

# The Whole Counsel of God

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**[www.thegoodnewsofgod.org](http://www.thegoodnewsofgod.org)**

"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.  
For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God."

**Acts 20:26-27, NKJV**

## From the Editor's Desk

DYLAN STEWART - 01 JULY 2024

We are excited to bring to you the sixth and final edition of the first volume of *The Whole Counsel of God*. We thank you for your kind and warm reception this past year as we started this new endeavour in trying to spread the Lord's gospel.

The past year since beginning *The Whole Counsel of God* has certainly been a challenging one for me, personally. I am thankful for each day God grants me, and I am thankful for His continued goodness towards me. The last year has served as reminder for me that even on the worst of days,

God treats us far, far better than we could ever deserve. All praise and honor belongs to God for His lovingkindness and tender mercies.

In this edition of the journal, we have included various articles targeted not at denominational people but, rather, the Lord's people. Articles such as *The Devil Made Me Do It*, *Comparing Ourselves with Ourselves*, *Sins of Ignorance - "Where is the Grace?"*, *God Knows My Heart*, and *Correcting Misconceptions of Humility* all require special self-examination (**2 Cor. 13:5**) on the part of God's people to ensure we do not fall into the various traps that Satan uses to draw Christians away from God and into his fold. We pray you will carefully consider the messages brought forth in each article.

As always, if you disagree with anything information presented in this publication, please do not hesitate to contact me via the method described in the *Table of Contents* page. You may even write a rebuttal to whatever you disagree with that, Lord willing, we will be publish in the next edition of *The Whole Counsel of God*. We take great pride in the fact that we will not refuse to listen to an opposing viewpoint, nor do we seek to silence anyone who uses book, chapter, and verse (**Col. 3:17**) to present their understanding of God's Word.

May God continue to bless you with good health and the necessities of this life, and may He bless us all in our endeavours to serve Him faithfully.

(DTS)



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# The Devil Made Me Do It

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## INTRODUCTION

When some Christians are found in the act of sin, they sometimes say, “The devil made me do it.” This phrase serves as a way to shift responsibility for wrongdoing. Does the devil make us sin? We will examine the validity of this claim by searching the scriptures.



## THE NATURE OF TEMPTATION

The scriptures took great care to explain the concept of temptation and one of the foremost passages we can find is in **James 1:12-15**: *“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”* From this passage, it is clear that temptation is not solely attributed to external influence from Satan

but is also understood as a consequence of human frailty. The temptation of Jesus in **Matt. 4** exemplifies this truth. Jesus didn’t fall into sin because He was not drawn away by His desires and enticed. Also, Joseph faced temptation from Potiphar’s wife and yet refused to succumb to it at a grave personal cost (**Gen. 39:7-20**). Christians can exercise discernment and resist their immoral tendencies even in the face of temptation. This fundamental freedom encompasses the Christian’s call to be separate from the world.

Although the Scriptures portray Satan as a powerful adversary, it is frequently misunderstood how much of an impact he has on human behavior. Unlike what is commonly believed, Satan cannot force people to sin against their will; instead, his strategies mostly consist of trickery and manipulation. Satan tries to entice people away from God’s will by twisting the truth and playing on human frailties. This is no different from what the Devil did in the Garden of Eden (**Gen. 3:1-7**). The devil didn’t make Eve eat the fruit, as we see in **verse 6**: *“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desired to make one wise, she took it and did eat, and also gave it to her husband with her and he did eat.”* We see that despite the devil’s approach to Eve, it was only when she was drawn away by her desires that she ate of the tree. Moreover, the Bible states clearly that Christians are strong enough in Christ to thwart the enemy’s plans.

## THE BLAME GAME

Shifting blame is a tendency of humans that was clearly expressed on the occasion of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Adam blamed Eve, while Eve blamed the serpent (**Gen. 3:11-13**). However, God is not interested in blame games and held Adam and Eve accountable for their actions. Besides, attributing our wrongdoings to the influence of the devil seeks to absolve us of individual responsibility and inhibits our spiritual growth in the face of sin. Rather than falling into excuse-making and blame-sharing, Christians are encouraged to take responsibility by acknowledging their mistakes, confessing them, and seeking forgiveness from God.

## OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Regarding temptation, the Scriptures provide great comfort for Christians as we constantly face this battle. The life of Jesus highlights the possibility of Christians overcoming sin. **Heb. 4:15** tells us that Jesus “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” That’s why He was able to say to us, “Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world” (**John 16:33**). Additionally, **1 Cor. 10:13** says, “No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” Overcoming temptation is by no means an easy task, but God has provided us with the advantage we need to succeed. We can overcome temptations through the following means:

### (1) Flee Temptation

Most times, the best way to overcome temptations is to flee from it. When Joseph was faced with temptation from Po-

tiphar’s wife, he had to flee from the spot (**Gen. 39:12**). As **2 Tim. 2:22** says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”



### (2) Resist the Devil

We are to make constant effort to resist the devil when he comes to tempt us: “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (**James 4:7**). Jesus laid a good example for us in this regard. Each time Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He responded by using God’s Word as a weapon. He said, “It is written,” or “It has been said.” So, when we are faced with temptations, we can also employ the tactic used by Jesus.

### (3) Don’t Love the World

Since we give in to temptations when we are enticed and drawn away by our desires, we are to make an effort to not make the things of the world the center of our desires. **1 John 2:15a** says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world.” When we amend our desires and make them spiritually inclined, we will easily be able to overcome temptation.

## CONCLUSION

Christians need to realize that the devil’s influence over our actions is limited. Instead of engaging in blame games, we are to take responsibility for our actions and make conscious decisions to live and maintain a righteous Christian life. We can do this by leveraging the power God has given us to overcome temptation.

## Comparing Ourselves with Ourselves

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Many believers seem to decide what is right and wrong Biblically by what other they associate with believe and practice, instead of following the truth (**John 17:17**). Perhaps **2 Cor. 10:12** refers to this attitude when it warns, *“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.”*

Could this be the main reason the great majority in denominations make the puzzling decision to accept the sprinkling of infants for baptism when the Bible so clearly teaches believers (**Acts 8:35-37**) should be buried (**Rom. 6:4**) in baptism? Might it be because they have developed a confidence in the belief of their parents, their preacher, and/or especially those that are in their church circle of friends? “Sprinkling babies must be okay; the majority of my faithful church friends go along with it.”

And is it possible this is the main reason many Christians don’t work very hard at personal evangelism (**Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 8:4; 2 Cor. 5:11**), because the Christians they associate with most don’t do it either? They reason - if those I respect as Christians aren’t diligently working to get studies with non-Christians, then it must not be important to God for me to do such either. This ideology makes for problems among Christians in other areas also, like the general disdain for public religious debating (**Acts 19:8-10**), ignoring God’s instructions regarding fasting (**Acts 13:3, 14:23, etc.**), the

trend toward immodest clothing (**1 Tim. 2:9-10**), and some never even studying the covering issue (**1 Cor. 11:2-16**). There are many areas this attitude could affect. We (myself included) need to guard against this comfort trap. Instead of comparing ourselves to the church people around us, we should challenge ourselves with Jesus, His apostles, and their teaching (**John 8:31**).

### Did You Know?

Historians estimate that Jesus may have been born as early as 6 BC. Although most scholars agree He died either in 30 or 33 AD, it is possible Jesus could have died as early as 26 AD or as late as 39 AD. Scholars also have determined that Jesus could have been anywhere between 33 and 39 years old when He was crucified. The point being illustrated is that it should make no difference to us how long Jesus lived, when He was born, or when He died because the Bible does not provide us with that information. Therefore, these things should matter very little to believers. Yet, how many times have you heard preachers state as fact in sermons that Jesus was 33 years old when He died, or in 33 AD Peter preached the first gospel sermon on Pentecost (see **Acts 2**)? See how easy it is for people to accept things as Bible “truth” without the Bible actually providing that information? (DTS)

## Sins of Ignorance - “Where is the Grace?”

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When speaking with our denominational friends and neighbors, if the subject of God requiring complete obedience ever comes up (see **Matt. 5:19; Matt. 23:23; John 14:15, 21, 23-24; 1 John 3:18, 24a; 1 John 5:3; James 2:10**), you will likely hear the question “Where is the grace?” or the rebuttal “That’s not true because we are under grace now.” In the minds of many, being under Christ’s law of grace and liberty means we are not expected to live in complete adherence with His law. They misconstrue numerous passages, with one such being **Rom. 6:14b**, to contend that anyone who teaches Christ requires complete obedience every second of every day are simply “legalists.” **Rom. 6:14b** reads, “*You are not under law but under grace.*” Of course, while overlooking the fact that the “*law*” referenced in this verse is speaking about the Law of Moses (see **Rom. 7:6**), these folks also conveniently overlook the first half of this verse, which says, “*Sin shall not have dominion over you.*” In other words, we “*must not*” allow sin to ever be our “*master*” (GNT). Re-

member what Jesus said: “*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other*” (**Matt. 6:24**). Jesus’s words are exemplified throughout **Rom. 6**, where Paul explains that we are either slaves to sin or slaves to righteousness through obedience (**Rom. 6:16**) - there is no in between!

To be clear, God’s grace has certainly appeared to all men (**Titus 2:11**) and not just an elect few as many falsely teach. Jesus died for the entire world (**John 3:16; 1 John 2:2**). Likewise, we are saved by grace. There is nothing man could possibly do to save himself; only God’s grace makes salvation possible. Paul explains, “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*” (**Eph. 2:8-9**). Without God extending His grace to every person through the gift of His Son, humanity is in a terrible predicament because “*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (**Rom. 3:23**). Thankfully, all can be “*justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith*” (**Rom. 3:24-25**).

Christians are rightfully quick to explain to our denominational friends that we must continually obey God to receive the gift of His grace. For example, we often point out the following passages to explain how faith alone will not save, but faith that moves us to obey is what will save:

- **Matt. 7:21** - *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.”*
- **Luke 6:46** - *“But why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?”*
- **Heb. 5:9** - *“Having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.”*

Similarly, we will quickly explain to all of our Once Saved, Always Saved friends how **Gal. 5:4** shows conclusively that committing sin causes a Christian to fall from grace. Yet, how easily it appears some Christians forget these truths when it comes to realizing grace ceases promptly at every sin.

Unfortunately, the false doctrine promoting grace over obedience has infiltrated the Lord’s church. There are those who prop up the false doctrine of “continual cleansing” and automatic forgiveness for sins of ignorance without repentance, which stems from an obvious misunderstanding of how God’s grace works (see **1 John 1:5-10**). Let us be very clear: **In the Christian’s life, grace does not abound where sin abounds.** Why else would Paul ask, *“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!”* (**Rom. 6:15**). Clearly addressing Christians (see **Rom. 6:4-5**), Paul also asks, *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”* (**Rom. 6:1-2**). Sin always separates (**Isa. 59:1-2**). If we do not believe that, then we necessarily imply that Christ did not actually need to die. All sins, whether intentional or of ignorance, bear this consequence: *“The wages of sin is death”* (**Rom. 6:23a**). While intentional sins carry with them additional consequences

(see **Heb. 10:26-30**), sins committed in ignorance still carry the same eternal consequence of intentional sins - the loss of God’s grace and impending eternal death unless we repent.



Since Christ’s sacrifice is the *“free gift of God”* (**Rom. 6:24**), many think forgiveness comes freely before repentance and confession of sin. Yet, that was not the case for Simon (a Christian who sinned) in **Acts 8**. He accepted Peter’s rebuke in (**v.24**) - implying he confessed his sins, in keeping with **1 John 1:9** - and Peter commanded him to repent (**v.22**), so we can see these conditions are necessary for Christians to receive forgiveness after they sin, thus returning them to God’s grace.

Most Christians agree with this conclusion, but will then make the exception for sins of ignorance, completely ignoring the following passages that teach clearly how unrepented/unconfessed sins committed in ignorance lead to death just like Peter’s intentional sin of covetousness:

- **Luke 12:46-48** - *“The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him . . . And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few.”*



- **Prov. 14:12** - *“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”*

If a person makes the exception that sins of ignorance are automatically forgiven without repentance and confession when God has not made this exception, the person is really saying what most denominational believers believe: “Sincerity and grace trumps truth and obedience.” Of course, this thinking could not be further from the truth!

In **1 Cor. 4:4**, Paul, describing the very subject we are considering, concluded, *“I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me”* (RSV). This passage speaks very plainly to the point of the matter. We can see that even if we are diligent in trying to live righteously but are lacking even in just one point, even unintentionally, we are still guilty of the whole law and stand condemned before God (**James 2:10; Luke 16:10**). Obviously, this is one of those “hard” truths. We may be sincerely serving God with a clear conscience and not be aware that we have sins charged against us through ignorance. What is a Christian to do?



I firmly believe five specific passages provide the answer to the all-important question of how a person can learn of his sins of ignorance so he can repent and confess them to God for forgiveness:

- *“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall be filled”* (**Matt. 5:6**).
- *“Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you”* (**Matt.7:7**).
- *“If anyone’s will is to do God’s will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority”* (**John 7:17, ESV**).
- *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him . . . He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”* (**Heb. 11:6**).
- *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting”* (**James 1:5-6a**).

We can see how the Bible teaches that those who - by faith - fervently seek to know the Lord’s will by praying and actively pursuing knowledge of any potential wrongdoings will receive that knowledge from God. While we will not receive direct revelation from God speaking to us through a vision or dream, He still provides knowledge in a few different ways. He may provide knowledge (“*correction*”) through us diligently studying His word (**2 Tim. 3:16**), or He may reveal our errors to us the same way Simon received his correction - through the love and admonition of a fellow Christian.

We must never discount the effects of praying in faith without doubting because we know that if we hunger and thirst for righteousness and truly desire to understand

the Lord's will in all things, God will reveal to us the things needed to present ourselves acceptable to Him. Remember what prayers made in faith can do - *"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray . . . Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of the faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses one to another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much"* (James 5:13-16). Let there be no doubt that fervent prayer accompanied by seeking the Lord's will in all things will

provide us with the answers to any sins we may have left charged against us.

So, "Where is the grace?" As we have made clearly evident from the Scriptures, God's grace ceases to remain in the Christian's life where sin begins, and this is always the case. We must be busy everyday doing the Lord's will to keep ourselves in the love of God (Jude 21). Let us all strive to understand the will of God to the best of our capabilities through fervent prayer and studying of His word. When we fall short of His divine standard, let us confess our sins and repent, and let us never fall into the trap of believing that ignorance will excuse us from the wrath of God.

## **LIGHTING THE PATH**

**"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"  
(Psalm 119:105, NKJV)**

I've listened to several sermons lately from preachers (both gospel and denominational) who have done a lot of talking but very little reading of scripture. Don't these preachers realize sermons without scripture are devoid of the very thing that saves souls?

- *"The gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes"* (Rom. 1:16).
- *"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17).
- *"I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified"* (Acts 20:32).

Funny jokes and interesting stories a preacher tells might touch the audience's heart, but those jokes and stories do not *"cut to the heart"* (Acts 2:37; see also Heb. 4:12-13); only God's word does that (Acts 2:14-41; Heb. 4:12). Testimonies and conversion stories are great and can be helpful in teaching (see Acts 22:1-21), but they are no substitute for preaching the gospel (see Acts 24:14-25). The gospel - not a testimony, funny joke, or interesting story - is what saves people. If a preacher neglects to quote or read from God's Word during a sermon, he is not preaching at all - *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching"* (2 Tim. 4:2). Does your preacher preach *"the word,"* or does he *"preach"* something else entirely? (DTS)

## This is a Hard Saying

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Jesus taught men to be careful how they hear or read the word of God. To the disciples, He cautioned, *“With what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you”* (Mark 4:24). He had been teaching the crowd in parables (the soils, the sower, and the mustard seed). Men are responsible for what they hear: *“Who hath ears to hear, let him hear”* (v.9). To the lawyer who made trial of Him, He asked, *“How readest thou”* (Luke 10:26). He replied: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.”* Jesus then said, *“Thou hast answered right: this do and thou shalt live.”* Jesus hit an exposed nerve. This man knew what Scripture said, but he did not agree with what he read. It was hard for him. Read the next verse to see his reaction.

There are many “hard” verses in the word of God. If you read much in the Bible, you will run across one before long. These “hard” verses can usually be divided into at least three categories:

1. Sometimes the passage is hard because we don't have all the information we need to reach a conclusion. Why did Jacob decide to keep Leah as his wife (Gen. 29:21-28)? He had agreed with Laban for Rachel and worked for her seven years (Gen. 29:20). Why didn't he tell Laban, “No deal!”? Instead, he became a bigamist. I wish I knew more about this, don't you?
2. Some passages seem to contradict a cherished ideal or doctrine. The disciples heard Jesus reply to the Pharisees' question about Moses and divorce (Matt. 19:1-9). When Jesus gave His analysis of divorce and remarriage. He stipulated only one cause for such: *“except for fornication.”* The disciples replied, *“It is not expedient to marry”* (v.10). If Moses allowed divorce and subsequent remarriage, this new teaching is so hard that it would be better not to marry at all. It is possible to have the same feelings as the disciple when I read something which contradicts what I already believe. When my mind becomes so inflexible I cannot accept what a passage clearly teaches, I am controlled by tradition, not truth. Each person must so read and hear that all truth is honored and accepted.
3. A few passages are hard because they conflict with my own desire. Have you ever read a passage you wish read differently? When Scripture conflicts with lifestyle, the result may be Scripture is too hard to obey. For example, the prevalence of sexual promiscuity indicates many people find pleasure in casual sex. With great clarity, Scripture proclaims this unacceptable and sinful (1 Cor. 6:9-10). It then becomes “hard” in application, not in understanding.

By far, the best thing to do is accept and obey the “words of life” which come from Jesus and His men. No matter how “hard.”

## God Knows My Heart

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I admit that at some point, I became fed up with hearing the phrase “God knows my heart.” Typically, I hear this used as an excuse for some sinful behavior – “I know that [whatever I just said/did] is wrong, but God knows my heart.” The idea being that, even though I know what I just did was wrong, God knows that deep down I’m a pretty good person – so I think he’ll overlook my sinful behavior. We may hear this said about profanity and inappropriate conversation, lewd clothing or behavior, angry outbursts at spouses and children, gossip about our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the list could continue. While this way of using the phrase “God knows my heart” is tiring, we cannot let it distract us from the truth of the statement. It is a deeply biblical concept that God knows my heart!

God must know the heart to say “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (**Matt. 5:8**). While arguing that Gentile Christians do not need to be circumcised, Peter states that “*God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us*” and based on this

knowledge, God “*cleansed their hearts by faith*” (**Acts 15:8-9**). Certainly, God knows my heart, a fact which brings incredible comfort to someone who has set his heart to follow Jesus!

However, it is equally true that “God knows my heart” can be a sobering warning. God sent a world-wide flood because “*every intention of the thoughts of [mankind’s] heart was only evil continually*” (**Gen. 6:5**). The book of **Ecclesiastes** ends with a reminder that God will “*bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing*” (**Eccl. 12:14**). Jesus reminded religious leaders of His day that “*you are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts*” (**Luke 16:15**). “God knows my heart” is always a true statement, but whether it brings comfort or warning depends on what God finds in my heart!

In **Psalms 139**, I believe King David provides a good example of what it looks like to joyfully yet seriously consider God’s intimate knowledge of our hearts. The majority of this psalm is spent on God’s knowledge – he knows us inside and out, he knows both our thoughts and our words, he goes before us and behind us (**Psalms 139:1-6**). God knows our hearts even better than we do! We are never without his guidance, nor could we flee his presence if we wanted to (**v.7,10**). He has known us from the beginning of our existence and knows the “ins and outs” of who we are (**v.13,15**). Reflecting on this, David clearly expresses he wants to be on God’s side: “*Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? . . . I count them my enemies*” (**v.21-22**). Da-

vid did not want to be counted among God's enemies; he wanted to be on God's side! This leads us to the final two verses of **Psalm 139**: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"* Because of his desire to align himself with God, David asks God to SEARCH him, TRY him, and LEAD him.



**SEARCH ME:** It is intimidating to consider God searching us and understanding our deepest thoughts and feelings; but we who are in Christ do not need to be frightened by this. We need to embrace the exposing light of Christ in our lives.

**TRY ME:** The word for "try" here can also refer to the "testing" of precious metals. If we claim to serve God and follow Jesus, then we should want God to refine us. The process will likely not be pleasant but will be worth every discomfort. If there is "any grievous way" in us, only God through the power of his Word and the power of his Spirit can cleanse us and sanctify us.

**LEAD ME:** If we understand our need for God's refining hand, then we should also understand our need for his guidance. Jesus is the Lord we must obey (**Luke 6:46**). Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life (**John 14:6**). If we are going to follow anyone, it

must be Jesus. No preacher, theologian, or social media influencer can lead us in the way everlasting; no self-help book or philosopher will guide us on the narrow way; and our own desires will surely lead us astray to worship a Jesus made in our own image.

Too often, we find ourselves trying to get God "on our side;" we rationalize by any means possible why God is okay with the way we live and the decisions we make. This is futile. God knows our hearts; he knows that what we need more than anything else is Jesus. We must come to know the one, true Jesus through the Word he revealed, and we must say to him, *"Search my heart, try my thoughts, and lead me in the way everlasting!"*

## **THINK ON THIS**

**"Meditate on these things"**  
**(Phil. 4:8, NKJV)**

**Rom. 12:1** tells us a Christian must present his body as *"a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."* This requires a person to *"lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness"* (**James 1:21**). A Christian should be identified by how he interacts with others. For example, Paul says Christians are to be *"kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love"* and should *"live peaceably with all men"* (**Rom. 12:10, 18**). Christians will not be partaking in *"neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting"* (**Eph. 5:4**). If someone has never seen a Christian before, could they recognize us as the Lord's disciples by using these verses as their guide?  
**(DTS)**

# How to Not Have God

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**2 John 9-11** says, *“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.”*

Many today do not think it is essential for everyone to believe and teach the same thing about the Bible. They might say, “You go your way, and I’ll go mine,” or they may also say, “You believe and teach what you want, and I’ll believe and teach what I want, and we will both get to heaven.”

People who have this attitude must not have fully considered **2 John 9-11**, which tells us we must abide in the doctrine (or teaching) of Christ, and if we do not do so, we do not have God.

The Greek word translated “transgresses” means, “to proceed, go forward: in a bad sense, to go further than is right or proper, equivalent to . . . transgress the limits of true doctrine” (Thayer’s Greek Lexi-

con). The phrase “does not abide” means about the same thing. Both describe the one who advances beyond prescribed limits.

These verses help us to see the necessity of staying within the realm of the Bible. We must teach and practice exactly what the Bible teaches; no more, no less (**Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Pet. 4:11**). Those who do not do this do not have God (**v.9**) and would be lost. This concept is so important. In fact, according to the text, the seriousness of not abiding in the doctrine of Christ is such that we are not to even “receive” or “greet” a person who teaches false doctrine (**see also Eph. 5:11**). It does matter what we believe, teach, practice, and even how we worship God (**John 4:24; Matt. 15:8-9**). We must “abide in” the doctrine of Christ.

## SWORD SWIPES

**“Shun profane and vain babblings”  
(2 Tim. 2:16a, KJV)**

**If we won’t preach on certain subjects, it won’t be long until we can’t preach on those subjects.**

***“For the time will come when they not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables”  
(2 Tim. 4:3-4). (DTS)***

## Tithing vs the Weekly Collection of 1 Cor. 16:1-2

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Many religious people consider the church collection taken on the first day of the week to be their tithe. However, the tithe and first day of the week collection are not synonymous but are two entirely different things.

The first example of tithing appears early in the Scriptures. In **Gen. 14:20**, we see Abraham tithing to the high priest Melchizedek (see also **Heb. 7:2**), which is something Abraham did voluntarily and not as a requirement from God. This is the first instance in the Bible where a person gave one tenth of what he possessed. Under the Law of Moses, a command would eventually be given by God for Israel to tithe (**Lev. 27:30-32**), and this command would later be repeated in **Deut. 14:22-28**. From there on and throughout the entirety of the Old Covenant, God's people were required to tithe. We even see Jesus refer to the tithe in **Matt. 23:23**. However, upon Christ's death on the cross, the tithing requirement was replaced with a new method of giving - the first day of the week collection.

The New Testament teaches that we are no longer under the Old Law, or the Law of Moses, nor are we bound to its legal demands (**Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 7:6**). As result of the Old Law being nailed to the cross when Jesus died, there are many practices which we are no longer bound to perform. For example, practices such as animal sacrifices, Sabbath (Saturday) worship at the temple in Jerusalem, and not being able to eat pork, catfish, etc. are all no longer binding as result of Christ's death.

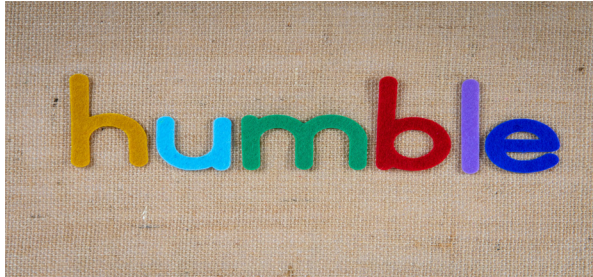
Just as Christians are no longer bound to follow these commands, so too are Christians not bound to the practice of tithing. Instead, tithing has been replaced with a different practice - the weekly collection spoken about in **1 Cor. 16:1-2**. There, we read, *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: on the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come."* So, although tithing is no longer required, God still expect us to give back to Him just as he expected the Israelites to give back under the Old Covenant. The key difference being that the New Testament does not state the exact percentage/amount one must give, whereas the Old Testament tithe was a finite and pre-determined amount prescribed by God (one-tenth).

There is only one required collection spoken about in the New Testament, which is done on the first day of every week. Instead of tithing, on the first day of every week Christians must give according to our prosperity (**1 Cor. 16:1-2**), each as we individually purpose in our hearts (**2 Cor. 9:7a**), all with an attitude of joy and thanksgiving (**2 Cor. 9:7b**). Anyone who gives or collects tithes today does so without biblical authority. Christ has set us free from the yoke of the Old Law, so let us all solely - without compulsion - give freely to the Lord each first day of the week as God has allowed us to prosper, in keeping with His New Testament command.

# Correcting Misconceptions of Humility

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Once it is established that Jesus was the ultimate example of humility, several misconceptions are laid to rest.

**Humility is not weakness.** Even the enemies of Jesus testified to His power. It was demonstrated over Satan, over nature, and over every force that opposed Him. Yet in the exercise of His power He was humble, acknowledging that the works He did were the works of His Father (**John 5:19**). Humble individuals who recognize their own weakness and allow the power of God to work in them are the only ones who are truly strong. The Lord said to Paul, “*My strength is made perfect in weakness*” (**2 Cor. 12:9**), causing Paul to respond, “*When I am weak, then I am strong*” (**2 Cor. 12:10**).

**Humility does not preclude leadership.** Jesus was “meek and lowly” (humble), but this did not prevent His exercising leadership. He is the great Shepherd of the flock, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Some individuals, citing humility as their reason, refuse to accept the responsibilities of leadership, especially as elders. The fact is that elders must be humble. They are to be sober-minded (**1 Tim. 3:2**), and this is defined in **Rom. 12:3** as not thinking more highly of oneself than one should. **1 Tim. 3:6** says that

an elder should not be a novice, “*lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.*” Rather than hindering leadership, humility defines the style of leadership that pleases God. Christ-like shepherds are not lords over those entrusted to them but examples to the flock (**1 Pet. 5:3**).

**Humility does not forbid rebuking sin.** Jesus was just as humble when He was driving out the money-changers from the temple in **Matt. 21** and rebuking the Pharisees in **chapter 23** as when He was blessing little children in **chapter 19**. In each case He was expressing in His words and actions the will of God, not His own. Humility will, however, affect our manner of dealing with sinners and those in error: “*A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition*” (**2 Tim. 2:24-25**); “*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in the spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted*” (**Gal. 6:1**). Rebuking that is done from a spirit of self-righteousness and pride will never be effective in accomplishing God’s purpose.

**Humility is not inconsistent with personal initiative.** The church needs the input of every spiritually-minded Christian in planning, and executing its work. A song we sing says, “Take my intellect and use every power as Thou shalt choose.” Yet some who have useful ideas fail to offer them, feeling that to do so would be inconsistent with humility. Of course, if one demands that



his way be accepted and becomes angry if his suggestion is not taken, he does lack humility. Humility demands that *“each esteem others better than himself”* (Phil. 2:3), but it does not forbid our offering our wisdom on a subject for whatever it may be worth in the opinion of our brethren.

**Humility does not require that we think of ourselves disdainfully, speak of ourselves disparagingly or grovel in the presence of others.** This is what many people think of as humility. However, this is the opposite of humility. Such a person is thinking too much of himself, however negative his thinking may be. When one is constantly thinking: “How inferior I am, how worthless I am, how useless I am, how poorly I do compared to others,” he is thinking of himself all the time. Pride is his problem; he is too proud to be comfortable among those whom he considers superior to himself. Humility is not the cause of such negative thinking; it is actually the solution—not thinking of self at all. A Christian can rejoice in the superiority of his brethren. Furthermore, he can hold up his head in the presence of all men, not because he himself is so worthy, but because he is a child of the God of heaven, redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus did not grovel before any man, yet He was not lacking in humility when He said to a Roman governor, *“You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above”* (John 19:11).

#### CONCLUSION

True humility replaces self-seeking with seeking first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33), self-will with doing the will of God (Matt. 7:21), self reliance with reliance upon God (2 Cor. 3:5), self-confidence with confidence in God (2 Tim. 1:12), and self-exaltation with exaltation by God (1 Cor. 4:3-6). These were the qualities that made Jesus

humble and the qualities He seeks in us. May we bring ourselves to say truly, even as we sing: Lord, thy love at last has conquered: None of self, and all of Thee.

## “THE COLD WITHIN”

**James Patrick Kinney**

Six humans trapped by happenstance in black and bitter cold. Each possessed a stick of wood, or so the story’s told.

Their dying fire in need of logs, the first woman held hers back, for on the faces around the fire she noticed one was black.

The next man looking ‘cross the way’ saw one not of his church, and couldn’t bring himself to give the fire his stick of birch.

The third one sat in tattered clothes, he gave his coat a hitch. Why should his log be put to use to warm the idle rich?

The rich man just sat back and thought of the wealth he had in store, and how to keep what he had earned from the lazy, shiftless poor.

The black man’s face bespoke revenge as the fire passed from his sight, for all he saw in his stick of wood was a chance to spite the white.

And the last man of this forlorn group did naught except for gain, giving only to those who gave was how he played the game.

The logs held tight in death’s stilled hands was proof of human sin. They didn’t die from the cold without, they died from the cold within.

## A VOICE FROM THE PAST

**“And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks” (Hebrews 11:4, ESV).**

### **The Church Does Make a Difference!**

**CHARLES G. MAPLES, SR.**

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A commonly accepted philosophy, relative to one’s spiritual welfare, is that “the church doesn’t make any difference,” and so the conclusion is that one should just “join the church of his choice,” or “you don’t have to be a member of any church to be saved.” But I submit to you that this is NOT what the Word of God teaches! Following are some plain, concrete reasons why we must conclude that the church to which one belongs DOES “make a difference!”

#### **THE CHURCH WAS IN THE “ETERNAL PURPOSE” OF GOD!**

Read with me in **Eph. 3:8-11**: “*To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to His eternal purpose, which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Does this not suggest that the church would “make a difference!?”

#### **CHRIST BUILT HIS CHURCH!**

Even the thought of that Scriptural fact should surely suggest that “The Church **DOES** Make a Difference!” After having

asked His disciples about just Who did they consider Him to be, being answered by the apostle Peter, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God;*” Jesus replied, “*Upon this rock [Peter’s confession] I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*” (**Matt. 16:14-18**). Surely, no thoughtful person would conclude that HIS “church doesn’t make any difference!”



#### **JESUS PURCHASED THE CHURCH WITH HIS BLOOD!**

The apostle Paul urged the Ephesian elders to “*take heed to yourselves and to all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood*” (**Acts 20:28; cf. Eph. 5:25**). Can anyone even think that the Christ would be required by God the Father to die that cruel death of the cross, shedding His blood for something that “makes no difference?”



### CHRIST PUTS ALL OF THE SAVED INTO THE CHURCH!

In **Acts 2** we read of the first preaching of the gospel of Christ under the Great Commission, and the first offer of “Remission of Sins.” We are told that what was preached “*pricked the hearts*” of many of those who heard, and when they asked, “*What shall we do?*” they were told to “*repent and be baptized for the remission of sins*” (**v. 38**), then in **v. 41** Inspiration tells us that “*as many as gladly received the Word were baptized, and there was added to them that day about three thousand souls.*” Then in verse forty-seven we see “*the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*” Could we possibly conclude that the church in which all the “*saved*” are admitted by God “*makes no difference?*”

### ALL, IN BECOMING CHRISTIANS, ARE “BAPTIZED INTO THE ONE BODY”

“*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit*” (**1 Cor. 12:13**), and we read in **Eph. 1:22f** that the “*body is the church.*”

### THE CHURCH IS THE KINGDOM OF “KING OF KINGS!”

In addition to the fact that in **Matt. 16:18-19** Jesus used the terms “*church*” and

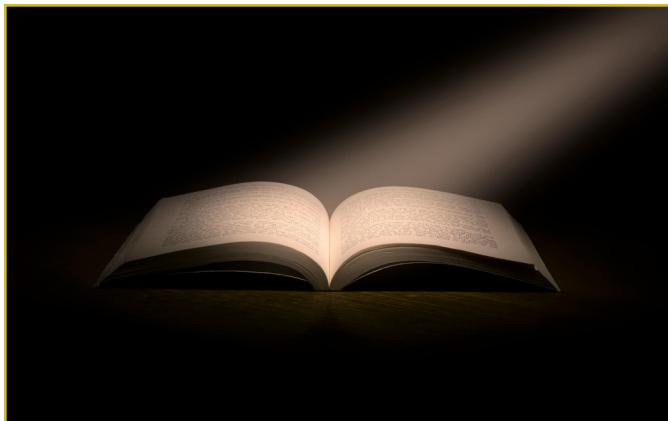
“*kingdom*” synonymously, other Scriptures indicate the same. In **Mark 9:31** Jesus assured His apostles that some of them would not die before His kingdom would “*come with power.*” In **Acts 1:8** He promised that the “*power*” would come with the Holy Spirit, and in **v. 5** He assured the apostles that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from the time of that statement. The apostles WERE baptized with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, and we read of people being added to His church (as seen before) that day (**Acts 2:1-47**). In **Heb. 12:23, 28** we see again the terms “*church*” and “*kingdom*” used with reference to the same institution! Indeed, can anyone say that the KINGDOM of “*the King of Kings*” (**1 Tim. 6:15**) “*makes no difference!?*”

### “CHRIST LOVED THE CHURCH AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR HER” (EPH. 5:25-26)

How could something that Christ loved enough to die for, be considered to “*make no difference?*” And then add to that, as seen in **v. 27** of that same chapter, that Christ will finally “*PRESENT HER (THE CHURCH) TO HIMSELF!*” Do you think that at the end of time, the Lord will present to Himself something that “*makes no difference?*”

### CONCLUSION

Let it be understood that all of the above Scriptures speak of THE LORD’S CHURCH; they have nothing to do with the many churches founded upon and directed by the wisdom of men! THOSE CHURCHES not only do not “*make a difference*” in that they do not contribute to one’s salvation, but they believe, teach, and practice doctrines CONTRARY TO SALVATION! In light of that, please read carefully **2 John 9; Col. 3:17 and Rev. 22:18-19!**



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