Knowledge

What we know determines how we live our lives

I believe that most Christians wish they had become a Christian at a much younger age than most of us did. The Bible is a guide for how we should live our lives and the younger we are when we realize that allows us to put our faith and knowledge into practice and to pursue a life course that we feel we have been led to. For many who come to saving knowledge in the latter years of their life, whatever they hear of the Word and wisdom of God that He has provided to us all is always an encouragement, for it reinforces that He is a good God and what we read or hear of His Word always proves better than what we have known and seen of this world around us.

Becoming a Christian in the latter stages of our life, sometimes means we find ourselves in positions, whether physically, financially or other circumstances where we are not able to go out and do good deeds, in whatever form, that we would like to do were we able. Sometimes good deeds can merely consist of just letting God's love flow through you by your kindness to others, intercessory prayer (praying for others) and telling others that God's love is real, that Jesus is your 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 for our sins and was resurrected from the dead to affirm who He was and to give us the opportunity to be reconciled back to God and His presence, back to where Adam's sin separated us from. Through the small "mustard seed" of faith God has planted in our hearts when we hear the gospel message, we have the opportunity to grow that faith into full genuine saving faith by believing, trusting and surrendering all we are to Him which will include all that the Bible has said of who He is, what He has done and what He has prepared for those who believe in Him.

In *Matthew Chapter 7* Jesus says "*Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of My Father, who is in heaven."* And what is the will of the Father? *John 6:28,29,40* states, (after Jesus fed the 5000) *They replied, "We want to perform God's works, too. What should we do?" Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the One He has sent. For it is My Father's will that all who see His Son and believe in Him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day."*

In *Romans 4:16-25* it says *"So the promise (*that is, eternal life*) is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the Law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe. That is what the Scriptures means when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing. Even when there was no reason for hope, Abraham kept hoping—believing that he would become the father of many nations. For God had said to him, (*as the stars in the sky and the sand on the shores*) "That's how many descendants you will have!" And Abraham's faith did not weaken, even though, at about 100 years of age, he figured his body was as good as dead—and so was Sarah's womb. Abraham never wavered in believing God's promise. In fact, his faith grew stronger, and in this he brought glory to God. He was fully convinced that God is able to do whatever He promises. And because of Abraham's faith, God counted him as righteous. And when God counted him as righteous, it wasn't just for Abraham's benefit. It was recorded for our benefit too, assuring us*

that God will also count us as righteous if we believe in Him, the One who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. Jesus was handed over to die because of our sins, and was raised to life for our justification.

The Kingdom of heaven is God's world, God's dominion, salvation, eternal life. And entrance into that Kingdom is dependent upon righteousness. In other words the Lord said at the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount that the people who enter My Kingdom are the people who know their own righteousness doesn't make it, that the standard of perfection is way beyond their capacity, and so they are beggars in their spirit, they can't earn it, they mourn because of the total sinfulness that they see in themselves, they are meek and humble because they know they fall so short of the standard of God, and they hunger and thirst for a righteousness they know they can't attain.

The purpose of The Sermon on The Mount then is identical to the purpose of the Law of God in the Old Testament. When God gave the Law (10 Commandments) to Moses on Sinai, The law was not to make you righteous but to make man see how far short he came even as he tried so hard and that it was impossible to keep the commandments, and needed a Savior. The law makes the whole world guilty before God. Knowing the Ten Commandments and agreeing they are good 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 Christ to no avail.

Now that leaves men with two options, as you live your life, you either invent your religion or you come God's way. You either come on your terms or His terms and that is precisely where the sermon climaxes in chapter 7 verses 13 and 14. And there our Lord says, "*Enter in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be who go in that way; Because narrow is the gate, and hard is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it."* Jesus says, there are only those two ways, there is the broad gate, leads to the broad way, ends up in destruction. It is the way of easy religion, it is the way of human righteousness, it is the way of the scribes and the Pharisees and those who think they're good enough on their own. On the other hand there's the narrow gate and the narrow way that leads to life and that is the way of those who come with a broken heart, with a contrite spirit, those who come and know they can't make it, they can't keep God's law, they can't meet His standard, they can't live up to His righteousness, they can't be as perfect as God is, and they cast themselves on the mercy of Jesus Christ who imputes to them His own righteousness. There's only those two ways and that is the climax of the sermon.

It's difficult also because it is a narrow gate and that means you come through naked, stripped of all yourself, your sin, your self-righteousness. You come through absolutely alone, you don't come through with a group, you don't come through with a family, you come through alone. And it is a constricted way and you know it's going to be a narrow life and you must count the cost. And Jesus said further it's not only difficult because it's hard to find, it's away from the crowd, it's a narrow gate, but because you must agonize to enter it. In other words there must be penitence (that is: remorse, regret and sorrow), confession and repentance, soul searching and brokenness.

When we hear, understand and accept the gospel message our sins are forgiven, past present and future, meaning we are no longer subject to eternal judgment, we should be grateful for we live in this

body which much of the time has proven to be our worst enemy. We do have an ingrained sinful nature, yet no longer need to be dominated by it. Yes, we know that we're going to fail but that's where we come for forgiveness, and that's part of the righteous act. The righteous standard Jesus speaks of assumes we'll fail but when we fail we'll be there confessing. That's why *1 John 1:9* says "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*." If we are the ones continually confessing our sins, we give evidence of the ones that are being forgiven. In other words the ones being forgiven are the ones confessing. You see, He's not saying, here's the perfect standard, if you ever fail you're out, He's saying here's the perfect standard, and part of the perfect standard is that when you fail you deal with it. That's God's standard. And I would dare say that if The Sermon on The Mount is not the direction of your life, not the perfection of it but if it's not the direction of your life I don't care what confession you've made, I don't care if you've been baptized or whatever you're not a Christian. You remember in *John 6 they said to Him, well what do we do to work the works of God? And He said, this is the work of God that you believe on Him that sent Him.* Where do you start with the will of God? Believe on Christ. The only thing acceptable to God is a righteousness that is the product of repentant faith in Jesus Christ, and that produces good works.

So with what was just stated we consider the following.

God establishes the fact that all men are sinners.

Romans 3:10-12 - All are under the power of sin. As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous — not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one."

Romans 3:23 - For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

Isaiah 64:6 - We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags.

Jeremiah 17:9,10 - "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? But I, the LORD, search all hearts and examine secret motives. I give all people their due rewards, according to what their actions deserve."

James 2:10 - For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God's laws.

God establishes the fact that the penalty for sin is death.

Romans 6:23 - For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ezekiel 18:20 - The person who sins is the one who will die (that is - the one who continues in a sinful lifestyle) *The child will not be punished for the parent's sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child's sins. Righteous people will be rewarded for their own righteous behavior, and wicked people will be punished for their own wickedness.*

The fact has been established that you must be perfect to enter heaven.

Revelation 21:27 – Speaking of the New Jerusalem, the capital city of heaven a place of perfect holiness: *Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life* (i.e. the saved).

Psalm 5:4,5 - O God, you take no pleasure in wickedness; you cannot tolerate the sins of the wicked. Therefore, the proud may not stand in your presence, for you hate all who do evil.

God has established the fact that man can do nothing of himself to obtain this perfection.

Ephesians 2:8,9 - God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Romans 4:4-8 - When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned. But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners (when they come to Him for that forgiveness). *David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it: "Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight. Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of sin." Romans 8:1 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.*

Galatians 2:16,19,20 - Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law. For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law - I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God. My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Though we are saved by grace, and not bound to the penalty of the law, we are bound to its precepts, that is, its guidelines, for God has not changed His morality. God has provided a sin-bearer (Jesus- to pay the price for your sin) and in turn imputes to man (credits to our account) the righteousness of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:20,21,15 - So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

He died for everyone so that those who receive His new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

Philippians 3:9 - I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with Himself depends on faith.

In *Isaiah 53:4-6* the prophet states speaking of the Messiah - *Yet it was our weaknesses He carried; it was our sorrows that weighed Him down. And we thought His troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for His own sins! But He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the* LORD *laid on Him the sins of us all.*

1 Peter 3:18 - Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but He died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but He was raised to life in the Spirit.

God established the fact that man needs only to believe in the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior for salvation. To believe is to put your faith and trust in the gospel message with a sincere heart and pure motive. So think of these words when you hear the gospel message and decide if that is indeed how sure your faith is.

Belief - Acceptance by the mind that something is true or real, often supported by an emotional or spiritual sense of certainty.

Confidence - Belief or trust in somebody or something, or in the ability of somebody or something to act in a proper, trustworthy, or reliable manner.

Trust / Reliance - To place confidence in somebody or in somebody's good qualities, especially fairness, truth, honor, or ability.

Assurance - Freedom from uncertainty

Conviction - Firmness of belief or opinion

Faith - Belief in and devotion to God

Biblical definition of faith: *Hebrews 11:1,3,6 - Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the Word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*

Do these words - belief, confidence, trust, reliance, assurance and conviction define your faith in 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. Do you 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 our responsibility to acknowledge and confess our sins and to repent, turning away from our sins and to ask for forgiveness. Salvation is wholly of God by grace, His (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.

John 3:16-18 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "There is no judgment against anyone who believes in Him. But anyone who does not believe in Him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son."

Romans 10:9,10 - If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.

*John 1:12,13 - But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a (*spiritual*) birth that comes from God.*

When Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi, praying and singing hymns, there was an earthquake and the prison doors opened and their chains fell off. The guard thought they had escaped and was about to commit suicide for he was responsible for the prisoners. But Paul stopped him. In *Acts 16:29-31* it says - *The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved…"*

Scripture establishes the fact that man can be certain of his salvation now, and that salvation cannot be lost because eternal life is eternal.

In *John 6:37-40* – Jesus says *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."*

John 10:27-30 - My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from Me, for My Father has given them

to Me, and He is greater than all. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

The Hope (expectation) of Eternal Life - *1 Peter 1:3-9 - All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by His great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by His power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see. So be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while. These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world. You love Him even though you have never seen Him. Though you do not see Him now, you trust Him; and you rejoice with a glorious, inexpressible joy. The reward for trusting Him will be the salvation of your souls.*

Hebrews 10:5-13 - Since we believe human testimony, surely we can believe the greater testimony that comes from God. And God has testified about His Son. All who believe in the Son of God know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about His Son. And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.

The parable of the soils demonstrates that only one out of four that hear the gospel actually sincerely accepts it and perseveres to the point it can be considered "genuine saving faith."

Matt.13:19 states that the "seed" is the "Word of the kingdom" or "the gospel." The soil is the heart of man. In the parable of the soils, Jesus explains the four different types of soils that the seed landed on.

There was the beaten path, there were rocky places where there was not much soil, and areas where thorns and weeds chocked out whatever was planted. Finally, there was good, fertile soil where the seed grew and flourished. He goes on to explain; 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. 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. 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. 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)

Those genuinely born again persevere and continue in faith, fellowship and endurance. Eternal life belongs to those with genuine saving faith. The Apostle John explained about those that we see that seemed to be Christians but walked away. In *1 John 2:19* he says *"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."*

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."*

2 Timothy 2:12 "If we endure hardship, we will reign with Him. If we deny Him, He will deny us."

James 1:12 "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."

Matthew 10:22 Jesus speaking *"And everyone will hate you because of your allegiance to Me. But those who endure to the end will be saved."*

Colossians 2:6,7 "And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to live in obedience to Him. 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."

** (Jesus speaking to Paul) ***For I have appeared to you for this purpose, to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' Acts 26:18***

It is easier to follow a road already paved to a destination than to attempt to make your own trail without the assurance of reaching your intended destination.