavior in reference to the political chaos of the nation in which they lived. Some of Jude's readers had been caught up in the political insanity of the moment of day in which both Jude and Peter lived.

The exhortations of both 2 Peter 2 and Jude should not be taken lightly. Both writers were writing in an era of the Roman Empire in which there was tremendous political chaos going on throughout the Empire. Caesars were rising and falling. Civil wars were occurring throughout the Empire. It was a time that Jesus had prophesied when He warned His disciples forty years before, “*You will hear of wars and rumors of wars*” (Mt 24:6). In making this prophecy over thirty years before, both Jude and Peter wrote, Jesus gave a warning to His disciples: “*See that you are not troubled*” (Mt 24:6).

If a Christian is caught up in the political chaos of the nation in which he or she lives, then he or she is in trouble. If one is troubled by political trouble, then his soul is in trouble. It is in trouble because he might be tempted to become involved in the social chaos of the moment. Both Jude and Peter were writing in order to warn their Jewish readers not to become involved in the political chaos of the times. They were concerned about Jewish insurrectionists who were urging all Jews to join in rebellion against the existing government of the time.

When a society loses its moral compass it is easy to be caught up in the political anxiety of the moment. But if one is caught up in such, he or she is often aligning himself or herself with those who “*speak evil of government officials.*” And if one involves himself or herself in such, then both inspired writers have some serious words to say in reference to such brothers or sisters.

• **Political anarchists have lost their integrity and dignity:** “*But Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil and disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing accusation. But he said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’ But these speak evil of those things that they do not know. But what they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves*” (Jd 9,10).

They have certainly not followed the example of the chief angel of God, Michael. We have in this and Peter’s text the only reference to this event that took place sometime immediately after the death of Moses. Jude reminded some of his insolent readers that Michael “***dared not bring against him*** [the devil] ***a railing accusation***” (Jd 9). Michael had more integrity and dignity than the political anarchists of Jude and Peter’s day.

We have always found it quite interesting to note that there are those who are quick to condemn Caesar for some political misdemeanor that is inconsequential to the governance of a nation, but fail to understand the whole picture of what brings down empires. In doing such, many political opponents have lost their moral integrity. Such people should be shamed by the example of Michael. Michael simply said to the devil, “I will not personally debate this matter with you. It is not my place. *‘The Lord rebuke you’*” (Jd 9). If we rail against those in government who have the responsibility to keep us safe, then we lose our integrity, if not the security of the nation in which we live.

We have discovered throughout the years that those who resent authority often lose their integrity and dignity by posting nonsense in the social media in reference to “arguments about the body of Moses.” In reference to Christians, this would be an onslaught against “the faith.” Instead of defending the faith, some Christians are greatly concerned and ravenous in their political proclamations about those things of which they have little knowledge. This was the case with those to whom both Peter and Jude wrote. They are as Jude continued, “*These speak evil of those things that they do not know*” (Jd 10). In doing such they reveal their lack of integrity. They are as “*brute beasts*” who speak in a manner by which they corrupt themselves (Jd 10). They are as raging “bulls

in a China closet,” destroying everything in their rampage in order to promote those things about which they know nothing. No Christian should be caught, either in speech or behavior, as a “brute beast” in the fellowship of the disciples.

Many years before Peter and Jude wrote their judgments against such “brute beasts” in the fellowship of the church, Jesus warned of such people who would come in among His disciples: *“Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves”* (Mt 7:15). Jesus was not speaking about those who taught false doctrines, though the behavior of the wolves was based on that which was morally wrong. He spoke of those who would devour the sheep of God **through their destructive speech and behavior**.

Jesus continued to explain, *“You will know them by their fruits”* (Mt 7:16). Ravenous wolves would always be known by their fruits, **not by their teachings**. This is the commentary of those about whom both Peter and Jude identified, at the time of their writing, who existed among the sheep. In Matthew 7, Jesus handed the early disciples a dictionary that would define the “false prophet” as one who would come in among the fellowship of the saints with his or her own hidden agenda. These would be those who would sit right there in the midst of the love feast, feeding themselves with the purpose of influencing grace-driven disciples with their own political or social ambitions. The readers of those times needed to remember what Jesus said: *“A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bring forth good fruit”* (Mt 7:18). Unfortunately, some of the ravenous wolves must be among us long enough for them to reveal their bad fruit. They then can go out from us because they were not, as John wrote, of us (1 Jn 2:18,19). We must be careful in reference to the forest in which we dwell.

- **The destiny of political anarchists:** *“Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain and have run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the rebellion of Korah”* (Jd 11).

Those who are quick to speak evil against those government officials with whom they disagree *“have gone in the way of Cain,”* the one

who murdered even his own brother (Jd 11). They are jealous to the point that they commit murder with the weapon of their social media posts and Twitter messages. They would encourage the violent insurrectionists of a society to threaten the families of those with whom they politically disagree. These are insurrectionists who march in streets and burn buildings, carrying placards that slander their government officials. They would slander with hateful and poisonous words in order to stir up those who feel politically marginalized, or those who simply suffer from a cultural inferiority complex. This is the “way of Cain,” who envied Abel, his brother.

Jude is not finished with these unspiritual zombies. *“They run greedily after the error of Balaam for reward”* (Jd 11). The Jewish Sadducees were the corporate magnates of Jude’s day, and the one’s about whom Jude may have had in mind when he wrote these words. At least these corporate rich were in the mind of James when he wrote that at the time when both Peter and Jude addressed their epistles to those who were in danger of falling victim to the schemes of the rich. James asked the faithful, *“Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into courts?”* (Js 2:6). Therefore, James warned of an impending judgment that was coming on the rich Sadducean Jews who were evidently plotting tax relief through insurrection against Rome: *“Come now you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you”* (Js 5:1). This was an impending judgment upon the rich who were exploiting the poor. James was not discussing something that would transpire two thousand years after he wrote. The judgment was imminent. It was coming upon the rich of that day. And when Jerusalem was eventually destroyed, the rich Sadducean Jews indeed lost all their riches.

Nevertheless, we must not be fooled today. In the political arena of democracies around the world, the ultimate goal of many politicians is as the rich Sadducean Jews. They want to control the money. Power is sought in order to be in control of the wealth of a nation. If one does not understand this, then he or she may be quite naive concerning the ambitions of many politicians who run for some office. There are those who seek to be true “civil servants,” but sometimes their proclamation from podiums to serve the people is simply a cover for glory and gain.

We have found in developing democracies that running for office to be a “civil servant” is sometimes not primary in the hearts of the would-be politician. What is in his or her heart is money.

In the political West, the corporations that contribute to the ambitions of the politicians, who will govern according to the corporations’ desire, seek to control the wealth of the country. Unfortunately, in Western democracies, politicians must conform to the desires of the corporations, for the corporations make massive contributions to their favorite politicians. Even if the politicians would seek to be true “civil servants,” they often bow to the money of the corporations in order to have their campaign financed. If the corporations want a politician voted out of power, then they will contribute massive funds to an opposition politician.

Add to this the news media corporations, to whom the business corporations also make large contributions. It would be correct to conclude that Western democracies are basically controlled by the money that originates from global corporations who manipulate politicians through contributions that are necessary for politicians to win an elections. Therefore, the “*error of Balaam*” is not reserved only for individuals of the first century. If an individual would seek to be a politician today, then he or she must often conform to the wishes of the corporations more than the voters themselves. Balaam became political when he preached against the people of God for the sake of contributions from a foreign government.

The voting constituency today is often persuaded by the news media that is sustained by massive contributions from the corporations who run their advertisements on each news media broadcast. People will be people, and thus, Jude’s indictment must not be confined to a first century social and economic upheaval in the Roman Empire. Money still controls who is in power. The insurrectionists then, as well as today, are following the money. In fighting against Rome, the rich Jews were seeking tax relief from the Empire. It was through massive taxes that supported the military that the Roman Empire continued to exist. When the taxes diminished, so did the Empire, which thing eventually came to fruition in A.D. 476 with the eventual fall of the city of

Rome. In the century leading up to the fall of Rome, the Empire was in great financial straits to support the military. When the taxes decreased for the military, the military decreased to the point that it could not defend the Empire.

But in reference to the times of Jude's readers, those Jewish insurrectionists who participated in rebellion against the God-ordained authority would likewise "*perish in the rebellion of Korah*" (Jd 11). As Korah, and his cohorts who rebelled against the authority of Moses, were swallowed up by the earth, so would those who rebelled against God's ordained authority at the time Jude wrote. They too would be swallowed up by Rome in the destruction of Jerusalem (See Nm 16:1-3,31-35).

Rebellion against Roman government authority would not go unpunished. It is estimated that about one million Jews perished in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. Those who would perish today in such a rebellion may not so perish directly in this life, but certainly they will when King Jesus comes with His fiery destruction of this world (2 Th 1:6-9). Insurrectionists will be destroyed from the presence of God because their rebellious spirit in life revealed that they were not candidates for heaven. In reference to any brother who would involve himself in such an insurrection, he would be a false prophet who was bringing forth bad fruit in the fellowship of the disciples.

• **Blemishes at the dinner table:** "*These are spots in your love feasts when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear. They are clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, plucked up by the roots, twice dead*" (Jd 12).

Most of the time when the texts of Jude and 2 Peter are considered, commentators assume that the individuals under consideration by both authors are unbelievers who are outside the fellowship of the church. But in these texts, unbelievers are not directly under consideration. Both Jude and Peter are specific as to who is the problem. Jude identified these ungodly individuals as Christians: "*These are spots in your love feast when they feast with you*" (Jd 12). Unless we assume that these ungodly political activists were invited guests to the love

feast/Lord's Supper of the church, then Jude was speaking of fellow brothers or sisters in Christ who were involved in some insurrectionist activity. At the time, these were in the very core of Christian fellowship, the love feast. They were sitting across the table and "*feeding themselves without fear*" of the reprisals of government and the impending destruction that was coming upon all those who would join the Jewish anarchist's movement against Rome.

The Jewish insurrectionists who were promising "showers of blessings" when Palestine was delivered from Roman occupation, were dreamers who promised rain when they themselves were only empty clouds with political promises. They were like politicians who make great promises, but deliver no results when they are eventually voted into office. In this case, they were recruiting votes and volunteers among the membership of Jewish disciples in order to stir up a rebellion against Rome.

These were those who were carried along by the populous vote of those who "*speak evil of those things that they do not know*" (Jd 10). Peter was more descriptive in identifying these misguided Jewish recruiters: "*They are stains and blemishes, carousing themselves with their own deceptions while they feast with you*" (2 Pt 2:13).

And as all politically motivated individuals who crept in to spy out the liberty that we have in Christ, their work of eating at the love feast was for the purpose of "*enticing unstable souls*" (2 Pt 2:14). But Peter warned those who would encourage these brute political beasts among the brethren: "*These are wells without water, clouds and mists that are carried by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved*" (2 Pt 2:17; see 2 Th 1:6-9). These made empty promises to gullible members who would believe almost anything.

Now in those days, Paul wrote that "*the Spirit clearly says that in the latter times [of national Israel], some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons*" (1 Tm 4:1). Paul prophesied of the times in which both Peter and Jude lived and wrote. We have found that many would-be prophets today miss this critical point when they are deceiving the people concerning their "end-of-time" prognostications. These false prophets forget that Paul, Peter

and Jude, as well as James, were addressing Christians of their day who were about to endure tremendous social calamity. **These New Testament writers did not skip over two thousand years of time in order to write concerning world events of our day.** They simply did not steal from their immediate readers prophecies of social and political calamity that their readers would have to endure in just a few years after the inspired letters were written. What they wrote applies indirectly to us in that we reap from warnings that were given directly to them.

In fact, it seems quite inconceivable that some today would steal away warnings that were delivered directly to the early Christians in the first century in order to spare their lives (See Mk 9:1). The warnings were given in order to remind the early Jewish Christians that Jesus' prophecy that was recorded in Matthew 24 was upon them. Their generation would suffer the atrocities that were about to come (See Mk 9:1). And if they joined the insurrection against Rome, they too would possibly be of the number of about one million Jews who died in the conflict.

As is so evident in the epistle of Jude, there were political Jewish brethren working among the early disciples in order to recruit volunteers. There were those who were recruiting volunteers to join in the resistance against Rome. If the faithful succumbed to the intimidation of the recruiters, then the possibility that some would be killed in the coming destruction of A.D. 70 as very probable. There are those today, however, who persist to be prophetic thieves in order to satisfy their own thirst to capture an innocent audience who would follow their misleading prognostications.

“While they promise them liberty [from Roman oppression], they themselves [at the time Peter wrote] are the bondservants of corruption” (2 Pt 2:19). The Holy Spirit defined the characters in Paul's letter to Timothy. They were those who came in among the early disciples. They came in *“speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron”* (1 Tm 4:2). This is as the corrupt false teacher who has concealed his personal corruption, while at the same time encourages the deceived populous to vote for him. In order to gain the vote of

the people so he can continue his corruption, he must work with deceit lest the voting populous discover his true motives or politically corrupt financial dealings. Peter's following conclusion is a description of the character of these individuals who existed among the brethren of his readership: "*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the later end is worse for them than the beginning* (2 Pt 2:20).

The latter end is worse because the revealed gospel of grace no longer appealed to them. It no longer had any power to change their behavior because they had become as the Hebrew writer wrote in reference to his readers who lived at the same time: "*We have many things to say, and hard to explain, seeing you have become dull of hearing*" (Hb 5:11). These ungodly characters were using the innocent sheep of God, the church, as an opportunity to promote their political ambitions. In doing so, they had turned away from the grace by which they were saved. If there were ever a clear statement to be made in Scripture as to whether we should abhor such individuals in the church, the preceding statement of 2 Peter 2:20 would be that statement.

The ungodly practice of these political religionists was so grave that the Holy Spirit said that "*it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment [of the gospel of grace] delivered to them [through the preaching of the gospel]*" (2 Pt 2:21). We can understand now why Peter exhorted his readers with the following statement: "*Grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pt 3:18). Those who continue to grow in their understanding of the grace of God will be kept by God. Jude concluded, "*Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy*" (Jd 24).

We are kept from falling only if we continue to grow in the knowledge of the grace of God (2 Pt 3:18). It was for this reason that Paul wanted to go to the Christians in Rome (See Rm 1:13-16). If he could produce fruit in them by their continued growth in the gospel of grace, then they would be kept safe. In others words, if we do not study the

word of God in order to understand better the grace of God that was poured out through His Son, then it is inevitable that we will fall away. We may remain religious, but in our hearts we will fall from the gospel of Jesus that is the foundation of our faith. This may give some reason why the early disciples partook of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week, or as often as they could (See At 20:7; 1 Co 11:25).

- **The end game for unspiritual opportunists:** *“They are raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever”* (Jd 13).

The descriptive conclusion and final end of those who would use the church as an opportunity for either financial gain or political ambitions is not bright. Jude was rich with metaphors as he defined the character and reward of these ungodly political opportunists who were in the fellowship of the church. They were **“raging waves”** and **“wandering stars”** for whom eternal separation from the light of God has been reserved.

- **Doxology of judgment:** *“Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment on all, and to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds that they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.’ These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts. And their mouth speaks great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage”* (Jd 14-16).

The doxology of judgment of Jude 14-16 was first delivered to humanity by Enoch in reference to the flood of Noah's day. It was the time before the flood when **“God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”** (Gn 6:5).

Every judgment of God in time is a metaphor of His final judgment at the end of time. But in the text of both Jude and Peter, a similar

judgment in time was going to be released upon the “raging waves” and “wandering stars.” This judgment was illustrated by the flood of Noah’s day. It was a judgment that was prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 24, and was to occur soon in the lives of those Jewish brethren to whom both Jude and Peter wrote.

As the A. D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem loomed just over the horizon, it was a time that the disciples of that time had to be warned, or reminded of what Jesus had prophesied of the event over thirty years before (See Mt 24). It would be in the destruction of Jerusalem that the Lord would come in time “*to execute judgment on all [unbelieving Jews], and to convict all who are ungodly among them [the Jews] of all their ungodly deeds*” and the harsh things they had spoken against the Lord Jesus (Jd 15).

Jude concluded with a description of how the Jewish nationalists among the brethren were politically seeking to recruit fellow Jewish friends and family members to take up arms against Rome. These insurrectionists spoke in secret of things they would do to bring down Roman domination in Palestine. They continually complained about how oppressive the Romans were. And thus they walked according to their desires to throw off Roman oppression. In order to recruit fellow Jews to join them in the resistance, they made great promises of freedom from the tyrant in Rome. They behaved as good politicians by speaking “*great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage*” (Jd 16).

If we could conclude Jude’s final words to the Jewish insurrectionists among the early church, it would be that brethren should never in any way behave as ungodly political leaders among the brethren. If one does such, he is as Paul stated in the following exhortation to the Corinthians, among whom some were behaving politically:

*For we dare not class or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, **are not wise** (2 Co 10:12).*

A final exhortation was in order for the faithful. During those

times of social chaos—the times in which the innocent Christians of those years of Rome’s onslaught against Jewish insurrection would suffer—the faithful needed to remember who was in total control of all things. So as a reminder and encouragement for the faithful, Jude concluded with the following statement:

*To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be **glory and majesty, dominion and power**, before all time and now and forever. Amen* (Jd 25).

Chapter 2 THE GOSPEL IS TRUE

When Christians fail to do that which Peter, in his final words, admonished his readers to do—grow in our knowledge of the grace of God—we inadvertently set ourselves up for trouble (2 Pt 3:18). We must not forget that our faith is based on our belief that the gospel is historically true. The Son of God was incarnate into the flesh of man. This is true. He offered His incarnate body on a cross. This is true. He was resurrected. This is true. He ascended into heaven. This is true. He is presently reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords. This is also true. This is **the truth of the gospel**.

But when we begin to forget these sacred truths, then we are in trouble. We forget by not understanding the truth of the gospel as we become infatuated with our own religiosity. And in order to protect our religiosity, there is only one thing that can be done. We must write some type of creed or catechism by which we begin to judge the faithfulness of the adherents to our favorite religion. In all this quagmire of religion, it is often difficult to restore a knowledge of the truth.

When everyone speaks the same thing, then everyone stops thinking. This is the curse of cults and religions. It is the fatal error of the social philosophy of Marxism. It is also the problem with the legalist who turns the New Testament into a catechism of self-justification through meritorious law-keeping. For the legalist, once all the statutes

have been determined that must be obeyed, then everyone must stop thinking about any new statutes. Neither should anyone question those statutes that have been established to define their particular religious heritage. Unfortunately, in doing such we have not identified the church. We have defined a meritorious system of law-keeping that is contrary to the grace by which the church is saved. Again we have forgotten what the Holy Spirit declared: “*For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves*” through any meritorious law-keeping (Ep 2:8). And again, “*For you are not under law, but under grace*” (Rm 6:14).

This is particularly true in reference to how we understand “the truth” of the gospel. Unfortunately, we sometimes define “the truth” to be a legal system of statutes by which we can justify ourselves as righteous before God, and thus be classified as those who are “of the truth.” We convince ourselves that after we have obediently performed “the truth” of our established statutes of meritorious law-keeping, we are then justified before God. By believing this, we have relegated ourselves to cultic religious behavior and actually submitted ourselves to a theology that is contrary to the gospel. We have stopped thinking, and subsequently, we have stopped studying our Bibles.

In our submission to “the truth,” we have failed to understand that the New Testament is not a document on law by which we would measure ourselves justified before God. It is a road map of instructions from a Father who seeks to prepare our hearts for heaven in our response to His Son. Contrary to “the truth” being a system of self-justifying laws, it is the gospel of the sacrificial offering, resurrection and reign of the incarnate Son of God. These historical events are true, and thus they are “the truth of the gospel.”

In the New Testament, “the truth” refers to the obedience of the incarnate Son of God on our behalf, not to something that we would be so presumptuous to do in order to put God in debt to save us (Rm 4:4). It is truth that He obediently performed on our behalf: “*For it was fitting for Him [the Son of God], for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings*” (Hb 2:10). “***And having***

been made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him” (Hb 5:9).

Nevertheless, we have discovered over the years that many have established a legal system of religious behavior that is actually contrary to the truth of Jesus’ obedient behavior to go to the cross for our salvation. We have turned this gospel journey of Jesus into a legal system of laws that must be obeyed. Our legal response to His obedient sacrifice may arise out of a sincere desire “to do the will of God.” However, as we study through this matter in the New Testament, and when we come specifically to the document of Galatians, our legal response is actually “another gospel,” or as Paul reminded the Roman disciples, the establishment of a law of “sin and death.” In other words, if “the truth” is a meritorious system of law-keeping, and obedient self-justification thereof is necessary, then we have made “the truth” to stand in contrast to the gospel of grace that sets us free from meritorious law-keeping.

•**A strike at the heart of the gospel:** By establishing a legal system of theology by which some sought to meritoriously justify themselves through the keeping of law, an inherent problem arose among some of the disciples of the first century. This problem struck right at the heart of the gospel of grace. In fact, it was a denial of the gospel. It nullified the effect of the cross to transform lives. And in nullifying the effect of the gospel, some severed themselves from Christ.

At the time, the problem was so severe that the Holy Spirit had to inspire two documents (Romans and Galatians) to be written in order to deal with this matter, lest the church vanish into the maze of just some religion of the day that was based on theology.

Stated briefly, the two dissertations of Paul from the Holy Spirit were based on the inability of any person to live righteously according to law in a way whereby one could successfully justify himself before God through perfect keeping of law. Therefore, when a legal system of “the truth” (law) is developed to which one must conform perfectly in order to be self-justified, then grace is replaced with meritorious law-keeping, and thus, the justification of the cross is nullified. Those who were seeking to self-justify themselves through a theology of perfect

law-keeping snubbed the justification that came from the incarnational offering of the Son of God on the cross.

In dealing with this problem that actually denied the grace of God and marginalized the cross, Paul eventually had to state clearly, “*You are not under [meritorious keeping of] law, but under grace*” (Rm 6:14). We must understand exactly what he meant in this statement in order to discover that “the truth” **is not a systematic theology of self-justification or worship**. On the contrary, it is the good news about the incarnational offering of the Lord Jesus Christ, His resurrection, ascension and present reign as King of kings (See 1 Co 15:1-4). “The truth” is about Him and what He did for us, not about what we do for Him through a certified system of self-justification. All this theology—all of which is only an organizational system of meritorious rites, rituals and ceremonies—is misleading. Such leads one from focusing exclusively on the cross and the imputed righteousness of God that is projected to everyone who obeys the gospel.

- **The truth of the gospel:** It is difficult for those who want to walk according to their manufactured system of religion to restore motivation in behavior that is based on the gospel. Sometimes people are more zealous to defend their religious heritage, than the gospel of God’s grace. This is true because it is sometimes easier to fall back on our religious heritage, and the laws or traditions that define such, than to defend our behavior in response to the grace of God. This is especially true when one is doing nothing in his or her life other than sitting on a church pew every Sunday morning. Grace will simply not allow one to be content while settled into the comfort of some church house.

When the early modern-day missionaries went forth to people who were less educated, they often found it easier to prescribe obedience to some simple system of law. In prescribing obedience to an outline of law, it was a simple matter of teaching an outline of what was supposedly necessary to be an obedient child of God. In reference to salvation, and since there were five fingers on one hand—then the “gospel” that was preached was “hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized.” There were a host of proof texts under each point. And since there

were five fingers on the other hand, in order for one to remain faithful to God by worshiping in truth, then all the novice Christians had to do every Sunday morning between an opening and closing prayer was to “sing, preach, pray, serve the Lord Supper, and not forget the contribution.”

All the above supposedly composed “true worship” if legally performed every Sunday. By teaching his five-plus-five religious identity of the church, the church was supposedly established by the obedience of those who were cloned after the “gospel of law-keeping.” Reports were subsequently written back to supporters that there was a new “church” established in the village. There were members of this church who were carrying out the “five-by-five” identifying “marks of the church.” The growth of the church was then determined by how many cloned assemblies were meeting at different locations as autonomous groups.

At the time we were imposing this “form of teaching” on the people, we paid little attention to the incarnation of the Son of God. We forgot to teach the cornerstone concept of what Paul reminded the Philippians, “*Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus . . .*” (You can read the rest in Ph 2:5-8). Paul then carried on with the incarnational journey of the Son of God. Nevertheless, in teaching the subject of the gospel, we spoke of the sacrificial offering of the cross, but we often forgot to focus on the implications of Hebrews 10:5: “*A body You have prepared for Me.*” At the beginning of the incarnational journey of the Son of God, the Father had to prepare a body on earth in order that the events of the gospel occur (See Jn 1:1,2,14). If we would be disciples of this incarnate Deity, then we too must go through a transformation. We cannot incarnate into flesh and bones, for we are already there. However, we can be transformed in mind (Rm 12:1,2).

The gospel journey of the incarnate Son of God demonstrated God’s love for us (Rm 5:8). Through this journey to the cross, the Son of God demonstrated grace. It is this love and grace that motivates worship (See 2 Co 4:15; 5:14; 1 Jn 4:19). We can start our journey with Jesus by having love and grace in our own minds and hearts.

But we must be cautioned that we too can become as those to

whom the Hebrew writer wrote. We can become dull of hearing (Hb 5:11). We can even be enticed to forsake our commitment by those religionists who surround and satisfy us with their theatrical concerts that excite experiential religiosity. We must not forget that experiential religiosity turns our focus from King Jesus to ourselves. Emotional subjectivism is a powerful motivation, and thus a powerful diversion from the power of the gospel.

- **Obedient response to grace:** We can be assured that we are not alone in our struggle to maintain our commitment to Jesus in the midst of a religious world that has become very religious, but not according to the word of God. Even one of Jesus' apostles fell into this religious quagmire by falling back into the security of his Jewish heritage. While in Antioch, the apostle Peter was intimidated by some legal religionists who came from Jerusalem with their "Jewish Christianity" (Gl 2:11-13). This entire incident should remind all of us that it is easy to be diverted from the power of the gospel. If Peter could be momentarily led astray, then certainly we ourselves can do the same.

For our benefit, the unfortunate lapse in gospel behavior on the part of the apostle was recorded for posterity in order to remind all of us that we too can slip back into the security of legal religiosity, and thus, forsake the power of the truth of the gospel. This same apostasy on a large scale was occurring in Galatia. Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, many Jewish Christians *en masse* were turning back to the Sinai law and the security of their Jewish religious heritage. The entire book of Hebrews was written in order to terminate this flow away from the truth of the gospel. In some ways, too many today find it reassuring to accept everyone as "Christian," and thus everyone is supposedly accepted by God in the performance of their religiosity. Therefore, we need to take another look at the actions of Peter.

We must reverently read what Paul wrote concerning his encounter with Peter that took place in Antioch: "*But when I saw that they [Peter and the other Antioch Jews] were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles, and not as the Jews, why do you compel the Gen-*

tiles to live as the Jews?’” (Gl 2:14). In behaving as he did, Paul said that Peter “stood condemned” (Gl 2:11). This is thus a serious matter because our religious behavior can in fact judge us condemned when we live contrary to the truth of the gospel.

Behavior that is not according to the gospel of grace is simply hypocritical behavior (Gl 2:13). It is hypocritical because one reveals his lack of inner commitment in reference to his faith. He may believe the right things in his head, as Peter who knew the truth of the gospel, but behave contrary to what grace teaches (See Ti 2:11,14). In reference to his behavior at Antioch, Peter knew better than to behave contrary to what he knew. We would say that in separating himself from the Gentiles because he was intimidated by some Jewish religionists who came from Jerusalem, he was “*not straightforward about the truth of the gospel*” (Gl 2:14). He behaved contrary to the nature of the gospel of grace. He thus stood condemned.

In this context, the Holy Spirit introduced the phrase, “**the truth of the gospel**” in the statement of Galatians 2:16. However, throughout the New Testament, the Spirit commonly used the abbreviated phrase “the truth” to refer to the truth of the gospel. This is significant in reference to understanding the phrase “the truth” as it is used in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit was consistent. He did not change the meaning of “the truth of the gospel” in Galatians when He used the abbreviated term, “the truth,” in other New Testament texts. “The truth,” when read in the epistles, therefore, must first be understood as a reference to “the truth of the gospel,” not to some legal system of religious rules that one would seek to keep in order to self-justify oneself before God.

- **The gospel is based on true historical events:** In order to be clear we must understand that in Galatians 2:16 “the truth” is defined by the phrase “of the gospel.” Therefore, our understanding of what the gospel is determines our understanding of what the abbreviated phrase “the truth” means in reference to the gospel. And herein many have gone wrong by making the gospel an analytical system of self-justifying religious law. However, in the Galatians context reference

was to how Peter **behaved**, not to what he believed.

Our behavior as a Christian is motivated by our belief that the events of the gospel are true. When in Antioch, Peter had a lapse in behavior, not because he changed his beliefs in reference to the gospel, or that he forgot the historical events of the gospel. It was that his behavior for a moment was not according to what he knew in reference to the truth of Jesus' incarnational offering, resurrection and kingdom reign. He had not forgotten what he preached on Sunday morning on Pentecost many years before (See At 2:14-36).

In missing this point in reference to Peter's behavior, some have subsequently brought law in as a definition of the gospel, and thus, brought into the church the law of sin and death. They have forgotten that "the truth" is not our meritorious relationship with some system of law, but a reference to Christ Jesus and the good news of His coming into this world. It is the gospel of Christ Jesus and what He did in this world that delivers us from the law of sin and death. Since this is true, then the phrase "the truth of the gospel" must be believed in order to motivate gospel behavior. Peter for a moment simply fell from the power of the gospel of grace to motivate correct behavior.

If we believe that the gospel is true, then we will act on our belief. This is what Paul wanted to remind the Corinthians. They would remain saved by the gospel on the condition that they continued to "*hold fast to that word* [by which the gospel was communicated to them] *which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain*" (1 Co 15:2). If we stop believing that Jesus was crucified, resurrected, and ascended to reign at the right hand of God, then we will lose the motivational power of the gospel.

The gospel can never be a system of law, because law only brings death. It brings spiritual death because no one can keep law perfectly in order to save himself. Law, therefore, can never bring good news, for in the presence of law, we sin. It is then as Paul wrote, "*For without law, I was once alive. But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died*" (Rm 7:9). Therefore, **if we make the gospel a system of law-keeping, then we have introduced sin and death into the body of Christ because we all continue to sin** (1 Jn 1:8). This is the other

gospel Paul mentioned that was being brought in among the Galatian disciples. It was already in the fellowship of the disciples in Rome (See Gl 1:6-9).

Therefore, we must be careful not to reverse the order of the phrase, “the truth of the gospel.” It is not “the gospel of the truth.” If we believe that the gospel is some system of self-justifying religious law-keeping, then we would be correct to say that it is “the gospel of the truth.” But this is totally contrary to what Jesus said to the Jews in the following statement: “*You will know **the truth** [Me], and **the truth** [about Me] will make you free*” (Jn 8:32). A new legal system of law would not make them free from sin. He would. Therefore Jesus said, “*I am the way, **the truth, and the life***” (Jn 14:6). In these two statements Jesus used the phrase “the truth” to refer to Himself and His salvational work as the incarnate Son of God who was going to the cross. The so-called “five steps” to salvation—hear, believe, repent, confess, baptism—**are not the gospel**. These are simply the responses of those in the book of Acts who believed the work of God through the incarnational journey of His Son from heaven, to earth, to the cross, and then back to His right hand to function as our only mediator between God and man (1 Tm 2:5). We must not confuse the response with the gospel journey of Jesus to which we must respond.

Jesus is the good news about our problem of sin. And thus, the phrase will always read, “the truth of the gospel.” There is no other good news in reference to our salvation. There is no good news in more laws to which we would supposedly conform in a meritorious effort to justify ourselves. On the contrary, the good news is about Jesus and the grace that was revealed through the true events of the incarnational journey of Jesus. He is the good news because through Him the grace of God was revealed. He did not institute a new law system that was supposedly meant to be our road map to self-justification.

We must not assume that the “other-gospel” teachers in Galatia had forgotten to teach Jesus. They did teach the gospel of Jesus. Unfortunately, they also added self-justifying obedience to certain religious laws to which they assumed one must also conform in order to be

saved (See At 15:1). Their teaching of the gospel of the Son of God thus became another gospel because of their addition of meritorious obedience to other religious rites, rituals and ceremonies that they deemed necessary to perform in order for one to be justified before God. And because they made these additions, they brought into the church a law of sin and spiritual death. No one could keep all the laws perfectly, and thus all spiritually died before God who assumed that they were self-justified because of their meritorious law-keeping, or tradition-keeping. They severed themselves from Christ by establishing their own religious system of righteousness (See Rm 10:1-3).

Chapter 3 TRUE WORSHIP

We must not believe that we are guarded from teaching another gospel simply because we teach the truth of Jesus' incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and kingdom reign. The problem is that we tag on to these gospel truths our own traditional teachings, methods, or heritage that we confuse with the simplicity of the gospel. In doing this we lead ourselves to believe that our add-ons are also necessary to believe and obey in order to be justified before God. This is particularly true in reference to a legalized ceremony of worship.

What we must keep in mind is that any obsession about obedience to our add-ons in an effort to self-justify or self-sanctify ourselves is an attack against the grace of God that was revealed at the cross. Because most religious people today understand little about the gospel, or at least focus little on the complete gospel, their worship of God has moved into a self-sanctifying experience of emotional experientialism. In other words, the more emotional one becomes during an assigned period of worship, the more sincere the worship is surely to be. This is particularly true in reference to the obsession with "speaking in tongues." As we explained in Book 44, *Experiential Religion vs Word-Based Faith*, the modern-day phenomenon is real, but it is not the work of the Holy Spirit (See *Biblical Research library*, africainternational.org). It is the

work of our own spirit when in a state of emotional upheaval. And in some cases, it is a self-sanctifying exercise on the part of the speaker.

Others, on the other hand, have gone to the extreme to create a legalized ceremonial assembly during which prescribed performances are carried out as “acts of worship.” It is believed that when the performances of these acts are all completed, then the supposed worshipers of “true worship” after a “closing prayer,” and then can go on their way, satisfied that they have worshiped God “in spirit and truth.” They have supposedly sanctified themselves for the week, and thus, will return next Sunday in order to perform another series of self-sanctifying ceremonies before God. Both of the preceding extremes, whether experiential emotionalism or legal orthodoxy, are attacks against the grace of God. Each focuses on the individual “worshiper,” and less on God.

• **An inherent denial of grace:** In his confrontation with Peter in Antioch, who along with some Jewish Christians who were also not walking straightforward according to the truth of the gospel (Gl 2:14), Paul embedded a principle that must always be kept in mind in reference to our salvation, and particularly our worship. We must remember the following lest we too bring into the body of Christ the law of sin and death, even in the manner by which we worship God:

Knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of Christ Jesus, even we [Paul and Peter] have believed in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by works of law, for by works of law no flesh will be justified (Gl 2:16).

There are two very important points in the above statement that reveal our relationship with God. First, the *King James Version* reads, “*Knowing that a man is ... justified ... by the faith of Jesus Christ.*” The Greek word that is translated “by” is *dia*. This Greek word is commonly translated “through.” This is the translation that is brought out in the *American Standard Version*: “... **through** faith in Jesus Christ.” The *New King James Version* gives a similar rendition, the meaning of which is found in Acts 13:39: “By Him [Jesus Christ] all

who believe are justified from all things.” The meaning of all these readings is that the incarnate Son of God, through His commitment (faith) to go to the cross, was the means by which all will be saved who believe in His sacrificial offering. In other words, the measure of His justification through the cross is not determined by our measure of faith in His work of redemption. On the contrary, in reference to our justification **all our faith must be placed in Him, not in our own faith. We must believe that the gospel of His atoning sacrifice was true and sincere on His part.** Our faith must not be meritorious, and thus cancel His faith to do the will of the Father for us in going to the cross (Lk 22:42).

Second, Paul was abundantly clear as he pressed hard with his feather-pen to paper in order to write, **“For by works of law no flesh will be justified.”** He made this statement twice in this one verse as if he knew we would have a difficult time understanding the concept. And we do. Nevertheless, taken at face value, no one can be meritoriously justified by perfect law-keeping simply because of what the Holy Spirit stated in Romans 3:23: *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* We kept on sinning against law even after we have been baptized into Christ.

Galatians 2:16 is thus clear. Jesus performed perfectly on the cross in order to justify our lack of performance. We must have absolute faith in His performance in order not to try adding our own performance of either good works, or a supposed perfect keeping of law, in order to subsidize His total and complete performance for our redemption. We must not even be so presumptuous as to offer legal worship to God in order to “please Him.” In doing so, we will actually displease Him because we are marginalizing the offering of His Son whom He gave for our justification. If we seek to justify ourselves through worship law-keeping, then are trying to either add to or subsidize His justification through the performance of our legal acts of worship.

Lest we make the mistake of interpreting Paul’s use of the word “law” in Galatians 2:16 to refer to the Sinai law, he purposely did not use the definite article “the” with the word “law.” It was not **“the Sinai law.”** It was any law that we might establish as a meritorious system of obedience in order to justify ourselves before God. We could even

make the “law of Christ” to be “another gospel” if we construct a systematic doctrine of “the truth” (acts of worship) we must perform meritoriously and perfectly in order to save ourselves. We must keep this in mind when we try to construct some system of “true worship” that is supposedly based on a ceremonial performance of our fabrication of “acts of worship.”

If we deceive ourselves into believing that we can obey perfectly any law we consider to be “the truth,” then we have introduced among ourselves the law of sin and death. We have forgotten that *“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death”* (Rm 8:2). The point is that we cannot keep perfectly any law, whether the law of Christ, or our own fabrications of law, in order to justify ourselves before God. Therefore, the Holy Spirit had some hard words for those who would introduce sin and death into the church: *“If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed”* (Gl 1:9).

Thankfully, however, our sins in Christ are cleansed by the washing of Jesus’ blood that continues to flow from Calvary (1 Jn 1:7). This is the continuation of grace in our lives. As with Peter, we must walk by faith in this grace and trust that God will save us from ourselves. Our faith is in the grace of God, not in our presumptuous claim that we can keep any system of law perfectly by which we can save ourselves.

Though we would quote Galatians 2:16 to affirm that one cannot establish any legal system of law by which he would justify himself before God, we have done just that in making “the truth” a legal system of law. We have established a legal system of law that we call “the truth,” and then we are so arrogant as to claim that we have justified ourselves before God because we have obeyed perfectly our legal system of “the truth.” In this way we have inadvertently switched around the phrase “the truth of the gospel.” We now consider it to read “the gospel of the truth.” We have assumed that “the truth” is the good news of a new set of laws that we suppose God would bind on us in order that we justify ourselves before Him. So we have forgotten what the Holy Spirit said: *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death”* (Rm 8:2).

We sometimes assume that we are justified by our own meritorious performance of what we have fabricated to be “the truth.” We then assume that we can self-justify ourselves when we are satisfied that we have correctly performed our fabrication. This problem leads us to becoming somewhat self-righteous religionists by throwing away everyone who does not measure up to our fabricated religion of “true worship.”

In our zeal to please God, we become as the Jews who established their own systematic theology of “the truth,” “*but not according to knowledge [of the word of God]*” (Rm 10:2). The problem with the Jews’ system of religiosity was explained by the Holy Spirit: “*For they [the Jews] being ignorant of God’s righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God*” (Rm 10:3). In our own zeal, we also do as the Jews by establishing a system of “the truth” in order to affirm that we are righteous before God when we meritoriously perform all the statutes of our improvised system of worship laws. We are often so zealous to keep our legal system of our “truth” that we will, as the Jews, lay aside the commandments of God (Mk 7:8).

- **“The truth” in reference to worship:** A good example of our misunderstanding of “the truth” is when this phrase is used in reference to worship. Throughout the years we have heard the common and misleading use of “the truth” in order to lay a foundation for a self-righteous system of law-keeping in reference to worship. This system of truth is often based on a misunderstanding of what Jesus said in John 4:23,24:

*But the hour is coming and now is when the **true worshipers** will worship the Father in spirit and in **truth**, for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and **truth**.*

We sincerely want to be “true worshipers.” However, in our zeal to worship God “in truth” we have established a meritorious system of

worship that is contrary to the entire theme of both Romans and Galatians, and thus, contrary to the gospel. For example, in order to identify ourselves as “true worshipers,” we often establish a legal system of “true worship” that can be identified by the performance of certain “acts of worship.” In other words, if the acts of this true worship are meritoriously performed every Sunday, then we assure ourselves that we have worshiped God in “truth.” We are even so arrogant to say that those who do not worship according to our legally defined “truth” of systematic acts of worship are not true worshipers.

As the Holy Spirit previously pronounced through Paul that no one can be justified before God through law-keeping, the same principle applies to our worship. But on this matter **we have contradicted the Spirit by establishing what we consider to be “the truth” (a system of law) in reference to true worship.** If any of the points of this “true worship” are violated or omitted, then it is supposed that one’s worship is not true. We are also quick to judge those who would be so presumptuous as to add to our legally defined system of “true worship.” In believing and behaving in this manner, we have established our own self-righteous worship, and thus have unknowingly denied the grace of God. We forgot that Christians are under grace, not meritorious law-keeping (Rm 6:14).

We have also forgotten that worship pours forth from a heart of thanksgiving and gratitude (2 Co 4:15). When we worship around the Lord’s Supper, remembering God’s love for us spurs us on to love: *“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge that if one died for all, then all died”* (2 Co 5:14). John was so strikingly clear on this matter that he proclaimed, *“And by this [our love for one another] we will know that we are of the truth [of the gospel], and will assure our heart before Him”* (1 Jn 3:19).

When we speak of true worship, it is not a matter of how, but why. We must focus on why we worship before we ask how. If we feel that we have sorted out the “how,” but ignored the “why,” then our worship is empty, void, and often vain. We find ourselves going through worship rituals, and thus feel empty after the “closing prayer.”

• **The rise of judges:** Unfortunately, our systematic theology on what is considered a legal system of “true worship” has encouraged us to be judges of others in reference to their worship. If others do not worship according to our legally-defined “true worship,” then they are worshipping God in vain. Even on the surface, with a novice study of the grace of God, we can perceive that there is something very wrong with this reasoning.

If one worships God from the heart, then what gives us the right to judge the hearts of others in reference to their worship? The problem is that we have established a systematic legal performance of supposed actions of worship that are fabricated from an arrangement of selected scriptures. Our “true worship” is thus according to our formulated legal statutes of law, **and not according to a heart of gratitude in response to the grace of God.** In other words, the fact that we have become judges of the worship of others is evidence that we have established a self-righteous legal system of worship by which we judge the worship of others. We judge the worship of others according to our improvised standard of laws that we have outlined as a definition of “the truth” in reference to worship. We have forgotten that true worship can never be the performance of a set of rules. Cults do this, but not Christians who live in gratitude of the grace of God.

Our legal systematic acts of worship, therefore, encourage us to be judges of the worship of others. But James would shock us into some reality on this matter. He asks every “worship judge,” *“There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy. **Who are you to judge another?**”* (Jas 4:12). If our legal system of “truth” in reference to worship inspires us to be judges of others in their worship, then our “truth” has made us lawgivers by which we would judge others. If we are honest with ourselves, we will conclude that there is no standard of law that we can use to judge the hearts of people in reference to worship. We can be only fruit inspectors, for by their fruits we will know them (See Mt 7:16,17).

This does not mean, however, that we should not allow the word of God to guard us from following after the doctrines of demons in reference to worship. The word of God is our guard against vain wor-

ship. True worship is governed by the word of God. We know God only through His word, and thus we know how He would be worshiped according to His word. Those who have no knowledge of the word of God will fabricate man-made systems of worship. What we are trying to do is to guard ourselves from using the word of God to fabricate a legal system of law that we presume to be the identity of a system of worship that is considered true. But it is simply true that worship cannot be legislated by law.

• **Supposed self-justification:** One of the greatest distinguishing marks of identity between man and animal is that man has the ability to worship a Higher Being. This is a wonderful privilege, if not experience. This is what makes us human. If one does not worship God as a result of faith, then he or she will sell themselves over to worship something, usually something that is of this world, or at least a god we create after our own imagination. And then again, we are different than animals because we can imagine something that is beyond our own existence. We are worshipful beings. We cannot help ourselves. However, in the context of worship many people have convinced themselves that they can be justified before God through the meritorious performance of worship rules they have constructed to please themselves more than God. It is for this reason that we often have difficulty understanding the following statement of the Holy Spirit: *“For sin will not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace”* (Rm 6:14). In other words, if we deceive ourselves into believing that we are justified before Him whom we worship with the performance of some “worship laws,” then we are under sin, not grace. We have actually nullified grace through our own self-deception that we can legally justify ourselves before God through law-keeping.

Those who have constructed a legal system of “true worship” will have difficulty understanding what the Holy Spirit wanted to say to the Roman disciples in the preceding statement. Actually, what the Spirit was trying to do was to bring the disciples back under grace by delivering them out of their efforts to self-justify themselves through perfect law-keeping. If we would seek to worship God truthfully, then we must

implement in our lives this road map back to true worship.

The books of Romans and Galatians are dictionaries on this matter. These two letters were written in order to remind all of us that we are saved by grace, not by the perfect law-keeping of a five-point outline on what we supposed to be true worship. Therefore, our worship is inspired by grace, not by law-keeping. Maybe Romans 11:6 will help: *“And if by grace [we are saved and worship], then it is no more by works [of law], otherwise grace is no more grace.”*

Self-justification in reference to worship can be quite deceiving. Efforts to self-justify oneself in worship goes beyond legal obedience to certain ceremonies of worship that we might organize for ourselves for a Sunday morning performance. On the contrary, our attendance in assembly itself is by some considered to be a self-justifying legal performance for acceptable worship. We must not forget that the hortatory statement of Hebrews 10:24,25 was made in reference to assembly, not worship. The statement of the text was not an imperative command to assemble for worship. Therefore, worship is not contingent on being present at some assembly. Some have erroneously assumed that if one is not in the assembly of the saints, then he or she cannot worship God. This is self-justifying worship based on one’s ability to assemble with the saints. But such is a wrong conclusion, and based on an erroneous concept of worship.

A good example that refutes the concept that worship and assembly are contingent on one another is understood from the case of Elijah. When Elijah fled to Horeb in the wilderness, escaping the murderous plot of Jezebel to kill him, God reminded him of one very important point that would apply directly to his individual worship of God alone in the confines of his own house back in Palestine. From a cave in Horeb, Elijah complained to God, *“The children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and slain Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I alone am left”* (1 Kg 19:10). This is a significant statement. Elijah thought that he alone was the last true worshiper of God in all of Israel. As the only remaining true worshiper of God, he thus worship **alone**. We must not miss this point.

But then God exhorted the prophet, who at that very moment was

worshipping God alone in a cave, with the following words: “*I have left for Me 7,000 in Israel whose knees have not bowed to Baal*” (1 Kg 19:18). Elijah thought that he alone was the only one who worship God with his knee bowed to the only true and living God. He thus worshiped alone, for he thought he was alone. Therefore, when one is alone as Elijah, he or she too can bow his or her knee to the one true and living God, and worship.

Worship is not dependent on some assembly with others for the sake of performing ceremonies of worship acts. If one thinks that he or she should be in an assembly with others in order to worship, then he or she does not understand worship. He or she does not understand that one must be worshipping God even before showing up with others in order to worship together. Those who think that worship is dependent on assembly with others need to consider those who cannot, because of age, attend any assembly. The aged can worship God just as reverently as those who might be sitting in the midst of a crowd of one thousand people. In fact, it might be right to judge that those who worship alone have less distractions than those who worship in the assembly of a multitude of distractions.

- **True worship out of gratitude:** True worshipers worship God out of their heart response to the grace of God, not according to some legal system of law whereby they can affirm that they have meritoriously performed legally and correctly certain acts of worship between an opening and closing prayer.

An older disciple can sit quietly in a rocking chair in his or her own home, with a tear slowly flowing down from a closed eye, and be worshipping God in spirit and truth. A younger, more energetic person might be somewhat more animated and expressive with bodily movements in his or her worship. But the worship of both is true when motivated by a spirit of gratitude for the grace of God. Therefore, we have no right to be “worship judges” in reference to either.

As one sits quietly in a chair at home during the pandemic restrictions of the Covid lockdown, he or she can be assured that his or her heartfelt worship is pleasing to God. We can be assured that our

worship is true without all the concert performances of a theatrical assembly, or the supposed ritualistic ceremonies that we have convinced ourselves that we must meritoriously perform in an organized assembly. One of the greatest advantages of the Covid pandemic is that people of God around the world have been forced into isolated situations wherein they must take another look at the subject of what is considered true worship.

Christians are motivated in true worship by their gratitude for the grace of God. This can take place both publicly and in the privacy of one's own home. Worship is not defined by the public performance of a number of legal statutes that we have orchestrated from a series of proof texts on an outline. Worship is spontaneous from the heart. This is true worship that is motivated by the gospel. This is exactly what Paul meant when he urged the Romans to present their bodies as living sacrifices to God, which thing "*is your reasonable service*" (Rm 12:1). Some translations read, "spiritual worship."

If we satisfy ourselves with our perfect keeping of some legal system of worship that we have formulated as a systematic theology of public worship, and to which we refer to as "true worship," then we have marginalized the motivating power of the grace of God. Paul said that we are not under such a system of law-keeping, which system we would assume to include our worship. On the contrary, we are under grace that generates worship from a heart that has responded to the gospel journey of the incarnate Son of God. We thus worship out of our gratitude for His love to make such a journey on our behalf.

Grateful hearts need no systematic set of rules to worship. They need no legal "acts of worship." They need no "place of worship." Temples, church houses or cathedrals. This means that we do not need some ceremonial system of law that prescribes how we are to worship at some "place of worship."

Obedience to rules of law stimulates limited worship. We are motivated only by the sense of self-satisfaction that we have obeyed the law. But response to the gospel sacrifice of the Son of God moves us in worship beyond the calculated measures of keeping legal acts of worship in some designated "place of worship." In contrast to being

subject to a legal system of worship laws, we are subject to the true fact of Jesus' incarnational journey on our behalf. It is our understanding of this truth that causes true worship in our hearts (See 2 Co 4:15). The more we understand the grace of God that was revealed through His Son, the more intense and sincere our worship becomes. If we would increase the sincerity of our worship, therefore, then we must "*grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pt 3:18).

Again, one of the advantages of the Covid pandemic is that the lockdowns have forced believers around the world not to depend on the crutch of ceremonial worship performances in church houses. We have discovered that our own house is the best "place of worship" with our families. Therefore, we are all encouraged to dig deep into our own hearts in order to worship God without all the surrounding stimuli that we thought was so necessary in order to generate worship. And the beautiful thing about it all is that we have learned that we can worship, even in the inner confines of our own closets.

- **Meritorious law-keeping severs one from Christ:** The Holy Spirit was serious about this matter. Through Paul He warned the Christians in Galatia, "*You have been severed from Christ, you who seek to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace*" (Gl 5:4). If one feels self-righteous because he has performed a certain system of acts in worship, then he has convinced himself that no grace is needed. After all, when one has satisfied himself with his legal performance of his legalized "true worship," then he can feel confident in his supposed self-justification through the performance of a ceremony of worship acts. If one feels self-sanctified in his worship after the "closing prayer," then he needs no sanctification from the cross.

We have found it most interesting that in our worship alone in the lockdowns of the Covid pandemic, the opening and closing prayers have all vanished away. We can now better understand what the Holy Spirit meant when He instructed that we "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Th 5:17). When we are not locked into an institutional performance of worship on Sunday morning, we now better understand that worship is

a daily offering of our lives to the Father, with occasional moments throughout the day when we offer prayer to Him in reference to something in which we are immediately engaged.

We must translate our understanding of worship into the context of the theme of both Romans and Galatians. In order to be clear, what the Spirit said in the statement of Galatians 5:4 is that those of us who would seek to be justified by our laws of worship (“acts of worship”) have actually endangered our relationship with King Jesus because we have convinced ourselves that we no longer need His grace that was revealed through the cross. We have caused ourselves to have fallen from grace because we have convinced ourselves that it is possible to be justified before God on the basis of our meritorious obedience to “the truth” in reference to our orchestrated performances of worship. Therefore, if we would assume that “the truth” in reference to worship is some system of meritorious law, then we are in trouble. We have denied “the truth of the gospel” by relegating the gospel of the Son of God to a legal system of worship and behavior. But this is not the gospel (See 1 Co 15:1-4). This is another gospel (Gl 1:6-9).

We must not forget that whenever we discuss worship, we are talking about **ourselves**. Whenever we are establishing law, we are talking about **ourselves** in reference to our obedience to the law. But when we talk about gospel, **we are talking about Jesus Christ**. It is simply for this reason that “the truth” can never be a reference to a system of law. It is always in the New Testament stated to be, “the truth of the gospel.” The focus is on the truth of King Jesus, not on ourselves.

If we are honest with ourselves, then we know that we cannot keep any law perfectly in order to demand our salvation, or to certify our worship as true before God. Therefore, if “the truth” is a code of law, then we are doomed, for we would have to obey “the truth” perfectly in order to be saved. But we know that we cannot do this. We know this while we are sitting there in an assembly with our minds wandering here and there about the things of this world. We then realize that we have sinned according to our definition of “true worship.” Therefore, we need to take another look at what the New Testament states in reference to “the truth,” especially “the truth of the gospel.” If we do not,

then we will as some in Galatia be teaching “another gospel,” and thus reap what the Holy Spirit declared in Galatians 1:9: “*As we said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.*”

Chapter 4 JESUS IS “THE TRUTH”

Paul reminded Timothy that God “*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of **the truth***” (1 Tm 2:4). When Paul used the phrase “the truth” in the context of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, he was using it as an abbreviated form of the complete phrase, “the truth of the gospel” that he used in the letter to the Galatians (Gl 2:14). Therefore, when Paul made the preceding statement, he wanted all men to come to a knowledge of the historical event of the Son of God coming into the world for the salvation of all people. The meaning of “the truth” **was not** in reference to learning a theological outline of scriptures in reference to some doctrinal system of law. Paul wanted the world to come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ and His redemptive offering for the sins of the world (See Rm 9:1-3; 10:1).

The gospel is not an outline of true points of a church catechism. “The truth of the gospel” is not some systematic theology that is assembled together through the organization of favorite proof texts. The abbreviated statement of this phrase, “the truth,” is not a reference to doctrine, though doctrine of the New Testament is true and important. But in reference to “the truth” as the phrase is connected with the word “gospel,” it is truth in reference to a Divine being and action in reference to the salvation of the world. Jesus explained, “*I am the way, **the truth, and the life***” (Jn 14:6). Jesus said that He was “the truth.” This is person, not doctrine.

Though the religionists to whom Jesus spoke on the occasion of the preceding statement in John 14 were seeking some systematic theology of traditions or doctrinal mandates from Jesus, at the time, they, as well as the disciples who stood with Jesus on the occasion, still

could not understand that He was the incarnate "Word of God." He was "the truth" that was revealed from God. He was God's Word through which redemption came to mankind.

Now consider this point in reference to Jesus, the incarnate Word of God, who stood before Pilate. Jesus said to Pilate, "*You say correctly that I am a king. For this reason I was born, and for this cause I came into the world, that I should bear witness to **the truth**. Everyone who is of **the truth** hears My voice*" (Jn 18:37). But Jesus' statement so befuddled Pilate that he responded to Jesus, "*What is truth?*" (Jn 18:38). What Pilate did not understand is that the "what" was the "who" who was standing before him. Jesus was "the truth" to whom John the Baptist gave witness (Jn 5:33). Jesus was the incarnate Word who was sent to mankind. This truth was far outside the understanding of Pilate at the time. The King who was before him was "the truth," the incarnate Word who had come into the world (Jn 1:1,2,14). This was "the truth" to whom the Father had given witness through the works that Jesus did in the midst of the people (Jn 5:36).

Nevertheless, regardless of Pilate's limited understanding of these spiritual matters, he was certainly not asking from Jesus some doctrinal manifest that would explain a systematic theology that Jesus was promoting, specifically in reference to the existence of Jewish insurrectionists who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. At the time, Pilate was frustrated, seeing Jesus only as a man whom the Jews sought to have eliminated. But he could find no fault in His behavior that would warrant His execution (Jn 18:38).

Our understanding that Jesus is "the truth" is brought out in Paul's letter to the Galatians. In the same context of those who would not walk according to the gospel in Jerusalem, Paul wrote, "*To whom [the legalistic Jewish religionists] we did not yield in subjection even for an hour, so that **the truth of the gospel** might continue with you*" (Gl 2:5). These were those who "*were not straightforward about **the truth of the gospel***" (Gl 2:14). Jesus was the good news that was revealed to the Galatians. He is the truth to which all people must gravitate. It is as Jesus said during His earthly ministry, "*And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me*" (Jn 12:32).

When the apostles first went forth to preach the gospel, people heard "*the word of the truth of the gospel*" (Cl 1:5). There is a difference between the medium of the preached word by which the gospel of Jesus is communicated to the world, and the gospel itself (See 1 Co 15:1-4). The gospel is good news about the truth of Jesus' incarnation, sacrificial offering, resurrection, ascension and reign at the right hand of God. We use words to communicate this salvational journey of the Son of God into and out of this world. These are the truthful events that must be preached to the world in order that all those who desire to hear might "*come to the knowledge of the truth [of the gospel]*" (1 Tm 2:4). It is knowledge of this Jesus to which all men must come.

When one ceases to believe the word by which "the truth" of Jesus is communicated, then he begins to turn from the truth of who Jesus is. His doubt assumes that he no longer believes any of the events of the gospel, and thus begins to doubt whether Jesus is the Son of God. There are those who enter into the body of Christ who were initially convicted by the truth of the gospel. But later they began to doubt the historical events of the gospel, and thus they eroded Jesus Christ as the foundation upon which their faith was built (1 Co 3:11).

When belief in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God is preached, church happens, because people believe that He is our resurrected Savior (See Mt 16:18,19). The church in turn becomes the medium through which the truth of the gospel is preached to the world (1 Tm 3:15). Nevertheless, there are those in the church who become "*destitute of the truth [of the gospel]*" (1 Tm 6:5). They are as Hymenaeus and Philetus, "*who concerning the truth [of the gospel] have strayed*" (2 Tm 2:18). In the case of these two brethren, they denied the gospel of the resurrection. And by making such a denial, "*they overthrow the faith of some*" (2 Tm 2:18).

God desires that we continue to grow in our knowledge of the gospel. The textbook of the New Testament must be devoured lest we ourselves be devoured by Satan. For this reason, the early evangelists returned to Christians who had initially responded to the gospel. They returned to teach again the gospel in order that they might come to "*a full knowledge of the truth [of the gospel]*" (2 Tm 2:26). Some wrote

to encourage the disciples to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (2 Pt 3:18). On one occasion, this was the reason why Paul wanted to make a trip to Rome. He wanted to go to the disciples in Rome in order that he might bear fruit among them through his continued teaching of the gospel (See Rm 1:13-16). He knew that some are “*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth [of the gospel]*” (2 Tm 3:7). Therefore, Christians must take every opportunity to study and discuss matters concerning the truth of the gospel.

In view of the fact that there are always present among the disciples “*men of corrupt minds*” (2 Tm 3:8), it is the work of every evangelist to continue to teach the gospel in order that the members of the body might come to a full knowledge of the gospel. This is necessary because there are always those in the fellowship of the church who “*will turn away their ears from the truth [of the gospel] and will be turned to fables*” (2 Tm 4:4). In the first century, these were those who gave “*heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth [of the gospel]*” (Ti 1:14). Such people need to remember the final warning of the Hebrew writer in reference to some Jewish Christians who were returning to the religion of the Jews: “*For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth [of the gospel], there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins*” (Hb 10:26).

Chapter 5

AN EXERCISE IN CONTEXT

Do not think that we have belabored the subject, the truth of the gospel. Sometimes it is necessary to go as deep as possible on crucial subjects as this in order to understand that in general, religion has led us astray from our focus on the gospel that we believe. Religion is so theologically orchestrated that systems of religious behavior have marginalized a knowledge of the gospel. This is particularly true in reference to those who would seek to live a political life in an effort to please everyone. In their quest to be political, they sometimes pay little homage to the events of the whole gospel, particularly to the incarna-

tion and present kingdom reign of King Jesus.

So in order to make an emphatic statement about what the Holy Spirit sought to remind all of us in the New Testament, the Spirit emphasized the power of the gospel as the central motivating factor to Christian living. There can be no politics in our total commitment to live the gospel. If we marginalize the gospel, we marginalize its power to transform our lives. We marginalize the cross and the sacrifice of the One who was nailed there.

- **The truth of the gospel means that the gospel is true:** In the three letters that Paul wrote to the two evangelists, Timothy and Titus, the fact of the gospel was made strikingly clear in his use of the phrase “the truth.” Before the letters were written, both evangelists had been with Paul for several years in his efforts to preach the gospel. These two former companions in the ministry of the gospel believed that the gospel was true. For this reason, Paul used the abbreviated form of the phrase “the truth of the gospel” in reference to all the gospel events and their significance throughout his letters to the two former fellow workers. He did not have to use the entire phrase. Because Timothy and Titus had preached the truth of the gospel with Paul for years, Paul needed only to remind the two evangelists of the message they had preached by using the abbreviated phrase, “the truth.”

Therefore, when we go on a journey with Paul through his three letters to Timothy and Titus, something becomes clear in reference to the power of the gospel and our necessity to continue to respond to the report (the New Testament) of the events that revealed the good news of God’s grace. If the reader has previously been schooled that the phrase “the truth” is a reference to some system of theology by which we can self-justify ourselves before God, then the following exercise of reading quotations throughout 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus will be quite helpful, if not revealing. If nothing would change one’s thinking from making “the truth” some self-justifying system of doctrine, to the historical events of the incarnational offering, resurrection, ascension and present kingdom reign of the Son of God that inspires godly living, then one is stuck in religion. He or she has denied the faith. He or she

has severed themselves from Christ. Therefore, the following is a reading of the texts of Paul's letters, with the phrase "of the gospel" added when Paul used the phrase "the truth":

- **1 Timothy 2:4:** God "*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of **the truth** [of the gospel].*" It is absolutely necessary to know the gospel before one can obey the gospel. However, knowing the gospel is not a matter of better understanding codes of doctrine. Neither is meritorious law-keeping the truth of the gospel. When we better understand the eternal sacrifice of the Son of God, it is then that we are motivated to begin living the gospel by first obeying it in baptism (Rm 6:3-6). It is this that God desires all men know. In order for the gospel to be known, it must first be preached.

- **1 Timothy 2:7:** "*For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I speak **the truth** [of the gospel] in Christ.*" Paul announced the true events of the good news. It was not an announcement of doctrinal matters of law-keeping that he preached to the world. It was the truth concerning the gospel journey of the incarnate Son of God. He was personally chosen by Jesus to preach this good news to the world.

- **1 Timothy 3:15:** "*But if I tarry long, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of **the truth** [of the gospel].*" We, the church, are the medium through which the events of the gospel are made known to the world. God will not send angels to preach the crucifixion and resurrection. We are the pillar and ground of the gospel simply because the world will never know the gospel unless we live and preach it.

- **1 Timothy 4:1,3:** "*Now the Spirit clearly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith [Jd 3], ... forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from foods that God has created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know **the truth** [of the gospel].*" Religionists will devise all sorts of religious rites, rituals and

ceremonies in reference to religious behavior. These performances are preached in order to draw people to favorite religious groups. But those who have obeyed the gospel will always receive with thanksgiving those things that have been created by God. They do so because they believe what Jesus did for them. Their motivation is the good news about the incarnational sacrifice of the Son of God and the fact that He is now reigning over all things.

- **1 Timothy 6:3-5:** Some are “*obsessed with controversy and disputes about words, from which come ... perverse disputings between men of corrupt minds and destitute of **the truth** [of the gospel], supposing that godliness is a means to gain.*” If there is no belief in the truth that Jesus is the resurrected King, then there is no power in the gospel to motivate change in our lives. Men can dispute about certain points on an outline of doctrine, **but there can be absolutely no debate about the events of the gospel journey of Jesus.**

- **2 Timothy 2:17,18:** “*And their word will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning **the truth** [of the gospel] have strayed, saying that the resurrection is already past. And they overthrow the faith of some.*” If indeed Jesus was not raised from the dead, then there is no reason to live righteously before God. Those who do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus have sucked the power out of the gospel. Their faith has been overthrown, and as those who presume to be followers of Jesus, they wreck the faith of others.

- **2 Timothy 2:24,25:** “*And the servant of the Lord must not quarrel, but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God perhaps will grant them repentance leading to a full knowledge of **the truth** [of the gospel].*” In other words, one cannot understand the good news of the incarnate Son of God if he does not live a repentant life. We repent in changing our lives to conform to the life that was illustrated by Jesus during His earthly ministry. Repentance in the New Testament is not in reference

to changing doctrinal beliefs, though one must change beliefs if he or she believes that the gospel events truly occurred. We believe what Jesus said because we believe He was raised from the dead. But we must first believe in the events of the gospel before we change our beliefs, and most important, change our lives.

- **2 Timothy 3:6,7:** *“For of these are those who creep into houses and lead captive gullible women weighed down with sins, led away with various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of **the truth** [of the gospel].”* If one would fully understand that the Son of God was crucified for our sins, then the desire to sin would be suppressed. But some, because of their desire to live unrighteously, never want to understand the love of God for them that was revealed through the incarnation and crucifixion of His Son. Those who do not want to transform their lives in order to spiritually align with Jesus will never understand who Jesus really was and is (See Rm 12:1,2).

- **2 Timothy 3:8:** *“Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist **the truth** [of the gospel]—men of corrupt minds, rejected concerning the faith.”* Those who are corrupted in their thinking have no desire to come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ and His sacrificial offering for their sins. Those who are rebellious against authority will always resist the authority that has been given to King Jesus (Mt 28:18; Ep 1:19-23; Hb 1:3).

- **2 Timothy 4:3,4:** *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching [about the gospel]. But to suit their itching ears, they will surround themselves with those who will agree with their own desires. And they will turn away their ears from **the truth** [of the gospel], and will be turned to fables.”* Some religions are created after the desires of those who want to live immoral lives. For example, many today seek to live in fornication (adultery, lesbianism, homosexuality) because they seek to follow after the lusts of the flesh. Some religions are fabricated around the desires of those who have thus gone astray morally. It is for this reason that they do not desire any knowl-

edge of a resurrected King Jesus before whom we all must eventually give account (See Hb 4:13; 9:27).

- **Titus 1:2:** *“Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the knowledge of **the truth** [of the gospel] that is according to godliness.”* The gospel is according to godliness because those who believe that the gospel is true seek to live a repentant life in conformity to the instructions of their Father.

- **Titus 1:13,14:** *“This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply so that they may be sound in the faith [Jd 3], not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from **the truth** [of the gospel].”* When religious people start believing in fables and the religious authority of the commandments of men, they turn away from the power of the gospel. Therefore, it is inherent in religion itself to be opposed to the true events of the incarnational journey of the Son of God.

- **Falling from a life-style:** Obedience in response to the gospel means that one is motivated to live within the parameters of the instructions of the One who loved us through the offering of His Son. Therefore, our lives must reveal that Jesus Christ is our Lord. Our submission to the lordship of Jesus must be revealed in the life of every disciple of Jesus. If one would fall away from the gospel, therefore, he falls away because his life is no longer motivated and controlled by the lordship of King Jesus. In the first century, such falling away was happening among many of the Jewish Christians prior to the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. This was a falling away that was addressed by the Hebrew writer about thirty years after the event of the gospel in Jerusalem. It was a falling away unto destruction (Hb 10:38,39).

James, John and Jude wrote at about the same time as the Hebrew writer, sometime in the decade before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A. D. 70. It is not incidental, therefore, that all four writers referred to “the truth” of the gospel events in their letters. Their use of the phrase “the truth” was a reference to the motivation that encour-

aged a life-style that would keep one in fellowship with God (See 1 Jn 1:3). It was not that people were falling away from a catechism of doctrine, but from the power that encouraged one to continue in the faith. The following statements, therefore, must be understood in the context of what the gospel of God's grace must cause in the life of those who believe that Jesus Christ is the incarnate, resurrected and reigning Son of God:

- **Hebrews 10:26:** *“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of **the truth** [of the gospel], there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”* This is not a reference to receive an outline of law, but receiving a knowledge that Jesus was the Messiah and offering of God for the sins of the world. If we would turn away from this truth, then the offering of Jesus for our sins no longer continues in our lives.

- **James 5:19,20:** *“Brethren, if any of you strays from **the truth** [of the gospel], and one brings him back, let him know that he who converts the sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”* The error is in straying from our belief that Jesus was the incarnate Son of God who was offered for our sins. We are saved by the gospel as long as we continue to believe in the salvational events of the gospel (See 1 Co 15:1,2).

- **1 John 1:6:** *“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice **the truth** [of the gospel].”* Reference here is not to performing the points on an outline of doctrine, but to living in thanksgiving of our Savior Jesus who offered Himself for us. The power of the gospel, therefore, is beyond salvational matters in reference to baptism for remission of sins. The power of the gospel continues in the lives of baptized believers in order that they are transformed into the image of the One who died for them (Rm 12:1,2). When lives are transformed, then people are living the gospel that they obeyed in baptism.

- **1 John 1:8:** *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive our-*

*selves and **the truth** [of the gospel] is not in us.*” It is true that we continue to sin when in Christ. However, if we say that we are not sinners in Christ, then the gospel of Jesus’ redemption is invalidated by our desire to live in sin. When we continue to allow the mind of the Son of God to influence our behavior, it is then that the transforming power of His gospel journey changes and guides our lives (See Ph 2:5-11).

- **1 John 2:4:** *“He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar. And **the truth** [of the gospel] is not in him.”* Those who are disobedient to the will of God cease allowing the grace of God to cause thanksgiving in their lives. Since the gospel of God’s grace must motivate us to be obedient to the will of our Father, if we say that we are living by the gospel while willfully sinning, then we are liars. One’s faith in the truth of the gospel motivates one to live in response to the gospel.

- **1 John 2:21:** *“I have not written to you because you do not know **the truth** [of the gospel], but because you know it, and because no lie is of **the truth** [of the gospel].”* We accept the letters of the New Testament because we have not grown dull of hearing (Hb 5:11). We believe what is written about the gospel because we believe the gospel.

- **1 John 3:19:** *“And by this we will know that we are of **the truth** [of the gospel], and will assure our heart before Him.”* We will know that we are living after the gospel when we live in gratitude of what the Son of God did for us at the cross. When we are motivated by this faith, then we are of the gospel. When we are motivated by the same love by which God loved us, then we know that we are of Him (1 Jn 4:9,19).

- **1 John 5:6:** *“This is He who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by the water and the blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is [bears witness to] **the truth** [of the gospel].”* The Holy Spirit bears witness to the gospel through the New Testament letters that were written in order to explain

the gospel, as well as reveal the effect the gospel had on the lives of thousands of people in the first century. The Holy Spirit is the revelation of the event of the gospel (See 1 Co 15:1-4).

- **2 John 1,2:** “*The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, for the sake of **the truth** [of the gospel] that dwells in us and will be with us forever.*” God and His Son dwell in us as we live in response to the redemptive work of the Son. His sacrificial redemptive work will take us into eternity.

- **3 John 3,4:** “*For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of **the truth** [of the gospel] that is in you, just as you walk in **truth** [of the gospel]. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in **the truth** [of the gospel].*” John’s reference to “walking” was a metaphor that explained the life-style of Gaius to whom he wrote. It was not that Gaius was living according to the subpoints of an outline on Christian living. He was walking in response to the fact that he believed that the gospel was true. In this way he lived in response to the gospel, and thus, the gospel was in him. We can know, therefore, that one believes the gospel by the manner of his or her behavior in response to the gospel.

- **3 John 8:** “*Therefore, we ought to show hospitality to such men [evangelists] so that we might be fellow workers for **the truth** [of the gospel].*” Jesus commissioned His first disciples to preach the gospel to the world (Mk 16:15,16). When Christians, as Gaius, financially support those who go forth and preach the gospel, then they are partnering with those evangelists they support. Supporting evangelists thus makes one a fellow worker to preach the gospel to the world.

- **3 John 12:** “*Demetrius has a good report from all, and of **the truth** [of the gospel] itself.*” If one walks in response to the grace of the gospel, then his walk reveals that he lives in response to the gospel. Our lives, therefore, should manifest to the world that King Jesus is our Lord.

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ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**