

# How One is Born Again

*Revised*

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Ye must be born again." John 3:7*



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*Tom Hagler*

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**Bible Quotations  
King James Authorized Version of 1611**

**By  
Tom Hagler, Jr.**

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## **Notice!**

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## Introduction

This small booklet is Brother Tom Hagler's most recent writing. Ever since I have known Brother Tom, he has had a great desire to share the joy, comfort and peace of the scriptures with anyone who has the love of God in their heart. He has often stated how he would love to be able to write it in such a way that all of his friends and all of God's children could see the simple beauty of the scriptures, and the joy of knowing God's salvation of his children.

This work endeavors to get to the essence of one of the main doctrinal differences between those who believe God is completely sovereign in the "new birth", and those who believe there is something the poor sinner must or can do to be born again. Most, if not all, Primitive Baptists have maintained that God is the One who born His children again, without the aid of any man or means of men. Many of God's sincere born again children from other religious beliefs, hold to the position that it is something they did, or must do to be born again and thus save themselves or others. There is the dilemma, is it of God? Or is there something we must do to be born again?

It is this question "How is one born again?" that this book will focus your attention and hopefully answer for you. It is my prayer that as you read it and check it against the word of God, that the Lord would bless you as the apostle Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus "*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being*

*enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,” Ephesians 1:17-18*

Elder Dwayne Hooven

## **Acknowledgements**

Elder Dwayne Hooven is pastor of Augusta Old Line Primitive Church, where I feel fortunate to be a member. He has made many important suggestions to a number of my books and booklets to improve readability as well as valuable advice on doctrinal issues.

My former pastors, Elder Harold Hunt, Maryville, TN, and Elder Sam Bryant, Hoover AL, have always encouraged me in writing and offered me the benefit of their great wisdom in doctrinal matters. Their suggestions to this and all my books have been invaluable.

The preaching of Elder Sonny Pyles has been the source of the idea and expressions used in several chapters of this book (as noted). In my opinion, he is the greatest preaching evangelist alive today. He has been of tremendous benefit to many Primitive Baptist Elders as well as church members and has strengthened the Lord's churches all across America. He has been a great blessing to us all.

My granddaughter Rachael and her husband Robbie Mundy have been of great benefit to me as proofreaders correcting my poor and unprofessional grammar.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to my brother Danforth W. Hagler for his advice and insight as a Presbyterian. Many people cannot see the forest for the trees; however Danny has always had the gift of taking a complicated subject and finding the key issues that makes the whole more understandable. The idea for the fifth chapter entitled "What is the point of it all?" came from him.

Minor revisions as suggested by friends were made on pages 2, 3, 49, and 50...plus other minor corrections.

## Dedicated to...

...my friends who are open to consider in more detail how God, without help from any person, is able to give eternal salvation to His children. This booklet will examine more closely what a number of Bible verses actually state, and then compare Scripture with Scripture.

If one finds this doctrine comforting to the soul, and feels it honors God and unlocks the meaning of so many things in the Bible that were once a mystery, it is my suggestion that this person visit a Primitive Baptist Church...come and see, as Philip told Nathanael:

- John 1:45-46 *“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.”*

## Foreword

This booklet will examine briefly how one is born again. A widely held view by many from different denominations is that if you would only accept Christ as your personal saviour, and invite Him into your heart, then you will be born again. I am not aware of any Bible verse that supports that view. Several Bible verses are mistakenly offered as proof for this opinion. This booklet will attempt to demonstrate how these particular verses mean something completely different, thereby rejecting this assertion.

The first chapter entitled "Spiritual life by regeneration" will give clear Scriptural proof of how a person is actually born again. Also in this chapter, we will consider the meaning of John 1:12 and Romans 10:9 that are often misunderstood.

The second chapter is entitled "Belief...the cause or the effect?" It offers conclusive proof that one's belief in Christ as the Son of God is the effect or evidence one is already born again. Four proof texts, 1 John 5:1, John 5:24, John 6:47, and Acts 13:48, will be presented to support this view. Since it is impossible for something to be both the cause and the effect, three important Bible verses mistakenly used to prove belief in Christ is the cause of regeneration will be examined. These verses are Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:21 and John 3:16. These three Bible verses will be explained in context, and in the exact grammar as written, thereby explaining their actual meaning.

The third chapter entitled "More than one salvation taught in the Bible," demonstrates the Bible does not always use the word salvation just to mean eternal salvation. There are other meanings that are obvious once you consider the context, grammar, and other proven Scriptural principles. No Scripture will ever contradict any other Scripture.



The fourth chapter entitled “What the gospel is not,” considers Bible verses mistakenly used to teach regeneration by gospel preaching, such as James 1:18, 1 Peter 1:23, 25, Hebrews 4:12, and 1 Corinthians 4:15. Each of these Bible verses will be explained considering context, grammar, and other Scripture, in order to reject this false understanding. It is then necessary to explain what these verses actually teach. We will see there is absolutely nothing a person can do to be born again....God is completely sovereign in eternal salvation. No human can help or hinder God in this action. We will then briefly cover the important purpose of the gospel preserved by God for our benefit during this lifetime.

The fifth chapter is entitled “What is the point of it all?” If one understands they can do nothing to inherit eternal life, they may ask that question. Why should one obey the Lord’s commandments? Why not eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die? They may even think God is unrighteous by not allowing man to do something so that he can obtain eternal salvation! Hopefully these questions are answered to the reader’s satisfaction. More on the purpose of the gospel will be given.

The sixth chapter entitled “Those who are unregenerate,” deals with the condition and nature of a person not born again. Since a person may feel sorry for the unregenerate, it might be helpful if one understood the attitude and nature of an unregenerate. It is also important to understand more about the unregenerate in order to fully appreciate what the Lord has done for His elect children.

Since I do not expect everyone will agree with the meaning assigned to every verse quoted, I invite readers to give me an explanation as to their interpretation. I need and want constructive criticism. Please send any comments to Tom Hagler, 5 Somerset Court, Augusta, GA 30909.

For one final thought, Acts 17:2 states, “*And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.*” Let’s follow this example, and reason together from Scripture.

Tom Hagler

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## Spiritual life by regeneration

A common belief among many Bible believers is that if one would only accept Christ as their personal saviour, they will be born again. I do not believe there is even one Bible verse to support that opinion. However, Scripture does support how God makes a great number of individuals acceptable to Him. Consider the following:

- Ephesians 1:4-6 *“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us **accepted** in the beloved.”*

Only Jesus gives spiritual life, and He limits spiritual life to only those the Father gave Him to save. Jesus made this point very clear as He prayed just before His crucifixion.

- John 17:1-3 *“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”*

As many as means not one more and not one less. Jesus has power over all flesh, so He could save everyone. However, this verse says Jesus limits eternal salvation to those the Father gave Him to save. This happens to be a very large number, as given in Revelation 5:9 and 7:9.

Those Jesus saves include those who die as infants (it is the position of the writer that the non-elect do not die young...see more on this below), or those elect who have a mental deficiency, or the elect who live in a remote place and never hear the gospel preached. It also includes those of the elect of God who hear the gospel preached, but reject it for one reason or another.

One example of a child of God turning down the opportunity to follow Christ as a disciple would be found in the story of the rich young ruler, Mark 10:17-27. This account opens with this young man asking Jesus, "*Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*" We know this young man already possesses eternal life because in Mark 10:21, "*Then Jesus beholding him loved him...*" Jesus knows His children, so if He ever loves a person, this love began from before the foundation of the world, and it will last until the end of time on into heaven. This man had youth, power, and riches; however, because of the deceitfulness of his great wealth, he would not take up his cross and follow Christ as a disciple into the Lord's church. The Lord's church offers the child of God a wonderful salvation during this lifetime...something the rich young ruler never experienced as far as Scripture reveals...yet he is now in heaven.

Regarding my opinion that the non-elect do not die young, as noted above, this position was arrived at based on Scriptural evidence. In every case I know of, the unregenerate do not die young. The wicked are described in Job 21:7-15, "*They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.*" In the example of the rich man and Lararus, Luke 16:19-31 (quoted on pages 63 and 64)...the rich man lived a full life. Next, the final judgment was explained in Revelation 20:12-15. Verse 12

describes the unregenerate by stating, *“the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”* A dead fetus would have no works. Also, Romans 9:22 states, *“What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction;”* This verse eliminates the possibility of any non-elect infant deaths. Finally, when David lost his son by Bathsheba, notice 2 Samuel 12:23, *“But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”* David had no doubt that he would go to his child in heaven after his death. He did not worry that his dead child may not be in heaven. There is no Scripture to my knowledge that supports the position of non-elect infant deaths. We know that a dead fetus is guilty of sin according to Psalms 51:5, *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”* However, I believe non-elect infants live long enough so their evil carnal nature produces works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) to such a degree that much will be *“written in the books”* to be judged by God at the final judgement.

### ***How a person is born again***

First, we need to see how one is born again. Jesus says it is by His voice through the Spirit of God, as follows:

- John 5:25 *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”*

This is not the second coming of Christ because that is mentioned three verses later in John 5:28-29, *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they*



*that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*” The next two verses are similar to John 5:25 as they declare that regeneration is from the voice of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit...by the Seed of God, which is Christ, as follows:

- Jesus says in John 6:63, *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, [they] are spirit, and [they] are life.”*
- 1 Peter 1:23 *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”*

One is born again by Jesus Christ, the living Word of God (John 1:1-4, 14), and Jesus Christ is referred to as the incorruptible Seed of God in the following two verses: Galatians 3:16, *“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”*, and Galatians 3:19, *“Wherefore then [serveth] the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”* **Man’s seed generates physical life, and the Seed of God, Jesus Christ, regenerates an elect of God to spiritual life for eternal salvation.**

God quickens His children to life, and the dead surely can do nothing to help God in the resurrection from death.

- Ephesians 2:1 *“And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins;”*

The process of a person obtaining this spiritual life from God takes place in an instant of time sometime between

conception and death, and is described as being translated by the following Bible verse:

- Colossians 1:13 *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated [us] into the kingdom of his dear Son.”*

Being born again is described in the Bible as given above by several different expressions. We have been born again, regenerated, quickened (resurrected), or translated. In this miraculous event that yields eternal salvation, God is always active and the person dead in trespasses and in sins (Ephesians 2:1) is always passive. It is Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, alone and unaided, that gives (not offers) eternal life to the elect of God. The sinner (as well as any other human), is not involved...they cannot help or hinder this action by God.

In the following Bible verses, notice that God is sovereign in giving eternal salvation. There is no place for humans to make any contribution at all:

- 2 Timothy 1:9 *“Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”*
- Titus 3:5 *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”*
- Ephesians 2:8-9 *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the*

*gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

- Matthew 1:21 *“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”* This verse does not say Jesus will try to save His people if they will only cooperate. It just says He shall save His people from their sins.

Clearly, the above Bible verses show that God is sovereign in our eternal salvation, and man contributes nothing to the process. Still, some people have tried to use a few Bible verses to show that man does participate in this great work.

### ***John 1:12-13***

One Bible verse commonly used to support the notion that one “accepts Christ” is as follows:

- 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:”*

Notice the grammar in which it states “as many as received him.” It does not mean as many as will receive Him, but rather, as many as have already received Him. Also, a believer is already born again. Even so, the answer is found in the very next verse:

- John 1:13 *“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

Only God’s will accomplishes one’s spiritual birth or regeneration. We know from John 3:3 that Jesus told

Nicodemus, *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Nicodemus did not know what Jesus meant, as noted in John 3:4. A few verses later, Jesus explains to Nicodemus how regeneration occurs.

- John 3:8 *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”*

A person cannot control where or when the wind will blow, or, where or when the Spirit of God will give spiritual life. Therefore, spiritual life cannot come from preaching the gospel or baptism, since we can control the time and place for both.

### **Romans 10:9**

This is another Bible verse many refer to in order to make the point that the lost sinner must reach out to Christ and accept Him as Saviour, before Christ will grant eternal salvation. Consider this verse:

- Romans 10:9 *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*

The 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans deals with God’s sovereignty in eternal salvation and the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans with a child of God’s duty towards God in this lifetime. Romans 10:2 states *“...they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”* Only God’s born again people have *“a zeal of God.”* The unregenerate carnal mind hates God, as stated in Roman 8:7, *“Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”* As for Romans 10:9, confessing Christ as our saviour, acknowledging what He did for us, is not the same as accepting Christ. This has to do with gospel

conversion unto discipleship in the Lord's church. Discipleship offers a wonderful salvation the child of God can enjoy in this lifetime in fellowship with Christ and His people. It is something only a born again person would desire.

### **Conclusion**

Hopefully the Bible verses presented clarify that spiritual life gained from regeneration is something only God can give to the elect of God, and no human plays any part at all in assisting God. Regeneration is by the will of God, and not the will of man, as John 1:13 makes very clear. In other words, the notion that one must accept Christ as personal Saviour and invite Him into their heart in order to be born again is false.

Romans 10:9 points out a person that hears the gospel preached (only God's children can hear: John 8:47, "*He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*"), should confess Christ (Romans 10:9), and by way of baptism, follow Christ into the Lord's church (Mark 16:16). For a person to have the desire to seek and to obey God, this person would have to be already born again. This principle will be explained in more detail in the next chapter entitled, "Belief...the cause or the effect?"

Understanding that we can do nothing to obtain eternal life, we may ask, what is the point of it all? Why should I obey the Lord's commandments? Why not eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die? They may even question if God is unrighteous by not allowing man to act in some way so as to obtain eternal life! The answers to these questions are considered beginning on page 48.

## **Belief...the cause or the effect?**

Some years ago, Elder Sonny Pyles (Graham, Texas) preached a sermon entitled *Three Essential Facts*. The first essential fact was “cause and effect.” The second essential fact was that more than one type salvation is mentioned in the Bible...that is the subject of our next chapter. Elder Pyles mentioned that if we are blessed to understand only one or two of these concepts, then we will be a long way down the road to understanding what Jesus has done for us.

### ***Belief is the effect of eternal life***

The principle of cause and effect applies to belief in Christ. The question to be answered is, “does our belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God obtain eternal life for us, or does our belief in Christ give evidence we are already eternally saved?” Is belief in Christ the cause, or is it the effect (or evidence) we are eternally saved? This chapter will show that the Bible clearly teaches our belief that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal Son of God, is evidence that we are already a child of God.

Belief in Christ cannot be both the cause as well as the effect of eternal life. It is impossible for it to be both; it must be either one or the other. For real world examples of cause and effect, consider a person that has high fever. A medical doctor would say the fever is an effect or evidence of some sickness. The doctor would then look for the cause of this problem. The doctor would never consider the fever to be the cause of the sickness. It is impossible for something to be both the cause as well as the effect of an occurrence.

Let's consider another real world example. Imagine that an electric lamp does not work. The fact that the lamp does not work is the symptom, evidence, or effect that points you back to the cause of the problem. The cause may be a burned out light bulb, faulty wiring, unplugged cord, a popped circuit breaker, etc. You could not say that the lack of light is the cause of the problem. The absence of light when the lamp is turned on is the effect.

We should take the time now to prove with Bible verses that the Scriptural position is that our belief in Jesus Christ is clearly the effect or evidence of eternal life. Our belief cannot possibly be both the cause (a condition that one must meet) as well as the effect or evidence. Consider the following:

- 1 John 5:1 *"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:"* A person who believes that Jesus is the Christ is already born of God.
- John 5:24 *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."* Not "will have" eternal life, but "hath," or "already has" eternal life.
- John 6:47 *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."* Again the same grammar...not will have, but "hath," meaning already has eternal life.
- Acts 13:48 *"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."*

Those who were previously ordained were the ones that believed. Belief is evidence of eternal life, not the cause.

Our faith is listed as one of the nine evidences we are indwelled by the Spirit of God. Notice the *“fruit of the Spirit”* given in the following verses:

- Galatians 5:22-23 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”*

The fruit of an apple tree is an apple. First the apple tree must exist, and then later the tree produces the apple as fruit. In the same way, a person must first be born of the Spirit in order to have the Spirit of God dwelling within him. 1 Corinthians 3:16, *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”* The person is then able to produce the fruits of the Spirit of God. An unregenerate person cannot exercise faith which he does not have by believing that Jesus is the Christ. After he has been born of the Spirit of God, and has the Spirit of God dwelling within him, the person will have faith, the seventh item listed as *“fruit of the Spirit”*.

Some argue that all people have a little faith. However, the Bible clearly states all people do not have faith. The Bible verse which says exactly that is as follows:

- 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 *“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.”*



For this reason, the gospel is delivered by a child of God who has faith to other of God's children who also have faith. The gospel cannot be delivered from those who have faith to those who are without faith. Notice what is stated by Romans 1:17 *"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."* In others words, the gospel is the power of God only to regenerate children of God who have faith. 1 Corinthians 1:18 also says exactly that, as follows: *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."* Not will be saved, but to those who are already saved, preaching is the power of God.

Finally, the theory that a person must believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God in order to obtain eternal life has a problem because of what Jesus said in the Gospel of John:

- John 10:25-30 *"Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand. I and [my] Father are one."*
- John 8:46-47 *"Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."*

Jesus clearly states to His audience that they cannot hear or believe because they are not God's children. Their eternal salvation does not depend on their decision to accept Christ. The problem is they have no spiritual life.

Those people above addressed by Jesus do not have the ability to understand spiritual matters. This principle is also proven by the following verse:

- 1 Corinthians 2:14 *"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."* (a natural man is unregenerate)

Next, we should consider Bible verses mistakenly used to prove that if we will only believe, then we will have everlasting life.

### ***Romans 1:16***

We will now consider a Bible verse in which the principles of cause and effect have not been properly understood. As shown above by very clear Bible verses, only a child of God who is already born again can believe in Christ. Notice this Bible verse that is too often misunderstood:

- Romans 1:16 *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

The statement "to every one that believeth," means to everyone that now believes, not to everyone that will believe. Since a believer is already a child of God, the statement could be changed to read "to everyone that is a

child of God.” The gospel of Christ is the power of God only to those who are already eternally saved. Another Bible verse that says exactly that is as follows:

- 1 Corinthians 1:18 *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*

Notice that preaching of the cross, or, the gospel of Christ, is only foolishness to those who are unregenerate; however, it is the power of God to those who are already born again. This verse takes the same position as Romans 1:16, so Romans 1:16 could be quoted as follows:

- **I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to everyone that is a child of God, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**

### **1 Corinthians 1:21**

Notice again 1 Corinthians 1:18 as quoted above. Only three verses later, we have another very interesting Bible verse, as follows:

- 1 Corinthians 1:21 *“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”*

Since 1 John 5:1 states, *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:”*, then preaching of the cross saves them that are already saved eternally. Preaching saves the saved. That principle is what Peter preached to some born again Jews in Acts 2:38, 40: *“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...And with many*

*other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*” You cannot save yourself for heaven, but baptism into the Lord’s church gives the Lord’s children a great salvation in this lifetime.

### **John 3:16**

Now we should consider John 3:16. It is one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible, in my humble opinion. For this reason, considerable time will be taken for a detailed study. This verse is another example of the principles of cause and effect not being taken into account. Remember, it is impossible for something to be both the cause of an occurrence, as well as the effect or evidence that the cause was to produce. It cannot be both cause and effect.

In many instances, an attempt is made to use this important Bible verse to prove the manner in which we can be born again, rather than to declare the eternal security of God’s children it actually teaches. A person would mistakenly say that God loves the entire human world, and if one will only believe that Jesus is the Christ (the eternal Son of God), then this person will obtain everlasting life. However, based on the actual grammar and Bible principles already established, we can determine the actual meaning of this important Bible verse.

We will consider John 3:14-18. These verses as they appear in the King James AV 1611 Bible are as follows:

## How one is Born Again

- John 3:14 *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”*
- John 3:15 *“That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”*
- John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*
- John 3:17 *“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”*
- John 3:18 *“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”*

Note: The words above that are underlined, world and believe, are for emphasis.

The following consideration will primarily provide Bible based definitions for the words “world” and “believeth,” and will show which “world” is under consideration in John 3:16. The expression “whosoever believeth” has already been dealt with...belief is evidence a person is already a child of God. One who believeth not may not be a child of God...they may not be one of His sheep. However, this scenario does not consider the case of a child of God guilty of unbelief, which is also possible.

## *World*

Let's first consider "world." One must know which "world" is the object of God's love. We know that in John 17:9, Jesus prayed just before He was crucified: *"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine."* This prayer clearly demonstrates that a world exists that God does not love. In fact, in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, "world" is mentioned 19 times by Jesus in this prayer, and it refers to at least four different "worlds" (shown later, beginning on page 19). The reader should independently verify this fact.

Further, consider the "world" mentioned in Luke 2:1. This verse states as follows: *"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed."* Does this verse refer to the whole human world being taxed? Of course not! It means the whole Roman world. However, many people make this mistake regarding John 3:16. In light of John 17:9, John 3:16 clearly has reference to the "elect world" which God chose before the foundation of the world. Ephesians 1:4 states: *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."* The elect world is the object of God's love in John 3:16.

One should notice another comment by Jesus. In Matthew 7:22-23, Jesus states: *"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."* Jesus, being God manifest in the flesh, knew about these people. Jesus obviously means He never knew these people intimately. They were never the objects of His love

(foreknowledge) from before the foundation of the world. God only loves the “elect world.”

*Summation of thoughts on John 3:16*

Instead of teaching how one is to be born again, these verses in John 3:14-18 assure a child of God that his eternal salvation is secure. Based on the explanation above, John 3:14-18 could be rewritten so as to clearly show which world is the object of God’s love. In addition, a person that believes that Jesus is the Christ is already a child of God. The phrases “*believeth in him*” or “*believeth on him*” could obviously be replaced with the phrase “a child of God.” The phrase “*that believeth not,*” could be replaced with “is not a child of God,” or “is not of His sheep.”

John 3:14-18 could then be rewritten as follows:

- **And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up on the cross of Calvary: That whosoever is a child of God should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the elect world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever is a child of God should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the elect world; but that the elect world through Him might be saved. He that is a child of God is not condemned: but he that is not a child of God is condemned already, because he is not of His sheep.**

### *World Verses in John 17*

The following section is the prayer Jesus prayed in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John just before he went to the cross. Jesus mentioned “world” 19 times to refer to at least 4 different “worlds.” The reader should independently determine which “world” is under consideration in each verse. Notice my suggested meanings:

C = Created world: H = Human world: NE= Non-Elect world: E = Elect world

John 17:5 *“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world<sup>C</sup> was.”*

John 17:6 *“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world<sup>H</sup>: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.”*

John 17:9 *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world<sup>NE</sup>, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”*

John 17:11 *“And now I am no more in the world<sup>H</sup>, but these are in the world<sup>H</sup>, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”*

John 17:12 *“While I was with them in the world<sup>H</sup>, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.”*

John 17:13 *“And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world<sup>H</sup>, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”*



John 17:14 *"I have given them thy word; and the world<sup>NE</sup> hath hated them, because they are not of the world<sup>NE</sup>, even as I am not of the world<sup>C</sup>."*

John 17:15 *"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world<sup>H</sup>, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."*

John 17:16 *"They are not of the world<sup>H</sup>, even as I am not of the world<sup>C</sup>."*

John 17:18 *"As thou hast sent me into the world<sup>H</sup>, even so have I also sent them into the world<sup>H</sup>."*

John 17:21 *"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world<sup>E</sup> may believe that thou hast sent me."*

John 17:23 *"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world<sup>E</sup> may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."*

John 17:24 *"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world<sup>C</sup>."*

John 17:25 *"O righteous Father, the world<sup>NE</sup> hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."*

### **Conclusion**

Clearly, our belief that Jesus is the Christ is an evidence we are already a child of God. It is the "effect" of being

already born again. Our salvation cannot depend on something we must try to do. Belief cannot be both the cause and the effect.

Understanding that nothing can be done to inherit eternal life, one might ask, "what is the point of it all?" Why should I obey the Lord's commandments? Why not eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die? They may even question if God is unrighteous by not allowing man to act in some way to obtain eternal life! The answers to these questions are considered beginning on page 48.

## **More than one Salvation taught in Scripture**

The purpose of this chapter is to consider how the Bible uses “save,” “saved” or “salvation” to mean several different things. This is the second essential fact taught by Elder Sonny Pyles in his sermon entitled *Three Essential Facts*.

Too often the Bible believer assumes that the word “save” means only saved eternally, which is not the case. When one becomes aware of the different ways the Bible uses this word, he is more likely to consider the context and grammar, as well as comparisons with other verses, and not jump to a hasty conclusion. We are told to “*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*” (2 Timothy 2:15)

One of the most important principles of Bible study is to “rightly divide” the Scripture. The Bible contains examples in which the meaning of the word “save” is obvious. For two simple examples, notice the meaning of “save” in the following:

- 2 Corinthians 11:24 “*Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.*” Obviously, Paul means he received forty stripes except (or less) one, for a total of thirty-nine stripes.
- Matthew 19:11 “*But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.*” Obviously “save” in this verse means “except.”

The above verses could not be confused with saved eternally; however, they show that one should at least pause briefly to consider other possible definitions when the meaning is not so obvious.

### ***Eternal Salvation***

To begin our study, let's first look at verses that teach eternal salvation. Very little, if any, disagreement should exist concerning their meaning. Notice that these verses clearly state that the sinner has nothing to do with his eternal salvation. Eternal salvation is totally a work performed by God, alone and unaided. This fact is most important to remember. Consider the following:

- 2 Timothy 1:9 *"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began."*
- Titus 3:5 *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"*
- Ephesians 2:8-9 *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."*
- Matthew 1:21 *"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."* This verse does not say Jesus will try to save His people if they will only

cooperate. It just says He shall save His people from their sins.

Notice the prayer Jesus prays to the Father just before He is crucified. John 17:1-2 *“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”* Jesus has power over all flesh, and this verse says He gives eternal life to as many as the Father gave Him to save. “As many as” means not one more or not one less. Apparently, Jesus did not just make a way of salvation possible if the sinner would accept Him as their personal saviour, but rather, He actually saved eternally everyone the Father gave Him to save, without the loss of even one. John 6:37-39 quoted below is also very strong on this point. Jesus saved everyone chosen by the Father as declared in Ephesians 1:4: *“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:”*

As noted above, Jesus Christ saves all those chosen before the foundation of the world by the Father, and He saves them eternally without the loss of one. This fact is also clearly stated by Jesus in John 6:37-39, as follows:

- John 6:37-39 *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose*

*nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”*

The reader may remember the Bible verses already quoted that prove the spiritually dead sinner can neither hear (John 8:47), understand (1 Corinthians 2:14), nor believe (John 10:26) things of God, and their carnal mind is enmity against God (Romans 8:7). In this condition, the unregenerate must have a Saviour that does everything, because the dead can do nothing for themselves. Only God can quicken the dead, as given in Ephesians 2:1 *“And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”*

Before we look at other “save” Bible verses, remember how clearly the language used above teaches that eternal salvation is totally the work of God, and that our personal failures in this life do not hinder God from accomplishing His purpose.

### ***Salvation from physical danger***

The following Bible verses deal with physical dangers which could result in physical suffering and physical death. No one would misunderstand these verses and think eternal salvation is the subject. Notice how these Bible verses with “save” or “saved” mean a timely deliverance from a timely danger:

- Exodus 14:28-30 *“And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto*

*them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.*” The Lord saved the children of Israel that day from physical death at the hands of the Egyptians. No one would make the mistake of thinking these verses had anything to do with eternal salvation. “Saved” in these verses mean a timely deliverance from a timely danger.

- Acts 27:31 *“Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.”* Obviously, Paul means saved from physical death due to drowning. Once again, “saved” in this verse means a timely deliverance from a timely danger.
- Matthew 14:29-30 *“And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.”* Peter was asking Jesus to save him from drowning; he was not asking Jesus to save him eternally. Peter was asking for a timely deliverance from a timely danger.
- 1 Timothy 2:15 *“Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.”* Everyone would agree that saved in this verse does not mean saved eternally. The verse means a timely deliverance from a timely danger.

After considering the above Bible verses, one should have no problem understanding the correct meaning of the word “save” or “saved.”

### ***Conversion or temporal salvation***

The term “temporal salvation” or “conditional time salvation” is not found in Scripture. It is a term that describes gospel conversion unto discipleship in the Lord’s church. This conversion is a blessing called salvation to be enjoyed in this lifetime, conditioned on continued obedience. This salvation is also a timely deliverance from a timely danger. This timely deliverance is a salvation from physical suffering or death from the chastening rod of God against His disobedient and rebellious children, as opposed to eternal suffering in hell (called the second death). For a good Scripture reference, consider the following:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”* (Also Hebrews 10:26-31)

Now let’s get a little more complicated. Not everyone agrees on the meaning of the following eight Bible verses. Even so, unless the Bible has contradictions (and we know that it does not), then these verses cannot refer to eternal salvation, but rather must refer to a timely deliverance from a timely danger for God’s children. In other words, they must reference the salvation obtained by conversion, or “conditional time salvation,” available to an obedient child of God who denies himself, and takes up his cross to follow Christ as a disciple into the Lord’s church.



1. 1 Timothy 4:16 *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”*

Surely Paul believed Timothy was already saved eternally. Surely he did not think Timothy could eternally save himself and those that heard him by taking *“heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine, etc.”*, or he would be preaching a works salvation about which Timothy and those that heard him could boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 states, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”* Also, Titus 3:5 says the same, as follows: *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”*

Obviously, Paul meant that if Timothy took heed to the doctrine and continued in it, he could save himself and those that heard him from the untoward generation of that day. Peter preached this same salvation in Acts 2:38-40. This passage deals with God’s born again children following Christ as disciples. Not all of God’s people will agree to be disciples. Those who will not follow Christ as His disciples will never lose eternal salvation, but their disobedience will result in their loss of blessings available in the Lord’s church. Becoming a disciple of Christ offers us protection from our own sinful nature and the consequence of our sins. Our sins will lead us to suffering chastisement in this life as in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Hebrews 10:26-31 and 12:5-11. Since chastisement could result in not only physical suffering, but also physical death, one could say the salvation called for by 1 Timothy 4:16 is a “timely deliverance from a timely danger” or “conditional time salvation.”

2. 1 Peter 3:20-21 *“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:”*

In what sense did water save Noah and his family? Also, this verse says that baptism now saves us in the same way that the floodwaters saved Noah and his family. We remember how wicked man was in the days of Noah, as in Genesis 6:5 *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*

Also, much violence existed, as in Genesis 6:13 *“And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”* Returning to 1 Peter 3:20-21, the only logical meaning for how the floodwaters saved Noah and his family is that it saved them from the “wickedness” and “violence” of that time. It was a “time salvation.” Noah and his family were saved by floodwaters from the untoward (unruly) generation of that day. This salvation is compared to how we are now saved by baptism. To prove this fact more clearly, see Acts 2:38, 40: *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized....”* Now, verse 40 states, *“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”* A believer is saved through obedience to the gospel and baptism, but the salvation is not eternal. Rather, it is a salvation from the wicked untoward generation in which we live. The same

principle applicable in the days of Peter (Acts 2:40), or in the days of Noah (1 Peter 3:20-21), is applicable today. An individual needs to be obedient to gospel commandments through “good works” in order to be saved by discipleship in the Lord’s church.

3. Mark 16:15-16 *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

Baptism saves one *“from this untoward generation”* (Acts 2:40), which is a salvation in this life for a born again child of God. For further proof on this verse, notice that “every creature” refers to a born again person. When referring to a person, creature is defined by this Bible verse:

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

Also, we know a believer is someone that is already saved eternally, as proven in our second chapter beginning on page 9. Several Bible verses were used in this chapter to prove our belief in Christ is the effect of having spiritual life, including the following verse:

- 1 John 5:1, *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God:”*

We also learn that if this creature (born again person) rejects the gospel message in unbelief and refuses to be baptized, then he will be damned (suffer chastisement, not eternal damnation) as follows:

- Luke 12:47 *“And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.”*

From this verse we should see that Mark 16:15-16 offers a timely deliverance from a timely danger, or “conditional time salvation.”

4. Philippians 2:12-13 *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*

These verses refer to a “works salvation,” so it cannot mean eternal salvation based on the Bible verses quoted earlier. “Fear and trembling” reminds one that God chastens His rebellious and disobedient children. Remember the Corinthian brethren who were guilty of taking the communion service unworthily? This is a good example of how we can suffer because of our rebellious and disrespectful attitude:

- 1 Corinthians 11:28, 30 *“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord...For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”*

Disobedience cost many of these Corinthians their health and some their physical life. God’s children who possess faith need to demonstrate “good works.” As James 2:20 says, *“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?”* Good works can never produce eternal

salvation, but, for an obedient child of God, discipleship yields comfort and spiritual happiness. This salvation offers a timely deliverance from a timely danger, or in other words, “conditional time salvation.”

5. Romans 10:13 *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”*

Notice the action needed by the person in order to receive salvation. As above, this verse refers to a “works salvation,” so it must mean the salvation that was preached by Peter in Acts 2:38-40, *“save yourselves from this untoward generation”*. The obedient child of God gains this salvation when he repents of his sins (Acts 3:19), confesses Christ as his Saviour (Romans 10:9), and submits to baptism (Mark 16:16).

Notice that the 10<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Romans is addressed to God’s born again children, as proven by Romans 10:1-2, *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”* The unregenerate do not have a zeal of God because their *“carnal mind is enmity against God.”* (Romans 8:7) Romans 10:1 says, *“that they might be saved.”* This salvation is conditionally based on works that will later be explained, such as confessing Christ as saviour in the 9<sup>th</sup> verse. To confess Christ is not the same as to accept Christ. Ephesians 1:6 says *“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”* God made us accepted, not the opposite, where we accept Christ. The unregenerate hate God, their *“carnal mind is enmity against God”* (Romans 8:7).

The Bible verses quoted above speak of a salvation that is in addition to eternal glory. Another verse states this fact exactly, as follows:

6. 2 Timothy 2:10 *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”*

The elect are God’s children, chosen by the Father as stated in Ephesians 1:4. Paul endures all things with the hope they may also obtain something that is in addition to eternal glory. That something is *“the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus,”* the salvation Peter proclaimed, *“Save yourselves from this untoward generation”* (Acts 2:40).

Another verse that says the gospel saves God’s children who are already eternally saved, is as follows:

7. 1 Corinthians 1:21 *“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”*

We remember that someone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is already saved eternally. This fact is stated in 1 John 5:1 as follows: *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.”* It is also clearly stated in John 6:47 *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”* This salvation must be a salvation from this untoward generation, as Acts 2:40. Therefore, preaching the gospel only benefits those who are already saved eternally. Actually, 1 Corinthians 1:18 states this fact exactly, as follows: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish (unregenerate) foolishness; but unto us which are saved (eternally) it is the power of God.”*

Another verse that is related to this subject is not always understood properly, in my opinion. Consider the following:

8. Matthew 7:13-14 *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”*

The strait gate leads to the abundant life (John 10:10, *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”*) It does not mean eternal life. If this verse refers to eternal salvation and eternal destruction in a flaming hell, then it would support a works salvation. It must have reference to “a timely deliverance from a timely danger.” This advice about how we should conduct ourselves during our lifetime must offer us “conditional time salvation.” We can save ourselves from this untoward generation (Acts 2:40, *“Save yourselves from this untoward generation”*) that tempts us to lead an evil life that will result in God chastening us. This salvation is a timely deliverance from timely dangers.

### **Conclusion**

Hopefully, this chapter has created enough interest in the words “save,” “saved” and “salvation,” so that the reader will always more closely examine how the Bible uses these words before jumping to a hasty conclusion as to their actual meaning.

While there are many deep subjects in the Bible that are difficult to understand, salvation should be straightforward and simple for God’s children. The sovereignty of God

verses in Romans 9 do not conflict with the responsibility of man verses given in Romans 10. His people can rejoice in knowing that eternal salvation is totally in God's hands. The gospel is sent to His elect children offering a salvation from this "*untoward generation*" (Acts 2:40), free of the chastening rod of God (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Hebrews 10:26-31 and 12:5-11), in fellowship with Christ (Revelation 3:20-22) in His church. This salvation may be referred to as "conditional time salvation." Time salvation is gospel conversion unto discipleship in the Lord's church conditioned on continued obedience. The Lord then showers blessings upon His obedient children that can be enjoyed in this lifetime...yielding the abundant life! Jesus declared:

- John 10:10 "*...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have [it] more abundantly.*"



## What the gospel is not

The previous chapters have attempted to show that the eternal salvation of God's elect children was settled by God before the foundation of the world, as Ephesians 1:4 states, "*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*" This salvation is assured without implying the need for the gospel as noted in Romans 8:28-39...consider just the last two verses:

- Romans 8:38-39 *"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

The gospel and gospel preaching are involved in a child of God's conversion to discipleship. If the child of God is blessed to hear the gospel preached, he will have the opportunity to obey or disobey. However, it is important to remember that many of God's children (saved eternally) are either not obedient to the gospel or they may never hear the gospel preached as in the case of infant deaths, those with mental afflictions, and those in remote parts of the world.

While the arguments presented in the previous chapters do seem to be conclusive, some Scripture references appear to teach that God uses the gospel (for man's religious practice) as a divine instrument infused with a God given power to achieve eternal salvation. Many of God's children believe the gospel must be coupled with

the “work of the cross,” in order to make the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus....effective unto eternal salvation.

In this chapter, we will examine principle passages which appear to teach that God uses the gospel as a “means” for eternal salvation. We must explain the meaning of each verse in light of all other Scripture on eternal salvation. Every passage must be taken in context, and the grammar taken exactly as written in the AV 1611 King James Bible. This exercise is necessary to show there are no contradictions in the Bible concerning these particular verses.

Notice: Most of the material which follows is found in the booklet “Utility of the GOSPEL” by Elder Conrad Jarrell...printed 1977.

#### ***Four problem verses for the doctrine presented***

Consider the following Scriptures that appear to teach that God uses the gospel as a “means” in the spiritual birth.

- *“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” (James 1:18)*
- *“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever....And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” (1Peter 1:23 and 25)*
- *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the*

*joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)*

- *“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.” (1 Corinthians 4:15)*

The above verses may lead one to consider that a person is “born again” by the preached word (or the gospel) even though we have given compelling arguments to the contrary. If we remember 2 Peter 1:20, *“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation”*...we understand there are no contradictions in the Bible. With this fact in mind, let us examine the above four verses.

To begin, most of our problems are resolved if we understand which “word” is under consideration in the above Scripture. As 2 Timothy 2:15 states, we should be *“...rightly dividing the word of truth.”* Many words will have more than one meaning.

Now, let us examine the word “word.” Three different “words” are used in the Bible: the written or spoken word (rhema in Greek), and the living Word (Logos in Greek). Jesus Christ is the living Word (Logos) of God. If we can prove the above “word” verses refer to Jesus Christ, the living Word of God, and not to the spoken word, or written word, then, to a great degree, we will have been successful in reconciling these verses.

In the following two Bible verses Jesus Christ is the “Word” (Logos in Greek). This fact is rarely if ever disputed:

1. *“For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.”* (1 John 5:7)
2. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made....And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:1-3, 14)

John is not the only apostle to refer to Jesus Christ as the “Word” (Logos in Greek) of God. Luke, a Greek medical doctor, made the following statement: *“Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the Word.”* (Luke 1:2) One cannot be an eyewitness of the written or spoken word, but can be an eyewitness of the living Word. The word “eyewitnesses” in the original Greek language had one meaning, and one meaning only. It was used to mean a direct vision of deity...as in Greek mythology. However, in this case, Jesus Christ was deity. Also, in this context, *“ministers of the Word”*...would mean “body servants” of the living Word...Jesus Christ. The twelve disciples were literally body servants to Jesus.

#### *Comments on James 1:18*

Using the previous logic, James 1:18 is resolved, *“...Of His own will begat He us with the Word of Truth....”* Jesus did say, *“...I am the way, the Truth, and the life....”* John 14:6. Jesus is the living Word of Truth. James 1:18 could be quoted as follows: Of His own will begat He us by Jesus Christ.

*Comments on 1 Peter 1:23, and 25*

The verses in 1 Peter can be resolved in the same way. Verse 23 states, "*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word (Logos in the original Greek language) of God, which liveth and abideth forever.*" How could a written or spoken word be living? Jesus Christ does live and abide forever. Jesus Christ is also referred to as the Seed of God, as follows:

- Galatians 3:16 "*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*"
- Galatians 3:19 "*Wherefore then [serveth] the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; [and it was] ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*"

Now, back to the passage we were considering. Two verses later, in 1 Peter 1:25, we have, "*And this is the word (rhema in Greek) which by the gospel is preached unto you.*" Since the word preached is a different Greek word, this difference should make it clear we are born again by the living Word (Logos), Jesus...and informed of this "good news" by the gospel...the written word (rhema). This principle is plainly stated as follows:

- 2 Timothy 1:9-10 "*Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished*

*death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.*"

Could this principle be any clearer? Jesus Christ, the incorruptible Seed of God, gives spiritual life. In John 5:25, Jesus says: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.*" The gospel makes manifest, or brings to light, what Christ has done for His regenerate children.

Only God can give life, and He does not need help from the dead, alien, and unregenerate sinner. After all, the spiritually dead are dead. Ephesians 2:1 states, "*And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...*" This good news is brought to light through the gospel.

*Comments on Hebrews 4:12*

Hebrews 4:12 states "*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*"

The written word cannot be "*quick*," or alive. This "Word" must be the living Word of God--Jesus Christ. Also, this verse says that the Word of God is a "*...discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*" How could this be the written word? The living Word...Jesus Christ...is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, dwells within the heart of a child of God, as 1 Corinthians 3:16 states, "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God*

*dwelleth in you?*” Finally, in Hebrews 4:14, we have absolute proof:

- *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”* (Hebrews 4:14)

By reading Scripture in context and reading all Scripture on the subject, one should have no problem reconciling any seeming contradiction.

#### *Comments on 1 Corinthians 4:15*

The final verse to consider states, *“For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.”* This verse seems to have the apostle Paul claiming that he is their spiritual father. However, we remember Jesus said in Matthew 23:9, *“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.”* Now, since Paul is an inspired apostle, he could not say anything contrary to the teachings of Jesus.

Also, in Galatians 4:19, Paul appears to say he is a spiritual mother. This verse states, *“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.”* We cannot believe that Paul thought he was spiritual father to the Corinthians, then later tell the Galatians he was their spiritual mother. The answer to this dilemma is found in verse 14...1 Corinthians 4:14 states, *“I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you...”* The apostle Paul was using figurative language. He was the spiritual father to the Corinthians in the same way that one would say George Washington is the father of our country. No one in the United States seriously

considers this statement to mean George Washington is their literal ancestor.

***Brief purpose of the gospel***

Hopefully, the previous explanation has proven through Scripture what the gospel is not. God does not use the gospel and gospel preaching to assist man in securing a place for the sinner in heaven. God is sovereign and all powerful. He is not hindered in any way by weak and sinful man. However, the gospel is most important for the born again child of God during this lifetime. The gospel makes conversion possible, offering the penitent sinner fellowship with Jesus and salvation during this lifetime from the wicked world. Just as Peter said in Acts 2:40, “...*Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*” We know we cannot save ourselves for heaven.

God’s born again children are responsible and held accountable by God in this life for their own actions, even though it will not change their eternal destiny. Through the providence of God, events may be changed (the Lord willing) as a result of prayer. Many examples in Scripture prove this fact. “...*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” (James 5:16)

God has provided the gospel for conversion, to call His children to repent. Acts 3:19 states “*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;*” Obedient children of God should deny themselves, and confess Jesus Christ as their Saviour, Romans 10:9, “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*”



God's children who believe should be baptized, Mark 16:16, *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."* Conversion provides the comfort of the Holy Spirit in fellowship with Jesus Christ and His disciples in the church. What a wonderful salvation for God's people while in this lifetime! While the church is not used by God to regenerate His elect, it is a hospital for sinners. The Church does heal and nourish the Lord's people with spiritual food....the preached Word...so that they may grow in grace and in understanding to enjoy an abundant life. Jesus said in John 10:10, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have [it] more abundantly."*

### **Conclusion**

To my knowledge, the previous four verses are the most persuasive passages in the Bible for the position that the gospel is used by God to offer eternal salvation to the whole human race. If this is the case, then hopefully I have proven they mean something altogether different. The voice of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, the living Word of God...and not the gospel ... calls to life the elect of God. This process is how a child of God is born again.

- John 5:25 *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."*
- John 6:63 *"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."*

God, alone and unaided, gives spiritual life (being born again):

- John 3:8 *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”* Man cannot control the wind...nor can man control the Spirit of God.

Spiritual life is given to those He chose before the foundation of the world:

- Ephesians 1:4-6 *“According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.”*

God brings His children to life directly without man's assistance.

- John 1:13 *“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

God regenerates, or quickens, through the Spirit, by the voice of the living Word of God....Jesus Christ.

- John 6:63 *“It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”*

The sovereign God of the universe, who created all things in the universe, is also sovereign regarding who He will have in heaven. The elect of God (Ephesians 1:4-6), whether an unborn baby, the mentally deficient, those in remote parts of the world, or those who in rebellion reject the gospel, every elect child of God is secure in their eternal salvation. This doctrine is predestination. God has pre-determined the final eternal destination of His elect children. He will not lose even one.

To better see God's sovereignty and predestination, consider the following verse:

- Romans 9:15-16 *"For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on who I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on who I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."*

Restated, in regeneration God gives His children a new nature called "a new creature" in 2 Corinthians 5:17: *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."* In 2 Corinthians 1:22, this new nature, or "new creature," is referred to as follows: *"Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts."* This down payment (earnest) is referred to in Ephesians 1:14 as follows: *"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession..."*

Hopefully, this chapter has shown what the gospel is not as well as the purpose God actually intended for the gospel. The gospel is for the conversion unto discipleship in the Lord's church. The gospel brings to light, or makes manifest, what Christ has done for us, as stated in

2 Timothy 1:10, *“But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”*

## What is the point of it all?

Several questions can be asked at this point in the study. Understanding nothing can be done to inherit eternal life, one may then ask, "What is the point of it all? Why should I obey the Lord's commandments? Why not eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die?" One may even question if God is unrighteous by not allowing man to act in some way to obtain eternal life! This chapter will attempt to give a more complete answer to these questions.

Paul brings up the question of the righteousness of God in relation to God loving Jacob and hating Esau even before these twin boys were born, and before they had done any good or evil. It is most important to consider the following Scripture:

- Romans 9:10-16 *"And not only [this]; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, [even] by our father Isaac; (For [the children] being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? [Is there] unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then [it is] not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."*

God loved Jacob and hated Esau even before these twin boys were born, and before they had done any good or evil. From what we know of Esau and Jacob, it seems to

me we would like Esau more than Jacob. However, God loves the new nature He gives in regeneration. God makes it very clear that eternal salvation is not according to our good or bad works, but rather is based solely on His election. God has mercy on those whom He chose from before the foundation of the world...and none other.

- Ephesians 1:4-6 *“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us **accepted** in the beloved.”*

Now, we should consider, “what is the point of it all?” An elect child of God is first quickened by God into spiritual life sometime between conception and death...*“And you [hath he quickened], who were dead in trespasses and sins;”* (Ephesians 2:1) The good news is we have been saved eternally to live in heaven with God. The possible bad news is that God holds His children accountable during this lifetime, which is why the gospel is so vital.

### ***Purpose of the gospel***

We will now revisit the purpose of the gospel. While it plays no part in achieving eternal salvation for the elect of God, there is nothing else as important to a child of God during his lifetime than the gospel of Jesus Christ.

As a dear sister in San Diego was kind enough to point out, “we would all do better to treat others as heaven-bound versus hell bound.” An elect unregenerate or a

back sliden child of God may appear to us as one who is eternally hell bound. Our patience in sharing the gospel may eventually lead them to repentance, yielding a great deliverance in this lifetime, if God is in the matter. If the child of God is obedient (some are not) to the gospel commandments, he will repent of his sins...

- Acts 3:19 *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;”*

...confess the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour...

- Romans 10:9 *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”*

...and as a believer, submit to baptism.

- Mark 16:16 *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* Damned in this verse means chastisement in this lifetime, not eternal damnation.

The above Bible verses mention conversion, or a change in one’s life, in order to be saved. Since the child of God is already saved eternally, this action offers a salvation that is in addition to eternal glory. Paul mentions this additional salvation in the following Bible verse:

- 2 Timothy 2:10 *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”*

Notice that Paul endures all things so that the elect may obtain salvation; however, we know that the elect are already heaven bound. But Paul endures so they may also (in addition to) obtain by their effort and obedience, the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with (in addition to) eternal glory. This salvation in addition to eternal glory could be called gospel conversion unto discipleship in the Lord's church, and is a salvation to be enjoyed in this lifetime, conditioned upon continued obedience to God's laws. This description of gospel salvation may also be called "conditional time salvation." Or, it could be called gospel salvation that is conditioned upon continued obedience, and that it is in addition to eternal glory.

In Acts 2, Peter is preaching on the day of Pentecost to people who were already born again, based on the following:

- Acts 2:37 *"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?"*

The unregenerate have a heart of stone, and would have found this gospel message foolishness. However, these people were condemned by their guilty conscience, and called out, "*what shall we do?*" Peter then gives them the answer they wanted to hear:

- Acts 2:38 *"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."*



- Acts 2:40 *“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”*

The salvation Peter told them they would receive is from this “*untoward*” (stubborn or unruly) generation, and is a salvation that a person can achieve for himself by obedience to the gospel. This salvation is in addition to eternal glory. In the next Bible verse we have the following:

- Acts 2:41 *“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [unto them] about three thousand souls.”*

Based on this verse the purpose of Peter’s gospel preaching was to bring God’s children to the church. The last sentence in the second chapter of Acts, Acts 2:47 states, *“...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”*

The type of salvation received in baptism is pictured in the salvation of Noah and his family from the flood, as follows:

- 1 Peter 3:20-21 *“Which sometimes were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*

Notice that the above verse did not say Noah's family was saved by the ark from the water (flood), but rather, they were "*saved by water*." The salvation "*by water*" for those on the ark could only be a salvation from the wicked, untoward generation of that day. The salvation gained by baptism must also be the same for us today, as it was in Peter's day when he admonished those he was preaching to in Acts 2:38-40. Peter first states: "*Repent, and be baptized...*" (v. 38), then he states, "*Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*" (v. 40)

The many Bible verses already quoted obviously demonstrate that we cannot save ourselves eternally. These verses prescribe many righteous works that a person must perform in the conversion process. Therefore, conversion cannot be the same as regeneration, because no works are involved in regeneration, as follows:

- Titus 3:5 "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*"
- 2 Timothy 1:9 "*Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*"

Clearly, the value of religious conversion and the method of worship are related to benefits or suffering in this life for God's born again children. For this reason, it may be called gospel salvation, or "conditional time salvation."

As children of God, we have set before us the opportunity of obeying God's commandments, and, as a result, to enjoy a life with blessings from God. On the other hand, if we are tempted to follow the wicked, untoward generation Peter referred to, and rebel against God by not obeying His commandments, then we will suffer in this life, and may even die prematurely. This suffering will not be eternal in hell, but temporal in this life. This fact is very clear in the following verse:

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, *"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which [temple] ye are."*

Notice also the warning given below:

- Hebrews 10:26-31 *"For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."*

The above warning for God's children in the New Testament refers back to the children of Israel in the Old Testament. Their suffering and death should be a warning to us. In fact, they had also been warned before they crossed the River Jordan to possess the Promised Land. This warning by God was given through Moses. However, we must first prove that all the children of Israel Moses led out of Egypt were all born again children of God. Notice the following:

- 1 Corinthians 10:1-6 *"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted."*

Notice how many times all is repeated. Five times we are told that all those Moses led out of Egypt did eat and drink of that spiritual Rock that followed them, "and that Rock was Christ." Also, compare this wording to statements by Jesus in the Gospel of John:

- John 6:53-56 *"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood*

*is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.*

Obviously, all those Moses led out of Egypt were God's children. Notice now the warning God gave the children of Israel through Moses before they entered the Promised Land:

- Deuteronomy 30:15-19 *“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:”* (Verse 31:1 says *“And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel.”*)

God is not telling His people they will suffer eternal damnation. God's people already have spiritual life or eternal life. Eternal means non-ending, so God is clearly referring to things in this life by saying *“ye shall not prolong your days upon the land,”* as opposed to eternal damnation. This refers to “time” by living a longer life in peace and happiness through obedience or a shorter life of suffering by rebellion.

The nation of Israel was warned by God concerning the necessity of obedience to God's Laws after they enter and possess the Promised Land. However, in the opening chapters of Judges we find that they violated this warning time and time again and suffered the consequences (timely suffering and death, not eternal damnation), as follows:

- Judges 2:13-14 *"And they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies."*

Clearly, our religious practice (our worship of God) affects our present lifetime, but does not affect the eternal salvation of God's elect children. Elder Harold Hunt, Maryville, Tennessee, has said, "Gospel salvation has nothing to do with our eternal destiny, but it has everything to do with our welfare in this life. The well being of individuals and nations, of entire civilizations and cultures, are impacted by the influence of the gospel. Every other consideration fades into nothingness compared with the influence of the gospel." The obedience of God's people within nations affects these lands, as clearly pointed out in the following verse:

- 2 Chronicles 7:14 *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."*

The tremendous benefit to nations that occurred during the Protestant Reformation as a result of gospel preaching

and the gospel conversion of God's people is an interesting study. Those nations that embraced the Reformation were blessed to enjoy the Industrial Revolution. Nations like Spain that did not, also did not enjoy the Industrial Revolution. America has been tremendously blessed since our beginning. Notice the nations of Central and South America over the past two hundred years. These nations are rich in natural resources, but the argument can be made that their religion is the problem. This problem is evident in nations all over the world today where various pagan religions are practiced. As Elder Hunt observed, "every other consideration fades into nothingness compared with the influence of the gospel."

### **Conclusion**

When God begins a work in the heart of one of His elect children, He will finish it to the end. The Lord's children may rebel, and as a result suffer greatly in this life to even include a premature death. However, the Lord never fails in the eternal salvation of His elect. Jesus said in John 10:10, "*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have [it] more abundantly.*" This chapter is entitled "What is the point of it all?" The abundant life is the point of it all!!! Christ wants His obedient children to enjoy the many blessings one could call the abundant life that are available in His church in fellowship with Him and His disciples.

## Those who are unregenerate

The study of a few things the Bible teaches about the unregenerate may be helpful. The tender hearted child of God may feel sorry for the unregenerate, and feel it is wrong they have no chance to repent of their sins and be saved to live with God in heaven. They assume the unregenerate would love God if given the opportunity. They need to understand there is no virtue in the unregenerate at all, and none are righteous, nor fear God, nor seek after Him in any way. Consider the following Scripture:

- Romans 3:10:18 *“As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat [is] an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps [is] under their lips: Whose mouth [is] full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet [are] swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery [are] in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.”*

We have already pointed out that the unregenerate carnal mind is enmity (hostility or hate) against God, as follows:

- Romans 8:7 *“Because the carnal mind [is] enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”*

We also know the unregenerate is an enemy of God, as made clear in the following Bible verse:



## How one is Born Again

- Romans 5:10 *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.”*

The nature of the unregenerate is summarized in the following Bible verses:

- Galatians 5:19-21 *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are [these]; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told [you] in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

While the previous verses are clear about the nature of an unregenerate, the Book of Job gives one of the best descriptions, as follows:

- Job 21:7-15 *“Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses [are] safe from fear, neither [is] the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What [is] the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?”*

Note that the rod of God is not against the wicked. The rod of correction is only against God's children, as follows:

- Hebrews 12:5-11 *“And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected [us], and we gave [them] reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened [us] after their own pleasure; but he for [our] profit, that [we] might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”*

In addition, the unregenerate cannot hear, understand, or believe things of God. Consider again (from the chapter “Cause and effect”) the following unregenerate people that Jesus says cannot hear, understand or believe spiritual things of God:

- John 8:43-44 *“Why do ye not understand my speech? [even] because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of [your] father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he*

*speakech of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."*

Clearly these people were unregenerate. Now, notice what Jesus says to these people two verses later.

- John 8:46-47 *"Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God."*

Jesus does not tell these people their problem is a failure to perform some act. He doesn't even tell them that they only need to accept Him as their personal Saviour. Rather, He tells that they are unable to even hear because they are not of God. (If it had been a matter of their making a decision for Christ, surely this is the time and place for Jesus to make this point. He did not!)

The above people addressed by Jesus just do not have the ability to understand spiritual matters. This principle is also proven by the following verse:

- 1 Corinthians 2:14 *"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."* A natural man is unregenerate.

Finally, the unregenerate are unable to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, even though they witnessed His miracles:

- John 10:25-30 *"Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know*

*them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand. I and [my] Father are one."*

Why didn't Jesus say if they would just accept Him as their personal saviour, and invite Him into their heart, then they would be born again? In fact, Jesus said the exact opposite! He informed them they did not have the ability to believe because they were not God's children.

The parable of the rich man and Lazarus tells a lot about the condition of the unregenerate, as follows:

- Luke 16:19-31 *"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great*

*gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that [would come] from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."*

Notice that even if the rich man had returned from the dead, and appeared before his five brothers, his brothers would not have heeded the warning of eternal damnation in a flaming hell. If the unregenerate will not be persuaded by someone they know returning from the dead, then how could they possibly be persuaded by gospel preaching? They do not feel they are wicked, lost sinners in need of a Saviour. They would say that is just foolishness...as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 2:14.

### **Conclusion**

The unregenerate hate God and their unregenerate carnal mind is enmity against God (Romans 8:7). The unregenerate is an enemy of God (Romans 5:10). The rod of God is not against the unregenerate (Job 21:9, Hebrews 12: 8), and they do not desire to know God's ways or to serve Him. They question the value of praying to God (Job 21:14-15). They cannot hear things of God:

- John 8:47, *“He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”*

...understand things of God:

- 1 Corinthians 2:14, *“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.”*

...or believe that Jesus is the Son of God:

- John 10:25-26, *“Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.*

The unregenerate consider the gospel only foolishness! As quoted many times, 1 Corinthians 1:18 states, *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”* As with the rich man and Lazarus, even if one they know returned from the dead to warn an unregenerate person that they are facing an eternity in a flaming hell, they would not believe it, and would only consider it foolishness!

Hopefully this explanation will help a child of God to understand the basis of God's judgement. If one can see there is no virtue or redeeming value at all in the unregenerate, they may understand why God would say:

- Romans 10:15-16 *“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will*

*have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then [it is] not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”*

A few verses later God continues:

- Romans 9:19-24 *“Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed [it], Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? [What] if God, willing to shew [his] wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”*

We may not fully understand until we see God in person, so until then, we can offer thanks for His amazing grace and mercy in saving anyone from Adam’s race. We are all unworthy, and deserve no mercy.

The good news is that God has saved a very great number for heaven. Notice this final Bible verse:

- Revelation 7:9 *“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;”*