Reconciliation of Men to God

Salvation & Eternity in Heaven vs. Eternity in Hell

Almost everyone thinks they are a good person... But the question you should be asking is, "Am I good *enough* to go to Heaven?" How would you know? The way to find out is to ask yourself if you have obeyed the Ten Commandments. Most people say, *"Well, I've broken one or two, but nothing too serious, like murder, etc."* ***So as we go through them think back through your life and how you have done***. Remember, *(Romans 6:23)* states: "*For the wages of sin is death…"*

The Ten Commandments ***(Exodus 20:1-17)***

(# 1-4 concern man's relationship to God / #5-10 concern man's relationship to man)

GUILTY	**INNOCENT**
Yes, I have broken this commandment at least once.	**No, I have NEVER broken this commandment in my life.**

1)* "*You shall have no other gods before *(or besides****) Me.*"** Have you always put God first in your life? Jesus said to love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength-- so much, that your love and devotion for God was much stronger compared to your love for your parents, brothers and sisters, friends, and even your own life. Have you ever failed to put Him first in your life? Guilty or Innocent

***2)* "*You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.*"** Who is God to you? Is He only a god of love and mercy who would never judge anyone and never cast anyone into Hell? If that's your god, then you're right. Your god couldn't cast anyone into Hell because he doesn't exist. He's a figment of your imagination. You've created a god in your own mind that you're more comfortable with. You may call it your "personal belief," but God calls it idolatry. It's the oldest sin in the Book, and the Bible warns that idolaters will not inherit the kingdom of heaven. Guilty or Innocent

***3)* "*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name*."** Have you ever used God's name as a curse word? If you have, you've taken the holy name of God - who gave you your life, your family, and everything precious to you - and used it as a filthy, four-letter word. Hitler's name wasn't even despised enough to be used as a curse word! If you have used God's holy name in that manner, you are a blasphemer and the Bible says *"God will not hold him guiltless who takes the name of the Lord in vain."* Guilty or Innocent

***4)* "*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God… For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*"** God commands that we set aside one day in seven. Have you ever been guilty of breaking this Commandment? Guilty or Innocent

***5)* "*Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.*"** Have you always honored your parents in a way that's pleasing in the sight of God? Ask Him to remind you of the sins of your youth. You may have forgotten them, but God hasn't. Guilty or Innocent

***6)* "*You shall not murder*."** Jesus warned *"Whoever is angry with his brother without cause is in danger of judgment." (Matthew 5:22)* and the Bible says, *"He who hates his brother is a murderer." (1 John 3:15).* God sees hatred in the heart to be as wicked as murder. We can violate His Law by attitude and intent. Guilty or Innocent

***7)* "*You shall not commit adultery*"** Jesus warned*, "You have heard... 'You shall not commit adultery. "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* (*Matthew 5:28)*
Have you ever looked at another person with lust? The Bible says that adulterers and fornicators (those who have sex outside of marriage) will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Guilty or Innocent

***8)* "*You shall not steal.*"** Have you ever stolen anything (even if it was something small)? The value of the thing stolen doesn't matter; petty theft is still theft. Have you ever taken anything that belonged to someone else (from the office, school, parents, etc.)? If you have, that makes you a thief. Guilty or Innocent

***9)* "*You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor*."** Have you ever told a lie? Then you are a liar. How many murders do you have to commit to be a murderer? Just one. If you have told even one lie, that makes you a liar. The Bible warns that all liars will have their part in the Lake of Fire *(Revelation 21:8*). You may not think deceitfulness is a serious sin, but God does. Guilty or Innocent

***10)* "*You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*"** This means we should never desire anything that belongs to another person. Not their house, nor their car, nor their money, nor their wife, nor their lifestyle, nor anything that belongs to our neighbor. Guilty or Innocent

Sin: *All inclusive missing of the mark (falling short) of God's holy standard in thoughts, words or deeds against God or our fellow man.* ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."*** *(Romans 6:23)*

When the Ten Commandments (The Law) were given, it was never expected that man would be able to keep them in order to become righteous but to make man see that it was impossible to keep the commandments and needed a Savior.

Who of us can say we are not guilty of breaking the Ten Commandments? This is what the Bible means when it says, "*All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God.*" *(Romans 3:23)*

Can you see your predicament? You are guilty of sinning against God Himself, and, because you have a conscience, (con-with, science-knowledge) you have sinned "with knowledge." Isn't it true that every time you lied, stole, or lusted, etc., you knew it was wrong? Does the fact that you have sinned against God scare you? *It should.* You have actually angered Him by your sin. The Bible says His wrath abides on you, that you are an *"enemy of God in your mind through wicked works."*
Perhaps you think God is good and because of His goodness He will overlook your sins? But if you knew of a human judge, who turned a blind eye to the crimes of a guilty rapist, would you describe him as a "good" judge? *No.* That would be a "corrupt" judge. God could never be a corrupt judge. He is the Righteous Judge. He will punish all the rapists, murderers, and thieves... But he won't stop there. He will also punish all liars, the lustful, adulterers, idolaters, and blasphemers. The place of eternal punishment is hell.

(2 Cor.3:9) says "*The Lord is longsuffering and patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* The Lord is longsuffering, but do not think because He has not punished you immediately for some of the things you have said or done, that it meant that they were not that bad or that He condones those words and actions. Knowing the Ten Commandments and agreeing they are good goals to strive for is one thing, however, if we try to keep them to make us "right" with God, that only shows our ignorance and disregard for what God was saying their purpose was and making the death of Christ on the cross of no purpose.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:1)

To be "in Christ" means being reconciled to God. *God desires reconciliation with man. Reconciliation is done by the act of forgiveness.* Because of God's perfect justice, forgiveness can only come when sin is removed. *Sins are forgiven by the means of faith.* True faith and belief in the gospel message which is that God made a way for reconciliation by sending a sinless Jesus to be crucified and to die for our sins in our place. If you have accepted that responsibility and accepted Jesus Christ as your savior, the words of Jesus to the thief on the cross will also pertain to you when you are ready to take your last breath; "*Assuredly, I say to you today, you shall be with Me in paradise"(Luke 23:43).* But that decision to accept Christ as your Savior must be done with a *sincere heart* and *true motive* before you take your last breath here on earth! Again, it is to acknowledge and confess our sins, repenting and turning from them, believing ***God sent Jesus to this earth to make God known to man and for the purpose of dying, in our place, for our sins, that is - our redemption. Believing by faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and God as the 2nd Person of the Trinity (Father, <u>Son</u>, Holy Spirit), who came to this world in human flesh, the only sinless man, who died for our sins and was resurrected from the dead to affirm who He was and to give us hope.***

God does not want you to perish. He is rich in mercy and compassion, and has provided a way for you to be forgiven. He has invited you to come to Him for a full pardon and receive the free gift of Eternal Life. You cannot earn it, and you do not deserve it, but God is offering it to you as proof of His love for you.
Imagine you are standing in front of a judge, guilty of multiple serious crimes. All the evidence has been presented and there is no doubt about your guilt. Your apologies and good works cannot erase your crimes; therefore you must be punished. The fine for your crime is $250,000 or imprisonment, but you don't have two pennies to rub together. The judge is about to pass sentence when someone you don't even know steps in and pays your fine for you! The court accepts the money and declares that you are free to go. The law has been satisfied, your debt has been paid in full, and the stranger's sacrifice was a demonstration of his love for you. *That's what God did for you 2000 years ago.*
The Bible says that the God of the Universe became a man (Jesus Christ), and suffered and died on the cross for your sins and mine so that we could be set free. ***(***A clear visual understanding of the suffering He endured on the cross for us (including you) was magnificently portrayed in Mel Gibson's 2004 film "Passion of the Christ") It's as simple as this - we broke the Law, and Jesus paid our fine. *"God demonstrated His own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us." (Galatians 3:13)*

Look at it this way: To illustrate the function of God's law, let's just look for a moment at civil law. Imagine if I said to you, "I've got some *good news* for you: someone has just paid a $25,000 speeding fine on your behalf." You'd probably react by saying, "What are you talking about? That's not good news: it doesn't make sense. I don't have a $25,000 speeding fine." My good news wouldn't be good news to you: it would seem foolishness. But more than that, it would be offensive to you, because I'm insinuating you've broken the law when you don't think you have. *However,* if I put it this way, it may make more sense: "On the way to this meeting, the law clocked you at going 55 miles an hour through an area set aside for a blind children's convention. There were ten clear warning signs stating that fifteen miles an hour was the maximum speed, but you went straight through at 55 miles an hour. What you did was extremely dangerous; there's a $25,000 fine. The law was about to take its course, when someone you don't even know stepped in and paid the fine for you. You are very fortunate." Can you see that telling you precisely what you've done wrong *first* actually makes the good news make sense.

If I don't clearly bring instruction and understanding that you've violated the law, then the good news will seem like foolishness; it will seem offensive. But once you understand that you've broken the law, then that good news will become good news indeed.

Another Illustration:

The tragedy of modern evangelism is because around the turn of the century when it forsook the law in its capacity to convert the soul, to drive sinners to Christ, modern evangelism had to, therefore, find another reason for sinners to respond to the gospel. And the issue that modem evangelism chose to attract sinners was the issue of "life enhancement." The gospel degenerated into "Jesus Christ will give you peace, joy, love, fulfillment, and lasting happiness." Now to illustrate the unscriptural nature of this very popular teaching, I'd like you to listen very carefully to this following anecdote, because the essence of what I'm saying pivots on this particular illustration; *so please listen carefully.*

Two men are seated in a plane. The *first* is given a parachute and told to put it on as it would improve his flight. He's a little skeptical at first because he can't see how wearing a parachute in a plane could possibly improve the flight. After a time he decides to experiment and see if the claim is true. As he puts it on he notices the weight of it upon his shoulders and he finds that he has difficulty in sitting upright. However, he consoles himself with the fact that he was told the parachute would improve the flight. So, he decides to give the thing a little time. As he waits he notices that some of the other passengers are laughing at him, because he's wearing a parachute in a plane. He begins to feel somewhat humiliated. As they begin to point and laugh at him and he can stand it no longer, he slinks in his seat, unstraps the parachute, and throws it to the floor. Disillusionment and bitterness fill his heart, because, as far as he was concerned, he was told an outright lie.

A *second* man is given a parachute, *but listen to what he's told.* He's told to put it on because at any moment he'd be jumping *25,000 feet* out of the plane. He gratefully puts the parachute on; he doesn't notice the weight of it upon his shoulders, nor that he can't sit upright. His mind is consumed with the thought of what would happen to him if he jumped *without that parachute.* Let's analyze the motive and the result of each passenger's experience. The first man's motive for putting the parachute on was solely to improve his flight. The result of his experience was that he was humiliated by the passengers; he was disillusioned and somewhat embittered against those who gave him the parachute. As far as he's concerned it'll be a long time before anyone gets one of those things on his back again.

The second man put the parachute on solely to escape the jump to come, and because of his knowledge of what would happen to him without it, he has a deep-rooted joy and peace in his heart knowing that he's saved from sure death. This knowledge gives him the ability to withstand the mockery of the other passengers. *His attitude towards those who gave him the parachute is one of heart-felt gratitude.* Now listen to what the modern gospel says. It says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He'll give you love, joy, peace, fulfillment, and lasting happiness." In other words, "Jesus will improve your flight." So the sinner responds, and *in an experimental fashion,* puts on the Savior to see if the claims are true. And what does he get? The promised temptation, tribulation, and persecution. The other passengers mock him. So what does he do? He takes off the Lord Jesus Christ; he's offended for the Word's sake *(Mark 4:17*), he's disillusioned and somewhat embittered, and quite rightly so. He was promised peace, joy, love, fulfillment, and lasting happiness, and all he got were trials and humiliation. His bitterness is directed toward those who gave him the so-called "good news." His latter end becomes worse than the first: another inoculated and bitter backslider. We don't want to preach that Jesus improves the flight; we are warning the passengers they're going have to jump out of the plane. That it's "*appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment*" *(Heb.* 9:27). Hopefully, when a sinner understands the horrific consequences of breaking God's law, then he will flee to the Savior solely to escape the wrath that's to come. This is the point we wish to make. That there is wrath to come; that God "*commands all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30)* Why? "*Because He has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness" (vs. 31*). You see, the issue isn't one of happiness, but one of righteousness. It doesn't matter how happy a sinner is, how much he's enjoying "*the pleasures of sin for a season*" *(Heb. 11:25*). Without the righteousness of

Christ, he'll perish on the day of wrath. "*Riches profit not on the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death*" *(Proverbs 11:4).*

Peace and joy are legitimate fruits of salvation, but should not be used to draw one to salvation. If done so, sinners will respond with an impure motive lacking repentance.

Now, can you remember why the second passenger had joy and peace in his heart? It was because he knew that parachute was going to save him from sure death. And as a believer, I have, as Paul says, *joy and peace in believing" (Rom. 15:13),* because I know that the righteousness of Christ is going to deliver me from the wrath that is to come.

Now with that thought in mind, let's take a close look at an incident on board the plane. We have a brand new stewardess. She's carrying a tray of boiling hot coffee. It's her first day; she wants to leave an impression on the passengers, and she certainly does. Because as she's walking down the aisle, she trips over someone's foot and slops that boiling hot coffee all over the lap of our *second* passenger. Now what's his reaction as that boiling liquid hits his tender flesh? He may say, "Ssssfffffl Man that hurt?" Mmmhhh. He feels the pain. But then does he rip the parachute from his shoulders, throw it to the floor and say, *"The stupid parachute!?"* No. Why should he? He didn't put the parachute on for a better flight. He put it on to save him from the jump to come. If anything, the hot coffee incident causes him to cling tighter to the parachute and even look forward to the jump. Now if you and I have put on the Lord Jesus Christ for the right motive, to flee from the wrath that's to come, when tribulation strikes, when the flight gets bumpy, we won't get angry at God; we won't lose our joy and peace. Why should we? We didn't come to Jesus for a happy lifestyle: we came to flee from the wrath that's to come. And if anything, tribulation drives the true believer closer to the Savior. And sadly we have literally multitudes of professing Christians who lose their joy and peace when the flight gets bumpy. Why? They're the product of a man-centered gospel. They came lacking repentance, without which you can't be saved.

The Bible says that: *"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." (1 Cor.l:18)* And offensive because we are insinuating he's (your) a sinner when he doesn't think he is. As far as he is concerned, there are a lot of people far worse than him. But if we take the time to open up the Divine Law, *The Ten Commandments,* and show the sinner precisely what he has done, that he has offended God by violating His law, then when he becomes, as James says, *"convinced of the law as a transgressor" (James 2:9*), the good news of the fine being paid for will not be foolishness, it will not be offensive it will be *"the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16*). After looking at the above Ten Commandments they should have shown us our true state and realize that the following Scripture is so true. *"Now we know that whatsoever things the law says, it says to them that are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and the whole world held accountable before God."* So one function of God's law is to stop the mouth. To stop sinners justifying themselves and saying, *"There is plenty of people worse than me. I'm not a bad person. Really."* <u>No, the law stops the mouth of justification and leaves the whole world, not just the Jews, but the whole world guilty before God</u>.

Do you see God's great love for you? Do you see your need for His forgiveness? Do what He commands and "*Repent...that your sins may be wiped out and times of refreshing may come from the Lord.*" *(Acts 3:19*) You must turn away from sin and turn to God. *Desire* to have *nothing* to do with sin and surrender your life to the One who can save you. Jesus died to set you free, and then He rose from death to be your Lord. Jesus said, in *(John 14:6) "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."* If you will confess and forsake your sins (repent) and trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, God will forgive you and you'll pass from <u>*spiritual death*</u> to <u>*spiritual life*</u>. If you are not sure how to pray, read *Psalm 51* and make it your prayer. What does it mean to "*put your faith in Jesus Christ?*" It means to personally trust in Jesus the same way you'd trust in a parachute if you had to jump 25,000 feet out of an airplane. You wouldn't just "believe" in the parachute; you would put it on! In the same way, the Bible says in (*Romans 13:14) "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ..."* and you will be saved. There are millions of people who "believe" Jesus exists… but they have not put on the Savior - there's a BIG difference. And the difference will be obvious when you "jump" though the door of death.

Today, with all your heart - turn away from sin, and surrender your life to Jesus Christ. Please don't put it off until later. You may die today and then it will be too late. You may not yet have all the answers to your questions, but better to put on the parachute first and then ask questions, than to pass through the door unprepared, grasping for the parachute when it's too late.

You can pray something like this – "Dear God, today I turn from all my sins (name them), I have heard and believe the Gospel message and I put my trust in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Please forgive me, change me from who I have been into who you desire me to be and grant me your gift of everlasting life. Amen." There is nothing magic about these words-*it is the true attitude of your heart that God cares about.* God will transform you from the inside out. You will think and feel differently as you learn to trust and obey Him. God will give you new strength to live right and love Him above all else. *(2 Corinthians 5:16-19)* states "*So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know Him now! Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to Himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to Him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation."* Most Christians, though feeling pretty good about themselves before accepting the Lord, will admit they are extremely thankful that they have been changed and are not the man or woman they used to be. If you're looking for a change in your life, read your Bible, learn and obey His Word. You can trust God - He loves you and will always be faithful.
If you've decided to reject the gift of forgiveness and you die in your sins, there is no hope for you. The wrath of God abides on you and you will spend eternity in Hell.

Please take the time to read what the Bible says Hell is like.
There are three words translated "Hell" in Scripture:
Gehenna (Greek): The place of punishment *(Matthew 5:22,29*; *10:28; and James 3:6)*
Hades (Greek): The abode of the dead *(Matthew 11:23; 16:18*; *Luke 16:23*; *Acts 2:27)*
Sheol (Hebrew): The grave *(Psalm 9:17; 16:10)*
There are those who accept that Hell is a place of punishment, but believe that the punishment is to be annihilated-to cease conscious existence. They can't conceive that the punishment of the wicked will be conscious and eternal. If they are correct, then a man like Adolph Hitler, who was responsible for the deaths of millions, is being "punished" merely with eternal sleep. His fate is simply to return to the non-existent state he was in before he was born, where he doesn't even know that he is being punished. .
However, Scripture paints a different story. The rich man who found himself in hell *(Luke 6:19-31*) was conscious. He was able to feel pain, to thirst, and to experience remorse. He wasn't asleep in the grave; he was in a place of "torment." If Hell is a place of knowing nothing or a reference to the grave into which we go at death, Jesus' statements about Hell make no sense. He said that if your hand, foot, or eye causes you to sin, it would be better to remove it than to *"go into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:43-48).*
The Bible refers to the fate of the unsaved with such fearful words as the following:
- "*Shame and everlasting contempt."* (*Daniel 12:2)*
- "*Everlasting punishment" (Matthew 25:46)*
- *"Weeping and gnashing of teeth*" *(Matthew 24:51)*
- "*Fire unquenchable" (Luke 3:17)*
- "*Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*" *(Romans 2:8,9)*
- "*Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord"* (2 *Thessalonians 1:9)*
- "*Eternal fire...the blackness of darkness forever" (Jude 7,13)*

(Revelation 14:10,11) tells us the final, eternal destiny of the sinner: "*He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone...the smoke of their torment ascended up forever and ever: and they have no rest day or night.*"

Other references to *hell:*
(Is. 33:14) *The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips the godless: "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?"*
(Matt. 8:12) *"But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*
(Matt. 10:28) "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."
(Matt. 13:42) *"They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*
(Luke 12:5) *"But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him."*
(Heb. 9:27) "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment…" (an inescapable confrontation with God)
(2 Pet. 2:17) *"These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them."*
(Revelation 20:13) "The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and <u>each person was judged according to what he had done</u>."
(Revelation 20:15) "If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."
(Revelation 21:8) "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars - their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."
(Ezekiel 18:32) "For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!"
Hell: A decision of choice because of ride and arrogance. Heaven by the grace of God is a free gift!
Note: There is no biblical reference to Purgatory, Reincarnation, Soul sleep, or immediate personal annihilation, after death. Those who attempt to use the Bible for verification of their views misinterpret the verses they use.

The gospel message begins with Jesus and the purpose of why He came to this earth. He came:
1) To reveal God the Father to man and to give us a spiritual, conscious awareness of God (*Matt. 11:27; Titus 1:3)*
2) To destroy the works of the devil. The work of the devil seeks to distort *both mans concept of God <u>and</u> man's perception of the nature and character of God (1 John 3:8).* God revealed Himself through Jesus as a good, loving, gracious, merciful and compassionate God and wants us to know Him.
3) He was manifested (that is He became a man) to take away our sins *(1 John 3:5*). To be made sin for us *(2 Cor.5:21). **Jesus Christ was <u>born to die</u>.*** Born for the express purpose of dying, shedding His blood on the cross, ***sacrificing*** Himself to die in our place…and to be resurrected to show that God accepted His sacrifice…
4) So we may have life and that more abundantly *(John 10:10).* (A God controlled spiritual life/quality of life) *"For I know the plans I have for you." declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)*

1) God Desires Reconciliation with Man. It is His will. God's nature is to love His creation. ***"We work hard and suffer much in order that people will believe the truth, for our hope is in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, <u>and particularly of those who believe</u>."*** *(1 Timothy 4:10)* For those who believe, we are saved spiritually and eternally. For the non-believer, they are saved physically and temporally (while alive on earth). According to (*Romans 6:23),* we should not live after we have committed our first sin transgression. We trust that God always does what is right. Yet we know for

sure there are no people on the face of the earth who don't deserve to die. *(Romans 3:23)* states *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God…" (Romans 6:23)* states *"For the wages of sin is death…" and (Ezekiel 18:4)* states *"Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die."* Dying is not an aberration. One out of one dies. Everyone will die, whether by accident, disease, a criminal act, war or of "natural causes" that is our bodies wearing out from a long life. It's our payment for Adam's sin, whether now or later.

A compassionate God lets man live in rejection of Him because He made a plan of reconciliation and waits for man to come to Him *willingly,* of his own free will.

"The Lord is longsuffering and patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Has He been waiting for you to come? *"Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." (Isaiah 59:1,2)* God also says in *(Ezekiel 18:32) "For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and live!"*

"But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed." (Romans 2:5) "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..." (Heb. 9:27) "But I tell you that men will have to give account on the Day of Judgment for every careless word they have spoken." (Matthew 12:36)

"The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done." (Rev. 20:13) "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." (Galatians 6:7-9)

2) Reconciliation is done by the act of forgiveness. Because of God's perfect justice, forgiveness can only come when sin is removed. *No sin goes unpunished.* Either the sinner pays the price or Jesus Christ ***has already paid.*** ** It must be understood that ***until*** one accepts Jesus as Savior, he is forgiven of ***nothing*** but remains under the penalty for sin, which is death. ***God's Grace***, the undeserved, unmerited favor He bestows upon us*, is the only provision made, by way of Christ's shed blood on the cross, that we can be cleansed of our sins, forgiven and free from judgment for those sins.* That is how a person makes peace with God. Once that is clear in your heart and mind and you understand and accept - that as the Bible teaches - God is ***Omnipresent*** (everywhere***), Omniscient*** (all knowing) and ***Omnipotent*** (all powerful – almighty), you realize that God is in control and that regardless of what goes on in your life or in this world around you, God has allowed it for a reason, and as it has been said, this life on earth is the worst hell you will ever experience and that should give you the peace *of* God. For those who are not saved, this life on earth is the most heaven they will ever experience and that should make them shudder. The Gospel message is that God sent a sinless Jesus to be cruelly tortured and crucified and to die for our sins. *Picture in your mind's eye, Jesus hanging on the cross for **your sins personally.** Jesus Christ, the righteous and sinless Son of God, having taken upon Himself man's every sin past, present and future, and paying the penalty of death (once and for all) **in turn gave us His righteousness.** (by forgiving our sins)* ***However*** as *(Romans 3:22-25)* states *"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. But now God has shown us a different way to heaven - not by 'being good enough' and trying to keep His laws, but by a new way (though not new, really, for the Scriptures told about it long ago). Now God says He will accept and acquit us - declare us 'not guilty' - if we trust Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, by coming to Christ, no matter who we are or what we have been like. Yes, all have sinned; all fall short of God's*

glorious ideal; yet now God declares us 'not guilty' of offending Him, <u>if we trust in Jesus Christ, who in His kindness freely takes away our sins</u>. For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God's anger against us. He used Christ's blood and our faith as the means of saving us from His wrath." ***(John 3:16-18)*** states ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that <u>whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life</u>. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, <u>but whoever does not believe stands condemned already</u> because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."***
Jesus paid a price He did not owe because we owed a price we could not pay. *God is willing to forgive all your sins. Are you interested?* In *(Luke 11:23*) Jesus says *"He who is not with me is against me…"*

3) Reconciliation by the Work of Substitution – The work of substitution (placing all our sins on Jesus, as if He personally committed every sin, having Him pay the wages of those sins – death – in our place - and by imputing (crediting) Christ's righteousness to our account) allows God, in His justice, to be just and the justifier of the ungodly sinner. The sacrifice of the Lord Savior for sin is the heart of both the Old Testament and the New Testament**.** When *(Romans 6:23)* states: "*For the wages of sin is death…"* That means we all deserve death for we all sin. Without a spiritual rebirth, that means we are spiritually dead, sentenced to an eternity separated from God because sin cannot dwell with God's holiness. And because God is just, in His holy justice *in order for us to dwell with Him* the penalty for our sin must be paid and *that requires a substitute—one to die in the sinner's place. God's chosen substitute—the only one who qualified—is Jesus.*

Jesus being sinless was crucial. In the Old Testament when they sacrificed animals to atone for their sins the animals had to be in perfect health, that is without spot, blemish or defect. *(Gen. 3:21)* Has the first blood sacrifice for sin**.** Blood of animals was shed for their skins to clothe Adam and Eve in the garden after "The Fall." *(Heb. 9:22*) says *"In fact the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood. And without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness."* The sacrifices made for sins in the Old Testament had to be made annually because they merely "covered" the sins of the people. However, Jesus Christ, the righteous and sinless Son of God, having taken upon Himself man's every sin <u>*past, present and future*</u>, qualified us for forgiveness by shedding His blood for us on the cross and paying the penalty of death, (<u>*once and for all*</u>).
For Jesus to qualify as our acceptable sacrifice He had to be perfect. That is the reason for the virgin birth. He was not born through the natural inherited sinful seed of the natural man but through God's Holy Spirit. Jesus was God the Father's free gift to mankind (at great cost to God). He wants us to know who He is and what He has done for us. <u>*We have been given our free will to believe and accept or deny and face the consequences.*</u>

4) Sins are forgiven by the means of faith – We always hear that we must have faith and believe. What is faith? The Bible defines it this way: "*Now <u>faith</u> is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him."(Heb.11:1, 3, 6)* (*John 20:29)* states, *Then Jesus told him,* (doubting Thomas) *"<u>**You believe because you have seen me. Blessed are those who have not seen Me and believe anyway.**</u>"* (see *John 20:24-29)*

God pleads with hard-hearted and rebellious sinners to repent and be reconciled. Definition**:** ***<u>Repent</u>*** - to feel regret or contrition – *to turn from and no longer be <u>dominated</u> by sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life.* God provided the way for the reconciliation and redemption of man. *"<u>Repent</u>, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may refreshing may come from the Lord…" (Acts 3:19) "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He*

commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the Man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31) "Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief." (1Timothy 1:13) (The apostle Paul writing to Timothy)

When any sinner ***understands and fears the judgment he is ultimately destined for***, his decision to accept Christ as Savior becomes of utmost importance. When a person accepts this reality and repents, convinced he is at the end of himself and all his resources and has no power to save himself from the judgment he deserves, and pleads for mercy, God grants him forgiveness. God then declares him righteous because Christ's sacrifice covers him. God's mercy (not giving us what we deserve) now coincides with God's grace (giving us what we do not deserve). In the Old Testament, God justified sinners that same way (in their trust and obedience to Him), in anticipation of Christ's atoning work.

To know who Jesus is, is the most important fact you will ever discover and the impact of that realization is "eternal"! The forgiveness of sins, the gift of salvation is an offer from God that everyone needs however, not all will accept it. In *(John 3:3)* ***Jesus was speaking to Nicodemus, a Pharisee, one of the Jewish religious leaders when…*** *Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (Note: John 3:1-8; 16-18)*

There is a saying, "Born once, die twice. Born twice, die once." Meaning, without accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, a person will die a physical death, and then according to (Rev. 20:11-15) at The Great White Throne Judgment, the second death - eternity in Hell. A believer, born physically, then "born again" spiritually, will die only once, physically, and then be with the Lord in Heaven eternally. If you do not know whether you have been "converted," "saved," "delivered" or "born again," then you have not.

There is no entrance into heaven without the one and only proper qualification. It will be your answer to God's question *"What did you do with My son Jesus?"* There are many ways to say what you believe the gospel means. God knows the knowledge He has brought to you and He knows your heart. One type of acceptable answer would be, *"I accepted Jesus as my Savior after hearing and believing the gospel message - which is,* ***God sent Jesus to this earth to make God known to man and for the purpose of dying, in my place, for my sins, that is - my redemption. I believe by faith that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior, and God as the 2nd Person of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit), who came to this world in human flesh, the only sinless man, who died on the cross, shedding His blood for our sins and was resurrected from the dead to affirm who He was and to give us hope.*** *It is my responsibility to acknowledge and confess my sins and to repent, turning away from my sins and to ask for forgiveness. Salvation is wholly of God by grace, (unmerited, undeserved favor), on the basis of our* ***trust*** *in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood on the cross, and* ***not*** *on the basis of anything we can do.* ***More importantly, understanding that it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that shows He conquered death and gives us the assurance that all He said is true. The redemption of man being accomplished by His death on the cross and three days later, the greatest event to ever take place on earth, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*** *I believe by faith that I have heard the truth. Jesus I ask you to come into my life and begin your transforming work to make me the person you created me to be.*

Yes, the Resurrection. It is the reason we celebrate Easter and do so in the springtime. It is the beginning of new life. The beginning of our new life, (no matter how old we may be), when we acknowledge that He died in our place for our sins. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the single most important event in the history of our earth. Virtually every person in the modern western, and most of the non-western world, calls this year (2017). No other man in history has been accorded the almost universal honor of

dividing history in half – and with such definitive influence; that millions who do not call him Lord – are forced to bear witness daily to His on-going importance in the world by using the date (2017 or current date).

By simply recognizing our need for a divine Savior, and accepting Christ's payment for our sins, we do not have to guess, hope or wish but are given assurance, yes we are <u>*promised*</u> salvation and eternal life. *(1 John 5:11-13*) states "*This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may <u>know</u> that you have eternal life*."

Whether you believe it or not, as a non-believer you are: In bondage to evil, the natural state of man (*Romans 3:10-12)*, under divine wrath *(Romans 1:8)*, spiritually dead *(Ephesians 4:17,18)*, and without hope *(Ephesians 2:12).* At the time of salvation a dramatic change takes place. You become: A new creation in Christ *(2 Corinthians 5:17)*, spiritually alive in Him *(Ephesians 2:5)*, willingly controlled by Christ *(Romans 6:22),* and a recipient of God's divine grace *(Ephesians 2:8)*. You are delivered from the domain of darkness into the kingdom light of God's beloved Son *(Colossians 1:3)*, you then possess the righteousness of Christ *(2 Corinthians 5:21)* and will share in His eternal inheritance *(Romans 8:16,17).*
"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." (Romans 8:1) That is those who are ***"born again."***

"Come now; let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." (Isaiah 1:18) "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12)

It needs to be emphasized that even though when the holiday season approaches and we think of Jesus as a little baby born in the manger, *that was when He <u>first</u> came to earth*. The Bible teaches the next time He returns He will return to judge all mankind. *Jesus will come back not as the baby in the manger or as the gentle shepherd. The Bible teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ will return as the Righteous Judge, the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22,23):*

a. He will judge believers (for our rewards for our service for Him) *(1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10);*
b. Also those living inhabitants on the earth at His glorious return *(Matt. 25:31-46)*; and
c. The unbelieving dead at the great white throne judgment *(Rev. 20:11-15).*

As the mediator between God and man *(1 Tim. 2:5), He is the final judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matt. 25:14-46; Acts 17:30,31).*

Whether now or later, the Bible, speaking of Jesus, says in *(Philippians 2:9-11)* that*, "… God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus <u>every</u> knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that <u>every</u> tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* In acknowledging the Gospel message and accepting it, you bow in reverence (whether physically or in your heart and spirit) and in return God promises you eternal life in heaven with Him for eternity. However, if you refuse to accept the Gospel, out of pride because you think you know better, you can no longer say you did not know. After you take your last breath you will find yourself in the presence of God but it will be too late for salvation.

<u>You have heard the message of the cross proclaimed - will you push it away??</u> This may be the day in your life where God's call to you is finally acknowledged and your realization that He is drawing you to Him and that the power that has changed millions of lives is real. Are you the one to change the destiny of your loved ones; children, parents, spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, friends or other family,

by at least approaching them with this information for discussion? Or are you the prodigal son or daughter (*Luke 15:11-32*) who knows now is the time to return to your Lord who may have called you years ago? Are you possibly the spouse, brother, sister, son or daughter who your friends and family have been praying for through their tears for more years than they can count but have still been faithful in their prayers for your salvation "because they love you?" *In your heart, surely you feel the draw of the truth.* For over 2000 years churches, large and small, have been built on what seems like most every corner of every city in every state, in this country and throughout most all countries worldwide. Pastors and ministers in all those churches have preached and expounded every week on the contents of only one book – the Bible, without ever running out of material to speak on. All these pastors in all these churches, week after week, over all these years speaking to so many assembled people attending and supporting the churches, can only happen because people's lives have been changed for the better and they want to know more about how and why. They hear about a better way of life and realize that's the life they want to live.

Nothing terrifies people more than the fear of death. (especially the unsaved – except those who have false assumptions of what lies ahead) Many wait until they are sick, elderly and/or death is imminent before they seriously contemplate what follows death. Some may ask "Who is God? Didn't men write the Bible?" They may finally have a strong curiosity of what the Gospel message is and actually make time to listen intently, honestly looking for answers. However, when most of your life has passed or you find yourself with a grave illness and your mortality becomes a stark reality, you cannot begin to ask deep and complex questions and expect to get a 5 or 10 minute answer that satisfies your curiosity. Some may have a problem with *any* aspect of the Gospel someone tries to explain to them and reply with comments such as "I don't believe Jesus died and came back to life." *(2 Cor. 4:3,4)* states *"If the Good News we preach is hidden to anyone, it is hidden from the one who is on the road to eternal death. Satan, who is the god of this evil world, has made him blind, unable to see the glorious light of the Gospel that is shining upon him, or to understand the amazing message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is God." (1 Cor. 1:18)* states *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*
(Psalm 10:4) states *"In his pride the wicked does not seek Him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God."* These people have known about the Bible and could have read it anytime throughout their life. (See story of the *Rich man and Lazarus* in *Luke 16:19-29*)

Many people have spent their lives studying the Bible to search out the answers they seek, learning the knowledge of who God is and continually growing closer and developing their relationship with Him. When we receive Christ, death in reality holds no more fear for us since it brings us into the presence of God. After conquering death, speaking of His resurrection and our eternal life, in (*John 14:19*) Jesus said *"Because I live you shall live also."* The Bottom line is that Christians should have no fear of death or of facing God on judgment day because they have made *peace with God* by hearing and accepting the gospel message.

*Regarding the resurrection, **only** if the Father had **not** raised Him up by the power of the Holy Spirit, fulfilling scriptural prophecy, could we then discount His claims.* You need to understand and accept the Gospel message, then accept the fact that*; **you must have faith and believe in your heart that what you heard is true.*** The forgiveness of sins, the gift of salvation is an offer from God that everyone needs, however, regretfully not all will accept it.

All through our lives most of us live our lives doing what we feel we need to do for the welfare of our family; our children, spouses and/or our parents. It seems we are always doing for others. But your salvation and the assurance of heaven for *you* is the most important decision you will make on this earth *for yourself*. Make it a priority because though you may live a long time on this earth, eternity is much, much longer.

God does not grade on a curve as many of us were familiar with in school. ***The fact that we believe we are and have been good moral people and better than many others <u>is not</u> what decides whether or not we will be welcomed into heaven.*** Many to this day say, "I'm a good person." But we all know that throughout our lives we have made wrong choices and reacted impulsively in ways we regretted and also have said things we should not have, both towards God and our fellow man. Most of those times could probably fall into the category of sin. *(Romans 3:10)* states *"There is none righteous, no not one."* And in *(Isaiah 64:6) "But we are all as an unclean thing, and our righteousness are as filthy rags."* And the results as stated in *(Rom.6:23), "For the wages of sin is death…"* The law makes the whole world guilty before God. It is only through faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit within us that changes our perspectives, attitudes and actions. God both molds our wills to obey and then gives us the energy to work His will in our life as it pleases Him.

Many find it hard to understand or accept the aspect of the Christian doctrine of salvation which teaches that a person may at any time <u>*sincerely*</u> repent of his sins, and accept Jesus Christ as Savior, even at the *eleventh hour (later years or last moments of his life)*, and receive forgiveness and eternal life, <u>regardless of the quantity and magnitude of their sins</u>. *(Matthew 20:1-16)* ***<u>But remember - *your life can be taken in an instant and that decision to accept Christ as your Savior must be done with a **sincere heart** and **true motive** before you take your last breath here on earth!*</u>*** The Lord Jesus Christ replied to the thief on the cross, who had repented of his sins at the eleventh hour, so to speak, crying "*Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom"(Luke 23:42*). The answer of our Savior was unequivocal when He said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).* The parable of the laborer *(Matthew 20:1-16)* presents Christ's teaching that God agrees to give to all who believe in and will serve Him the same inheritance, *i.e., eternal life*, namely, <u>*eternal redemption*</u>. <u>*So whoever comes to Christ for salvation receives it, whether at the first hour (*</u>early in life*)* <u>*or at the eleventh hour*</u> (Later years or last moments of his life). The "<u>*gift of God*</u>" the scriptures tell us, <u>*is "eternal life*</u>." Rewards for deeds done to further His kingdom may be earned as the believer surrenders himself to the power of The Holy Spirit and bears fruit for the Lord. Those rewards are different for length and content of the services rendered, *(Matt. 19:29; 1 Cor. 9:24,25; Acts 20:32; Luke 18:29,30; 1 Pet.1:4,5)*

Many people say they believe in heaven. But where does the concept of heaven come from? It comes from the Bible. What many people overlook, ***and ignorance is not bliss,*** is that entrance to heaven has a specific requirement; that is - accepting the Gospel message. After your death - no one can pray you into heaven or pray for forgiveness on your behalf. You cannot get into heaven because the rest of your family were or are dedicated Christians. You cannot plead for leniency, or make excuses. Today you have heard the Gospel and are now responsible to make a decision. Christians who have heard and put their faith and trust in the Word of God are comforted and consoled in the realization of the fact that their Christian family and friends, who have died, have gone on to be with the Lord, and that we will see them again. Those who do not have that assurance, also have no such hope.

It is your responsibility. *(Matt. 12:30)* says "*He who is not with Me is against Me**,** and anyone who isn't working with Me is actually working against Me."* The alternative is hell – The fire and brimstone we have heard about many times – eternal life separated from God. Without God's forgiveness, we have only hell to look forward to. We have all heard descriptions of hell but I think it's worse than any of us can imagine and I don't think any one of us would voluntarily want to go there. Death after our last breath is not the end of it all!

Many people cry out to God at the lowest points in their lives – however, <u>*any time*</u> is appropriate. Please listen; *(2 Cor. 6:2)* states, ***For God says "Your cry came to Me at a favorable time, when the doors of welcome were wide open. I helped you on a day when salvation was being offered. <u>Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today He is ready to save you. Behold, now is the accepted time;</u>***

now is the day of salvation." Everyone desires a second chance at sometime in their lives. It needs to be known that our God is the God of the second and infinite number of chances. All we need do is ask. Many people, for various reasons, are not able to read the bible in depth, at length or at all. But if you can you should. What we want to stress to all is - *that all God wants from you is to sincerely believe He is who He said He is and let your life reflect that belief by your words and actions.* Today, you can speak to Him from your heart telling Him you believe in Him, thank Him for the forgiveness of your sins and that you accept His Son, Jesus Christ as Savior and He will lead you from that point to be with Him always. He wants you to trust in the fact that He has empowered you with what you need to *endure* and *persevere* through trying times. *Only what He allows* in our lives befall us. We are told He will not give us more than we can handle because He will make a way of escape.
In your dependence on Him He will give you rest, comfort and peace. (*Matt. 11:28-30)* states, ***"Come to Me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest……and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*** More importantly, *(Isaiah 55:6)* says, ***"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near."***

I have heard and read and believe it's probably true, that the older a person becomes, the less likely he is to accept the gospel. If you have been blessed with a number of years on this earth, we pray you will beat the odds. But time is of the essence**.** *(Hebrews 3:8,9)* states, *So as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts…."* When someone hears the gospel message one of two things happen. It either works to save them or it hardens their heart. When you hear the gospel preached, through whoever is speaking, it is His (God's) message to you. *It is never too late, but always better sooner than later and better later than not at all*. The more times you hear of God's love and His offer of salvation and do not accept its message the harder your heart becomes and the less likely you are to accept the gospel.

In the parable of the soils in (Matt.13:19) Jesus explains the four different types of soils that the seed landed on. Jesus states that the "seed" is the "Word of the Kingdom" or "the Gospel." ***The soil is the heart of man.*** We need to remember, there is nothing wrong with this sower. There is nothing wrong with the seed. The seed is being thrown by the same method. There is also nothing wrong with the soil either. *It was just the condition the soil was in.* Consider the condition of *your* heart as you read the following.

**** Matt. 13: v.4-8*** is the parable – ***v. 19-23*** explains the parable.

v.4) Some seed fell along the path and the birds came and ate it up
v.5,6) Some fell on rocky places where there was not much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow but when the sun came up they were scorched and withered because they had no root.
v.7) Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants.
v.8) Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop – a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.
v.19) Explains - *when anyone hears the message about the kingdom of God and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.*
v.20,21) What was sown on rocky places is the man who hears the Word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble and persecution come because of his belief in the Word, he quickly falls away.
v.22) What was sown among the thorns is the man who hears the Word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of riches choke it, making it unfruitful.
v.23) But what was sown on good soil is the man who hears the Word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. (I believe meaning - bringing the Word to many others)

In verses 5,6 and 20,21 – This is a superficial, shallow heart. There is rockbed under the thin layer of soil and the roots can only go so far. The roots quickly take hold and grow fast and tall until the roots reach a limit of depth that provides no moisture and does not allow them to take hold and continue to grow. From that point they wither and die. This is where many are deceived about their salvation. They hear the gospel message, and receive it with great interest, joy, exhilaration and emotion. They believe – for a while - but in time they fall away, never developing their faith and trust in the Lord, allowing the cares of this world to sabotage their faith (*vs. 7,22*) however continuing to believe their initial acknowledgement of faith had sealed their salvation. *"These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us." (1 John 2:19)*

(*Luke 13:23-25)* states *"Someone asked Him, 'Will only a few be saved?' And He replied, 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I will say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside knocking, and pleading, 'Lord, open the door for us,' He will reply, 'I do not know you.'"* (Speaking of those who felt they deserved entrance into heaven, because of the "good," "moral" or "religious" lives they had led, *but in reality, had never accepted and developed a relationship with Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior).*
Jesus stated in *(Matt.7:13,14) "Heaven can be entered only through the narrow gate! The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide enough for all the multitudes who choose its easy way. But the Gateway to Life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it."*

Even many Christians believe the joy, tears, hugs and happiness they see from those hearing the Gospel message are the signs of a real conversion. Joy is *not* the *distinguishing* feature of true salvation. *Sometimes it is a true feature of both false and true salvation, but not* ***the*** *distinguishing feature of true salvation. As the absence of joy is not the distinguishing feature of false conversion.* Emotional responses do not tell us anything about spiritual reality. They can be the first response to the gospel message but true salvation is done by God and it is a work that is not manifest (noticeably apparent). It is a spiritual work of justification, regeneration and transformation that is not immediately apparent but through time shows its faith true by one's <u>*endurance and perseverance*</u>. As *(Hebrews 12:2)* states *"…looking unto Jesus, the author and <u>finisher</u> of our faith.*

(Matthew 10:22) "And everyone will hate you because of your allegiance to Me. <u>But those who endure to the end will be saved</u>."

(Colossians 2:6,7) "*And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, <u>you must continue to live in obedience to Him</u>. Let your roots grow down into Him and draw up nourishment from Him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with thanksgiving for all He has done."*

(Colossians 1:3-6,11,12,23) "We always pray for you, and we give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard that you trust in Christ Jesus and that you love all of God's people. You do this because you are looking forward to the joys of heaven - <u>as you have been ever since you first heard the truth of the Good News</u>. This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is changing lives everywhere, just as it changed yours that very first day you heard and understood the truth about God's great kindness to sinners. <u>We also pray that you will be strengthened with His glorious power so that you will have all the patience and endurance you need</u>. May you be filled with joy, always thanking the Father, who has enabled you to share the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light. <u>*But you must continue to believe this truth and stand in it firmly. Don't drift away from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News…*</u>*"*

(2 Timothy 2:12) "<u>If we endure hardship, we will reign with Him.</u> If we deny Him, He will deny us."

(Hebrews 10: 34-39) states *"You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail. When all you owned was taken from you, you accepted it with joy. You knew you had better things waiting for you in eternity. Do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord, no matter what happens. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that He has promised. "For in just a little while, the Coming One will come and not delay. And a righteous person will live by faith. But I will have no pleasure in anyone who turns away." But we are not like those who turn their backs on God and seal their fate. We have faith that assures our salvation."*

(James 1:12, 5:11) "Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him." "Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful."

(John 15:4-7) "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you."

Although throughout our lives we are seemingly tossed around like a ship in a storm, and stray to the outer boundaries of where we know we ought to be, *our faith in God should work as does a ship's anchor. Always keeping us secured, trusting in the knowledge of His truth and faithfulness.*

The benefits of salvation, God's grace to us all, are having our sins forgiven, a totally transformed life, our guilt removed, washed clean with a clear conscience, with hope of heaven**,** *and* the mind of Christ which gives us the true perspective of this gift of life we have been given which includes all truth and the power of the Holy Spirit, as a compass to guide, teach and direct us throughout our lives. *"And if you leave God's paths and go astray, you will hear a voice behind you say, "No, this is the way; walk here." (Isaiah 30:21)*

(John14:25,26) "I am telling you these things now while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

In (John 16:12-15) Jesus said *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All that belongs to the Father is Mine; this is why I said, 'The Spirit will tell you whatever He receives from Me.'"*

(1 Corinthians 2:9-13) states *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths."*

We know by experience, by seeing our acquaintances, friends or family taken from us *in an instant, by accident or whatever means*, that none of us are guaranteed another hour, day, year or years. The September 11, 2001 events in New York, Washington D.C., and Pennsylvania are prime examples. Throughout our nation, churches were overflowing and prayer was foremost on many hearts and minds. God bless America was the call. Why were we reaching out to God? Was this His wake-up call for the nation and the world? Natural disasters happen often and accidents and disease take lives every day.
After 9/11, 4 years later, hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused some of the worst damage in the southern gulf states of our country that we have seen. Many died while others found themselves stranded in the flooded streets or on their housetops hoping to be "saved" from their situation.

That scene of stranded people can be used as an example of the hopeless plight of man on earth without Jesus Christ as Savior. The only difference is these people knew they were headed for death and destruction unless they were rescued. Their past lives, good or bad, their money (or lack of), their good works, nothing made them worth saving over another person in the same situation. It was by the sheer desire of the one saving to do so and when he dropped a lifeline down to the one stranded, it would have been of no help if the one stranded did not grab the rope. God the Father sent Jesus, God the Son as your lifeline. If you will not let God the Spirit bring the truth to your heart and show you your need to grab your lifeline to Eternal life in heaven with God as opposed to eternal life in hell, separated from God, He will not override your decision. In 2017 we saw floods, fires and mudslides with lives lost. People who never saw it coming, yet their time had come. Tomorrow is not guaranteed.

Many in this world are stranded in a Godless lifestyle, headed for destruction of which they have absolutely no control over except to hear and believe the Gospel message. *Do you really want to disregard the assurance God's free offer provides for you* ***today*** *or chance that you will have the opportunity to put it off until another day?* Satan knew that God required death for us because of sin, and through Adam death became a certain fact of life. He knew if we remained as we were, we would die and go out of God's presence forever. He wants to keep his hold on men until they die because once they are dead, the opportunity for salvation is gone (for no one can pray you into heaven).

Some say, "I believe in (a) God." But do you know who that God is, what He is like, or what He says about who He is? God gave us the Bible so we could know Him and understand Him. In *(Jeremiah 9:23,24)* it states *"This is what the Lord says: 'Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight,' declares the Lord."*

(2 Peter 3:9) states; *"The Lord is longsuffering and patient, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* I believe He keeps us alive on this earth until He accomplishes what He wants with our lives. Maybe you are reading this *now* because *today* your time has come to *hear with an open heart and respond*. If pride is holding you back, be aware, *(Proverbs 16:18)* states, ***"Pride goes before destruction…"***

Although the "Gospel" of the Bible, "The Good News" of Jesus Christ is straightforward and simple enough for a child to grasp and comprehend, the evidence that the Bible contains to substantiate it claims is overwhelming. It is 66 books written over a 1500 year span by 40 "God inspired" authors from every walk of life. Biblical authors spoke on hundreds of controversial subjects with harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation. There is one unfolding story: "God's Redemption of Man." The Bible as we now have it is one complete Book, composed by God to make Himself known and make known His ***one plan of grace***, to redeem His people from sin for His Glory.

As God's redemptive purposes and plan unfold in Scripture, five recurring themes are constantly emphasized:

- the character of God
- the judgment for sin and disobedience
- the blessing for faith and obedience
- the sacrifice of the Lord Savior for sin
- the glory of the coming kingdom

It states in *(2 Tim 3:16,17)* ***"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."*** Peter explains the process, ***"...knowing this first that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."*** *(2 Pet.1:20,21).* Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God was protected from human error.

The Bible as our foundation: The Bible is God's word directed to each man and woman personally to read and allow God's Spirit to guide you to the understanding of His word "in context." It tells us in Proverbs and Psalms how we are to live our lives and know our God and His attributes. "*He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8).* The Bible lays the foundation for our system of law and punishment, the foundation of marriage and family, along with many other cultural systems after which mankind has structured his societies. The Bible explains creation and gives us an understanding of mans sin nature, which allows us to understand *why we* as individuals, and mankind in general, *act and do the things we do.*

A Christian believes that the Bible is the inerrant (free from error) and infallible (incapable of error) Word of God, written by its authors *while under the inspiration of God*. We believe it was written in order to be man's book of instruction on how to live our lives on this earth and do so with preparation for our eternal life as promised by God. It was written to make God known to man. Many of the teachings came from Jesus, The Christ (Messiah, Anointed One, Deliverer) who was God, having come to this earth, as the *only* sinless man, to die in our place for our sins. We believe, ***by faith and trust***, that after His death He was resurrected from the dead to prove who He was, and is alive today.

He gives us the power to live our lives according to His Word which includes telling others of His free gift of eternal life for all who would believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, <u>*and the consequences for those who will not*</u>. We are people who feel as though we have found a treasure, much more than we could ever spend. And knowing that it cost us nothing, wish to freely give it away to our family, friends, and anyone who will accept it. *Everyone needs it*, however, not all will accept it. Such a treasure is forgiveness of sins, the gift of salvation from God. A person may have tremendous material wealth but be spiritually and emotionally bankrupt. Are you satisfied with your life as it is? Have you went through your (many?) years, satisfied for the most part with your life and what you have obtained or accomplished? Without the Savior, all your pleasures, comforts, material wealth, celebrity, recognitions for philanthropy etc. will be your only reward as it was for the rich man in the story of Lazarus in the example as told in *(Luke 16:19-31))* that follows:

The last verse, presented here (31), in the parable ***is important.*** In *(Luke 16:19-31).* The parable begins, *"'There was a certain rich man,' Jesus said, 'who was splendidly clothed and lived each day in mirth and luxury. One day Lazarus, a diseased beggar, was laid at his door. As he lay there longing for scraps from the rich man's table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores. Finally the beggar died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham in the place of the righteous dead. The rich man also died and was buried, and his soul went into hell. There, in torment, he saw Lazarus in the far distance with Abraham.*

'Father Abraham,' he shouted, 'have some pity! Send Lazarus over here if only to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in these flames.' But Abraham said to him, 'Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted and you are in anguish. And besides, there is a great chasm separating us, and anyone wanting to come to you from here is stopped at its edge; and no one over there can cross to us.' Then the rich man said, 'O Father Abraham, then please send him to my father's home - for I have five brothers - to warn them about this place of torment lest they come here when they die.' But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' ***But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"*** Jesus died and resurrected, by irrefutable proof, yet many to this day still do not believe. Let me leave you with the following*; (2 Cor. 6:2)* states, "***For God says '<u>Your</u> cry came to Me at a favorable time, when the doors of welcome were wide open. I helped you on a day when salvation was being offered. <u>Right now God is ready to welcome you. Today He is ready to save you. Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation</u>.'"***

- Verses to Consider -

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that <u>whosoever</u> believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

(John 14:6) Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

(Acts 4:12) "... Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

(1 Thessalonians 5:9) "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

(Titus 2:11) "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men."

(John 5:24) "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

(John 6:47) "I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.

(John 10:27-29) "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand."

(Ephesians 1:13,14) "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of His glory."

*** Pages 1-5 – Major Portions taken from "Hell's Best Kept Secret" @ Livingwaters.com (free evangelism tools) ** Most Scripture taken from the New Living Translation (NLT)*

Psalm 32 A psalm of David.

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit.
When I kept silent, my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.
Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found;
surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.
You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.
I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.
Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.
Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love
surrounds the man who trusts in Him.
Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Psalm 27 A psalm of David

The LORD is my light and my salvation -- so why should I be afraid?

The LORD protects me from danger -- so why should I tremble?

When evil people come to destroy me, when my enemies and foes attack me,

they will stumble and fall. Though a mighty army surrounds me, my heart will know no fear.

Even if they attack me, I remain confident.

The one thing I ask of the LORD -- the thing I seek most -- is to live in the house of the LORD

all the days of my life, delighting in the LORD's perfections and meditating in His Temple.

For He will conceal me there when troubles come; He will hide me in His sanctuary.

He will place me out of reach on a high rock.

Then I will hold my head high, above my enemies who surround me. At His Tabernacle I will

offer sacrifices with shouts of joy, singing and praising the LORD with music.

Listen to my pleading, O LORD. Be merciful and answer me! My heart has heard you say,

"Come and talk with Me." And my heart responds, "LORD, I am coming."

Do not hide yourself from me. Do not reject your servant in anger. You have always been my

helper. Don't leave me now; don't abandon me, O God of my salvation!

Even if my father and mother abandon me, the LORD will hold me close.

Teach me how to live, O LORD. Lead me along the path of honesty,

for my enemies are waiting for me to fall.

Do not let me fall into their hands. For they accuse me of things I've never done

and breathe out violence against me.

Yet I am confident that I will see the LORD's goodness while I am here in the land of the living.

Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.

Psalm 51:1-17 A psalm of David

Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me.

Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight--
That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice.

Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, The God of my salvation,
And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart--
These, O God, You will not despise.

*** Psalm 73:2-20 - A Psalm of Asaph - From "THE BOOK"*
A special version of the Living Bible.

"…But as for me, I came so close to stumbling. My feet were slipping and I was almost gone. For I was envious of the prosperity of the proud and wicked. Yes, all through life their road is smooth! They grow sleek and fat. They aren't always in trouble and plagued with problems like everyone else, so their pride sparkles like a jeweled necklace, and their clothing is woven of cruelty! These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for! They scoff at God and threaten His people. How proudly they speak! They boast against the very heavens, and their words strut through the earth.

And so God's people are dismayed and confused, and drink it all in. "Does God realize what is going on?" they ask. "Look at these men of arrogance; they never have to lift a finger – theirs is a life of ease; and all the time their riches multiply."

*Have I been wasting my time? Why take the trouble to be pure? All I get out of it is trouble and woe – every day and all day long! - If I had really said that, I would have been a traitor to your people. Yet it is so hard to explain it – this prosperity of those who hate (*or disrgard) *the Lord. Then one day I went into God's sanctuary to meditate, and thought about the future of these evil men. What a slippery path they are on – suddenly God will send them sliding over the edge of the cliff down to their destruction: an instant end to all their happiness, an eternity of terror. Their present life is only a dream! They will awaken to the truth as one awakens from a dream of things that never really were!"*