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THE MODEL CHURCH

OF ACTS

A commentary on the critical contrast between the:

Original Church and the Modern Church

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## Prefatory Statements

### 1. The Long-Neglected Need of Church Reformation.

The reason (which should be obvious, but is little-noted):

A degenerate church, with its general Laodicean condition, and corresponding need of doctrinal and practical reformation--particularly of its Arminian gospel theology. Rev. 3:14-22.

### 2. Identification of Root Cause of Problem.

That the church has for centuries, increasingly and critically, defected from the apostles' doctrine and correlating early church constitution (the fundamental principles and rules established in scripture for its operation and governance). And hence, from all but minimal performance of its corresponding responsibilities.

### 3. Desired Audience, Channels, and Anticipated Response.

Ultimately the church at large, if at all possible; first through its pastors and elders. But church prophecy indicates nothing but negative prospects for it, and my experience and observation of the last 25-30 years has been to encounter general resistance and opposition to the whole asserted problem.

The situation is analagous to the politics of our country, wherein the leadership does not seriously respond to direct approaches and appeals regarding its faults, but only after public arousal and protest. And then usually not until they are seriously threatened by major party or officeholder changes, which may impend or occur through the citizen voting process.

A willing or naturally disposed church audience or readership is not readily available, because of the deep-rooted nature of the problem which the material addresses. The work is reformational; yet, its objects, who are the great majority of the contemporary church, are scarcely aware of any particular need of reformation (as exemplified by Rev. 3:17).

But the effort must be made to reach whoever may eventually listen (per the admonitions of Rev. 3:18-22, et al).

## Observations and Thoughts

When Christians assert the postulate that the Bible is the only authority for doctrine and life, as a fundamental governing rule; what do they really mean?

Universally, Christians claim the above principle in defense and confirmation of their faith. Yet, no matter how "sincerely" they may mean it, the subtle reality is that it is how they interpret the Bible's words (principles, doctrines, practices, etc.), and that they call their "authority" for what they represent to be the truth--that is to be seriously questioned and examined.

Christians, individually, and churches must come to see their plight (see again Prefatory Statements, 1 and 2), and work to hopefully change their situations for the better (which must be ultimately all the way to the full, unadulterated truth). That is, to extricate themselves from their involvement in doctrinal error, and its resultant worldliness, carnality, and general unfaithfulness to God and his word--all due primarily to deviation from the "apostles' doctrine" as fundamentally laid down for us in Acts (particularly), as well as throughout the New Testament.

There is an inveterate condition in mankind, which renders virtually everyone instinctively closed-minded, or resistant to change; even to honest consideration of anything contrary to their beliefs, habits, and feelings. It is a defense mechanism, which while it can work for us if we are right about what we are protecting, it works against us if we are wrong and need to hear and learn the real truth (not that there is any other kind).

Truth is liberating; error is restricting! In an erroneous belief system there are basic false assumptions arising out of deviant thoughts and ideas; to which tendency or habit-fallen, mentally corrupt man is predisposed.

As we are so clearly and beautifully told in I Cor. 2, unsaved, unregenerate persons can not understand scriptural, doctrinal truths, because they are spiritually discerned. And, of course, only Christians have the Spirit of God, by which they may know the things of God.

Yet, what great irony there is in the fact that the mainstream majority of Christians hold interpretations of biblical doctrine that are not truths, but significant errors, and hence misrepresentations of various elements of the Gospel, and other biblical teaching.

What, then, is the subtle, almost universally pervasive factor that causes a Christian to resolutely hold beliefs containing error admixed with the truth--which makes for a corrupt theology, masquerading for the real thing; that is, the pure truth, for which we are responsible, without exception?

The answer is the "flesh"; the old nature! Rom. 6, 7 and 8. It predominates most of the average Christian's life. You are no doubt inclined to ask how I can make such a sweeping, judgmental statement, which has the effect of accusing the majority of the church of being seriously in error--both in constitution and practice! Yet, not without understanding and sympathy, these are honest, discriminating (non-prejudicial) criticisms that I believe are substantially accurate, and hence characteristic of most of today's church.

Hopefully, the following material will help provide insight, and guidance to solutions needed to cleanse the church of its defilement with error, so that we might come to have more of a testimony like unto our Lord Jesus Christ:..... "the faithful and true witness". Rev. 3:14.

## Chapter 1

### "The Apostles' Doctrine"?

How do you know that all the doctrine you hold is true? An oversimplified question? I don't think so. Let me cite an example--a pastor, clearly fundamental in basic theology and practice, made the following remark when asked about a certain doctrinal controversy. The inquirer being of the right wing extreme of the issue, and the pastor of a moderately conservative, yet opposite position. When asked how he knew he was "right" in his view--which he had claimed to be-- he simply said that he preached the word (of God), not an opinion or something different. The inquirer's reply was "but unless you preach the bible verbatim, you are using your own words in conjunction with the word", which, then, is subject to proof that it is the complete true representation of the applicable scripture.

He did, with some surprise, agree that the point was well taken, and at least implicitly acknowledged the questionableness of his assumption. Now this was no novice, but a pastor of many years experience, being essentially very committed to preach and teach the scriptures accurately. And except for this major doctrine (predestination) which, however, interrelates with other integral biblical subjects--he was comparatively sound and knowledgeable in his ministry.

First of all, why was he so sure that he accurately preached the "word" on the subject? If indeed, as I know, he is definitely Arminian in his salvation theology, then that itself makes for a particular view of the subject. The main fault with his basic creed is assumption! He (like us all) is a product of his influences. Assuming because of comparative fundamental conservatism, and the false comfort of a long-standing majority position--that his teachers, peers, etc. were right in the interpretations of scripture which they taught, but who themselves were subjects of similar influences.

If the true meaning of any and every doctrine could be determined, and how can we doubt that God has sufficiently revealed the truth of every subject of His word, what would justify not doing it? What ever stopped Christians for centuries now from carefully proving what they professed to believe? Especially something so central and integral as the gospel! When any of us stand before the Lord in judgment, what will we say? That this was what we were taught, or that most of the historic and contemporary church maintained as truth? We must believe and acknowledge that God made each of us individually responsible for what we believe, but also be thankful that he has given us the means to prove it directly in His word, and with Him in prayer and communion. Yet he did not intend for us to operate independently, but with the church in a continuous effort to consistently maintain his truth without corruption.

What, then, are the implications of all this? If we could clear our heads of all the suppositions and preconceived ideas that we

automatically perpetuate, we would start from square one; which may be the same as if we knew nothing yet, and then painstakingly proceed to learn and establish the truth of every subject, which we should have done from the beginning.

That is true scholarship, and the only safe course of action to protect us against the inclination to follow prevailing human influences. Is this not the admonition of I Cor. 3:10, where Paul said that he had "laid the foundation (Christ), and another buildeth thereon"? "But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon". Technically, this refers to ministers, teachers, etc., but we are personally responsible for our own "building". Will it be gold, silver, and precious stones; or will the large majority of the church continue to embrace the wood, hay and stubble of the Arminian concept of the gospel, by dishonoring God's true gospel? The Laodicean church prophecy of Rev. 3:14-16 says yes, unfortunately; but the counsel and warnings of vss. 18-22 of the same chapter are applicable and available to whoever will take heed and follow the Lord out of that dishonorable plight.

Nobody would argue the fact that the scriptures are to be the source of all our spiritual beliefs. They not only start us off right, they guarantee to keep us on the right track. But, not automatically! We are not automatons. Neither do so-called intentions, or commitments--even surrender and consecration--insure unerring results.

We are responsible to do something; mainly by absolute obedience to God's commands, especially "rightly dividing the word of truth". And to do that with every doctrine, and then to unswervingly maintain that ground in the face of every tendency and temptation to temper it with man's and Satan's errors and lies.

### The Early Church Practice

I doubt if the conditions and practices described in Acts 2: 41-47, where the Christians did everything necessary to keep themselves right with God and each other in the early church, prevailed intact more than a few generations, if that. "That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27) is what God wants us to be doing continually throughout the church age. But, sadly, it does not reflect more than a small percentage of the church's testimony today. And even then, it is mainly only to be found in individuals, and seldom in whole assemblies, if ever.

A simple example of how serious and extensive God's commands and principles are, can be seen in the precedent of the passage being considered. Acts 2:42 says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine", etc. Note the word "they". A quick reading can miss the full significance of just one, but often key word. Who is the "they"? You naturally answer: 'the church', in that place. But think a little further, considering the practical, technical comparison to our churches today.

"They" means all; every one of them! If we put a present day meaning to it, we are very apt to think majority, but not every single member. But why wouldn't it have been exactly what it says? Impossible, you may say! But not to begin with, having been taught directly by the apostles, who had it completely right --receiving it straight from God. The trouble has been keeping it that way; even for more than a comparatively short time after, it would seem.

If the latter situation can be found to exist, it can be shown --both by honest observation and logical deduction--what the fault is, and why it prevails throughout the universal church.

Let's put the proposition in the context of new believers who start with the truth (assumedly)--elementary and untested. The subject can be better followed and understood by moving back mentally to the original, primitive church setting.

First, then, how do we know they (the first church) started with the right doctrine (as you assume that you did)? Because the Acts account of their beginning says they did, which we will look at a bit later. But, by comparison, where is the proof that what you, or your church, believes is right? There is, of course, no inspired record of your church's testimony and activity.

Yet, the same scriptures are the proof, the test of truth and error to be applied to each and every church. The hard part is for one in error to surrender his defensive posture, and openly subject his beliefs to the acid test of true interpretation.

We cannot just say that what we believe is true; it has to be proven! To ourselves first, and then by mutual testimony to each other for the unity of the church, which God requires; yea, mandates! We are many centuries, or nearly two millenia removed from the early church, and if, as history will attest, doctrinal errors crept into assemblies even in the first century (which errors may still exist today), how many times must other deviations and corruptions have occurred in all the intervening years since?

What degree of perfection is possible for the church? If we mean flawlessness, or faultlessness, we are of course being completely idealistic and impractical. How high of a standard, then, are we responsible to achieve and maintain? Will you, or can you, draw the line? Has God set the rules, or criteria, for us to conform to? If you say yes, can we determine and mutually agree to such terms?

Where do we start? It should be easy to think: "at the beginning", "square one", etc., but do <sup>we</sup> really know where that is? In your own personal experience it was when you became a believer, and the Bible tells you how to proceed in the Christian life from that point, progressively throughout your earthly life. But in the church context, you are not only responsible for personal con-

duct and testimony, but also to determine if the church itself is doing, in all respects, what God ordained it to do. Personally, and collectively, there must be conformity to whatever standards God has revealed for its constitution (fundamental, operating principles and practices).

Can we actually find a charter, or complete formula to follow to fully comply with God's will for a uniformly functioning church? By which, I mean a complete framework of explicit and implicit conditions and parameters; all in one short section of scripture? Could the record of the first church give us all of these basic essential requirements for a fully faithful, successful church?

And even though we know with practical reality that such a degree of perfection probably will not be attained, and far less maintained for long (this due to man's inveterate tendency to allow the "flesh" to control at least some part of him, even in spite of all the spiritual knowledge (?) he may have), does that justify anything less than striving for the maximum possibility? Certainly many individuals throughout history have met and maintained that level of integrity, and possibly some churches. But, again, the vast majority of Christians have undoubtedly missed the mark in various inexcusable ways (all starting with some basic wrong first steps). One step off the right road keeps us going in the wrong direction, until we turn back and get on where we got off--not farther down the line, because we will have missed something on the road that we need before we can go on to all the other things that God has mapped out for us along the way, in His perfect order and timing.

To stress the importance of every believer's submission and cooperation (as in the adage "that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link"), let us see it together in the Acts 2 precedent and model; vs. 42, "they (all, per vs. 41) continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers"; vs. 43, "And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles"; vs. 44, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common"; vs. 45, all (being implicit in vs. 44) "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need", vs. 46, " And they (again, implicitly all) continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (solidarity, complete unity); vs. 47, "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be (were, by His election) saved".

#### Today's Church Comparison

Now think for a minute of how too easily you might think that you and your church could make the preceding claims, as either existing, or that you would do if called upon to do the same things under persecution, as that church did.



But, in reality, practically every church today would be found to be out of compliance at the very first verse--by individually and collectively not "continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, etc." And more than likely, hardly any of us have endeavored to prove every doctrine; especially soteriology (predestinated salvation facts vs. human concepts).

And then, even if you and a majority of your church do conform to the pattern, what about the members that don't? You may say you have tried through preaching, counselling (probably rarely), etc., to help them see their need, failures, errors, etc. After which, without success, it becomes touchy and very difficult to deal with; doesn't it? And the longer it is delayed--seemingly and practically impossible. Reformation, whenever it has begun, usually finds slow acceptance in the first generation because the errors and faults are so long and deeply entrenched that it meets with strong, united resistance. It is not a battle for the faint-hearted, or weakly-resolved soldier.

Going back and looking at the Acts case, how did they do it? First of all, they had a close community style of living, mainly due to the persecution circumstances of the time. And I am not advocating a commune or isolation type of life, either. But the effect is there in the practice of being often in contact and communion together with the Lord to minimize the ever-present tendency toward wrong ideas, feelings, influences, pressures, etc. In other words, to "nip it in the bud". This, of course, takes strong commitment; but being separated from the world requires something very similar to the first church's methods.

Acts 2:41-47 is a pattern, the precedent, for us to follow in our beliefs and what we do with them--a simple, but essentially complete outline of all the fundamental components of Christian responsibility for the success of the church through obedience to the Lord, and cooperation with him and each other. We must measure ourselves, individually and as churches, against the full implications of those scriptures (as directly applying, even demanding our compliance with every one of the principles involved in them).

How else can we strive to be of "one accord, one mind", as in Phil. 2:2, with the concomitant harmony, security, and safety resulting from being in such a united, close walk with the Lord? The process of becoming, and continuing to be of one accord, and one mind is, to be sure, a constant responsibility of facing testings, questions, differences and difficulties; but both the remedy and resolution of all these things are greatly enhanced--even guaranteed--by that kind of close-knit, consistent interaction and subjection.

On the subject of the early Christians having received the word of God directly from the apostles: the scriptures have preserved to all generations the same essential meaning of any particular

doctrine of God, as the early church had; that is, "the apostles' doctrine". Of which, while there may be many applications carefully made, there is--regarding actual doctrinal meaning--essentially only one true interpretation of particular scriptures. And, contrary to common practice, separate scriptural verses should not be treated as stand-alone proof of theological positions. I Pet. 1:20 ("no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation"). That is, private in the sense of separate, or independent.

When I said, above, that the Acts 2 record of the early church is important even to test and prove our doctrinal beliefs, I meant that we cannot assume that we have the same true knowledge as they had (or in other words, that we actually walk after the tradition of the elders, II Thess 3:6. (1) God, of course, has it right, (2) the apostles had it right, (3) the early church had it right, But (4) how do we know that we have got it right? The scriptures themselves are the only source of proof, and as with the Berean Christians...."they received the word gladly(not resistantly, nor gullibly), etc.....and searched the scriptures daily (continually insuring and guarding the church against error) whether those things were so". Acts 17:11. Have you and your church followed this same consistent and assiduous practice with everything you have heard, read, or been taught? It should be more than evident from the contemporary church condition that only a small minority of believers today are comparable in total discipleship to the first Christians. Even though we have more scriptural teaching to guide us than they had, there has been a continuous degeneration in the spiritual quality of the church in general for centuries now (even as prophesied, Rev. 2 & 3).

"And they (the original church, Acts 2) continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine". What is the apostles' doctrine, and does it apply to us, per se? First of all, the doctrine is the gospel, directly given to the apostles by the Lord. Until the new testament canon was completed, the apostles were the vehicle of revelation of God's word.

## Chapter 2

### The Leaven of Human Modifications

Now it is beyond question that the first church received the pure gospel, even as the new testament has preserved it to us, and will continue to as long as time endures. What then has happened in the church's intervening history to adversely affect the propagation of that truth (just as God gave it, and meant for it to be faithfully adhered to and ministered)?

Notwithstanding all the philosophical and pagan corruptions that have been done to the gospel message by false religions, there is within the true church a prevailing interpretive scheme, so seriously wrong, that it is in major respects a perverted gospel; but of which most of the church is woefully ignorant and unsuspecting. But let no one dare plead an excuse, or blame any-

one else! The sacred trust of the gospel delivered to the church by the apostles has been broken by everyone who has misrepresented any aspect of that doctrine, as well as any other revealed truth which is part of the "faith once delivered to the the saints". Jude 3.

### The Legacy of Church Traitors

The false theological concept, which pervades the church today, is properly referred to as Arminianism (named after Jacobus Arminius, a 16-17th century theologian). Arminius radically departed from the sovereign grace principles which he originally claimed to believe, and propounded that the will of man was spiritually free and co-active with the will of God in salvation (just like most of you reading this believe today, and think it is gospel truth). His prominent influence was a key development in the synthetic gospel proclaimed today by most churches!

Arminianism, then, is that school of thought and opinion which holds the view that God wants everyone to be saved, and gave each person a free will with which to choose to either believe, or reject the gospel as an invitation to salvation. Except for a small minority of faithfulness today to the original full truth of salvation principles--the present day theology is akin in nature to the tradition of the Pharisees and scribes ("teaching for doctrine, the commandments of men", Mk. 7:7,9,13). The comparable effect can be seen in C. I. Scofield's comment on Jewish tradition taking priority over the literal scriptural law (even as we see the Roman Catholic tradition of the "necessity" of priestly interpretation and authority, and other substitutions for direct scriptural reliance).

Quoting from Scofield.... "during this period (approx. 400 yrs., from Malachi to Christ) was created that mass of tradition, comment, and interpretation known as Mishna, Gemara (forming the Talmud), Halachoth, Midroshim, Kabbala, so superposed upon the Law that obedience was transferred from the Law itself to the traditional (deviant\*) interpretation". \* Edited for clarification.

Paraphrasing it to our times (for centuries, since the early church), the gospel has become so humanized with carnal corruption that the prevailing philosophy (Arminianism) is a contradiction of the basic facts of God's plan and execution of salvation. In other words, while it (the Arminian gospel) has all the same fundamental biblical words of truth in it, it has become admixed with human theological ideas and fabrications; that is, adulterated with the "leaven" of error. I Cor. 5:6.

The church problem is monumental! Proof of its errors is not scripturally difficult for honest, objective scholarship--but practically or realistically, extremely complicated (by man), and probably unlikely to be changed to any great degree (per church prophecy).

Yet, the effort towards reformation must be made, and it is the responsibility of every believer to examine his beliefs con-

scientifically and prayerfully, and to diligently work at the means of getting back to the pure truth that his spiritual ancestors held, and which has been sorely neglected and contravened ever since the earliest of church times. Rev. 3:20-22.

And while there are many well-intended men in the church, seldom can one be found who is devoted<sup>t</sup>o biblically prove and establish everything he believes and holds as doctrine, or theology. Impossible to do? Not only possible, but commanded by God! Nor does He require us to do anything that He will not also give us the ability to do. To opt for anything less, is to make allowance for the flesh by drawing a line on how serious we think God is in His demands of us, as His word literally specifies. I would rather be counted with those who tried to do something--even against all odds--than to continue to be part of the problem (either as an active resistor of reformation, or a passive follower of the Arminian tradition)!

We must not allow any opening, however small, for truth to be compromised with error (a wedge to be used by Satan; a chink in the armor). And this itself (the ideal) is easily rationalized--by stating, in effect, that we are not perfect and cannot be completely right in every degree of our beliefs, and subsequent expression of those beliefs. But this is a copout--using technicality for an excuse. While we may not each hold the same degree of truth or knowledge, we are not justified to be fundamentally in disagreement, or hold different ideas of the meanings of the various subjects of God's word.

The scriptures are replete with commands, warnings, and explicit directions to learn and maintain sound doctrine (which would be every doctrinal subject, in every detail necessary for the edification of the saints, and defense and confirmation of the gospel). Eph. 4:32, Phil. 1:7, I Tim. 1:10, 13, Tit. 1:9, etc., etc.

The guiding example of the first church situation in Acts 2, under consideration, gives no indication of anything but uniformity of beliefs and practices. Even if we allow ourselves to think of them as being a young church, or not yet involved in some of the deeper teachings developed later in the new testament, wouldn't God still want the same thing to be said of any church at any time: that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' (and all) doctrine"? And "they continuing daily with one accord" could not be said as long as there are differences. "Can two walk together except they be agreed"? Amos 3:3.

The contrast between the early church and Christianity today regarding salvation doctrine can be seen by a look at Acts 2:37-41, in conjunction with the vs.42-47 passage which we are mainly considering. Today, the Arminian/Calvinist conflict produces very different interpretations of key portions of those passages. But I believe it can be safely and logically inferred from the 42-47 text that no such disagreement or confusion existed at that time. If there had been any issue over the subject, it must have been resolved, and if any time after, it, or any other doctrinal differences occurred they would have had to be dealt with and re-

solved, or their "steadfast" testimony could not be maintained. We are them, now; that is, the church, and God requires us to have the same faithful record that they had. But, by and large, we do not!

### The Garden Path of Rationalization

And just because some difficult and "seemingly" conflicting statements in scripture have not been reconciled and settled by most of the church ever since the first century, does not mean that they cannot be. Are you going to say or think that God didn't make it clear enough? Or that He doesn't mind that we have different views on some of His word? Or that it is more important to "love" each other than have serious disputes and arguments about doctrine? What kind of love is it, for God or each other, that isn't concerned enough to help each other rightly understand God's teaching, no matter what it takes? What scriptural authority can we cite for anything less? Then, why don't we do it? In strong, simple terms; flesh versus spirit! The old nature having ascendancy over the new nature: even sitting in judgment over God's word! Don't we know that the new nature can not make such mistakes, but that it must be allowed to fully operate? I Cor. 2:10, 15, I John 4:6.

Getting back to the Acts example referred to above, our controversy is immediately noted. Starting with vs. 36 for background and basis for the vs. 37-38 subject, we read: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Now verse 38, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Verse 40.... "Save yourselves from this untoward generation". and vs. 41, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized....". These three excerpts would be assumed by Arminians (most believers) to support their free-will, universal-atonement, anyone-can-be-saved, interpretation of the gospel.

But verses 39, and 47 raise a question to that theory, which must be answered. Partially quoting from those verses: "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call". Verse 47....."And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved".

An out-of-context (unfortunately typical) reading of verse 38 can easily lead to the assumption that the words, "Repent and be baptized every one of you", meant everyone there in Peter's audience, and therefore may be used universally in evangelical preaching. And therein lies the common interpretive mistake made by most Christians. The cause is a serious misunderstanding

of the literality of scripture; and resultant wrong theology!

### Chapter 3

#### A Systematic Theology

Just because we say we believe in the literal interpretation of the Bible, does not justify the common tendency and habit of taking words, phrases, clauses, sentences and verses in an independently literal sense, without due regard for context, and underlying theology. That is a reckless, hit or miss method of learning which, in contrast to the injunction of 2 Tim. 2:15, is "wrongly" dividing the word of truth. The result is confusing, inconsistent theology, of which Arminianism is the prime example; and worst of all, rampant in today's churches. Funk & Wagnall's Dictionary definition 2 of rampant is: "widespread, or unchecked; as an erroneous belief". It is sad to say, and no doubt surprising to many to hear, that that is the state of the gospel doctrine as held today in practically every church in America, and beyond.

"Rightly dividing the word of truth", involves careful and thorough reading and studying of scriptural subjects. Only a devoted, disciplined mind can accomplish this, of which the theologian, Augustus H. Strong wrote, "Only such a mind can patiently collect the facts, hold in its grasp many facts at once (to the degree one is capable or responsible), educe (determine) by continuous reflection their connecting principles, and suspend final judgment until its conclusions are verified by scripture and experience". Parenthetical inserts added.

In other words, the system of study requires a methodology, which is more than a big word for method. It is "the principles, practices, etc. of orderly thought or procedure, applied to a particular branch of learning". Funk & Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary.

I believe there are at least three essential aspects of that orderly thought and procedure process. They are: (1) priority (of first principles), (2) system (order in the whole body of truth), and (3) harmony (between all their parts; in their proper place). By priority I do not mean that any particular subjects are necessarily more important than others, but that certain principles or acts of God may affect, even govern how others operate. For example, such a distinction can be made regarding God's attributes. God must be holy, just, and righteous. Everything He does will be strictly according to His nature in those respects. And while He is also essentially loving, and merciful, He is not bound to perform specific acts of love or mercy--even human salvation--unless He chooses to.

Since God decreed a personal election of certain persons to be redeemed and rescued from a justly condemnable race, the execution of that decree in time is also certain, including every de-

tail of related factors and circumstances, which are also pre-ordained. Predestination to salvation is a fixed fact! Nothing, or no one, can alter it, or be an exception to it. Whatever in scripture may appear to be contradictory, or seem to say something different than a well-defined doctrine of election declares, must not be allowed to continue as a mental conflict. God certainly wants us to be clearly convinced of His meaning of His word. And as that word says, God is not the author of our confusion. I know increasingly from my own experience of some thirty years of dealing with this Calvinist/Arminian controversy, that God's word does harmonize into a beautiful, logical, sound systematic theology (disproving all human fabrications; to wit, Arminianism, and anything else contrary to sound doctrine).

If we diligently and fully submit ourselves to the light of scripture, it will expose and dispel our errors, and wrong ideas; replacing them with all the truth. Biblically sound theology is doctrine as it was revealed and developed by the end of the apostolic age. There has been no further revelation by God since then, but much historical theology has been developed in the life of the church. This is what must always be tested against the Bible, and never to be accepted from anyone or any other source without being proved by the Bible. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good". I Thess. 5:21. Which implicitly requires rejection of everything that is not good, or is wrong!

In the order of priority, God and His will are first; everything is subject thereto! Election, or predestination to salvation is God's foreordained plan. And that plan, because God is infinitely meticulous and perfect in all His thoughts and works, leaves nothing to chance, choice, or circumstances external to God's will and control. Every means or factor involved in the execution and culmination of that eternal plan, is part and parcel of the plan. It can neither be enhanced, thwarted, or even modified by man or Satan, in the slightest degree, without that also being subject to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Which can either mean that He permits what He foresees as man's or Satan's response to circumstances, etc., or that he purposely causes the evil disposition of both to act according to His will in the administration of His plan. All of which is perfectly within His righteous, sovereign domain. "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own"? Matt. 20:15, etc.

#### Examples of Interpretive Conflicts

While both Calvinists and Arminians would put the decree of election first in the order of salvation factors or events, there is a subtle, but serious difference in the Arminian concept of what election is based upon. Both sides might agree that foreknowledge precedes election, but there is a considerable difference in the two views of what foreknowledge is. Listen to C. I. Scofield's (the reference Bible theologian, and an Arminian) comment on fore-

knowledge:....."Scripture nowhere declares what it is in the divine foreknowledge which determines the divine election and predestination". The general Arminian view is a giant-step assumption, which equates foreknowledge with foresight of faith. That is, that God, foreseeing who would believe the gospel, therefore chooses those persons to be saved. Which is, instead of being an independent, sovereign act of God, an election based upon an election. Or, God chooses us, because we choose Him! That should even sound ridiculous to an Arminian, but they (again, practically the whole church) can't see it, because of other related doctrinal misconceptions which lead to the wrong conclusions. Even in the idea of "foresight of faith", lies a fundamentally wrong concept of what faith itself is; misinterpreting the very working principle of it (spiritual life, per I Cor. 2:11, 12:3, etc.). In other words, there can be no spiritual faith, prior to regeneration!

A brief comparative analysis of just one Bible verse will illustrate the nature of the problem. The apostle Paul, in II Thess. 2:13, says, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you (1. election) to salvation (4. rescue, deliverance) through sanctification of the Spirit (2. regeneration) and belief of the truth (3. faith)". I have parenthetically numbered, in order of occurrence, and labeled the four aspects of the subject, for easier reference in our consideration of the controversy cited.

If you would objectively lay aside your own likely adverse reaction to the above step sequence, at least for now, it should prove enlightening to you to see where the weight of logic is in this dispute. And then I hope you would not do what most people do when confronted with this question; that even after acknowledging important conclusions supporting the Calvinist position, still revert to status quo as if it was a matter of option. A man who was a member of a church training class, which dealt with a variety of Biblical subjects, had asked to read a paper that I had prepared on the doctrine of election. After he had carefully read it, he came to me and said that he agreed that the Calvinist interpretation was definitely more logical, and essentially right, or more right than the Arminian view. But sadly to me, he said that he could not change his position. By which he was indicating that the latter, conventional school of opinion had more human appeal to him than the other. How many more millions (?) of believers have, when faced with the demands of this whole question, opted (or capitulated) in favor of the more comfortable, man-centered philosophy and creed?

By contrast, the II Thess. 2:13 items noted, would be numbered in the following order by the Arminian theology proponents: 1. election, 2. faith, 3. regeneration, and 4. salvation. And though this is the common consensus of the church, it doesn't make it right. For one thing, it practically ignores the extent of human depravity which, as clearly explained in I Cor. 2:14, renders unregenerate man as incapable of comprehending anything spiritual, or



even communicating with, or responding to God. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned".

Any tampering with the sovereign grace of God in His work of salvation; i.e. making it conditional, or subject to some action of man, misrepresents both God's character, and His revealed word. It portrays God in man's image, as if we could ever be capable of, or trusted with such an eternally important responsibility as our own, or anyone else's salvation. The disastrous results of our failure in Adam (in a state of innocence), ought to prove that to us. But the doctrine of original sin is much neglected, ignored, and misrepresented; to try to justify the concept of free moral agency, or some degree of capacity in fallen man to believe the gospel message of salvation.

To God be the glory for what he does, and what we do right, through Him, for Him, but not for what men do wrong in His name (and that misconstrued, because we can only do in His name what He would authorize; which must be consistent with His word in every aspect)! Truth, with the leaven of error (even 99% to 1%) = false doctrine! "... a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump". I Cor. 5:6. So too, any related works (witnessing, etc.), in that vein, are not good works. God is not going to approve of His name being put to any of it; neither will He bless or reward any persons for such actions. They (their works) may look and sound like the real thing, but in substance they will only be so much wood, hay, and stubble--perishable, and fit only to be burned up. How important is true knowledge of His word? It may be an elusive fact, for some inexcusable reason, but don't we first have to know what's right, to do what's right?

Poetic license may be acceptable in the secular literary field, but it has no place in the use of God's word. Oh yes, we can elucidate (if we really do), amplify, illustrate, and expand upon any scriptural subject if we do not violate the truth of it, but no liberty or allowance can be made for changing its God-intended meaning, in any detail. It is a sacred trust we are responsible for, without exception. Practices based upon right precepts and principles are the only kind of works that have any hope of acceptance by God. And while we can still do wrong, even knowing better, we cannot end up right if we don't start right (or get straightened out when we go wrong)! "As he (anyone) thinketh in his heart, so is he". Prov. 23:7. We will preach, witness, work, pray, talk, walk, and sing what we believe! How can we do anything else?

I do not want to repeat too much on subjects that I have written about extensively in other places, but the issue of whether faith or regeneration comes first is a critical doctrinal conflict which must be continually faced, and hopefully resolved in the church. Is faith a spiritual faculty, or not? The Bible tells us, among many other things about it, that faith is a fruit of the Spirit. Well, we don't have the Spirit before

we are born again, so how can we believe, trust God, etc., before we have received the capacity or ability to do those things, which are synonymous with faith? But, you will say, doesn't the Bible say, "For by grace are ye saved by faith", and "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved", and put practically all such similar requirements as a prerequisite to actual salvation?

And you are right, that the scriptures say it in that order, and there is no question about faith preceding salvation, but it does not precede regeneration. If you automatically think that when the Bible says salvation it means the same thing as the new birth, and do not consider that actual salvation (which is, technically, but importantly, the future event of deliverance from hell--by entrance to heaven) occurs after one becomes a believer, then you can not correctly interpret those scriptures which make that distinction. This doesn't take a thing away from the precious fact that when we are born again with the Spirit of God, that we are effectively saved; that is, guaranteed by all the promises of God to be delivered from the wrath and condemning judgment of God, and to live eternally safe, secure, and blessed with Him forever. Why, then, can't we get it straight? Until we get our basic theology right, we can't! Things have been wrong for so long with the church's salvation doctrine, that only a full scale reformation could possibly put the church back on the right track.

#### Chapter 4

##### Examination of the Subject of Repentance, per Acts 2:37-41

Prioritize, systematize, and harmonize! Once the doctrine of election is recognized and established firmly in our minds, in its right place in relation to other salvation factors, it never loses its priority effect upon the salvation process. Simply put, whenever we read in scripture the call, or command to repent--we have to know, and not forget, ignore or compromise the fact that only the elect (predestinated, foreordained, chosen ones of God) can repent. I refer to spiritual repentance, not temporal repentance, of which there are Biblical examples, especially in Israel's national history. In fact, in our Acts 2:37-41 passage being looked at for this purpose, it is a human, technically non-spiritual kind of repentance implied in verse 37 when it says, .... "they were pricked in their hearts", and then asked .... "what shall we do"? And how can we say that this was not actual spiritual repentance? Because Peter tells them to repent in the next verse in answer to their question.

And even here, it must be theologically understood that when Peter said "Repent", he is not telling them that they can naturally repent, because without the Spirit of God in them they can not! II Cor. 7:10 tells us that, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation". Quoting from John Gill's Commentary, Vol.

VI, on that verse we read of godly sorrow...."a sorrow which had God for its author' it did not arise from the power of free-will, nor from the dictates (dictates) of a natural conscience, nor from a work of law on their hearts, or from a fear of hell and damnation, but it sprung from the free grace of God (free in the sense of an independent, sovereign act)\*; it was a gift of his grace, the work of his Spirit, and the produce of his almighty power; being such, which no means, as judgments, mercies, of the most powerful ministry of themselves could effect; it was owing to divine instructions; it was heightened and increased with a discovery of the love of God, and views of pardoning grace and mercy, being attended with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: it had God also for its Object, as well as its Author; it was a sorrow which is for God....on the account of God, his honour, interest, and glory; it was a sorrow for sin, because it was committed against a God of infinite holiness, justice and truth, goodness, grace, and mercy;.....moreover, this sorrow is further described, from its salutary operation, it worketh repentance; it is the beginning of it, a part of it, an essential part of it, without which there is no true repentance..... and this repentance is unto salvation; not the cause or author of it, for that is Christ alone; nor the condition of it, but is itself a blessing of salvation, a part of it, the initial part of it, by which, and faith, we enter upon the possession of salvation (future entrance to heaven versus hell)\*....". \*Edited for clarification.

"Repent and be baptized every one of you".... should be interpreted: ...."be baptized every one of you" (who repents, because baptism is an after-conversion ordinance testifying belief in the Lord Jesus Christ). This distinction should help us see the close connection between repentance and faith; that is, the close timing of their occurrence; or that they are really two parts of the same event, as in the couplet in Acts 20:21....."repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ". Peter's use of "repent" in the subject verse is definitely the kind of repentance that results in actual belief and salvation, or he would never have commanded them to be baptized (to symbolize their conversion).

Continuing in Acts 2:38, where Peter says...."be baptized..... in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," is another example of how a strict literal interpretation of words, instead of being determined on the basis of underlying, governing doctrinal principles, can easily lead to confusing, contradictory conclusions, which are categorically wrong theology. To be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ means more fully, as John Gill wrote:....."by his authority, according to his command; professing their faith in him, devoting themselves to him, and calling on his name. The end for which this was to be submitted to, is 'for the remission of sins' (for a testimony to the fact that one's sins have been remitted); not that forgiveness of sin could be procured either by repentance, or by baptism; for this is only obtained by the blood of Christ (and that only for the elect)....". Parenthetical portions added. And though it is usually only the false religions that make the particular mistake noted above, many simi-

larly wrong interpretations are made by the true church in other doctrinal areas.

Even allowing for both elect and non-elect response to the call for repentance (vs. 38); that is, evangelical (spiritual) versus legal (law vs. grace), to be possible, does not imply or purport ability or capacity to believe, etc.--except of the elect (as caused to happen by God). The nonelect's response would be only external vs. internal (by the elect). These particular verses cited can not alone establish the doctrine of salvation by predestination, nor can they qualify, or be any exception to it.

God is the Power of His Principles (for us)

and

The Dynamic of His Demands (of us)

Acts 2:39 clarifies and proves the sovereign, particular grace principle:...."for the promise is unto you, and to your children, (etc.), even as many (none other, no more, no less) as the Lord God shall call". If you say he calls all to hear the Gospel message and possibly be saved--how does it fit with Rom. 8:30..... "whom he did predestinate, them he also 'called', and whom he 'called', them he also justified, them he also glorified"? Everyone God calls, he saves! Man by preaching, calls generally; not knowing who the elect are, but the efficacious inward calling is by the Lord (but only of the elect). "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9)--every step from foreordination to culmination, that has any causative effect is done by God, not man! Man is usually an instrument or means--but like a tool in the hands of a craftsman--he is powerless to do anything of himself (in this case, anything eternally consequential). And even if we think man chooses to be that tool, or an agent of God using His word properly, we do not have independent (nor mutual) use of the Spirit with which to operate on the heart and soul of another.

Everything we may do--preach, witness, pray, etc., may all be preparatory and contributory, but never with the power of efficacy for someone else's salvation. And remember, it His Spirit (more precisely, Him). We do not work alone--but as spiritual co-laborers, even journeymen, or skilled craftsmen (perhaps), but never as architects, engineers, or administrators. You may say, of course, I know that! But the truth is, that we more often think and act quite the opposite. Working on the basis of the man-slanted Arminian, free will theology, we are not inclined to humbly accept our appointed role to be assistants to God; secondary, but never primary. Yet, we can have such great latitude within those appointed bounds that we should feel extremely blessed and privileged. To know our place, and not cross the line into God's domain, is certainly a mark of true discipleship. It is a large part of real reverence, and acceptable service. The who, when, where, and how of salvation is His domain--precisely planned and controlled by Him. If we would come to a proper appreciation of the fullness of that fact, we would then begin to be more concerned with how we walk with Him, than how we work for him (yet not to the neglect of the latter)...

As to the demands of maintaining a strong conservative doctrinal position in our constitutional beliefs, we have to first realize that hard truth cannot be soft-pedaled, though it is both very difficult to accept, and to speak to others--especially in direct, unequivocal language! That is why some of the body of truth is either compromised, or at least softened, by most of those who, at some time or other, are confronted with its full reality.

So it is with gospel preaching and witnessing. The following rationale (consistent with sovereign grace theology; i.e., Calvinism), because of our human experience, is not easy for us either to accept, acknowledge, or act upon; but if the statements are indeed true, then we need both deep conviction and the corresponding courage to advocate the whole system of principles that they represent. The postulate is, then: that until the heart and mind of a person is spiritually receptive (regenerated by the Holy Spirit)--everything falls upon spiritually deaf ears! It is only philosophy, or logic, or rationalism to the carnal mind, and there is no in-between, neutral, or provisional capacity in man to the contrary. He is either carnal, or spiritual. Carnal cannot comprehend anything spiritual (anything of God). I Cor. 2:11-14. It contradicts the very basic principle of the spiritual dimension of life to allow for any step towards entrance into that dimension, while man is still in a natural, unregenerate state.

Natural man is essentially two parts--body and soul (since the fall, that is). Spiritual man is three parts--body, soul, and spirit (in reverse order of importance, technically). In another sense, natural man has "spirit" (that by which man knows man--but not God, unless and until regenerated with the spirit of God).

## Chapter 5

### The Free Will "Gospel"

The Arminian gospel theology assumes some kind of gray area between natural and spiritual that is a very strange, nebulous thing. It has no scriptural reference to its existence, because it is not from God, but man (a figment of his imagination, or more pointedly, his humanistic wishes). It is akin to false science, where, in order to pass off a theory as if it were true science, you add a few non-facts (unproven ideas, etc.) to the facts, and call them all facts. Of course, this requires the subtle use of intellectualism and sophistry--so that the giant steps from fact to fancy are concealed by the artful use of language skills, together with the psychology of emotional appeals, specious reasoning, and any other reinforcing techniques.

The gaps between truth and falsehood are there to the discerning eye of the unbrainwashed; but gullible man-followers never see them. Chew something over, when you can have it ready to swallow? Not the average pew-sitter; no sir! But they are still fundamentalists; you know, basically conservative--not liberal!

Never realizing, or considering that they are in fact, flawed fundamentalists. Any Christian (as with the great majority of of believers) who, whether ignorantly or intentionally, is in this category, is nonetheless not innocent of any of his errors and faults--unless possibly by virtue of being very young in the faith, and not having had time enough yet to scripturally examine the doctrinal interpretations that he has been exposed to. And that process cannot be unduly delayed.

Now, if you ascribe sarcasm or harshness to what I have said --that is not my intent, except with a desire to jolt you out of your complacency, or false comfort, so that you may begin to see that you have had the wool pulled over your eyes. It involves a combination of typical human factors: (1) ambitious leaders, deceived and motivated by certain wrong beliefs and related agenda, (2) people who are too naturally prone to assume credibility and integrity of pastors, teachers, and writers, (3) susceptibility of the latter group to pride, and misuse and abuse of position and authority, (4) proclivity of most church members to be lazy and lax in their responsibility of proving whether what they learn is true or not (which is a combination of lack of strong commitment and diligence to pursue all truth, and practice its demands, at any cost), and (5) the inherent natural penchant of believing what we want to believe.

I realize that this is going to cause resentment, anger, and retaliatory reaction from many, and I take no pleasure or satisfaction in that. But, if your heart is really right, you won't stay that way, but will in time come around to the truth you have missed. Then, those negative feelings will be directed where they belong: (1) to the institution you thought you could trust; (2) to Satan, the mastermind of false doctrine; and (3) yourself for being duped by the whole erroneous scheme.

And that takes me back to the Acts model from which most of the church has strayed. No. 1, instead of "all continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine", only a relative few have really done it, and No. 2, among other failures, most have certainly not "continue(d) daily with one accord"--except to say, the wrong accord.

### Keeping the Faith

In I Cor. 11:2, Paul praised the Corinthian church that they remembered him in all things, and kept the ordinances (doctrine, traditions, etc.), as he had delivered them. If he came into the average "good" churches today, I doubt if he could say it to any of them as assemblies, and probably to comparatively few individuals. If you have serious doubts that the situation is that bad, take the test yourself, by very thoughtfully and carefully measuring your compliance with every requirement specified in the Acts 2:42-47 precedent.

And lest you take comfort in a fairly high mark--if you fail one item, you technically fail it all, because I believe that the early church record is established as a perpetual standard to be fully conformed to by every church; indeed, every believer. It

sets forth not an easy, but sure road to success; and is, in fact, the only road! Is it not just like God to give us such a beautifully consolidated prescription, or formula, guaranteeing both personal and church development and growth to the fullest?

That this is true, should be self-evident. Where else in scripture can you see in one place such a complete, uninterrupted detailing of church responsibilities; or anything else that can serve as a fundamentally complete constitution for the minimum acceptable conduct and testimony of a church body? One set of rules for all. Both the minimum and maximum requirements, all in one. A checklist to be continually followed, and honored by obedience to the Lord in every one of its responsibilities.

How to do? "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord". Zech. 4:6. Which means that God is, Himself, the dynamic of His demands. Our part is to obey, to yield to Him, and let Him work in us, and prove Himself to us. By application of principle: Mal. 3:10....."prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it".

If you tend to be suddenly overwhelmed by the weight of such demands; especially to think that you have to get there all at once--think rather that God only requires us to do what we can reasonably do in an appropriate amount of time. If our attitude is right, and we begin to work at it all, and consistently make progress, God will surely accept it as our reasonable service. The ensuing blessings will assure us of His approval. Remember, that what we are talking about here is a major reformation movement that is needed to begin to overhaul and restore the church's gospel theology to what it was in the first century. Knowing full well that this is more of an idealistic than realistic hope, is no excuse for not putting forth the effort in the Lord to promote the cause in every way possible. Who knows what he might do, at least in some quarters, in response to our desire and willingness to be engaged in this high priority objective of reforming the church's ministry to itself and the world? By the "world", I mean essentially the world of the elect yet to be brought into the church. Extending God's salvation plan to any other inhabitants of the world (as an available entitlement), is a large part of the problem, or controversy that we are speaking of. If we don't get that point established, we can hardly go on in the right direction to amend the church's creed, or operating gospel principles.

#### Dealing with Error and Complacency

A moment's reflection on the purpose of all this would seem to be good for us at this point. The object of propounding this argument may not be that evident to the average believer, who doesn't see much wrong with his present theology. Trusting, hopefully, that many would come to see the errors in their beliefs, and still may not have the conviction of the seriousness of it, a look at a simple important principle may help to motivate them

to reformation. Can we acknowledge something together that is very basic to every Christian's responsibility to God? To wit, that we should never misrepresent God in any way! And that further, nothing is more representative of God than His word, which is to be understood and conveyed specifically (in meaning) as He gave it. That is, interpreted essentially the same by every believer. ".....that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment". I Cor. 1:10. For example, if there were ever two views on any doctrinal subject in the first church's life, the problem must have been resolved or then they would not have had the recorded testimony that, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine".

To have different thoughts, questions, ideas, etc. than the scriptures actually teach on various subjects is not culpable, initially; that is, until we have had sufficient time to study the matters enough to come to the right understanding of them. But, to keep or foster contrary beliefs and opinions, no matter how plausible or widely held they may be, is not only never right or allowable, it is, besides dishonoring God, playing into Satan's hands, and counterproductive and damaging to the believers' lives. II Cor. 10:5 has particular application here, and ought to be a guiding principle for everything our minds encounter: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ". Can you believe that you could go on in error if you committed everything that carefully to the Lord? By committing, I mean more than simply asking the Lord each time, or often, to help you do things right or get things straight. It will always involve that, which is the most important part of what we do--but it will also include the work which God has commanded us to do: the studying, testing, proving, and interacting with each other for unity of beliefs, and testimony, and teaching. II Tim. 2:15, I Thess. 5:21, I John 4:1, Heb. 2:1. Brethren, this is where we are not prevailing! By and large, we have let someone else do our work and thinking for us. And it happens in every area of our lives besides biblical doctrine--professional, political, parental, etc. Just look at the trends (in society) and you can see it: from conservatism being overcome by eventual socialism, civil order giving way to anarchy, absolute doctrine to rationalism, and increasing family (group and member) dysfunction! These are not all, but major areas of failure.

There are social, educational, economic, and political engineers always at work (usually with hidden agendas) trying to make the world the way they think it ought to be for everybody else. To wit, the ever-expanding governmental roles in the civil rights, health care, and gun control areas, to name a few. The old saying that "a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing", will always be true when man lives as if there were no God to answer to. Some of them act as if they are gods--believing themselves to be responsible for the welfare of others, whether they are wanted or agreed with, or not. They find a way to force their ideas and objectives upon others with reckless abandon, and consuming ambition.



Look behind the various movements that have taken place in the fields referred to above, and you will see one or more powerfully influential architects, whose ultimate goals are usually either revolutionary or insidious schemes for eventual radical changes in one or more of the areas cited. These changes invariably mean less real liberty for the individual, and more control by the state, and dependence upon authorities.

And the sad commentary on the average citizen is that he hasn't a clue that these forces are operating to limit control, and restructure his life, liberty, and other God-given rights. Why? First, simply put, because of failing to be a conscientious responsible individual who does not let somebody else do the job of watching out for his own interests (not any of them). Secondly, because the perpetrators of the programs to change and control their lives, camouflage their real objectives by doing such a clever selling job of couching their ideas and plans in nice sounding proposals and promises--that Joe citizen is mesmerized with the packaging, and blindly trusts the hawkers to be telling the truth about the contents. And only when you've bought it, do you find that there are no refunds or returns allowed. Instead of prevention, the only option left is the bleak hope of a cure--and given the disposition of typical man that got him into the problem, the chances are slim that he will ever do anything serious about getting out of it, if he could! But that being the normal case, is still never a justifiable excuse for continuing failure and inaction (especially in the church).

In the secular realm, man is ultimately headed in this downhill direction, but Christians have no acceptable excuse for being part of the general degradation of the universal church's life and testimony. We have the resources--the power of God--to do right. No one would vocally deny that, but yet most believers' actions do deny it. "My brethren, these things ought not so to be". James 3:10.

## Chapter 6

### Evangelism Gone Awry

At the obvious risk of being misunderstood and disagreed with, I would like to make a certain point with reference to our main text, Acts 2:42, which states that the first church "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship". Today's church, because of a misguided preoccupation could not fairly and fully apply itself to the foregoing scriptural requirement. That preoccupation--aside from all the other factors contributing to the lack of performance in its total ministry--is its concept of evangelism (as predicated on an Arminian theology base).

In many churches, most of the preaching is evangelistic versus church teaching of sanctification and worship principles. Some of the reasoning used to justify it can be very subtly convincing. For example (because of the underlying theology errors), it is

typically believed and stated that if there is one soul in the congregation that might be reached on a given day--that is more important than anything else, because that person might never attend again, or have another "opportunity" to hear and respond to the gospel. Sounds compelling, doesn't it? But only when you don't understand and believe the doctrine of election purely, which says in effect that only those chosen or predestinated can be saved, and that their salvation is guaranteed. Conversely, no one not elected can be saved--ever! It is that simple, and we should be glad that is, so that we don't have to worry about anything externally connected with anyone's salvation.

This does not mean that there is not much that we are to do as means, or instruments of God in His salvation work. If we are faithful to Him, so he can use us, it is a wonderful part of our service. In instances in which he can not use us, it is a matter of something wrong with our relationship with Him, but has no eternal salvation consequences in anyone's life. God will save whoever He has chosen, and will always have the ones he needs, or desires to use, to carry it out; yet, nothing essential is ever subcontracted by Him to us.

#### Calvinism's "T.U.L.I.P."

We have got to realize that God's plan for building (creating) His church never, in any way, depends on anyone's actions but His own! It is, as Calvin said, unconditional election, and irresistible grace, which are the U and the I of the acronym TULIP. The other parts being T for total depravity, L for limited atonement, and the P for perseverance. The total depravity factor is included for its application to man's complete inability to perceive or receive anything spiritual in his natural state--in which condition he remains (totally dead to all spiritual thoughts, concepts, and communication), until regenerated by God; by which He directly and independently converts him from a natural to a spiritual man.

The new birth precedes every personal spiritual disposition that a man can have, including knowledge of sin and righteousness, conviction, confession, belief or faith, acceptance, surrender, worship, and anything else which are fruits or results of the Spirit; received in regeneration--hence, subsequent to it.

Limited atonement implies nothing negative about the quality or efficacy of the atonement made by the Lord Jesus Christ for sin, but means that the application of the atonement is limited to the elect only. That is, that Christ died only for those whom God chose and predestinated to be saved. The technical distinction advanced by Arminian theology, states that the atonement was sufficient for all, but efficient only for those that believe--which confuses both the intent and extent of the atonement. Certainly the value and power of Christ's blood and death is unlimited, but the purpose of God was to expiate for sins, not conditionally or potentially provide for an atonement, which must be

appropriated by man before it is effective, or effectual. No, it is not subject to man's acceptance, not even to faith, as usually maintained!

As previously commented on, the preaching of the gospel, and all associated witnessing and exposure to Christian doctrine before actual regeneration can do nothing to affect that event. Whether God possibly causes or uses any element of natural reaction to spiritual principles or phenomena, is unknown, but it must not be accorded any spiritual relevance--until after the conversion experience, when the new Christian begins to reflect upon the many spiritual things with a renewed mind, that he heard or observed before becoming a believer; and then both exult in them, and exalt God for them.

I said at the outset of this section that most of the church is preoccupied with evangelism. And I meant evangelism motivated by Arminian theology; to wit, that the atonement was a universal provision for man's sin, reflecting God's desire for all to be saved; and accordingly that man has a free will (the ability) to either believe or reject the gospel. Notwithstanding the fact that the whole concept contradicts the doctrine of predestinated salvation, most of the church marches to its drumbeat, putting inordinate amounts of time and energy into a humanistic ideology that not only cannot work because it is not God's plan, and hence He is not in it--it overshadows and robs the church of the responsibility and inherent blessings of its heritage; the legacy of the apostles' tradition. The result being that today the church is little more than a shell of what it was in its pure and faithful early years. Why, if you still must ask? Because we have not "kept the faith", as it was delivered to our ancestors! And we are, therefore, well on our way to the final stage of apostasy, when God will spue the church out of His mouth (an early church judgment; such as "Ichabod"). Read it for yourself in Rev. 3. And so, "he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches". Ibid.

Defeated Lives  
in the  
Wilderness of Confusion and Disobedience

If indeed, this picture is as bad as I paint it; that being that the church is universally steeped in doctrinal confusion and error--who, then, is really listening to God? The Spirit is always speaking to the churches (particularly through his timelessly applicable scriptures); so what reason do we have for not hearing and heeding what He says to us? If I may be so blunt, I believe it is because we are more often operating in the flesh than in the Spirit! Why else would we accept and follow the "commandments of men", as if they were the true gospel? The new man, "walking after the Spirit" will not, can not, fail to discern the truth! Since there is obvious failure to properly learn and abide in the truth, as well as the reality of committing practically every other sin common to mankind, it must naturally be concluded that "walking in the Spirit" requires that the believer--possessing both a new nature, that cannot sin, and an old nature,

that can do nothing but sin--must continually, and conscientiously decide which nature will have the ascendancy, and therefore be the modus operandi of his life.

The prevailing degenerate condition of the church today shows clearly that the average Christian is not doing this with consistent regularity, at all. Neither can there be much personal or organized resistance to Satan, which ought to be seen by every believer as a daily necessity, at least. Do we think he (the devil misses a day to take any advantage of us, especially when we give him the opportunity more often than not? Is it any real wonder that the church is doctrinally confused, and basically more carnal than spiritual? What we have is high majority conformity to the status quo. It unfortunately appears to be a favorable thing, but upon examination of its credentials, it is found wanting. Can we, then, look together objectively at some negative factors which are at the root and heart of this sad state of affairs that we are in? But first, as a preparatory thought: why, after we have been given the capacity and resources for enlightenment in everything of life (as new creations in Christ, II Cor. 5:17), do we continue to be such slaves of the fallen human condition? And yet we testify and sing of claiming victory over many of the faults and shortcomings that naturally beset us, when to a great extent, we are only having a token experience of overcoming most of the things adversely affecting us.

If I may list some of those factors--in just single words or phrases--that are significant causes and effects of our dilemma, would you please take time to meditate upon each of them for their application; both to yourself, and collectively to the total problem situation in the church?

## Chapter 7

### Characteristics and Symptoms of Walking in the Flesh

#### CAUSES

Among the many inherent tendencies or traits which eventually lead us into some kind of captive or controlled state are:

1. Subjectiveness - not the good connotation, but a proneness to consider things inwardly by predisposition of feelings, opinions, prejudices, etc.  
Emotionality vs. rationality.  
Note: all subjectiveness is not wrong, but should never interfere with objectivity, which it does more often than not.
2. Passiveness - tendency to follow, inactively. Submissiveness, especially to assumed credibility of leaders, etc. The anti-thesis of responsible, active participation.
3. Status, or Class Consciousness - according eminence to persons of authority, rank, wealth, fame, etc., and conversely, lack of esteem and confidence in self and other more common people.

4. Gullibility - or credulousness (disposition to believe others--per item 3 above--without serious question or consideration of the accuracy or truth of their statements and proclamations).
5. Eloquence - of speakers (leaders, teachers, etc.). The effect of language skills (moving, forceful, persuasive oratory; or the art of public speaking).
6. Persona - the outer personality of an individual (especially in positions of leadership, teaching, etc.). The distinction of "outer" personality is very important to note, as being very possibly a poor indicator of the true inner person. Facets of persona may be charm, charisma, wit, knowledge, appearance, talent, etc.; the first three or four often affected (put on).
7. Mental Laziness - lack of dedication and diligence. The study required of a believer (II Tim. 2:15, etc.) is hard work, and most Christians shirk their responsibility in it. They often look for quick answers, or short cuts, to biblical knowledge; expecting a pastor to fully explain scriptures, so they won't have to study it too thoroughly. While a Christian has no excuse for failure to assiduously apply himself to scriptural reading and study, the problem may sometimes be contributed to when scriptures are minutely exegeted by others for him. Instead, teaching should stimulate students or listeners to think for themselves, and to explore and examine the scriptures more directly and independently. We ought to realize that letting someone else do the hard work, and the great majority simply reaping the benefits, really doesn't work. God will not allow us to circumvent the way he has established for us to succeed. The meat of His word is not supposed to be reduced to a condition by someone else, so that we don't have to chew it to digest it. It (the strong meat of the word) is for maturing Christians, not spiritual babes.

Certainly, other causes and characteristics could be included, but the preceding items should serve the purpose intended--identification of factors, and insight into why we don't do what we should do.

#### EFFECTS

1. Unspirituality - lack of growth (in faithfulness, knowledge, wisdom, service, strength, love, etc.), carnal-mindedness, worldliness. The flesh principle dominating our lives (however subtle, or sophisticated).
2. Deception and Delusion - Funk & Wagnalls Dictionary definition 3 of delusion: "A false, fixed belief, held in spite of evidence to the contrary". Playing into the devil's hand by believing the wrong thing (or his lies vs. God's truth). A strong statement, yes; but we either follow the God of the

universe, or the temporary god of this world, Satan! There is no neutral, or other, realm. That is how serious everything should be seen, and responded to accordingly.

3. Brainwashing - indoctrination with the propaganda of an adulterated gospel; hence, a distorted theology. Continued reinforcement of such doctrinal concepts as Arminianism, or any other wrong belief system, entrenches the errors so deeply that its subjects are convinced that they hold the complete truth. Worse still, they not only seldom even suspect that they may be wrong, they will usually defiantly and militantly defend their "principles" as if any disagreement or opposition is itself automatically deviant or heretical. In essence, brainwashing is getting people to think and say what someone wants them to; which is effectively: mind control. It produces what is sometimes called "herd mentality", when everyone thinks alike automatically, as if programmed like a computer; hence, the problem of sects, cults, and other aberrations.
  
4. Subjection to Satan. Any departure from the truth, and its accompanying security and blessing of the Lord, renders the believer vulnerable to Satan's influence and control. It is nothing less in seriousness than a continuation of Satan's temptation tactics with Adam and Eve: "Hath God said?", "Ye shall not surely die", "Your eyes shall be opened", "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil", etc. Gen. 3:1, 3-5. He forever, now as then, relentlessly labors to lure us away from God in any way he can, just as he did Adam and Eve. And the bait, or temptation, is usually either a questioning of truth, or a lie (bold, subtle, etc.), which is what false doctrine is; and usually swallowed hook, line, and sinker. The human mind is his major target, of which to gain power and control. And since we are essentially preoccupied with physical and health concerns, he is enabled by our permissiveness (or lack of resistance) to inflict us with any number of physical and mental maladies and illnesses--or at least often takes advantage of us in those circumstances.

And as long as we stay in doctrinal error, we have given Satan continual access to us (mentally and physically). The scriptures admonish us against giving him any area of power over us: "Neither give place to the devil", Eph. 4:27; "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices (but many live as though they are)", II Cor. 2:10; except parenthetical comment, added.

The promise of God in Jas. 4:7, which says "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you", will not work unless we have adequately obeyed the injunction at the beginning of the verse, "Submit yourselves therefore to God". Among the various ways of submitting to God, certainly submitting to His truth is required, without question. How, then, can we confidently (if at all) resist the devil if we have failed to be faithful and obedient to God in doctrine?

5. Judgment, or Consequences - the end result of the foregoing causes and effects.

It is a law of life, a natural principle, that (1) everything observed, (2) elicits some kind of response, which in turn, (3) produces a result. Item (1) could be correlated to cause, and item (2) to effect, which we have dealt with thus far. (3) Results, are what we shall consider now.

But first, a further word on response or effect: even no response, or inaction, is still a response; especially a conscious decision not to respond, or to be neutral, or not to act.

The statement, "What you don't know, won't hurt you", has very questionable or limited application in areas of responsibility. Even the civil law principle that "ignorance of the law is no excuse" should underscore that. A Christian who thinks he has any legitimate excuse for being ignorant, or wrong in his interpretation of scriptural principles, or doctrine, is thinking foolishly, and will do nothing in such cases but disobey and dishonor God, and likewise hurt himself by the consequences of such errors.

Why do most Christians risk the security God has promised to them for obedience to His will, by doing any of the various things that have been spoken of herein thus far? More than that, why would we let ourselves be dissuaded from honoring God's principles and commands--as a matter of love and respect for Him, first of all--with the corresponding benefits and blessings to ourselves, secondly?

In addition to the Bible having all the answers, some of the explanations are at least alluded to in the preceding section on causes and effects of the general failed condition of the church. And then there are countless volumes of other verbal and written teaching that has been done on the whole consuming problem, but which has been relatively unheeded for centuries. Such is the average individual, and collective testimony of even "fundamental" Christianity in the world today. "...when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8. Scofield's note on the verse says the reference is not to personal faith, but to belief in the whole body of revealed truth. And yet, can there even be much personal faith without conformity to total truth?

Nineteen centuries of misinterpreting, tampering with, modifying, and otherwise corrupting the pure gospel as received by the early church has brought us into the Laodicean era of church prophecy --and sadly, most Christians don't even know they are there! Very few, over time, have paid much attention to the progressive decline of the church in their lives, so why should you be expected to be any different? "Because thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (at least, by act-

ions, indicating false comfort and ease), "and knowest not that thou art wretched, miserable, poor, and blind, and naked". "Be zealous therefore, and repent". "Behold I (Christ) stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me". Rev. 3:17, 19, 20.

I would like to add a quote from Clarence Larkin's commentary, "The Book of Revelation", on the above quoted passage. "These words are generally quoted as an appeal to sinners, but they are not, they are addressed to a church, and to a church in whose midst Christ once stood, but now found Himself excluded and standing outside knocking for admittance. How did Christ come to be outside the church? He had been within it once, or there never would have been a church. How did He come to leave? It is clear that they had not thrust Him out, for they do not seem to have missed His presence. They continued to worship Him, sing His praises, and engage in all manner of Christian service, yet He had withdrawn. Why? The reason is summed up in one word --worldliness. The character of the church today (written in 1919) is Laodicean, and as the Laodicean period is to continue until the church of the "New-Born" is taken out, we cannot hope for any great change until the Lord comes back." But the warnings are there for anyone to heed, and cry out to the Lord for help. And so it is, the pathetic picture painted by prophecy; not that the church can't, but won't, repent and be reformed to the purity, power, and interactive unity that it originally possessed.

## Chapter 8

### The Value of Truth, and The Cost of Error

Upon whatever subject God has spoken, a Christian is bound by the declared will of God to determine the true meaning of His revelations, and to act obediently and compliantly with the requirements thereof without exception, or deviation. The scriptural command in Prov. 23:23 to "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, instruction, and understanding", though brief in its wording, is nonetheless an explicit directive from God telling us to learn the truth at any cost, and never to betray it, or compromise it.

"Buy" is a figure of speech for 'obtain by any means'--the truth being of indispensably great value, as we can infer from the teaching of Proverbs, that wisdom is the highest thing to be sought after. Without first understanding the truth, there is no hope of having true wisdom, for godly wisdom is the intelligent use of true knowledge.

"Sell it not", as it relates to the church's colossal problem of wrong doctrine and theology, is a very unequivocal warning of God that a believer betrays when he accepts wrong interpretations of scripture from others, or otherwise comes to erroneous conclusions in his study and consideration of biblical subjects.



First, I believe that once a basically solid knowledge of spiritual principles is acquired, the Christian probably would never be induced to renounce such beliefs and accept any serious modification of them, let alone contradictory tenets, or dogma. Think how crucial the formative years are!

I believe the implication is more of a warning against failing to pursue the truth carefully and persistently--until it is found and sufficiently considered and accepted, as it should be. That is why we have the example of the Berean Christians cited to us in scripture. They had a guiding principle inculcated into their thinking that would help prevent them from getting into doctrinal error. They never received teaching without subjecting that teaching or preaching to the scriptures themselves to prove "whether those things were so". And we should make no other assumptions about it. For example, that maybe not every believer in the Berean church could personally come to an adequate knowledge and understanding of all scriptural teaching.

The provision has been instituted by God to make the process work for every member of a church, but it requires their cooperation and obedience in following His prescribed methods.

For a practical consideration of how it should work, let's assume that two of the brethren in a church disagree with something the pastor taught the assembly. This being after sufficient time and diligent study of the scriptures on the matter involved. In fact, they each have different views on the subject in question.

1. Do they have the freedom to have variations in their beliefs? Won't we have differences anyway?

Answer. To the first part of the question, No! I don't see anything in the bible that permits disagreement on doctrinal subjects or issues ("Issue", per Funk & Wagnalls Dictionary definition 5: "A matter of importance to be resolved". Certainly, God's revealed truths are matters of importance to be understood clearly (and if limitedly in some matters, yet fundamentally sound in interpretation of the essential meanings).

As for differences anyway, that is how it has nearly always been, and in the main is going to continue to be (per prophecy cited, and other), but is no excuse for anyone, and technically does not have to be--and more importantly should never be, because God's will is for every one of His children to come to know what He means on every subject he has spoken on, for our education and edification. There are no options nor justification for variant interpretations of doctrine!

2. Should they yield to the majority, and adopt their view, to maintain unity and keep peace and harmony in the church, rather than risk discord and division.

Answer. It may be necessary to temporarily defer to the majority, rather than openly contend against their belief, until adequate time is allowed for the dissenters to study the subject--including discussions with others in the church, objectively and in a good spirit. But conceding to the church when not convinced and convicted of the truth, does not accomplish what God requires. It is not true unity in doctrine. Therefore, the individuals fail to have the knowledge they need, and the church falls short of its charge if they are not able to come to unanimous agreement, or properly deal with the problem disciplinarily, in due time. I Cor. 11:18-19.

3. What is the real reason for differences in beliefs among Christians? Is it: "things hard to be understood", II Pet. 3:16?

Answer. One common fault among people of different persuasions in theology, is to misapply scriptures by using them as unwarranted excuses and defenses for difficulties and conflicts in interpretations. For example, there is of course a right application and use of scriptures like I Cor. 8:2, "And if any man thinketh he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know", and I Cor. 13:12, "For now we see through a glass darkly:.....now I know in part....".

Seeing through a glass darkly, as it would apply to doctrine (considering the injunctions for us to study and learn what God has declared to us)--I believe would be more logically understood as how much we see of something particular, not fundamentally what we see, as if it wasn't clear enough for everyone to see the same basic thing. This would speak to the subject of whether God requires absolute unity in doctrine. That, yes, He intended for us to have constitutional oneness, or agreement, in all our basic beliefs. How else are we going to have the testimony of the first church, which did maintain a steadfast continuance in the apostles' doctrine, with one accord in the temple? Amos 3:3 concisely answers the question with a question, "Can two"(or 100)"walk together except they be agreed?"

As to the question of whether it is still possible today to have unanimous beliefs in a church (and desirably all churches): if we say that it (a principle, doctrine, etc.) is not fully, or well enough revealed for us to make a definitive interpretation of it, we cast aspersions upon God--that He made it too difficult, or limited in revelation, so that we have some justification for our confusion, and different slants and views. See how God answers the question of I Cor. 14:26, "How is it, then, brethren, when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation? Let all things be done unto edifying", by His reply in verse 33, "For God is not the author of confusion .....", and Eph. 4:13, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and (unity) of the knowledge of the Son of God (and by logical inference: all of His, and the Father's teaching).....,

and verse 14, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine....".

When I referred to II Pet. 3:16, and "things hard to be understood", note that it does not say 'too' hard to be understood, and that furthermore the verse makes the distinction that it is "they that are unlearned and unstable, that 'wrest' them, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction". And again, while primarily the reference is to "the error of the wicked", the principle applies, that in essence--any degree or form of misinterpretation of scripture is culpable, and never excusable, except in the early stages of ignorance and allowable process of learning and development.

May we, therefore, consider the whole warning of II Pet. 3:17, with parenthetical paraphrasing, as follows: "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before (if indeed you do), beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked (or of erroneous, or heretical brethren), fall from your own steadfastness."

In Jeremiah, the Lord speaking of false prophets, but with application to any wrong teaching, says in chapter 23, part of verse 28....."he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord", and in verse 36, "for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the Lord of hosts our God." ('Pervert', per F & W Dict.: misapply, distort, misconstrue, corrupt, etc.).

There should be no need to make other references to the subject, which are numerous in scripture, for us to get the message strong and clear that God does not want His word tampered with in any way. Not only does any kind of false teaching render its own negative results, God warns us of His attitude towards it in such scriptures as again in Jeremiah 23:30, where He says, "Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith." And again, while this passage relates directly to false prophets, the principle applies to anyone who handles His word, and who ought to be very respectful and careful not to misrepresent God in any way, but particularly in the use of Scriptures--personally, socially, and professionally (applying to all believers, not only prophets, pastors, teachers, etc.).

The opposite of unity or oneness in doctrine is confusion, which exists throughout the church world today. Is this of God, or condoned by Him? Never! Do we not agree that total unity in a church on doctrine (or anything else required by God) is possible, per the example of Acts 2, and 4, etc.? What is required for the brethren of different doctrinal beliefs or opinions to be able to come to agreement? Is it not just what the first church Christians did (by implication and deduction, from their united testimony)? That is, that (1) they met all together, and

(2) worked on their problems, until (3) they were resolved, and (4) mutual agreement was reached, as to (5) the true interpretation of scripture (all scripture that they had been taught, or otherwise learned).

What to do if true accord does not result? If, after every reasonable effort is made, one insists on remaining in error, the recourse must be church discipline which could ultimately mean excommunication ( a purging out of the leaven of error, per I Cor. 5). But always with the hope and effort to restore such a one to fellowship, per II Cor. 2:6-11. Remember, then, that God has made and revealed provisions and procedures for every situation that can occur in our lives--personally and corporately--so that unity and every other result of obedience and faithfulness can be maintained in the church. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Eph. 3:21.

In a completely opposite scenario, what is to be done when a dissenter is right in his interpretations and convictions, and the church is wrong? If, after due process, by which the one in disagreement approaches the pastor and nothing develops whereby the church eventually corrects its position, but the church follows its typical inclination to take erroneous disciplinary action against the dissenting brother (which might range anywhere from censure to restriction to expulsion), what does it say about the prospects or hopes of reformation?

Whenever any of the prescribed requirements of keeping church unity (in everything essential) are delayed, omitted, and otherwise not obeyed, efforts by individuals or relatively small numbers of believers to attempt to bring about reformation in their assemblies and beyond are usually met with strong resistance and recrimination. Many would shrink from the persecuting pressures encountered, and capitulate to the status quo with the excuse that the task is too formidable or virtually impossible to accomplish. Or, to avoid the disruption and upheaval in the church, compromise is justified as keeping the peace, or for fear of losing the love and fellowship of brethren. It is, to be sure, often a lonely, frustrating, and disheartening experience to be at odds with one's church family; or even possibly with the majority of the universal church.

But when it is a right cause, the recourse and resource of God's love and mercy will uplift, encourage and strengthen one's resolve to persist in such a work; which is not only highly worthy of doing, but incumbent upon the church to be ever involved in the preservation, defense, and confirmation of all of God's revealed truth--at any personal cost or sacrifice.

Finally, we can not just agree in theory to Biblical principles, and correct doctrinal interpretations (i.e., those contended for in this commentary)--we have to agree in practice, by

unyielding pursuit of the full truth of them until they become a reality in our lives; and then to continually maintain those ideal, but real, articles of faith (they being the tradition of the elders, or pure doctrine of the early church).

So beautifully and poignantly applicable to this great need is the couplet of II Tim. 2:25-26 (which is not usually realized to be church doctrine, and not evangelistic material, as generally used): "In meekness (the servant of the Lord, per preceding verse) instructing those that oppose themselves (Arminians, etc.); if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will".

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches". Rev. 2, and 3.

## Chapter 9

### Only With The Faithfulness Of A Daniel

Daniel "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself"--literally, with the king's meat or wine, but implicitly with anything, and definitely not with wrong doctrine. Dan. 1:8. For we read further in chapter 6, verse 3, that "an excellent spirit was found in him", and then in verse 4 that the presidents and princes could find no occasion or fault in him: "forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault in him". Is this because God graced him with special power and virtue because of his particular ministry and circumstances? Why are we so prone to make excuses for ourselves, that we can't be, or God doesn't really expect us to be like Daniel, or Paul, or other such notable disciples of the Lord? Certainly God does not directly make us personally faithful, nor would He ever make our circumstances more or less conducive to it, than anyone else's! Neither Daniel nor Paul would have received any more approval, commendation, or rewards (here, or beyond) for their personal faithfulness than any of us would. It will only be our own failure that makes any negative difference. "Dare to be a Daniel", is not a challenge--it is a principle, a command of the Lord to do everything he asks of us, and will by His promises empower us to do. And nowhere is this truth expressed more succinctly and aptly than in Dan. 10:12: "Then he (the Lord, in a theophany appearance)" said unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day" (and with continuing commitment) "that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words". Dare we, not do the same?

In doctrinal analysis and interpretation, or indeed any area of study, a suggested principle of scholarship would be to determine the minimum and maximum meaning and application of every principle and subject. In short, reduce everything to its minimum; extend everything to its maximum. The second part is where

the limitation is usually exceeded, and misapplication is made. Without going too far into the subject at this point, may I suggest that because we typically still think as the "old" man instead of with renewed minds, as the new man, we tend, therefore, to interpret and apply doctrine by tempering it with rationalism. And any rationalism; that is, reasoning, which modifies, alters, adds to or detracts from God's intended meaning of His revealed word is dishonoring to God, detrimental to the persons responsible, and anyone exposed to it.

Returning to the subject of a proposed study method, above, may we take for example the doctrine of election. Simply, and basically, the word "election" alone tells us that there was some kind of choice or selection made by someone, of someone or something. In Biblical election, we know (1) it is God who made the choice, or election, (2) that it is persons who are the objects of the election, or who are predestinated to become heirs of salvation, (3) that only those who are elected are saved (that is, that there is no exception to the necessity of personal election to salvation), (4) that those people who have already been converted were elected, and that (5) whoever in the future are regenerated are also among the elect.

The foregoing distinctions of the subject are scriptural facts, to which all honest, enlightened believers should agree (Calvinist, or Arminian). The difficulty comes from human speculation and reasoning as to why, or upon what basis or influence, God made His elections; to wit, the establishment of theology by rationalism versus literality, or true interpretation.

(1) Was it a purely sovereign and independent act of God, or (2) does it involve anything on the human side, which affected in any way their selection; and conversely, (3) is there anything relative to the nonelected which affected their exclusion from God's salvation decree?

In the order of the foregoing questions, revelation says yes, no, and no; and rationalism says no, yes, and yes.

If we first consider the scriptural evidence of man's fall from grace to sin, we know that the resultant judgment of condemnation was for cause. That is, it was because of disobedience to a specific command of God, for which the consequences of such failure were emphatically made known to him. So, before the fall, man (in Adam) had the innate, natural faculty to know God, and to respond to and communicate with Him. He was also created with a free will, and subject to a specific test--the alternatives of which would determine the security and quality of life of his entire future.

In our finite mental/moral capacity--whether regenerate or not--it is practically impossible for us to comprehend the eternal weight and extreme consequences of success or failure in

man's reaction to the conditions of that test. As indulgent in, and permissive as we are in our vitiated natures of all the vast scope and nuances of sinfulness, we can not possibly understand the justness of God in decreeing eternal condemnation to man for a singular act of disobedience to His will. We wonder or question how man could have the propensity for making such an eternally serious mistake--when he could have otherwise made the right choice, and have become immortal (never again having the nature or capacity to disobey God; as we understand the scriptures to mean).

But, as a precedent and comparison, we have the case of the disobedience of certain angels, who likewise had not known or committed sin prior to their act of turning from God, and electing to follow Satan in his rebellion against God (which, itself, is probably a greater mystery--considering the tremendous attributes and perfections of those creatures, and their corresponding position and relationship to God in His hierarchy). And we have the further solemn fact of their demise, that there is no opportunity or provision made for salvation for any of them.

As for man, when we properly determine what the effect of sin is upon his ability to obey God's commands and righteous requirements, we must conclude from all the scriptural teaching on the subject, that he lost his original capacity to comprehend anything spiritual--that is, to be able in any way to have a knowing relationship with God, either personally and directly, or indirectly by any revelation from Him. I Cor. 2:14, Eph. 4:18, etc.

And then, in the context of church evangelism, the typical contemporary Christian misinterprets many scriptures relating to man's salvation--resulting in a wrong concept of Gospel application; and even more seriously a wrong concept, or image of God Himself!

## Chapter 10.

### A Hymnology Critique

To illustrate the difference between Calvinistic and Arminian theology, that is; right and wrong theology, I have selected a number of well known hymns for the purpose. The bases of which problem are various scriptural principles, and literally hundreds of verses misinterpreted by the vast majority of contemporary Christians--forming a gospel philosophy which is so fundamentally flawed and perverted that it only superficially resembles the true Biblical gospel. It is in fact man's gospel, not God's--as He gave it! Yes, "another gospel" as deserving of judgment and denunciation as any other false representation of God.

Blasphemy committed by unregenerate, wicked man is probably not more reprehensible to God (given the fallen, evil nature of man) than error or heresy maintained as truth by His children, who have been made spiritually able and inexcusably responsible

to know the difference between truth and error, and therefore to believe and live accordingly--in a lifelong testimony of devotion, loyalty, and faithfulness to God and His word.

Following are the subject hymns with commentary:

1. "Blessed be the Name".

Implication in verse 1, 2nd stanza:

"Who gave His Son for man to die, That He might man redeem". Possibly the author did not mean it in the conditional sense, but it does not convey the certainty that election guarantees.

Then, in verse 3, 2nd stanza:

"Thou hast devised salvation's plan, For Thou has died for all". While, again, the author may not have meant it wrong (as per scriptural usage of "all")--without any qualifying words accompanying this statement, it basically reflects and reinforces the Arminian concept of universal atonement.

2. "To God be the Glory".

Verse 1, 2nd and 3rd stanza:

"And opened the lifegate that all may go in". Same question of meaning as in item 1, part 2, above. God's plan of salvation neither includes everyone, in any aspect, nor is it invitational or optional as the word "may" would imply.

3. "He is So Precious to Me".

Verse 2:

"He stood at my heart's door mid sunshine and rain, And patiently waited an entrance to gain, What shame that so long He entreated in vain".

This is typical of the psychical, soulish, emotional appeals of Arminian, humanistic evangelism. First of all, the Lord does not stand at unregenerate man's heart door, and plead with the flesh (carnal nature) of man to respond to Him--because that is not the way God works, per I Cor. 2:11,..... "the things of God knoweth no man, but (by) the Spirit of God (which must be in man first, per next verse: 2:15, "We have received the spirit of God....that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" including the gospel, and any spiritual response to it), vs. 14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned".

So, then, God does not plead with carnal man, trying to get him to respond to his "entreaties"--and though a man be preached to by man, there is no spiritual effect upon him, or knowing reaction from him--per above scriptures cited and others; unless and until God inwardly converts and



regenerates him first--which is exactly what He does (however mysteriously it all happens). The Arminian theology errors with all this, are so serious, that they make God look as if he violates His own declared principles, and does something contradictory to what they clearly state. Which is all part of the reverse theology of "God in the image of man", which is, in effect, the characteristic result of that school of false thinking and teaching.

"Depth of Mercy" Can There Be" .

Verse 2:

"I have long withstood His grace, Long provoked Him to His face, Would not hearken to His calls.....etc."

Unless this may be applied to a believer's life--it would not properly describe a work of the Lord in a nonbeliever's life--because God's grace when extended to any person is irresistible, and can not, indeed would not, be withstood. He does not call, except He gives the efficacy (by act of regeneration) by which a man may and will hearken (which makes all real response after the fact, never before).

"Wonderful".

Verse 1, 2nd and 3rd stanzas:

"(God) Pleading with sinners to let Him come in".

Again, God does not plead with sinners--they are spiritually dead and could not hear Him spiritually if He did speak to them before they are born again, which He would not do for it would contradict His own other applicable principles (and only foolish mortals do that--not God, ever!). If I may say so, reverently, He does not ask to come in, He enters the heart and life of His elect when He so chooses. No human words or thoughts, or actions have anything to do with it. As I stated in another commentary on the subject, I believe it is succinctly accurate to say that we have no more to do with our second birth (spiritual re-creation) than we did with our first birth (natural procreation).

"Have You Any Room for Jesus".

Verse 1, 2nd stanza:

"As He knocks and asks admission, Sinner will you let Him in"? As previously commented, Jesus does not plead with man--neither can man understandingly let Him in. And certainly, man's words alone do not constitute spiritual response. This is, again, contrary to election, human depravity, and conversion principles.

Verse 2, 2nd stanza:

"(Have you) not a place that He can enter, In the heart for which He died?".

No! We have not a place that He would enter, until He makes it habitable (by redemption and cleansing sanctification) for

Him (the Spirit), and secondly if it is a heart for which He died (which is an exclusionary principle versus universal atonement), He will indeed enter it in His way, and at His appointed time.

Verse 3, 1st and 2nd stanzas:

".....As in grace He calls again, Oh today is time accepted, Tomorrow you may call in vain".

As before noted, God isn't calling us, waiting for our possible (?) response--and if we call tomorrow in vain, we would call today in vain--because unless first regenerated, we can not effectively call upon the Lord (only believers can call upon Him--as their Father, helper, comforter, savior, etc.).

Verse 4, 1st and 2nd stanzas:

".....Soon will pass God's day of grace".

God's day of grace is the execution or fulfillment of His salvation plan for His elect--sovereignly, directly, and independently performed by Him as an operation on the heart of His chosen ones. It is not a "day" or period of opportunity for salvation--it is not grace proffered (that is, offered for acceptance).

The whole idea that unregenerated (spiritually dead) man can understand or respond to anything spiritual--including the gospel--is as preposterous as sounding reveille in a graveyard and expecting corpses to arise: notwithstanding God's power of resurrection (which would be--as in the act of regeneration--divine intervention).

"And thy Saviour's Pleading Cease".

First, He is not "thy saviour", if not elected, with whom He does not plead, but makes them Christians; and there is, again, no pleading or invitation, or any kind of opportunity for anyone but His elect.

Refrain:

"Bid Him enter while you may", is the same distortion of gospel truth as already referred to: i.e., human psychology, without scriptural basis.

"Almost Persuaded".

Another soulish, emotional, psychological hymn--contradictory to the doctrine of predestination and the true gospel. There is no "almost" persuaded. (1) The carnal, natural man cannot be persuaded in any degree, of anything spiritual. There surely is no "almost". None of the elect will remain lost, and none of the nonelect will ever be anything but lost (per salvation and condemnation decrees, respectively).

"Let Jesus Come into Your Heart".

It is not up to man to permit Jesus to enter his life. His plan of salvation does not work that way. When it is His

time, He enters our heart--even against our will, because we have only a natural, unspiritual will (at enmity with God), and cannot comprehend anything of God: the Father, the Son, the Spirit, or His word.

"I Am Praying For You".

Most of the various expressions, etc. in the song can be considered acceptable in the right sense--except when the implication is made that prayer in any way results in someone's salvation, as in verse 4,....."And prayer will be answered - 'twas answered for you". God did not act in response to any particular prayers, regarding anyone's redemption and conversion. It is preordained by God, irrespective of anything that man (including Christians) ever can or does do in relation to anyone's becoming a Christian.

"Lord, Is It I?"

Referring to the "world's vast millions, Sin-blinded, die", etc., and the question of someone failing God: "Lord, is it I?". No one can fail God in that way--to cause someone to miss the "possibility" of salvation. No more than they can be a positive, causative factor for salvation.

"Someone has failed Thee, Lord, is it I?, Millions are dying; Oh hear their crying! Someone has failed Thee: Lord, is it I?"

This is scripturally unsupportable, playing on fleshly emotions to motivate Christians to evangelization--as if anyone's soul would ever be dependent upon human actions, as more than limited means employed by God (having no efficacy of themselves; no decisive effect: ever!).

"Jesus Loves the Little Children"

No subject on earth is so sensitive and difficult to deal with as the suggestion or possibility that Jesus, or God does not love all the children of the world. But if you could withhold your natural adverse reaction to the question, long enough to doctrinally consider and test the supposition or assumption--you may find that it is at least not a foregone conclusion (that children are in a special category of universal love, and guaranteed eternal life if they die in infancy or youth); if it is at all tenable with applicable scriptural principles and doctrine.

The foundation of election is God's sovereign will--without regard to anything in the elect as a contributing factor (except, technically, their condemnable, unspiritual, lost condition, which is common to all unredeemed mankind).

Among the fuzzy, gray areas of Arminian theology is the idea of accountability, which, flying in the face of the doctrine of original sin, exempts children from the condemning consequences of Adam's--~~since~~ ~~until~~ ~~some~~ ~~particular~~ ~~age~~, when they

are mature enough to be responsible for the eternal consequences of personal sin, and decisions relating thereto.

Our great difficulty with all this--and I admit my own inability to understand all of its complex essence (if God even intended us to, yet)--is that we can not adequately comprehend the doctrine of original sin, whereby every human being (even at birth) was not only assigned automatic inclusion in its judgmental consequences as progeny of Adam, who personally committed the condemnable transgression, but that every person ever born, or that will be born, was intrinsically involved in him (Adam), even with him, in the commission of his act of mortal sin. Thus, the seed is both corrupted, and culpable.

It was not a simple matter of happenstance that Adam's original sin of disobedience was committed--not with the eternal consequences of such great magnitude and finality for the masses to follow (who are not elected to salvation).

Quoting from part of John Gill's comments on Rom.5:12 ("Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"), he says: "Hence may be learnt the origin of moral evil among men, which comes not from God, but man; of this it is said, that it 'entered into the world'; not the world above, there sin entered by the devil; but the world below, and it first entered into paradise, and then passed through the whole world; into all men that descend from him (Adam) by ordinary generation, and that so powerfully that there is no stopping of it. It has entered by him, not by imitation, for it has entered into such as never sinned 'after the similitude of his (Adam's) transgression, infants, or otherwise death could not have entered into them, and such who never heard of it, as the Heathens: besides, sin entered as death did, which was not by imitation but imputation, for all men are reckoned dead in Adam' being accounted sinners in him; add to this, that in the same way Christ's righteousness comes upon us, which is by imputation, Adam's sin enters into us, or becomes ours; upon which death follows, 'and death by sin'; that is, death has entered into the world of men by sin, by the first sin of the first man; not only corporeal death, but a spiritual or moral one, man, in consequence of this, becoming 'dead in sin', deprived of righteousness, and averse, and impotent to all that is good; and also an eternal death, to which he is liable; 'for the wages of sin is death'; even eternal death; all mankind are in a law-sense dead, the sentence of condemnation and death immediately passed on Adam as soon as he had sinned, and upon all his posterity; 'and so death passed upon all men'; the reason of which was, 'for that', or because 'in him all have sinned'; all men were naturally and seminally in him; as he was the common parent of mankind, he had all human nature in him, and was also the covenant head and representative of all his posterity; so

that they were in him both naturally and federally, and so 'sinned in him'; and fell with him by his first transgression into condemnation and death."

If, then, it is true (however deep and mysterious to us) that we were each individually responsible for, and guilty of the same act of disobedience to God that Adam was, it is just as if we had each done the same thing wrong that he did! In other words, not just Adam committed the first sin, but the whole human race sinned in him, as part of him (even as him).

It is, further, a scripturally established fact that all divine retribution or punishment is for direct cause; that is, no individual is punishable for another person's sin. The unity of the race in Adam, physically, innocently, and being co-responsible with him for obedience to God is, however incomprehensible to us, the only conclusion that we can safely make in consistency with the principles of cause and effect (i.e., commandments and consequences), as it applies to the doctrine of original, universal sin and its earthly and eternal judgments.

Adam sinned with an innocent nature--however subject or susceptible to possible failure it may have been, unless or until he might have made the positive choice given to him of eating of the tree of life. We were guilty of complicity in Adam's sin, by imputation (and that for inherent participation). Funk & Wagnall's Dictionary, Definition 1 of the word impute is: To attribute (a fault, crime, etc.) to a person; charge. 2. To consider as the cause or source of; ascribe: with 'to'.

This interpretation, then, is the only rational explanation for sin being chargeable to an infant, who might die before committing any personal act of sin (and while any expression of imperfection could itself be considered sin, technically--the scriptures do qualify such sin as 'not being after the similitude of Adam's transgression'). And also, anyone born after Adam, having inherited a sinful nature could basically do nothing but sin. He has not the inherent or constitutional innocency from which to choose (anything comparable to the tree of life that Adam could). Even the relative good that he may choose or perform would be tainted with sin.

I think some reflection and commentary may be helpful regarding Adam's test or commands given to him by God; his responses to which would determine the future nature and quality of his life. First of all, we must not think that there was anything fortuitous about Adam's opportunities or possible choices or decisions.. Consider, if you haven't, the scope of his earthly responsibility, to at least get some idea of his mental and physical capacity. Having been given the job of dressing and keeping the garden of Eden--on the surface--may not seem to be a particularly interesting or fulfilling occupation. But we must realize that the garden was some 400 sq. mi. in area, and he had to tend it in every way (which could well include the developmental aspect of agriculture and horticulture as

well as maintenance, plus utilization of minerals and other resources, the care of all the animals created, and surely other things that could realistically be imagined).

And even if Adam's responsibilities anticipated eventual family participation, still how could so much work be done daily or frequently enough? Even with the use of some fairly fast animals for travel, it would take days just to get from one end to another, with all the different directions of similar distances, and every place along each way. We can't conceive of being able to do such a job in less than many months, or even years; and that would only be one visit in every place, excluding whatever time would be needed for whatever work was required.

One thing I believe is certain, and which we should not doubt or rationalize about. That is, that if God gave him that much work to do on a regular basis, he also gave him the ability to do it. In his state of innocency and purity, it is conceivable that he had far greater mental and physical powers than anyone would have been permitted to possess after the corrupting and diminishing effect of the fall. Part of the curse would logically be a great reduction in man's capacity to perform the requirements of his original domain, or even be allowed and trusted with the prerogatives and privileges of his original endowment.

There are vestiges today of psychic and parapsychological powers in some individuals, even though they may often be occultic, or with some evil--even Satanic--connection. We also note persons of exceptional intellects, artistic and creative gifts, etc. It is, then, very conceivable that Adam was vested not only with a great intellectual capacity, but even with extrasensory faculties. To me, it is a reasonable conjecture to imagine that Adam had capabilities which, compared to us, we would call supernatural, or superhuman. But, it all would have been normal for him, and us too, if the intervention of sin and its degenerating consequences had not occurred.

Certain analogies would seem to be logical deductions between angels and man (Adam and Eve), and in the future restoration and glorification: all regenerate men. We have in scripture, various descriptions and accounts of angelic characteristics and functions, or abilities. Satan, being the prime example, was created by God with extraordinary attributes. Just listen to some of the descriptions from Ezek. 28: "Thou sealest up the sum" (or are so complete and perfect, that nothing could be added), "full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty" (appearance, and workmanship of all his mental and physical faculties), "Thou was perfect in all thy ways from the day thou was created, till iniquity was found in thee".

A quick study or impression of angels' power and abilities can be seen by the instance in Rev. 21:15-16:, "And he ('one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues', vs. 9) that talked with me (John) had a golden reed (about 10 ft. long) to measure the city (the new Jerusalem, or heavenly

city), and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof, And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth, and he measured the city with the reed (while John watched, or waited, per vs. 10), twelve thousand furlongs (approx. 1,323 mi.). The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal".

Whether the 1,323 mi. is the total measurement, or just one dimension (which appears likely), or the total, which would be three times that, or 3,969 mi., the feat is amazing to us either way. We might say that we realize angels can fly, or somehow project themselves, at great speeds, but he also measured the distance with a 10 ft. reed, and this must have been done in a relatively brief time (probably only minutes vs. hrs.). By human comparison, it would take a person something like 10 mos. just to walk 1,323 mi., or as much as 2½ yrs. to cover the three dimension total of 3,969 mi.

I make these analogies to suggest that Adam must have possessed some similar great powers and abilities--especially when we think of the scripture that tells us that God created man in His own image, or likeness (Gen. 1:27, 5:13, 9:6). And in view of the fact that God had given man the earth to be lord and steward of, he would need to be endowed with godlike characteristics and capabilities.

We can only imagine what man in his original design--comparatively unlimited vs. the severely diminished remnant that sinful man is now--could have done to fully develop and creatively utilize the earth's resources, plus establish and perfect man's spiritual, social, industrial, and professional life to heights far beyond what we have ever seen in our seriously limited and corrupted capacities. We have fallen so tragically far from that image and likeness of God, that even in our presently regenerated state we bear little resemblance to our original creation.

To resume the hymn critiques:

"Pass Me Not".

However moving and empathizing such words as rendered in the hymn may be to us--they are extra-scriptural; yes, contradictory to gospel truth. No fleshly cries are tantamount to any real appeal to God for salvation, for "none seeketh God" in their carnal state--even under the most powerful gospel messages and impulses of the Spirit. Nor are they directed by God at natural man to evoke a response from him, in his spiritually dead state.

Words alone, uttered by natural man, have no effect on God--for he "heareth not sinners" (John 9:31) in their unredeemed condition. And to reiterate the principle of certainty that ensures the salvation of the elect--there is no possibility of their being passed by, hence no such appeal is ever needed.

"Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul".

Verse 3, 4th stanza:

"Took of the offer of grace He did proffer.....".

There is no offer of grace to natural man, subject to his acceptance or rejection in order for salvation to occur. For the reasons heretofore explained, the conversion of a soul from natural to spiritual is a direct, independent act of God in which man is entirely passive. Which is what 'all of grace' means, or all of God, as the related doctrines--rightly interpreted--prove: from God's love and His will, to election or predestination, to the ministry of protecting angels, to Christ's sacrificial death (the atonement), to the impartation of the Spirit (regeneration/sanctification), to nurturing and teaching (edification), to exemption and escape from condemnation to hell (literal salvation), and to eternal glorification and cohabitation with God.



## Addendum

Calvinistic ~~exposition~~ of typical key words commonly misinterpreted by Arminian believers (church majority), in familiar Gospel verses.

### "World"

Strong's Concordance:

2889. kosmos, kos'-mos; prob. from base of 2865; orderly arrangement, i.e. decoration; by impl. the world (in a wide or narrow sense, includ. its inhab., lit. or fig. [mor.]: adorning, world.

Note: Acknowledging the broad generality of the word 'world', should itself keep one from getting dogmatic about its application; especially on a grammatical basis versus governing doctrine.

John 1:29, ..... "which taketh away the sin of the world" (by implication, man; but technically, per doctrine of predestination, elect man, only; and in context of passage: Gentiles, in addition to Jews (God's primary chosen ones). Note Isaiah 49:6, "And he (God) said, It is a light thing that thou (Christ) shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth".

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world.....".

17, "..... that the world through him might be saved".

4:42, "..... the Christ, the Saviour of the world".

6:51, "..... my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world".

12:47, "..... not to judge the world, but to save the world".

Rom. 11:12, "..... the fall of them (Israel), be the riches of the world", per Is. 49:6, above, and Acts 11:18, following: "..... Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life".

11:15, "For if the casting away of them (Israel) be the reconciling of the world.....".

2 Cor. 5:19, "..... reconciling the world unto himself....".

1 John 4:14, "..... the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world".

2:2, "..... the propitiation .....also, for the sins of the whole world". I.e., "unto the end of the earth" (per Is. 49:6), but not to include every inhabitant, ever; per previous references to applicable doctrine--here, and in preceding material.

A quotation from John Gill's "Exposition of the New Testament", on I John 2:2 should help to <sup>define</sup> the true sense of the word 'world', as used above: "Nothing is more common in Jewish writings" (and indeed scriptures, especially in the Gospels where mostly Jews were involved in the early ministry of the Lord and His disciples) "than to call the Gentiles the world, the whole world, and the nations of the world; and the word world is so used in scripture.....and stands opposed to a notion the Jews have of the Gentiles, that there is no propitiation for them". And

then, in a comment relative to John 3:16, he paraphrases as follows--of the Lord addressing Nicodemus: ".....it is as if he had said, you Rabbins say, that when the Messiah comes, only the Israelites, the peculiar favourites of God, shall share in the blessings that come by, and with him; and that the Gentiles shall reap no advantage by him, being hated of God, and rejected of him: but I tell you, God has so loved the Gentiles, as well as the Jews, that he gave his only begotten Son; to and for them, as well as for the Jews....".

"All"

John 1:7, "..... that all men through him (Christ) might believe".  
12:32, "I (Christ).... will draw all men unto me".  
Rom. 5:18, "..... the free gift came upon all men ....".  
10:12, "..... the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him".  
11:32, "..... that he might have mercy upon all".  
I Cor. 15:22, "..... in Christ shall all be made alive".  
2 Cor. 5:14, "..... if one died for all, then were all dead":  
5:15, "And that he died for all,....".  
I Tim. 2:4, "Who (God) will have all men to be saved,....".  
2:6, "Who gave himself a ransom for all,....".  
4:10, "..... (God) who is the saviour of all men,....".  
II Pet. 3:9, "..... that all should come to repentance".

In the scripture excerpts above; particularly John 1:7, 12:32, I Tim. 2:4, 4:10, and many other similar cases that could be cited, the word "all" refers essentially to the fact of God's extension to the Gentiles (per para. 1 above, etc.) of His grace in salvation to them, as well as the Jews. It means "all" in the sense of all nationalities, ethnic groups, classes, etc., but not every individual of the race--then, now, or ever!

In the verses Rom. 5:18, 10:12, 11:32, I Cor. 15:22, 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, I Tim. 2:6, II Pet. 3:9, and in many other places in scripture, the "all's" have specific reference to certain people, who are the objects and subjects of the underlying doctrines that apply to, or are essential to the true interpretation of those quotations, or passages involved.

This necessary distinction relating to the use of the word, doctrinally and contextually, I hope might be clarified by reference to something I had written in a treatise, "Disputing the Free Will Concept", contained elsewhere in this publication: Per 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, above....." It is not obvious, nor definite, that 'all' means everyone in the world, any more than it can well mean all that were particularly died for ( a certain class, or number). And to be consistent with predestination, this means the elect of God only.

"The truth of organic union and identification applied to the interpretation of I Cor. 15:22 (also Rom. 5:18-19) is to me the key to the meaning of this case in point: 'For as in Adam all

die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive'.

"The first clause--relating to a certain creation, would be rendered as: (1) Whoever (which is all humanity) that were in Adam die, because they were in Adam (seminally and by imputation).

"The second clause--relating to a contrasting creation, would read as: (2) Whoever is in Christ (which is not necessarily, nor even possibly, all humanity) will be made alive because they were in Christ.

"In each of the passages noted, the words 'many', or 'all' are the same Greek word, meaning what they say in English--but they do not apply to the same entire class, or group of people. They are each a certain 'all', not a common 'all'.

"The true interpretation, then, is not a declaration of universal atonement, or provisional salvation for all, as in the unlimited atonement concept (Arminian, prevailing theology).

"The truth is, rather, of two contrasting creations, and of two different heads of these creations--with judgment falling upon the posterity of one, and righteousness (by imputation) upon the other. This scripture teaches the principle of the organic unity and identification between each member in their own class, as related to the particular head of each domain, after the law which characterizes them--sin and death in the Adamic creation, and life and righteousness in the new creation of the body of Christ.

"But there is no automatic transfer of the 'all' of one group into the other. They are not necessarily even, consistently with scripture, the same 'all'.

"Again, in Eph. 2:11-16, we see Jew and Gentile contrast, and subsequent reconciliation, vs. 16. Nothing is said, nor hardly implied, that the Gentile inclusion in the grace of God means necessarily all mankind, other than Jews; any more than Israel (as objects of God's plan of salvation) means every Jew. And, again, election truth teaches us the designed limit of God's plan, as in Acts 15:14: that 'God did at the first visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name'."

II Pet. 3:9, commonly misinterpreted as evangelistic doctrine to support the Arminian view that God desires everyone to be saved, is instead church doctrine written to comfort and encourage brethren to remember the promises of the Lord's return. The sense of His being willing "that all should come to repentance", is the same as expressed in John 6:39, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me (the elect) I should lose nothing (no one), but should raise it up again at the last day". The word 'nothing' has special reference to the body\*, even every part and particle of it; as well as their souls. Please see the forementioned treatise, "Disputing the Free Will Concept, per index listing, for fuller discussion of II Pet. 3:9.

\*Resurrection.

"Every"

- Mark 16:15, ".....preach the Gospel to every creature".  
John 1:9, ".....which lighteth every man(,) that cometh into the world." (The last clause refers to Jesus, not man). The verse, legitimately rearranged, could read: 'That was the true Light, which cometh into the world, which lighteth every man'. ('Every' denotes the Gentile distinction, per vs. 11, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not; and especially to Isa. 49:6, "..... a light to the Gentiles.....").  
Acts 17:30, ".....(God) commandeth all men every where to repent." This item properly belongs in the 'all' section, preceding.  
Rom. 1:16, ".....salvation to every one that believeth....".  
10:4, ".....to every one that believeth."  
Heb. 2:9, ".....That God should taste death for every man" (that is, experience what every man's death is).

All the above references have the same basic Gentile, as well as Jew, connotation or meaning as the "world", and "all" scriptures cited.

"Whosoever"

- John 3:15-16, "....whosoever believeth in him.....".  
11:26, ".... " liveth and believeth in me.....".  
12:46, ".... " believeth on me should not abide in darkness".  
Acts 2:21, "....whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord".  
10:43, ".... " believeth in him shall receive remission of sins".  
Rom. 9:33, "....whosoever " on him shall not be ashamed".  
10:13, ".... " shall call upon the Lord shall be saved".  
I John 4:15, ".... " confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him.....".  
5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God....".  
Rev. 22:17, "And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely".

Again, with the same rationale as for the other words noted, the Lord is emphasizing for the Jews' benefit, who had always held such contempt toward Gentiles having any possible share in the saving grace of God--that they (certain elect Gentiles) are now specifically to be heirs of his salvation plan. For cause, relating to Israel's historic disobedience and later rejection of him as savior and king, they would be judicially blinded to him as their redeemer, for the gospel dispensation, or church age; that is, "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24, etc.).

"Will"

- Ezek. 3:18, "..... his blood will I require at thine hand."  
(For failure to warn the wicked of his ways, and impending death--as a witness, but not as cause of one going to hell).
- John 5:40, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life". (A rebuke for the error of their religion in trying to seek life outside of Christ. Even though, unless elect, unable to seek or come to know Christ--man is responsible for his inability [resulting from his sin] to spiritually know and obey the will of God). The analogy of a drunken driver illustrates the principle; the requirements of motor vehicle operation laws are not waived or removed in any way, because the operator failed to keep himself in a sober condition so that he could properly perform his legal responsibility.
- 6:37, "..... him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out". (This is a confirmation of God's promise, or guarantee to the elect of their sure entrance to heaven (and corresponding escape from hell). John Gill said that, "The three glorious doctrines of grace, of eternal election, efficacious in conversion, and the final perseverance of the saints, are clearly contained in these words". They are not, then, invitational words to the unsaved (in general), but proclamational or affirmational to the elect.
- 11:48, "..... all men will believe on him.....". Gentiles, as well as Jews; even as the chief priests and Pharisees said about Jesus doing miracles: "If we let him thus alone, all men (Gentiles) will believe on him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation".

"Would"

- Matt. 23:37 "..... how often would I have gathered thy children together,.....and ye would not!" This was the Lord rebuking the Pharisees, and leaders of Jerusalem, for not allowing the Jews to worship, etc.

"Believe"

- Mark 1:15, "..... repent ye, and believe the gospel". Exhortation to Jews to turn from works of law to grace and faith; at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.
- John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name". The main subject is the authority they are given as sons; the belief is a result of their regeneration, not the cause of it!
- 12:36, "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.....". An admonition for Christian walk ('while ye have the

light, per vss. 35, 36, as believers already; a continuation of the subject of vs. 26. "If any man serve me, let him follow me.....".)

John 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe....., and that believing ye might have life through his name". Spoken to the disciples, to teach them, and give them assurance of the promised hope.

Acts 13:39, "..... by him, all that believe are justified.....". Expresses Christian grace status, or effect of faith vs. law.

16:31, "..... Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house". A typically misinterpreted and misused passage, applied indiscriminately to unsaved in general, in evangelization. There is no warrant here, or elsewhere, to take words spoken specifically to a particular person (the Philippian jailor), and his family or household--which is an instance of God executing his pre-ordained plan of salvation for certain of his elect ones--, and for assuming that such words were intended to constitute universal gospel language. Given the special, apostolic powers that Paul (and possibly Silas) possessed, they might have known that this man and his family were being called by the Lord, and were to be made Christians at that time. If one would, or could set aside his strictly human tendencies, or Arminian theological predisposition, just long enough to look at this scripture purely objectively, it could at least be acknowledged that the usual assumption of this passage's meaning is subject to question, and careful reconsideration. When Paul and Silas answered the Philippian jailor's question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?", by saying "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, , , , , etc.", they are not telling him that in a carnal state he can believe, but that he must become a believer in the Lord ( a result of regeneration, not the cause), before he or anyone can escape hell, and enter heaven. In other words, they were not asking or inviting him to do something, which he did not have the capacity or ability to do in his unregenerate state. I believe the circumstances of the jailor's personal situation, fearing for his life because of the prisoners becoming loosed and assumed to have fled, caused him to be very concerned about his eternal security, not simply (by comparison) how to become a Christian for earthly life purposes. Or, 'what must I do to be saved from condemnation to hell' (in an immediate anticipated situation), not, 'what must I do to be born again' (as if there were no particular exigency threatening his earthly existence). When the word "saved" is used in its literal sense, meaning the actual chronological event of entering eternity as a redeemed human being, and not committed to hell with the wicked--it must not be

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- confused with the event of regeneration, which while guaranteeing eventual actual salvation, is not technically nor literally the same thing (as typically used indiscriminately in Arminian theology).
- Rom. 10:9 , "..... if thou shalt..... believe in thine heart..... thou shalt be saved". Same literal meaning of the word "saved" as preceding explanation. Assurance that believers shall escape hell, and go to heaven!
- I Cor.1:21, "..... it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe". The emphasis here is on the fact that only those who have faith (have become believers in Christ, being quickened by His Spirit, through the gospel, which is itself "the power of God") will go to heaven. The first part of the verse refers to the contrasting fact that "the world by wisdom knew not God", to whom the gospel is the "foolishness of preaching".
- Heb. 11:6, "..... he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and a rewarder of them that diligently seek him". The distinction here is the necessity of true faith versus mere profession. The 'cometh to God' phrase is after the fact of regeneration; coming to God in prayer, communion, worship, etc. which are only real to actual believers. And there is admonition to develop greater faith and blessings by "diligently" seeking Him. The Arminian idea of believing in God as a prerequisite of conversion, or that one can even come to God unless he is drawn (and that irresistibly, because of predestination), distorts the true meaning of this and many similar scriptures.
- I John 5:13, ".....that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God". 'Which they had done already, and still did; the sense is, that the above things (in the chapter) were written to them concerning the Son of God, that they might be encouraged to continue believing in him, as such; to hold fast the faith of him, and go on believing in him (trusting him) to the end; and that their faith might be increased: for faith is imperfect, and is capable of increasing, and growing exceedingly; and nothing more tends unto, or is a more proper means of it, than the sacred writings, the reading and hearing of them explained, and especially that part of them which respects the Person, office, and grace of Christ'. From John Gill's Commentary, Vol. VI.

### "Believed"

- John 3:18, ".....condemned already, because he hath not believed". An unavoidable fact of life for the non-elect. Their not believing proves reprobation; hence, the inability of such ones (as well as anyone in their natural state) to believe. It (not believing ) is not the cause of their condemnation, but a characteristic of all those in that irrecoverable plight. While I realize the particular wording of this scripture does not of itself

warrant the following paraphrasing, the underlying theology, or doctrinal principle does: that is, that the truth of the matter is 'that the doctrine of every man's original sin in Adam is what caused his condemnation to hell; therefore rendering him unable to believe, ever; unless he is one of the number chosen to be delivered from that decree, and subsequently given the means to become a believer in God (which is that direct, independent act of the Spirit of God, called regeneration, theologically; or quickening, etc., scripturally)'

"Believest"

Acts 8:37, "..... if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest (be baptized).....". This is spoken as a test of one's qualification to be eligible for the ordinance of baptism; and is spoken after the fact of conversion (in this case the profession of same, subject to question by the church, and personal examination and positive acknowledgment by the individual under consideration--if in fact, a true believer).

"Believeth"

Mark 16:16, "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; ..... ". A statement of fact declaring what one must be ( a believer) in order to be admitted to heaven. It means just what it says, but does not mean it as an invitation or potential promise, etc. for anyone but the elect. It is not general evangelical preaching or doctrine, subject to man's uncertain reaction; but rather words of assurance to actual believers of their guaranteed future eternal safety in glory with God.

John 3:18 "He that believeth on him is not condemned.....".

3:36 "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life..".

5:24 "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him...".

6:35 "..... he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

6:40 "..... every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.....".

6:47 "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

11:25 ".....he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live".

11:26 "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

Rom. 10:10 "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness..... ".



- I John 5:1 "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God....".
- 5:5 "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"
- 5:10 "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.....".

These passages come under the same explanation as Mk. 16:16. They are further promises and assurances to believers of particularly the future aspect of their inheritance as Christians. The words serve as encouragement and confirmation to them in this earthly life, with its many vicissitudes and circumstances that must be endured. Again, they have no application to the nonelect; that is, except for the negative sides of the truths declared--such as "... he that believeth not the Son shall not see life..." (John 3:36), etc. And neither are such statements of scripture a warning or threat to unbelievers, because the salvation of souls has been exclusively preordained for the certain ones whom God elected; whose redemption and conversion is guaranteed to occur at His appointed time. There are no positive spiritual promises or gospel verities that apply to anyone, but God's elect, as available to them, or attainable by them in any other way.

### "Faith"

- Mark 11:22 "..... Have faith in God." Admonition to believers to trust God.
- Luke 7:50 "..... Thy faith hath saved thee.....". Assurance of possession of faith, as believer.
- Acts 3:16 "..... through faith in his name ....". Indicating the necessity of faith as prerequisite of going to heaven, not as cause or requirement of new birth.
- 20:21 "..... and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." As a believer; not previous to regeneration.
- Rom. 3:25 "..... propitiation through faith in his blood." One of the results of redemption and conversion; which faith also is (that is, a result, not a cause).
- 3:28 "..... a man is justified by faith....". A contrast to the Jewish tradition of trying to obtain righteousness by the "deeds of the law", instead of the "righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ". In other words salvation is all of grace, even the faith, or belief.
- 5:1 "..... being justified by faith . Same as preceding.
- 5:2 "..... access by faith, into this grace." Present access to the throne of grace, as believer, only.
- 9:30 "..... righteousness, which is of faith." Per 3:28 note, above.
- 9:32 "..... because they sought it not by faith." " .
- 10:17 "..... faith cometh by hearing.... ". Imparted to the elect, through the gospel.

"faith", cont'd

- Gal. 2:20 "..... I live by the faith of the Son of God." He is the author, and with God, the whole source and cause of faith; with nothing requisite of man to affect it.
- Eph. 2:8 ^ "..... by grace are ye saved\*, through faith....".  
\*Escaped from hell, and assured of heaven; by means of God, previously noted.

"Trust"

- Psalms 2:12 "..... Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Reference is to those who are his followers (actual believers)--contrasting their life status to others in the chapter (kings, judges, etc.), who because of their ungodly actions, abuses of authority, etc., are objects of his wrath, and displeasure--being warned accordingly of consequences if they persist in their defiance of Him. It is a common mistaken concept that an unbeliever can "put his trust" in God and become a Christian, for in a carnal state he cannot possess the kind of knowing, spiritual trust that is referred to in this scripture, or anywhere else in the Bible with the same connotation.

"Repent"

- Acts 2:38 ".....Repent, and be baptized ....." Expresses acts of faith and obedience to command of God, which is only possible to ones who have been spiritually enabled by God to do the things required.
- 3:19 "Repent ye therefore, and be converted.....". The apostle Peter is declaring what must occur in one's life before he can be accounted a true believer; but he is not telling them (Israel), indiscriminately, that they can of themselves (in any way) do what is stated. His ministry is external, or general preaching. God, by his Spirit, and the word, ministers internally, efficaciously to the elect; thereby causing the reactions required, or specified in the subject verse.
- 26:20 "..... that they should repent, and turn to God...". Internal spiritual repentance, per preceding; followed by worship.
- Ezek. 18:30 "..... Repent, and turn yourselves ....". Per 26:20 note.

"Save"

- Matt. 18:11 "For the Son of man is come to save that which is lost." While it may be said that all men are lost, God is saving, or rescuing only the elect lost. Otherwise, the scripture would be misinterpreted as "possible" salvation for all, thus contradicting the exclusive principle of sovereign grace election.

"Save", cont'd

I Tim. 1:15 "..... came into the world to save sinners...". Elect sinners. Only the conditioned mental reflexes of the Arminian, free will, universal grace indoctrination, makes a person automatically think all sinners when reading the phrase in question, as with many other similar scriptures on the general subject of salvation.

"Bought"

II Pet, 2:1 "..... denying the Lord that bought them." These are apostates who, by their falling away, deny their profession of Christ as saviour, in the sense of Heb. 6:4-6 (referring to similar cases of those who were once "enlightened", but only intellectually--not spiritually, and had "tasted of the heavenly gift", and made "partakers of the Holy Ghost", etc.; which likewise are not internal, real spiritual faculties or possessions, but external presumptions and imitations of true Christian characteristics of regeneration and sanctification). By contrast, the true, or actual believer cannot fall away so as to perish spiritually, or in any way lose his salvation.

"Died"

I Cor. 15:3 "..... Christ died for our sins....". This is believer testimony. Paul, speaking to the brethren (vs.1) of the Corinthian church, is referring to their sins ("our"). He would never speak all-inclusively to an audience of unsaved listeners, <sup>and</sup> make such a doctrinal mistake of indicating or implying universal atonement. This is just another instance of many, where church truth is misapplied to the world in general.

Rom. 5:6 "..... Christ died for the ungodly." Again, as with I Tim. 1:15, being elect sinners, these are the elect ungodly.

5:8 "..... while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Same application as vs. 6, above.

"Death"

Rom. 5:10 ".....when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son....". Believer testimony, and doctrine, per antecedent "we", and further statement of verse: "much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life". If all men (people) were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, then all would be saved, per latter part of the verse, for no condition is added to that explicit, precious promise (made to fellow believers; indeed all believers, only).