

Prologue

When David Kirkwood wrote his compelling book, *The Disciple-Making Minister*, he took pains to describe the people he was writing to. David specified he was writing to church leaders but primarily to those who live outside of North America, Western Europe and Australia/New Zealand. Though he specified that likely all people everywhere would benefit from his book, he knew that the readers who would benefit most are those in the non-western nations.

My concern has always been with the western church – first with the American church and later, with the church in New Zealand. I am still concerned, likely because I know more about the condition of the church in those two countries. Those in third-world nations may also gain much from this book, because the west has exported its rebellion all over the world. The western church claimed to bring them the Gospel, but in many cases has brought another gospel – not the biblical Gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Just as David Kirkwood believes that church leaders – pastors, evangelists, teachers, missionaries, church planters, prophets, Sunday-school workers and other church leaders could benefit most from his book, I also aim this book to the same group. I admit feeling like Jeremiah who is told by God to speak God's words to a generation that will reject his words. The church leaders are the ones who are rebelling against God and his word, and they are unlikely to change. From my experiences of speaking with them, they are steeped in their ways. They are convinced that they have superior understanding and are unwilling to change.

This book will likely have its greatest impact among the lay people in the church who are sincerely seeking God, but know in their spirit that something is wrong about what they are being taught, but are unsure why or what it is.

This book will reveal that they have been betrayed by leaders who are rebelling against God.

I'm convinced that many in the church who are in rebellion against God and his word are products of a church culture that I call "Churchianity," which is opposed to Christianity. First, this different gospel has permeated the seminaries, then the pulpits, and finally the church. Unless countered, this false gospel will continue to deny salvation to the millions who uncritically accept it.

Jesus warned the experts in the law, "Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering" (Luke 11:52). The present "experts in the law" are seminary-trained pastors. Most of these experts refuse to present the key of knowledge to those in their charge. They have not learned and obeyed themselves, and deny the truth of Scripture to others. You will understand better as we proceed. The issue is the same as in Jesus' day. Present-day experts are hindering those who are entering. Their false gospel will deny salvation to untold millions.

We seem to be living in a time prophesied by God at Amos 8:11: "The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land — not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD." This scripture will become clear as we continue.

I've stated in this book that "millions" will be denied salvation because of the false gospel that is being propagated by those who are in rebellion against God. Although this number is not substantiated by statistical studies, it does describe the vast number of people who will be denied salvation; in fact, when you fully understand the premise of this book, you might even use the term "tens of millions" to describe the number of people you believe are being denied salvation by this false gospel.

This book will show the difference between the biblical Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and the false gospel that is preached so widely today. The biblical Gospel is the source of eternal life; the other gospel is a counterfeit evolved by man long ago and accepted and perpetuated by succeeding generations – a gospel that will continue to lead untold millions into separation from God and eternal destruction.

Preface

As we begin, let's establish common ground on which we can agree. Here we will lose some people because many won't agree. It is widely reported that some members of the clergy don't believe the Bible should be taken literally. Others deny the virgin birth as well as the divinity of Jesus. Some deny the miracles, while others deny the account of creation. The variations are endless, as are the doctrines that have come out of these confused, unbelieving attitudes toward Scripture.

If the Bible is true – if it is the Word of God – then we should reverence it and seek to obey its commands; but for those who claim the Bible is not true, or is not entirely true, they create their own form of Churchianity. Such people promote a religion of man in which they pick and choose what they will believe and what they will preach and teach.

If you are part of the group that does not regard the Bible as the Word of God and have no intention of letting your mind be influenced by facts contrary to what you presently believe, then don't bother to continue. Those who don't accept Scripture as written, but who do continue to read will come to realize that they may have already made their reservation in a place that Jesus describes as outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, a place of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. See Hebrews 10:26.

Having said this, it is necessary to state a caveat. Just because all Scripture has been given by inspiration of God does not mean that all Scripture is equally applicable to Christian believers. We will cover this in a separate chapter. Many false doctrines have sprung up from the failure to understand which scriptures the Christian believer is to obey.

The truth of Scripture can be proven through the prophecies about Jesus. Many say there are as many as

300 prophecies in the Old Testament about the Messiah – the Anointed One – who was to come. When Jesus came, he fulfilled all the prophecies that he was to fulfill at his first coming.

Josh McDowell wrote in his book, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, about a study done by Peter Stoner that was published in *Science Speaks*. Mr. Stoner considered only eight of the many prophecies about the Christ, namely that he would be born in Bethlehem, that he would be preceded by a messenger, that he would enter Jerusalem on a donkey, that he would be betrayed by a friend, that he would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver, that the money would be thrown in God's house and then used to buy a Potter's field, that he would remain silent before his accusers; and that he would have his hands and feet pierced and that he would be crucified. According to the science of probabilities, the chance that any man could fulfill just those eight prophecies is 1 in 10^{17} – 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000.

Mr. Stoner illustrated the immensity of this number by supposing we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the state of Texas. This many silver dollars would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. Then mark just one of the silver dollars and mix it into the mass. Blindfold a man and tell him he can travel anywhere in Texas in order to choose one, and only one, silver dollar. What chance would he have of selecting the marked one? That is approximately the same chance that anyone could coincidentally fulfill those eight prophecies. Jesus not only fulfilled those eight prophecies, but also all the other prophecies about the Christ, except those yet to be fulfilled at his second coming. Mr. Stoner considered the probabilities of Jesus fulfilling 48 prophecies to be 1 in 10^{157} – a number too vast, and a probability too infinitesimal for the mind to grasp.

Now consider that there is one book, and only one – the Bible – that contains those prophecies. Through its prophecies, the Bible correctly identified the unique person

who fulfilled those prophecies about the Christ. Moreover, it did it through many different writers over hundreds of years. What do you suppose is the probability that any book, by chance, could contain so many prophecies that the Jews believed concerned their coming Messiah that would be fulfilled by one man? The probability is likely similar to one man fulfilling those prophecies by chance.

At the time of Jesus and for centuries before, the Jews believed these prophecies were about their coming Messiah. In the Gospels there are numerous references showing how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Christ.

My undergraduate background is mathematics and science. Those probabilities are so overwhelming I would consider myself a fool if I did not believe them. I was also a practicing attorney who looked for and presented evidence to make my case. I can imagine no stronger evidence that the Bible is true and that Jesus is the Christ than what you have just read. It is far beyond any reasonable doubt.

There is still more evidence that proves who Jesus is. Jesus chose 12 apostles. The one who betrayed him realized what he had done and committed suicide. But all the others, save John, were said to be martyred because they preached that Jesus was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died on a cross but was resurrected from the dead. They likely could have saved themselves by recanting that testimony or simply fading away and not continuing to proclaim who Jesus was. The moment of truth is when facing death. Few people would choose to die for something they know is not true. Yet, none of the apostles recanted their testimony. Instead, they chose death rather than to deny the Lord Jesus and what they knew to be the truth about him.

Rebellion begins when the Bible is not believed to be true. At John 14:6, Jesus declared: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through

me.” Not only is the Bible true – the book that revealed who Jesus is – but Jesus himself is truth.

Those who rebel against the truth of the Bible also refuse to know and believe who Jesus is. Jesus warned at John 12: 48-50, “There is a judge for the one who rejects *me* and does not accept *my words*; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.”

This book contains many scripture references. Some verses will be used multiple times because of their importance in illustrating the truths we will discuss here. Each use is intentional and important to the context.

Introduction

Scott Hillstrom and I met in New Zealand. Both of us are attorneys who had emigrated to New Zealand with our families and had been granted permanent resident visas.

Scott and I would meet at the Coffee House on Durham, a couple blocks from the Arts Centre, in Christchurch. As we chatted about one subject after another, we would have one Americano, then another, and sometimes a third.

Because Scott and I are both Christians we often discussed our faith, Jesus, and various Christian doctrines. One day when the subject was the Bible, Scott made the statement, "All I need are the red-letters of the Bible." [For those who may not be familiar with "red-letter" editions of the Bible, in those editions the words of Jesus are printed in red.]

Scott's statement set me back on my heels. My understanding is that all Scripture is God-breathed and inerrant in the original manuscripts. Scott apparently thought some scriptures were more important than others. His words made me realize that I apparently regarded all the New Testament Scripture of equal importance. I had already learned that the Old Testament was not of the same importance for present-day believers as the writings in the New Testament. But Scott was stating that parts of the New Testament were more important than others.

I was concerned for Scott. It seemed to me he was on dangerous ground. Could one be a true believer if he didn't think everything in the New Testament is equally important to one's faith and understanding of the Gospel? I couldn't argue the point at that time because I hadn't critically thought through that issue.

As I considered the possibility that certain parts of the New Testament were more important than others, I recalled that, as a new believer at age 43, I consumed the Gospels, reading them over and over. Because the Apostle Peter

said that Paul's writings were hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16), I avoided Paul's writings for awhile, first reading the Gospels over and over, then James, Peter, John and Jude. Finally, I could contain myself no longer and read Paul's epistles. I found them perfectly acceptable, easily understood in light of the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, also perhaps because I was reading them for the first time in the New International Version (NIV) translation. That is the same translation I will use throughout this book unless specifically stated to the contrary.

It didn't take me long to realize that Scott was right. Jesus himself said his words were of greater importance than any other words ever written. At Matthew 24:35 Jesus said, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but *my words* will never pass away." Jesus revealed why his words had such power at John 6:63: "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words *I have spoken* to you are Spirit and they are life." WOW! What person has ever been able to say that about his words?

Never is anything similar to Jesus' claims about his words made about other writings in the Bible. The Apostles recognized that Jesus' words were different. At John 6:68, Peter testified, "You have the words of eternal life."

Scott's comment focused me once again on the words of Jesus. For years I had been concerned about the failure of the local church to teach its people to obey Jesus' commands. Suddenly I realized that my concern was at least in part because these teachings and commands were Jesus' words – the red-letter words – words that were special, words that were Spirit and life, and that would never pass away.

In the years since, I have come to realize that this great omission, failure, and refusal of the church to teach its people to obey the teachings and commands of Jesus amounts to REBELLION. The rest of this book will explain

why this is not a minor difference of opinion or a matter of semantics. This rebellion against Jesus and his commands has and will cost the salvation of untold millions. Amazingly, this rebellion is fostered and perpetuated by pastors and teachers in the church against the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ who is its head.

Chapter 1

REBELLION AGAINST JESUS AS LORD

The rebellion likely begins with the refusal to accept Jesus for who he is. Let's look first at who Jesus is and how this refusal becomes the basis for the great REBELLION.

At John 8:24, Jesus created a salvation issue when he said, "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins."

No one who dies in their sins will enter the kingdom of heaven. At Revelation 21:27, the Apostle John wrote about heaven: "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." If our sins are not forgiven, we will continue to be impure. For further proof, at Colossians 1:22, Paul wrote, "But now he [God] has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation ..." Those whose sins are not forgiven are full of the blemishes of sin and are the objects of accusation.

Jesus said we will die in our sins if we do not believe that he is who he claims to be. Who did he claim to be? At John 13:13, Jesus said, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am." When arrested by the Jews, the high priest said to Jesus, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God."

“Yes, it is as you say,” Jesus replied. “But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” (See Matthew 26:63-64.)

In these few verses, Jesus claimed to be Teacher, Lord, the Christ, the son of man, and the Son of God. Do you believe Jesus is all those things? Many will say, “Yes, I surely do!” Then I must ask, is Jesus all those to you? For example, is he your Lord? Do you obey Jesus because he is your Lord? Here you want to be very careful of your answer. Don’t lie to yourself and to God about an issue so important.

Even in Jesus’ day, people called him Lord, but denied it by their actions. Jesus asked, “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). Obviously Jesus expected obedience from those who called him Lord.

It is my intent to prove to you from Scripture that to believe in and receive Jesus as LORD is essential to a saving faith. At Romans 10:9, Paul told us, “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is LORD,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” At Romans 10:13, Paul said, “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.” Paul revealed that salvation itself is based on confessing Jesus as Lord. When he asked what he must do to be saved, Paul told the Philippian jailer, “Believe in the LORD Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household” (Acts 16:31).

Likely you have heard many times the invitation from a pulpit, “If you accept (or receive or believe in) Jesus as your Savior you will have eternal life.” Such a claim is extra-biblical – it doesn’t exist in Scripture. It appears pastors and theologians have developed their own ideas of how to be saved. Since everything about biblical salvation comes from Scripture, how dare anyone introduce something different than what Scripture reveals? We dare not! Man-made gospels are “another gospel.”

Using the NIV translation of Scripture, there are no instances of “accepting” Jesus in any capacity. There are two instances in which the word “received” is used. The first is at John 1:11-13, but there it doesn’t say in what capacity we are to receive Jesus:

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who *received* him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

The next use of “receive” is at Colossians 2:6: “So then, just as you *received* Christ Jesus as LORD, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him ...” This reveals that the Colossians received Jesus as LORD! Why would they receive Jesus as LORD? Paul made that clear when he said, “We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as *LORD*” (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Paul made clear that salvation is in Jesus as *LORD*. He said, “God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive *salvation* through our *LORD* Jesus Christ (1 Thess. 5:9). The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus our *LORD*” (Romans 6:23). Peter exhorted: “In your hearts set apart Christ as *LORD*” (1 Peter 3:15).

Another convincing proof to me is a combination of two scriptures. The first is at Acts 20:21 where Paul declared to the Ephesian elders, “I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and *have faith in our LORD Jesus.*” Now combine that verse with the familiar verses at Ephesians 2:8-9: “For it is by grace you have been saved, *through faith [in our LORD Jesus]*—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”

The first half of my earlier book, *Saving Faith*, is devoted to the proofs that Jesus must be Lord of all who will be saved. Perhaps a way to get God’s view of the importance of the

Lordship of Jesus is to note how many times Jesus is referred to as LORD in the New Testament. The following table shows many of the titles of Jesus and the number of times they are used in the New Testament:

618 times as LORD
543 times as Christ
84 times as Son of Man
42 times as Teacher
37 times as Son of God
35 times as King
32 times as Lamb
15 times as Savior
15 times as Prophet
11 times as Master
7 times as High Priest

That makes the point, doesn't it? It becomes even more powerful when we learn that the title "Christ" includes within it the title "Lord." At Romans 1:4, Paul wrote, "... was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our LORD." Paul declared that the Son of God is Jesus Christ our LORD. He tied together three major titles of Jesus to make sure we realize that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, and the LORD.

Another scripture especially impresses me. At Romans 14:9, Paul explained: "For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the LORD of both the dead and the living." Paul reveals that Jesus' reason and reward for dying and returning to life was so he could be our LORD.

There are another 600+ scriptures concerning Jesus as LORD. It is a major theme of the New Testament. God insists that Jesus must be the LORD of all who will be saved.

Are there many lords? Is God the Father our Lord? At 1 Corinthians 8:5-6, Paul explained: "Even if there are so-

called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), yet for us there is but *one God, the Father*, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but *one LORD, Jesus Christ*, through whom all things came and through whom we live."

The vast majority of the western church is in REBELLION against the LORD Jesus Christ. Its leaders refuse to recognize his Lordship, instead creating Churchianity out of Christianity. Though they sometimes use the title Lord for Jesus, they don't teach what it means to have Jesus as one's LORD. They don't teach that it is necessary to obey Jesus as one's LORD. Therein is the basis for the great REBELLION against Jesus as LORD.

If Jesus taught, and other scripture confirms, that Jesus must be LORD of all who would be saved, why would anyone not bow the knee to Jesus, receive him as Lord, and teach others to do the same? I think the answer is a refusal and unwillingness to submit to Jesus' authority. The question we should ask is, "What will Jesus think of the refusal to accept him as Lord?" At Luke 19:12-27, Jesus answered that question in a parable that actually included two separate teachings. We'll examine only the part of the parable that refers to him. Jesus spoke of a man of noble birth who went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, "We don't want this man to be our king." He was made king, however, and returned home. The parable ended when Jesus said, "But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them – bring them here and kill them in front of me." It will be a frightful result for those who refuse to receive Jesus as their Lord!

Much of the present church looks for ways to build huge churches filled with thousands of people. Pastors run to one church leader after another who has created the newest mega-church. They disregard Jesus' teachings that show it is the quality and obedience of the person who

would follow him that is important, not the number of people who claim to follow him.

Most people seem unaware of the conditions God has imposed for those who will gain salvation. In fact, some fraudulently and deceitfully insist that there are no conditions. We will discuss this in more detail in the following chapters.

For a more comprehensive look at the Scriptures that show the preeminence of Jesus as Lord, see www.bereanpublishers.com | Book: Saving Faith | Chapter 2. Jesus is Lord.

Chapter 2

REBELLION AGAINST JESUS' WORDS

REBELLION in the church cannot be shown more clearly, I believe, than in the deliberate failure and refusal of the church to do what Jesus commanded.

Rebellion is not a difficult concept. Children are rebellious when they refuse to do what their parents, teachers, or others in authority tell them to do. Criminals rebel against authority; they are determined to do what they want, when they want, no matter how it may hurt society. Rebellions occur against governments. Tonight's news showed chaos in the streets of two countries where the citizens were rebelling against tyrannical governments.

Sometimes rebellion can be subtle, when a person just quietly disobeys the rules of the person in authority. Sometimes it can be more overt by urging and teaching others to rebel through disobedience to the law.

Definitions of rebellion are:

- An act or a show of defiance toward an authority or established convention.
- Organized opposition intended to change or overthrow existing authority.
- Disobedience; revolt.
- A fight or struggle against any kind of control.

You might wonder if any of those definitions could pertain to actions in the church. It is my hope that as we continue, you will be convinced that all those actions are true of much of the western church as we begin the 21st Century.

Who is the authority the church is rebelling against? As unlikely as it may sound, the Christian church is rebelling

against its head – the LORD Jesus Christ. What does Scripture teach us about the authority of Jesus?

Paul taught the Philippians: God exalted Jesus to the *highest* place and *gave him the name that is above every name*, that at the name of Jesus every knee should *bow*, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue *confess* that Jesus Christ is *LORD*, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9-11).

Paul testified that Jesus is the *image* of the invisible God, the *firstborn* over all creation (Colossians 1:15). Paul credited creation itself to the LORD Jesus: "By Jesus all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; *all things were created by him and for him*" (Colossians 1:16).

Paul told us about the order of authority that pertains to us: "Jesus is *before* all things, and in him all things hold together. Jesus is the *head* of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in *everything* he might have the *supremacy*" (Colossians 1:17-18).

Paul testified that *God seated Jesus at his right hand* in the heavenly realms, *far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given*, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church ..." (Ephesians 1:22).

I've reviewed those verses as a reminder of who Jesus is with respect to his church – he is the head with all authority, power and dominion. Is that clear? There is no authority in heaven or on earth greater than the Lord Jesus. At the beginning of the great commission at Matthew 28:18, Jesus said exactly that: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

God himself commanded that we listen to Jesus. When Jesus and Peter and John went up the mountain and Jesus was transfigured before them, God's voice came from a cloud and said, "This is my Son, whom I love, with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matthew 17:5, Mark 9:7, and Luke 9:35). The KJV uses the terms "hearken to" instead of "listen to." The Zodiates study Bible shows the meaning of "hearken" is to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention, obedience, etc.). A reasonable interpretation of God's command is: "Listen attentively and obey him!" and that is consistent with other New Testament scriptures.

Did the Lord Jesus expect his followers to obey him? Absolutely! He asked them, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Even then, as now, people called Jesus Lord, but refused to obey him.

There is another critically important reason why we should believe and obey the Lord Jesus. Over and over again, Jesus emphasized that everything he did and said while on earth was what his Father told him to do and say. At John 12:49-50, Jesus said, "For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say." See also John 3:34, 8:28, 14:10, 14:24, and 14:31. No wonder God told us to listen to him.

Because it was God who told Jesus what to say and how to say it, we can now understand better what Jesus said about his words: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but *my words* will never pass away" (Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31 and Luke 21:33). Jesus also said, "The words *I have spoken* to you are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). Even what Jesus said about his words were what God his Father told him to say.

Jesus gave multiple examples of the importance of his words: "I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears *my words* and puts them into practice. He is like

a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears *my words* and does *not* put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete" (Luke 6:47-49. See also Matthew 7:24-27).

The Apostles recognized that Jesus' words were different. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? *You* have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

That Jesus spoke and did only what God his Father commanded him to say and do is very important as that made *everything* Jesus said and did *the will of God*. That became a *salvation issue* when Jesus said,

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

A salvation issue exists when a requirement is stated for salvation. In this instance Jesus limited those who will enter the kingdom of heaven to those who *do* the will of his Father. Thus, doing the will of the Father is a salvation issue – a condition that must be satisfied if one is to enter the kingdom of heaven. The Apostle John corroborated that at 1 John 2:17: "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who *does* the will of God lives forever." John implied that *only* those who *do* the will of God will enter heaven; he assures us that all who do the will of God have eternal life.

Does the church do the will of God by obeying what Jesus commanded? Sadly no! Church leaders say, "Lord, Lord," but refuse to do the will of God – to obey everything that Jesus taught and commanded. We cannot enter the kingdom of heaven unless we *do* the will of God. This is an over-arching *condition* of salvation. To repeat: We cannot

be saved (enter the kingdom of heaven) unless we *do* the will of God. It is the will of God that New Testament believers obey the teachings and commands of Jesus. It is the will of God that the church make disciples by “teaching them to obey all that I [Jesus] have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20).

Many in the church today act as if they are ashamed of the words of Jesus. These people seem to believe that Jesus’ words do not apply in what they claim is a new paradigm in which they seek to reach the unchurched in new relevant ways. Yet, Scripture says that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Jesus said, “If anyone is ashamed of me *and my words* in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38. See also Luke 9:26). As we saw earlier, Jesus warned, “There is a judge for the one who rejects *me* and does not accept *my words*; that very word which *I spoke* will condemn him at the last day” (John 12:48-50).

Have you noticed the strong emphasis on Jesus’ words? We will be judged if we do not accept *Jesus’ words*; the words he spoke will condemn those who do not accept *his words*. *Jesus’ words* will never pass away. *Jesus’ words* are spirit and they are life. The person who hears *Jesus’ words* and puts them into practice is likened unto a man who built his foundation on rock.

Let’s review: The Lord Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth and he is the head of his church. All the words and deeds Jesus said and did while on earth were exactly what God his Father commanded him to say and do. All of *Jesus’ words* and deeds were God’s will. Only those who *do* the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven.

What about the Old Testament? Many claim there are rules, regulations, and commands in the Old Testament

that must be obeyed by followers of Christ. Let's investigate what Christians must obey.

What Christians must obey.

First, let's make clear that in the New Testament the term "law" almost always refers to the Old Testament law – that given by Moses. It was the only religious "law" known to the Jews of that time. The Jews were under the secular law of the Romans who ruled the Jews at the time of Christ.

Moses prophesied about the coming Messiah when he said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people" (Acts 3:22-23). Peter, quoting Moses, said that Moses was speaking about Jesus. Even Moses, centuries earlier, commanded the Jews to listen to Jesus when he came. Please remember that "listen" is akin to hearing attentively, and obeying what is heard.

Deuteronomy is a good source of information about the commands of God given through Moses – the law to the Jews. We learn who this law applied to when Moses addressed the children of Israel prior to giving the law. Look carefully at his language:

"Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you" (Deuteronomy 4:1-2).

"These are the commands, decrees and laws the Lord your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and

their children after them may fear the Lord your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life" (Deuteronomy 6:1-2).

Who was Moses talking to? It was Israel. Over and over he repeated that this was for "you" – Israel. Then he added children, grandchildren and future generations of Israel who would benefit from this personal relationship with God and who would enjoy his blessings by keeping his law.

Did God tell Israel to convert their Gentile neighbors and teach them the law he was giving them? No. He commanded Israel to kill the Gentiles in the land of Canaan, leaving none alive so that they would not contaminate the people of Israel with their idolatry. See Deuteronomy 7:16.

The commands were for Israel of that day and included future generations. God commanded:

"These commandments I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, and when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

These commands were personal to Israel and its progeny. Each generation was to teach these commands to its children. With the commands, God set before them both blessings and curses:

"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse – the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the Lord your God and turn from the way that I command you

today by following other gods, which you have not known" (Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

The law, the commands, the relationship with God, the blessings and the curses were all directed to the people of Israel and their succeeding generations. The aliens living in the land were given special attention by God, who commanded Israel to love the aliens because they themselves were aliens in Egypt. See Deuteronomy 10:19. *But the alien was not subject to the laws God gave Israel.* When God commanded the children of Israel not to eat anything they find already dead he said, "You may give it to an *alien* living in any of your towns, and he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. But you are a people holy to the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 14:21).

Moses' Law was given to Israel; they were to obey the law. They were not commanded to teach the Gentiles to obey the Law (except those Gentiles that converted to Judaism before the coming of Jesus). The law was intended for the nation of Israel.

The command of circumcision was given to Abraham by God as part of his covenant with Abraham and his descendants, before the law was given to Israel. Let's look at the text:

Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.

... Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant" (Genesis 17:9-12, 14).

Paul taught the Galatians: "Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you'" (Galatians 3:7-9).

Casually reading that passage could lead a person to believe that any male who is a descendant of Abraham should be circumcised, even to this day. Even Gentile believers are considered "children of Abraham" as Paul told the Galatians. It must follow then that even Gentile believers must be circumcised. Wrong!

Paul taught the Corinthians, "Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts" (1 Corinthians 7:18-19). Paul was harsh when he rebuked the Galatians:

"I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all . . . For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 5:2, 6).

Did Paul get off the track? God specifically told Abraham that both he and all his descendants were to be circumcised. We read too casually. The sign of circumcision was *a sign of the covenant* between God and Abraham and Abraham's *descendants*. It was *not* a sign of a covenant between God and those who would believe in Christ Jesus as their Lord – called the *children* of Abraham. A *descendant* is of a lineage – any living being that belongs to that lineage. *Children* is used of those who believe, as Abraham believed God.

Jesus said he did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; "I have not come to abolish them *but to fulfill them*" (Matthew 5:17). He also said, "I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter,

not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18). ("Accomplished" can be read "fulfilled.") Did you notice the caveat at the end of Matthew 5:18? Jesus said that nothing will disappear from the Law *until everything is accomplished*.

It can be argued that everything in the law was fulfilled just before Jesus' death on the cross when he uttered his last words, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). Animal sacrifice was no longer needed. Jesus fulfilled his redemptive purpose as God's sacrificial lamb to take away the sins of the world. That seemed to be Paul's understanding when he told the Romans, that "Christ is the *end of the law . . .*" (Romans 10:4). The footnote in the NIV Study Bible points out that the word "end" (*telos*) can mean either (1) "termination," "cessation," or (2) "goal," "culmination," or "fulfillment" and suggests it is better to understand it in its latter sense, as fulfillment of the law. The Amplified Bible states:

"For Christ is the *end of the Law* – the limit at which it ceases to be, for the Law leads up to Him Who is the fulfillment of its types, and in Him the purpose which it was designed to accomplish is fulfilled. – That is, the purpose of the Law is fulfilled in Him – as the means of righteousness (right relationship to God) for everyone who trusts in and adheres to and relies on him" (Romans 10:4, Amplified Bible).

The Old Testament Law was fulfilled and in Christ it ceases to be. It does not govern the life of the New Testament believer. Paul insisted, ". . . you are not under law . . ." (Romans 6:14).

As further corroboration that New Testament believers are not under the law, Paul said that Jesus abolished the law through his sacrifice on the cross:

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall

of hostility, *by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations*. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility (Ephesians 2: 14-16).

We now see the law as both fulfilled and abolished. While Jesus came to fulfill the law, when he fulfilled it he also abolished it so that all believers can be one in him, and not under the yoke of the Old Testament Law.

Some say that only the regulations were abolished. The scripture clearly says "the law with its *commandments and regulations*."

Sabbatarians often argue that the ten commandments were not included. They call the Ten Commandments the moral law (even though the 4th commandment has no moral context). Consider what the following scripture describes:

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone... (2 Corinthians 3:6-7).

We know the Ten Commands were given to Moses on tablets of stone. No other law was engraved by God on stone. The above scripture must refer to the Ten Commandments. Paul is speaking of it as the same Law that has passed away, but this time is referring to it as "the ministry that brought death." The Ten Commandments are part of the "Law" to which Paul repeatedly refers. But as we have seen, and will see repeatedly, for the follower of Christ the Law is gone – Jesus abolished the law in his flesh.

Paul emphasized the same to the Colossians: "God ... canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was

against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, *nailing it to the cross*" (Colossians 2:14). The Old Testament Law with its regulations has been fulfilled, has ceased to exist, has been abolished, and has been nailed to the cross.

Just because the Christian is not under Old Testament Law does not mean the Old Testament has no value to the New Testament believer. There are many reasons the Old Testament is worthy of study.

First and foremost, there are literally hundreds of prophecies about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. The most compelling reason for following Jesus is that he fulfilled the prophecies found in the Old Testament law and the prophets. Only one person, ever, has fulfilled the prophecies of the coming Jewish Messiah. Jesus fulfilled all of them, except those yet to be fulfilled.

Second, the Old Testament tells us a great deal about God. It recites his attributes, his power, authority, and tells us his names. We learn his awesome power, his creation of the universe, his concern for the details of his creation and how he honors those who reverence his name, who trust him, worship, love and obey him. Because God does not change, these truths are as applicable to us as when they were written. See Hebrews 13:8.

Third, the Old Testament shows how God deals with his people, how he will punish and discipline them when they desert him to follow other gods, how he will bless, protect, and fight for them when they remain true to him and trust him as their God. In Hebrews the author referred to the Old Testament when he described the unbelief and disobedience of the children of Israel after leaving Egypt; God prevented them from entering his rest – the promised land of Canaan. The author exhorted, "Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their *example* of disobedience" (Hebrews 4:11). Peter explained why we were told the Old Testament story of Sodom and Gomorrah: "He

condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an *example* of what is going to happen to the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6).

Fourth, the Old Testament gives personal testimonies about men to inspire us in our walk with the Lord. We learn of such people as Enoch who had an intimate relationship with God. One day he went to be with the Lord; he did not taste death. We are given the model of perseverance in Noah who built the ark as commanded by God over a period of 120 years. Though likely ridiculed by the evil generation in which he lived, he persevered and saved his family from the flood. Joseph remained true to God and became second in authority in Egypt; God used him to save his family and all Egypt from famine. Daniel revered and obeyed God all his life; he was delivered from the lion's den and used mightily by God in successive kingdoms. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego show us how to stand for God in the face of the highest earthly authority. God demonstrated his mighty power to deliver his faithful from a fiery furnace. Many other testimonies of both faithful and unfaithful men and women help teach us how to live in obedience to the teachings and commands of our Lord Jesus.

Even though there is much to learn from the Old Testament, its commands, rules and regulations are not to be obeyed. Paul dealt with the Galatians who had been induced by Judaizers to obey the Jewish customs and regulations, including circumcision. The Judaizers were Jews who claimed to be Christians but they demanded that Gentile Christians observe the Jewish law. Was this a mild difference in doctrine? Was it just a difference of opinion, neither right nor wrong? No.

Paul could hardly have condemned it more forcefully. He called it "a different gospel – which is *really no gospel at all*" (Galatians 1:6-7). He condemned those who brought that false gospel saying, "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, *let him be eternally condemned!*" (Galatians 1:9).

Jesus Christ brought a *new covenant*; the old covenant was done away with. "Christ is the mediator of a *new covenant*, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance ..." (Hebrews 9:15). Circumcision, the sign of the old covenant is no longer applicable; it is not a sign of the new covenant. Even worse, Paul taught that to go back under the law to require circumcision meant they were giving up their relationship with Jesus Christ – Christ would be of no value to them at all. They were demonstrating their belief that Jesus, his words, and his sacrifice were not sufficient – that more was required.

Long before Christ came, God caused Jeremiah to prophesy, "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will *not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers* when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord" (Hebrews 8:8-9, quoting Jeremiah 31:31-32).

At the last Passover observance with his disciples, Jesus took the cup (the cup of atonement after supper), saying, "*This cup is the new covenant in my blood*, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). The sign of the new covenant is not circumcision, as with the Old Testament Law, but rather what Christians call the Lord's Supper – partaking of bread and wine (or wine substitute) commemorating Christ's body and shed blood for the remission of sins, once for all (Hebrews 9:26, 28; 10:10, 1 Peter 3:18).

Not only was there a change of covenant, there was a change of priesthood. God declared of Jesus: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 7:17, quoting Psalm 110.4). Speaking first of the old law and then of the priesthood of Jesus, the author continued:

The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing

perfect), and a better hope is introduced by which we draw near to God. And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he (Jesus) became a priest with an oath when God said to him: "The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind: 'You are a priest forever.'" Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant (Hebrews 7:18-22).

Through Jesus God made everything new. Jesus – the new high priest in the order of Melchizedek – guaranteed a new covenant. Not only is it new, it is superior:

But the ministry (priesthood) Jesus has received is as *superior* to theirs (Levitical priesthood) as the covenant of which he is mediator is *superior* to the old one, and it is founded on better promises (Hebrews 8:6).

If the covenant changed and the priesthood changed, did God change anything else?

Yes, God changed the law! At Hebrews 7:12 we read: "For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a *change of the law*."

And there is a new law. At Galatians 6:2, Paul called the new law "the law of Christ." It is that body of commands and teachings which Jesus commanded be taught to every new disciple, "... teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).

Paul equated God's law with Christ's law:

To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from *God's law*, but am under *Christ's law*), so as to win those not having the law (1 Corinthians 9:21).

Paul instructed the Galatians: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the *law of Christ*" (Galatians

6:2). Paul said, "Let the *word of Christ* dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God" (Colossians 3:16). The continuing emphasis of the New Testament is on what *Jesus commanded*, on what *Jesus said!*

Jesus did not merely suggest that believers should obey him. He stated as fact that true believers – those who love him – *will obey* him. He said, "If you love *me*, you *will obey* what *I* command" (John 14:15). Again the emphasis is on obedience to what Jesus commanded. Note the parallel to 1 John 5:3: This is love for God: to obey his commands.

Peter added that believers were chosen to obey. He greeted his readers by calling them God's elect, "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for *obedience to Jesus Christ* and sprinkling by his blood" (1 Peter 1:2). Peter, the apostle to the Jews, did not say believers were to obey Moses' Law. No, they were chosen "for obedience to Jesus Christ."

Jesus emphasized that he had come from God, his Father. Jesus told us the source of his authority. "For the one whom God has sent speaks the *words of God*" (John 3:34). He said, "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but *him who sent me*" (John 5:30). Speaking of God his Father, Jesus said, "I am not here on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him, but I know him because I am from him and *he sent me*" (John 7:28-29).

Speaking of his purpose Jesus said, "For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38). At John 8:54-55, Jesus said, "My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him, I know him. If

I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but *I do know him and keep his word.*"

Jesus revealed the source of his teaching and the way to confirm that truth: "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own" (John 7:16-17) ... "He who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world" (John 8:28).

Jesus specifically stated that what he taught and commanded came from God:

"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do *nothing on my own* but *speak just what the Father has taught me*" (John 8:28).

"I did *not* speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. . . . So *whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say*" (John 12:49-50).

"Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are *not* just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work" (John 14:10).

"These words you hear are *not* my own; *they belong to the Father who sent me*" (John 14:24).

"The world must learn that I love the Father and that *I do exactly what my Father has commanded me*" (John 14:31).

Because God instructed Jesus what to do and say, and because Jesus obeyed perfectly, whatever Jesus said and did was God's will. Every teaching, every command, every miracle, all were done by Jesus because God the Father instructed him to do it and he did exactly as he was told. Everything Jesus did and said was the will of God.

Jesus told his followers that only those who *do* the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven. With equal

truth he could have said, "Only those who obey my teachings and commands will enter the kingdom of heaven. It is Jesus' command and the will of the Father that we make disciples, "teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).

How will you fare, pastor and Bible teacher, if you continue to refuse to do what Jesus commands? How will you fare elders, as you are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of your church?

Chapter 3

THE GREAT REBELLION EXPOSED

Jesus taught that only those who do the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven. Because salvation is conditioned upon doing God's will, the first question that should enter a person's mind is, "What is God's will?"

We know the answer to that question, that God's will is every word and deed of Jesus – all his teachings and commands. The great REBELLION in the church is the failure and refusal of church leaders, pastors, and teachers to obey Jesus' command in the great commission at Mathew 28:19-20:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

It is Jesus' direct command and God's will that the church make disciples by teaching converts to obey everything that Jesus commanded. Do the pastors and the teachers of the church do that? Not in my experience. Over and over I've inquired of pastors, "What do you do to teach the people to obey the teachings and commands of Jesus?" Over and over the pastor stands there like a deer caught in headlights. They do nothing! Yet Jesus warned that only those who do the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven and we know that the teachings and commands of Jesus are the will of God. The command to teach converts to obey the teachings and commands of Jesus is the will of God. Where does that leave the pastors and teachers who decide in their wisdom that they know better than the Lord Jesus, that they will teach and preach what they choose, not caring that the head of the church commanded exactly what they are to do? Are they wicked, unfaithful servants?

In the 2000 years since Christ gave his church this command, one would expect that, in obedience to his command to teach them "to obey everything I have commanded you," there would be thousands upon thousands of Bible studies written specifically on the teachings and commands of Jesus. Not so. An internet search on the teachings and commands of Jesus showed my Bible study – www.bereanpublishers.com | [Bible Studies | Teachings and Commands of Jesus](#) – as the number one entry. There were many other entries that mentioned words or phrases, but I found no other comprehensive Bible studies on this subject. I hasten to add that I did not check all 1.5 million internet search responses.

Note that the Lord Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples. He did not say we are to go into all the world and make converts. Yet that seems to be the goal of many church leaders today. Many churches emphasize getting a person to make a "decision for Christ," but that is not what Jesus commanded. The rebellion continues.

Wikipedia defines "disciple" in Christianity as:

A disciple is a follower and student of a mentor, teacher, or other wise figure. It can refer to in religion: [Disciple \(Christianity\)](#) the followers of Jesus Christ.

Why would it be important that we make disciples (or students)? Jesus taught, "It is enough for the student to be like his teacher and the servant like his master" (Matthew 10:25). At Luke 6:40, Jesus said, "A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher."

Who is the teacher Jesus is referring to? At Matthew 23:10, Jesus told us: "Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Christ." Jesus said that everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher – like

Jesus. Is this important? The Apostle John thought so. At 1 John 2:6, John said, "Whoever claims to live in him *must* walk as Jesus did." At Romans 8:29, Paul also made this a *salvation issue* when he said, "For those God foreknew he also *predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son*, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers." Yes, God predestined a condition for those he foreknew would be saved: They must be conformed to the likeness of his Son!

How are people to be fully trained to become like Jesus? Jesus told us what we're to do – we're to teach them to obey his teachings and commands. Jesus perfectly obeyed the commands he gave us. As we learn to obey his commands we become like Jesus – which is what we *must* do if we are to be conformed to his likeness and walk as Jesus did. As we obey Jesus' teachings and commands, we do the will of God – the very thing we *must* do if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven.

These are critical salvation issues. God predestined a condition for those who would be saved: they must be conformed to the likeness of his son, the Lord Jesus. What is a primary characteristic of Jesus? He was totally obedient to his Father, saying and doing only what his Father told him to say and do. Likewise, we can only be conformed to the likeness of Jesus and do the will of God – required for those who will enter the kingdom of heaven – if we learn and obey the teachings and commands of Jesus.

Considering only these two salvation issues, untold millions will not be in heaven because their pastors and teachers rebelled against the Lord Jesus, refusing to teach people to obey all that he commanded. As a result, because those millions were not taught to obey Jesus' teachings and commands they will fail to do the will of God and will not be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Ask yourself some questions. As Paul exhorted, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Does your church teach

new converts to obey all that Jesus commanded? Have you personally ever been taught to obey the teachings and commands of Jesus? Have you learned on your own the teachings and commands of Jesus and committed to obey them? Are you conformed to the likeness of Jesus? Are you doing the will of God by obeying the teachings and commands of Jesus?

What a shame that so few will have found the way of salvation through their church pastors, teachers, and leaders. Instead, those who have diligently sought the truth of God's word on their own and pledged to obey the Lord Jesus will be those who do the will of God and will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus' teachings and commands show us how to live in a different kingdom – the kingdom of which the Lord Jesus Christ is King. Once we become true followers of Jesus and commit to obey him, we are born again into the Lord's kingdom (John 14:15-17; see also Acts 5:32) and God becomes our Father (John 1:12-13; see also Matthew 23:9). At that point we become aliens in this world. Dar and I know that concept well. When we moved to New Zealand, we were aliens there. We stopped being aliens when we became citizens of New Zealand. Likewise, until people come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, they are citizens of this world. When they come to a saving faith in our Lord Jesus, they become citizens of his kingdom and aliens in the world. Peter expressed that concept at 1 Peter 2:11: "*Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*" Hebrews 11 recites people who lived by faith. At Hebrews 11:13 it states, "All these people were still living by faith when they died ... And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth."

Many people say that God intends that they should love and enjoy this world in which we live. Is that what God's word says? James told us, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world

becomes an enemy of God" (James 4:4). The Apostle John added, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

Then John explains why we should not love the world: "For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:16-17).

If you are a pastor or teacher, what do you preach and teach in your church? How seriously do you take the salvation of those entrusted to your care? Do the following 100-year-old thoughts by C. H. Spurgeon apply to you?

"...You might go into a Roman Catholic chapel now-a-days, and hear as good a sermon from a Popish priest as you hear in many cases from a Protestant minister, because he does not touch disputed points, or bring out the angular parts of our Protestant religion. Mark, too, in the great majority of our books what a dislike there is to sound doctrine! The writers seem to fancy that truth is of no more value than error; that as for the doctrines we preach, it cannot matter what they are; still holding that 'He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.'

"...Oh! if we had some of the old Scotch preachers! Those Scotch preachers made kings tremble; they were no men's servants; they were very lords, wherever they went, because each of them said, "God has given me a message; my brow is like adamant against men; I will speak what God bids me." Like Micah, they said, "As the Lord my God liveth, whatsoever my God saith unto me, that will I speak."

Church leaders run to Bill Hybel's Willow Creek Church or Rick Warren's Saddleback Community Church to learn the latest marketing techniques to create a mega-church, but they ignore the specific will of God as to what they are to do to build his church.

We need not argue about whether many or most in Christendom are rebelling against their Master by refusing to "teach them to obey all that I commanded you." If you are a church pastor, teacher, or leader, just answer this question: Are you making disciples by teaching them to obey all that Jesus commanded? If not, why not?

You may think I'm being hard on pastors, teachers, and church leaders. I'm not. I'm only reciting what the Lord Jesus taught and commanded. Don't you know these things? If you say, "I know them!" Then why don't you do them? Don't you remember Jesus asking, "'Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46).

Jesus told a parable of the faithful and wise servant and the wicked servant. Note that both were servants of the master:

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:45-51).

In this parable, the wicked servant is in charge of the other servants, just as is the wise and faithful servant. The faithful servant continues to give the other servants their food at the proper time. The master rewards him.

But the wicked servant tired of serving as the master commanded. Instead, he began to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. Jesus said that when the master returns he will cut that servant to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. The punishment recited here is worse than that found in any other teaching or parable of Jesus. It adds "he will cut that servant to pieces."

Does the wicked servant represent those unfaithful pastors, teachers, and church leaders in rebellion against the Lord Jesus and his words? Does the wise servant represent those pastors, teachers, and leaders who faithfully fed the other servants their food – the words, teachings, and commands of their Lord Jesus?

As a pastor, church leader, or elder, this section may not be as meaningful to you as it should because you may be so indoctrinated by Churchianity that you don't realize the eternal gravity of your rebellion. False doctrines have sprung up from ignorance of Jesus' teachings and commands that claim Christians are not subject to any law. Will pastors, teachers, and church leaders be condemned for their rebellion? We'll look at that next.

Chapter 4

WILL CHURCH LEADERS BE CONDEMNED?

Pastors, teachers, and elders are in a difficult spot. Many have been raised in a Christian culture that didn't include teaching on the need to obey Jesus as one's Lord. Even the seminaries attended by those now in the pastorate likely didn't teach the Lordship of Jesus and what that means in one's life – to be a servant who faithfully obeys each and every command and teaching of Jesus. Some pastors may never have learned that those who do not obey are unfaithful servants.

Though it certainly doesn't sound like it from the words I've used, I have a special love for pastors. Many have been my friends even when we disagreed on points of doctrine. Some pastors are hopelessly overworked with less time for prayer and study of the word than the laypeople in their church.

Sadly, that is not a sufficient excuse for them. Pastors are usually educated people who have attended seminaries where they have studied scripture in the original languages. Instead of an excuse, it becomes inexcusable to have the ability to know the truth through one's education and profession, and yet to ignore it or to avoid it for personal or professional reasons. Not surprisingly, there are many who argue loud and long against the Lordship of Jesus. Satan himself must hate the Lordship of Jesus. How tragic that some church leaders capitulate to such people instead of standing up for their Master and Lord.

Using only Scripture, you can come to your own conclusion of the eternal destiny of many church leaders. First, let's recognize that pastors and teachers will be judged more strictly (James 3:1). That's appropriate as those to whom they preach and teach believe their pastor studies God's word more intently and thoroughly than they are able to

and therefore give credence to what he says. Further, many pastors display their knowledge of the original Greek and Hebrew to purportedly give a deeper and more accurate understanding of the Scripture.

I've noted in the last fifteen years, more use of the title Lord, as applied to Jesus, but I've not seen any increase in the explanation of what that means in the life of a believer nor of the need to receive Jesus as one's Lord in order to gain salvation.

Jesus said that if we do not believe he is who he claims to be, we will die in our sins (John 8:24). Who did Jesus say he was? Jesus said, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am" (John 13:13).

The title "Lord" when applied to Jesus refers to him as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16), who has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). The only appropriate response to the Lord Jesus is to obey him. It is an oxymoron to claim Jesus as Lord and not obey him. The Lord Jesus has the right to expect and demand obedience from those who would be his followers, and especially from those who claim to preach and teach in his name.

Did Jesus expect obedience? Indeed he did! At Luke 6:46, Jesus asked, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" Even when Jesus was in their presence, some must have chosen to call Jesus Lord rather than to receive him as Lord of their lives.

Is obedience to Jesus as one's Lord a salvation issue? Indeed it is! We must look again at Matthew 7:21 where Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Pastors can mouth the words, "Lord, Lord," but they will not enter heaven unless they *do* the will of Jesus' Father who is in heaven.

What is God's will for New Testament believers? Jesus said that everything he did and said while on earth was what his Father told him to do and say (John 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10, 14:24, 14:31). Thus everything Jesus said and did was the will of God. Is it any wonder he is the source of salvation for all who obey him? (See Hebrews 5:9.)

I want to again call your attention to the one command of the Lord Jesus that seems to be totally ignored in present Churchianity. It is the command Jesus gave to his followers who were to build his church. At Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus said, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*"

Jesus gave us hundreds of teachings and commands – there are 382 separate discussions of them in my Bible study on the teachings and commands of Jesus. Each of them was given to Jesus by his Father. Each teaching and command is God's will. According to Matthew 7:21, none of us will enter the kingdom of heaven unless we *do* the will of God.

Everyone who attends a Christian church should be hearing the exhortation to obey the teachings and commands of Jesus, with each command reviewed and explained. Is this done? If you are a pastor or teacher, have you ever done this? Is this the subject matter of virtually all your sermons, as commanded by Jesus? Are you constantly aware that those in your church who do not know and do not obey Jesus' commands will never enter the kingdom of heaven?

If you are a layman, have you been taught Jesus' teachings and commands? Do you have a working knowledge of Jesus' commands so that you can take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ? (See 2 Corinthians 10:5.) If you have not been taught this in your church, you must study and secure this knowledge for yourself. Study the Gospels. Each teaching and command of Jesus

teaches you how to live as part of Jesus' kingdom so that you can be prepared to live in the kingdom of heaven. This is the good news of the Gospel – that God, through Jesus, revealed to us his will so that we can be reconciled to God and live with him in heaven through all eternity. See Colossians 1:21-23.

What will become of those who don't know and don't obey? Paul told us at 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9: "He [God] will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power..." The stakes are very high with eternal consequences.

What about those who are our pastors and teachers and who fail to (or refuse to) teach their congregants to obey everything Jesus commanded? At law, a reckless disregard is equivalent to a deliberate act. Thus, Hebrews 10:26 should bring terror to the hearts of those who deliberately refuse (or recklessly disregard the command) to obey Jesus' command to teach them to obey all that he commanded: "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God." It is sin to fail or refuse to make disciples by "teaching them to obey all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).

Many pastors will immediately object to all I've said, saying, "I'm not an enemy of God!"

Your remonstrations are of little interest. What should concern you is what God thinks of you, not what you think of yourself. Matthew 7:22-23 contains terrifying language: "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Could Jesus have been referring to pastors and church leaders here? These were men who appeared to have a special anointing; they prophesied, drove out demons and even performed many miracles. Was the Lord Jesus pleased with them? No, he said he never knew them and called them evildoers (antinomians).

Is there any pastor or teacher who can claim ignorance of Jesus' command? Are they not in deliberate sin by their refusal to teach those entrusted to them to obey all that Jesus commanded his disciples? Are not pastors who refuse to obey that command and continue to fail to do so deliberately keeping on sinning, as said in Hebrews 10:26?

Are not many pastors today like the Pharisees and teachers of the law of Jesus' day? Jesus warned them, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are." The Pharisees were zealous for the law – Moses Law. Yet Jesus called them sons of hell and said their followers would become twice as much a son of hell as they were.

Is that an unfair criticism of present-day pastors? What of those who teach false doctrines and fail to obey the command of Jesus as to what they are to teach?

Roger Oakland recently wrote "My Trip to the Rethink Conference," based on his observations after attending *Rethink: new perspectives from global influences* on January 17-19, 2008, hosted by Erwin Mc Manus and Robert Schuller. Find the full article on his website at www.understandthetimes.org. Roger wrote that speakers insisted that Christianity must be re-thought and re-invented if the name of Jesus Christ is going to survive here on planet earth now that we are in the twenty-first century. Roger said Robert Schuller gave a brief overview of his accomplishments. Schuller explained how pleased he was to be able to look back at the tremendous leaders he had mentored over the years, which include Willow Creek's

seeker-friendly pioneer pastor Bill Hybels, Bishop Charles Blake of the six million member church of God in Christ, and Rick Warren who has pioneered the purpose driven church and the purpose driven life.

As if he was looking forward over the centuries Jesus asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). As you consider the *Rethink* Conference and consider what is presented in the coming chapters, perhaps you will also wonder if a saving faith is not already scarce on the earth.

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:16-17). Aren't many pastors trying to be greater than their master? If pastors are to be messengers to proclaim the gospel, have they decided that they need to improve the message (the gospel) because it doesn't fit their idea of a new paradigm?

Though Jesus said "Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:15), we seem to have many church leaders who proudly proclaim a new gospel – another gospel, apparently believing that they know better than the Lord Jesus and that they need to improve upon his teaching, even to the point of "re-thinking" and "reinventing" it.

We'll look next at antinomianism in the church.

Chapter 5

REBELLION AGAINST THE LAW OF CHRIST

After returning from New Zealand, Dar and I began to attend a mega-church in Scottsdale, Arizona. We found a huge theological change had taken place in the six years we were in New Zealand. Before we left for New Zealand, I knew the senior pastor subscribed to the false doctrine of unconditional eternal security, but he seldom verbalized it. Upon our return, however, one Sunday the senior pastor talked about Christian adulterers and Christian homosexuals, assuring the congregation that the salvation of these people was not affected by their actions. Antinomianism had taken over the church and their doctrines.

As we will see, antinomianism is widespread and has spawned its own children – more false doctrines that will draw more millions away from heaven and into hell. We'll look later at a couple of the most popular false doctrines.

What is antinomianism? It comes from two Greek words, "*anti*" and "*nomos*." *Anti* means opposed to. *Nomos* means a law, rule, standard, a rule of life or moral conduct. Combining those gives us the meaning: lawlessness; without, opposed to or against laws, standards, or rules of moral conduct.

The teachings and commands of Jesus are about standards and rules of moral conduct. Paul called Jesus' teachings and commands "Christ's law." (See 1 Corinthians 9:21 and Galatians 6:2.) Many of Jesus' commands and teachings are salvation issues, i.e., a person must do, or not do, what the commands say if he is to gain salvation. Of course such commands are impossible to reconcile for antinomians. They argue that Jesus' commands do not

apply to this day and age, that they were only for the Jews, or that we are now under grace, not law.

The rise of antinomianism helps explain why many church leaders, pastors, and teachers simply ignore the teachings and commands of Jesus. As far as their beliefs are concerned, they are not subject to any law or rule of moral conduct. Therefore, why would they bother to teach new believers to obey the teachings and commands of Jesus? Instead, they emphasize to new converts that they are saved by grace and that their personal conduct will not influence their salvation.

Many years ago I was talking about this subject to a former pastor who was teaching at the Graduate School of Theology in Pasadena, California. He asked me, "Surely you don't try to obey the teachings and commands of Jesus?" I responded, "Of course I do!" He said, "Those aren't for Gentiles. Those are for the Jews!" I replied, "Please read the Great Commission. It says to make disciples of all nations. It says nothing of Jews. And it says to teach those people to obey all that Jesus commanded." He didn't respond.

The word antinomian is used at various places in Scripture. It is usually translated using words like "iniquity," "wicked," "unrighteousness" or "transgressor" in the King James Version. At Matthew 7:23 (NIV), Jesus told them, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" It could properly be translated as, "Away from me, you antinomians (or lawless ones)!"

That passage is especially terrifying because the people arguing with Jesus at the judgment say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" These people likely thought they were super-Christians, prophesying, driving out demons and performing miracles. Doubtless they were convinced they were saved and heaven-bound. They were not! They were condemned. Why? Jesus had just told them why at Matthew 7:21: "Not everyone who says to

me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." Over and over I have emphasized the point that everything Jesus taught and commanded is *the will of God*. Doubtless those "super-Christians" who prophesied, drove out demons and performed miracles also claimed they were not under any law, that they were saved by grace. Likely they also taught this popular heresy to others in their charge, perpetuating antinomianism in their followers.

In his book, *Paths to Power*, A.W. Tozer defined antinomianism this way. "Fundamental Christianity in our times is deeply influenced by that ancient enemy of righteousness, Antinomianism. The creed of the Antinomian is easily stated: We are saved by faith alone; works have no place in salvation; conduct is works, and is therefore of no importance. What we do cannot matter as long as we believe rightly. The divorce between creed and conduct is absolute and final. The question of sin is settled by the Cross; conduct is outside the circle of faith and cannot come between the believer and God. Such in brief, is the teaching of the Antinomian.

"And so fully has it permeated the Fundamental element in modern Christianity that it is accepted by the religious masses as the very truth of God. Antinomianism is the doctrine of grace carried by uncorrected logic to the point of absurdity. It takes the teaching of justification by faith and twists it into deformity."

Tozer correctly defines Antinomianism as concerning itself only with what one believes, not with one's actions. When the Bible speaks of the judgment of God, it is never based on what one believes. At Revelation 20:12-13, John told what he saw at the great white throne judgment: "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. *The dead were judged according to what they had done* as recorded in the books. 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.*"

Speaking of the last days, Jesus said, "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done" (Matthew 16:27). Likewise, Jesus said, "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone *according to what he has done*" (Revelation 22:12).

Paul spoke of the same at Romans 2:5-6: "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. God will give to each person *according to what he has done.*" At Romans 14:12, Paul wrote, "So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God." Paul wrote the Corinthians, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, *according to what he has done*, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

So far, this certainly sounds the very opposite of antinomianism, doesn't it? We are not judged according to what we believe, but according to what we have done.

Many other teachings in Scripture agree. At John 15:1-2, Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." According to this verse, Antinomians will be cut off from the Lord by the Father because they bear no fruit.

Jesus told the parable of the sheep and the goats at Matthew 25:31-46. Once again, the setting is the judgment. Jesus described it this way: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one

from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left."

Then Jesus tells how the people will be judged as he says: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'"

The righteous (those on his right) ask him, "' Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'"

Jesus then told the basis for the judgment: "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you *did* for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

The opposite was true for those on his left – the goats. "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" Jesus goes on to recite that they did nothing for him, or for one of the least of these, his brothers. Jesus concludes, "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Who do you suppose is the one who did nothing? Naturally it would be the Antinomian who relies only on what he believes; he thinks his conduct means nothing. He is opposed to works, often claiming those with works (and obedience) are trying to earn salvation. Again the opposite is true. What we claim we believe is not important at the judgment. We will be judged according to what we have done.

Jesus related conduct to relationships with him. At Matthew 12:50 Jesus said, "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother." At John 15:14, Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do what I command." Our conduct shows what we truly believe. Do we have any chance of salvation if we are not a friend or brother or sister or mother of the Lord Jesus? Again Jesus established the requirements of doing the will of God and doing what he commanded.

Antinomians likely consider themselves followers of Paul. Yet Paul taught that conduct is very important. At Galatians 5:19-21, Paul warned: "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." Here Paul is clearly saying that conduct of the wrong kind will deny salvation to the person who practices them.

Likewise, at 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul warned: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Did you notice that almost everything Paul lists is conduct? How can the Antinomian claim that conduct does not matter? Paul repeatedly says that wicked conduct will prevent a person from having an inheritance in the kingdom of God. See also Colossians 3:5-8, and 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

At Revelation 21:8, John quotes Jesus: "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." Jesus condemns those with wicked conduct and includes the conduct of not

believing. Scripture says conduct does matter and that wicked conduct will cause people to be condemned.

Sin always seems to evolve into greater sin. Antinomianism has evolved into a very popular false theology in the western world. Let's look at this evil scheme next.

Chapter 6

A CHILD OF ANTINOMIANISM:

Unconditional Eternal Security

Paul was given a glimpse of the future when he wrote, “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4: 3-4).

What could be more appealing than being taught that you could gain eternal life in heaven by simply believing something to be true, but without it affecting your personal conduct? You could live as you wished, but simply believe something to be true and you'd be on your way to heaven. So it is with antinomianism.

Satan is the likely author of an “improved” version of antinomianism that is known as Once-Saved, Always Saved, or Unconditional Eternal Security. This new version of antinomianism takes away any uncertainty of salvation that might exist for those who no longer appear to believe. It assures its adherents that if they once believed, their salvation is forever assured.

Once again, adherents to this false doctrine are usually followers of Paul. Naturally they also emphasize that their salvation is by grace alone and that any form of works is an attempt to earn salvation. They often consider obedience to be a form of works.

To illustrate their beliefs accurately, I will quote from Dr. Charles Stanley, one of the best known proponents of Unconditional Eternal Security, who has written the book,

*Eternal Security Can You Be Sure?*¹ Dr. Stanley defines unconditional eternal security as “eternal security is that work of God in which He guarantees that the gift of salvation once received is possessed forever and cannot be lost.”²

In the prior section on Antinomianism, we read that Paul and Jesus listed various sins and said that those who do these sins will not inherit the kingdom of God and will be thrown in the lake of burning sulphur. By contrast, Dr. Stanley says:

“It is not lying, cheating, stealing, raping, murdering, or being unfaithful that sends people to hell.”³

Strange, isn't it, that the Scriptures we looked at said the exact opposite. The writer to the Hebrews said that God will judge the adulterer. None of those Scriptures made any exceptions for those who claim to have once received the gift of salvation. Nor does Paul's warning to the Ephesians:

But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient (Ephesians 5:3-6).

¹ Stanley, Charles, *Eternal Security Can You Be Sure?* (Nashville, TN: Oliver Nelson, 1990),

² Stanley, Charles, “Eternal Security What Do We Have To Lose?”, Tape #6, MI090.

³ *Ibid*, p. 70.

Notice Paul's warning at the end. Let no one deceive you with empty words. Paul says it is because of such sins – immoral, impure, or greedy – that God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Dr. Stanley, and the false doctrine of unconditional eternal security, is deceiving with empty words, just as Paul warned his readers. Dr. Stanley's assurances are the opposite of the repeated warnings of Scripture.

If the eternal security proponents are right, why did Jesus give the following warning?

If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:29-30).

Jesus says that wicked conduct – sin – caused by your eye or your hand will indeed cause your whole body to be thrown into hell. Jesus says it is better to cut off or gouge out the offending part of the body than to be thrown into hell.

However, Dr. Stanley writes:

But if a man or woman who has been rescued once from a state of unforgiveness need not worry. For once 100 percent of a man's or woman's sins have been forgiven, the potential for being unforgiven has been done away with. The risk factor is zero. There are no more fires from which the believer needs to be saved.⁴ [Emphasis added.]

As you see from the prior quotation, those who subscribe to the eternal security doctrine will assure you that nothing

⁴ Ibid, pages 79-80.

you do after once having had faith will affect your salvation if you are certain that you once were rescued from a state of unforgiveness. According to Dr. Stanley, there are no sins that can affect your salvation, notwithstanding what Scripture says, no matter that Paul warned both the Corinthians and the Galatians about sins that would prevent those practicing them from inheriting the kingdom of God, and no matter that Jesus told the Apostle John about sins that would cause people to be condemned to hell. According to Dr. Stanley, none of those scriptures can pertain to those who hold to the doctrine of eternal security if they once trusted in Jesus for forgiveness of sins and received the gift of salvation.

Perhaps Dr. Stanley's fundamental mistake is that he claims that if a person once repents and his sins are forgiven, that forgiveness includes all sins committed in the future. Peter said the opposite: "... he has been cleansed from his *past* sins" (2 Peter 1:9).

Dr. Stanley goes even further. He wrote:

"The Bible clearly teaches that God's love for His People is of such magnitude that even those who walk away from the faith have not the slightest chance of slipping from His hand."⁵ On other occasions he taught, "Even if a believer for all practical purposes becomes an unbeliever, his salvation is not in jeopardy"⁶ and ". . . believers who lose or abandon their faith will retain their salvation"⁷ [Emphasis added.]

Did you notice how the above paragraph begins? Dr. Stanley says, "The Bible clearly teaches . . ." That kind of statement can only be accepted by those who do not know or study their Bible. That statement is for those ignorant of the scriptures, who rely on teachers, such as Dr. Stanley,

⁵ Ibid, page 74.

⁶ Ibid, page 93.

⁷ Ibid, page 94.

for their spiritual nourishment. How sad it is that they are betrayed by those like Dr. Stanley who are in rebellion against God and the Lord Jesus and his teachings and commands.

What should people conclude who accept the doctrine of unconditional eternal security? Is adultery a problem? Of course not. Any other sin? How could it be? According to Dr. Stanley, if a person once received the gift of salvation and once was forgiven 100% of his/her sins, then all future sins have also been forgiven and he/she cannot lose their salvation.

Is it any wonder why divorce is so rampant in churches that teach the unconditional eternal security doctrine? There is no reason whatsoever to accept the teachings of Jesus on the subject of divorce because the eternal security proponents assure them that no sins will send people to hell if they once trusted in Jesus for forgiveness of sins. It doesn't matter if they live in continuing adultery. According to the eternal security proponents, the warnings about not inheriting the kingdom of God and being condemned to hell have nothing to do with the sins they commit.⁸

Dr. Stanley also claims:

“. . . God does not require a constant attitude of faith in order to be saved – only an act of faith.”⁹ He says, “It [saving faith] is a singular moment in time wherein we take what God has offered.”¹⁰ He wrote: “Faithful or not, every person who has at any time had saving faith is a permanent part of the body of Christ.”¹¹

⁸ For a more complete discussion refuting the doctrine of unconditional eternal security, see the website www.bereanpublishers.co.nz, False doctrines, “Is the Believer Eternally Secure?”

⁹ Supra 6, p. 80

¹⁰ Ibid, page 81.

¹¹ Ibid, page 94.

Scripture, however, has quite a different message, emphasizing that it is continued faith and faithfulness that counts. The idea of a one-time commitment that saves forever is false. Consider Paul's warning to the Corinthians:

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain (1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

This scripture is especially important. Paul admits the Corinthians received the gospel, took their stand on it, and are saved if they hold firmly to it. What if they don't hold firmly to it? Paul warns they will have believed in vain.

Likewise, Paul's warning to the Colossians:

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation — if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant (Colossians 1:21-23. See also James 1:12).

The above is Paul's summary of the Gospel, of which he became a servant. All the good news of the Gospel is there, provided – the if – you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel. God requires much from those he delivers from the kingdom of darkness into his glorious light. Their reward will be an inheritance in the kingdom of God instead of being cast into the fiery lake of burning sulphur.

Jesus emphasized the need to persevere: "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22) and "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24:12-13).

Dr. Stanley also claims, "... we are presented with a Christian who at no point in his entire life bore any eternal fruit. And yet his salvation is never jeopardized"¹² and "... there are Christians who show no evidence of their Christianity as well."¹³

Jesus refuted such claims at John 15:1-6:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful....

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. (John 15:1-2, 5-6. See also Luke 13:6-7.)

Where was the branch that was cut off? It was in the vine – in Jesus! This refers to people who started in Christ but did not produce fruit. Branches that bear no fruit are cut off from Christ by God the Father. What is done with branches that do not bear fruit? They are thrown away and wither, then picked up and thrown into the fire and burned.

This was not Jesus' only teaching on the subject of the necessity of producing good fruit. At Matthew 7:17-19,

¹² Ibid, page 121.

¹³ Ibid, page 71.

Jesus said, "Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Once again the requirement is to produce good fruit or be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Jesus told another parable illustrating the same point: "A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?'

'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down'" (Luke 13:6-9).

Once again the issue is producing fruit. In this case, there simply wasn't any fruit so God told Jesus to cut down the tree. Jesus interceded, asking for more time, but agreed that if the tree did not produce fruit in the next year, it should be cut down.

Jesus taught a parallel teaching in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30). Each servant was given a different number of talents to invest before the master left on a journey. Most did well, doubling the amounts entrusted to them.

One servant did not. He was given a talent but buried his talent in the ground, offering it back to his master when he returned. In the parable of the vine and the branches, the branch (the believer) was given the life-giving sap from the vine but did not use it to produce fruit. In both parables, the servant accomplished nothing with what was given him.

The end is the same for each. Jesus said of the servant who wasted his talent: "Throw that *worthless servant*

outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

These parables show punishment and damnation for not producing fruit, not using that given to us by God to produce gain for the Kingdom. Is this what Paul referred to when he said, "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do?" (Ephesians 2:10). If so, it would be a case of disobedience for refusing (or failing) to do those good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

A further corroboration is found in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-8, Mark 4:3-8, and Luke 8:5-8). The seed was sown on four kinds of soil. Only one of the soils produced a crop. Of that soil, Jesus explained, "The one who received the seed that fell 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" (Matthew 13:23). The true believer perseveres and produces fruit, or a crop, according to what God has given him to do.

What about the other three soils? Two of those are material to this study. The first is not. Of it Jesus said that the seed sown on the path is like a person who hears the message but does not understand it; the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart (Matthew 13:19). The second, seed sown on rocky soil, represents a person who hears the word and receives it with joy. He becomes a new believer. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away (Matthew 13:20-21). He didn't persevere. The third is one where the seed was sown among thorns. He also hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful (Matthew 13:22).

Of the four soils that received the seed, only one persevered and produced fruit. The second and third,

though receiving the seed — hearing and accepting the word — failed to persevere.

From the foregoing scriptures we see that bearing fruit for the kingdom is important. We can lose our salvation if we failed or refused to do those good works which God prepared in advance for us to do. That is a form of rebellion against God.

Dr. Stanley says, "We are presented with a Christian who at no point in his entire life bore any eternal fruit. And yet his salvation is never jeopardized." Is that what you just read in the preceding scriptures? In ALL the scriptures mentioned above, because there was no fruit (or the fruit was bad, or the talent was buried), the lack of fruit resulted in being cut off or the tree was cut down or the branch was cut off the vine and thrown into the fire and burned, or the lazy servant was condemned. All these examples show condemnation for those who do not produce fruit.

Eternal security proponents say there is no need to worry if your sins were once forgiven through trust in Christ. But Scripture also says:

"[Jesus] became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

Is Jesus also the source of salvation for those who do not obey him? That would seem an opposite conclusion from this verse, wouldn't it? It is worth noting that the term "obey" in Hebrews 5:9 (above) is in the continuous sense — for all those who continue to obey him.

Does the person who continues to disobey have salvation? Consider what the Apostle John taught:

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:3-4).

Once again, the verb "obey" is in the continuous sense, i.e., "if we [continue to] obey his commands."

Let's review. It was Jesus who said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Jesus said that everything he did and everything he said was just what the Father told him to do and say (John 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10, 14:24, 14:31). Thus, everything Jesus said and did was the will of God. Is it any wonder he is the source of salvation for all who obey him? (Hebrews 5:9). Or that he ended his great commission with the command to teach new disciples to obey all that he commanded them? (Matthew 28:20).

The scriptures show that people who think they can live in sin and yet have salvation are deceived. The Apostle John spoke to that issue as well:

No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him ... He who does what is sinful is of the devil ... No one who is born of God will continue to sin ... (1 John 3:6, 8, 9).

As we can see from numerous scriptures, there is an essential need for obedience to the teachings and commands of Jesus that accompanies biblical faith and salvation. What happens to those who deliberately continue in sin, confident that their conduct will not affect their salvation? At Hebrews 10:26-27 we read:

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

The proponents of eternal security who preach that once all sins were forgiven all future sins are also forgiven and that

once the gift of salvation is received it can never be lost are teaching a false gospel which is contrary to Scripture.

Peter told believers of certain attributes they should make every effort to add to their faith. Then he cautioned:

But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his *past* sins (2 Peter 1:9).

Past sins? Yes, when we come to a saving faith and repent of our sins, it is our past sins that are forgiven 100% at the moment of our conversion. In his letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus commanded five of the seven churches to repent. Why would they need to repent if all future sins were forgiven? They wouldn't, of course. It is a false gospel that teaches that future sins are forgiven when in fact it is one's past sins that are forgiven.

Is it any wonder that Scripture teaches "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12) and "examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Christians are to have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

God is loving, gracious and good. He is also holy and just. We are to fear him for his wrath and righteous judgment of those who refuse to obey him – those who continue in rebellion against him.

We noted in the first chapter that the beginning rebellion is against Jesus as Lord. In Dr. Stanley's writing, the title "Lord" is glaringly absent. He speaks of Jesus as Savior, but not Lord. The unconditional eternal security advocate seems to have great difficulty acknowledging Jesus as Lord because to do so assumes with it the responsibility of obeying him. Receiving Jesus as Lord, and obeying his teachings and commands, destroys both the false doctrine of unconditional eternal security and antinomianism.

Obedience to Jesus as one's Lord is totally incompatible with these false doctrines.

Peter also dealt a blow to the doctrine of unconditional eternal security. At 2 Peter 2:20-22, he wrote:

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."

Peter was referring to people who had known our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But these people again became entangled in the corruption of the world and were overcome by it. Peter says these people are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. What was their fate at the beginning? They would be condemned to hell for not having a saving faith. How could they be worse off at the end? Jesus told us: "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows" (Luke 12:47-48). Once we know the truth and go back into the world, our punishment will be more severe.

Once again, we are warned by Peter that there is no such thing as unconditional eternal security.

At 2 Peter 3:17, he concludes his letter with one more warning:

"Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may

not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position.”¹⁴

Peter recognizes that our position in Christ is secure. But he says we can fall from our secure position which agrees with the previous scriptures. He warns us to be on guard. He knows that we can be carried away by the error of lawless men. It is interesting that Peter used the term “lawless men” which means antinomeans. As you now know, those who advocate the doctrine of unconditional eternal security are antinomeans – lawless men.

The writer to the Hebrews wrote many passages about persevering in the faith. At Hebrews 6:4-6, he describes a believer who experienced everything God offers to the believer:

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

The crux of unconditional eternal security is that no one who once experienced forgiveness can ever be lost. This passage specifically contradicts this false doctrine. The persons described here had all that God offers. The writer tells what happens, and cannot happen, if such a person falls away. This Scripture says that a person who falls away cannot come back to faith. The sole other time is when Jesus taught that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven (Matthew 12:31). Such a person cannot be saved.

The author warns again at Hebrews 10:26-27:

¹⁴ 2 Peter 3:17.

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a *fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.*

At Hebrews 6:4-6 the author spoke of others. In this passage he includes himself. He says, "If we . . ." There can be no doubt that he is speaking to believers. We can safely assume he is also a believer. He speaks of a person who has *received* the knowledge of the truth, not just heard it or exposed to it. No, he refers to someone who actually received it — a believer.

Here, the author is reinforcing the need for a changed life for those who are believers — they must give up a life of sin and be holy. If they deliberately refuse and continue in sin, they face only judgment and raging fire.

The author makes it clear that this is not the discipline for "sons" he later describes in Hebrews 12. No, this is punishment — judgment and raging fire — that will consume *the enemies of God*. No believer is subject to that, nor is a believer an enemy of God.

Isn't this the exact opposite of what Dr. Stanley has claimed over and over? He claimed, "But if a man or woman who has been rescued once from a state of unforgiveness need not worry. For once 100 percent of a man's or woman's sins have been forgiven, the potential for being unforgiven has been done away with. The risk factor is zero. There are no more fires from which the believer needs to be saved."¹⁵

Really? Dr. Stanley's rescued person has no restraint on his conduct. He believes he can do anything (including sin) and have zero effect on his salvation. The writer to the Hebrews says that anyone — including the writer — who

¹⁵ Ibid, pages 79-80.

continues in deliberate sin has only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

The author continues to reinforce that teaching at the end of the chapter as he speaks of the righteous:

“But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.’

But we are not *of those who shrink back and are destroyed*, but of those who believe and are saved.”

He states the principle we know to be true. The righteous will live by faith. But what if the righteous no longer live by faith? The writer continues with God's response: “If he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.”

The author then contrasts those who shrink back with those who believe. *Those who shrink back are destroyed*; those who believe are saved.

The one who shrank back was not always an unbeliever but rather one God described as his “righteous one.” Sadly, even a righteous one who shrinks back will be destroyed. Again, this is totally contrary to the claims of the unconditional eternal security doctrine, once again proving that it is false!

Again notice the similarity in Jesus' teaching at Matthew 24: 45-51, where Jesus contrasts two servants, one who is faithful and perseveres, another who tires and falls away:

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing

so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

“But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

To begin with, both began serving the Lord. Both are servants with responsible positions in charge of others.

Jesus commends the first and assures him that he will be rewarded for his faithfulness. Not so with the second servant. It didn't matter that he had once been so faithful that he was promoted to a position of responsibility. It only mattered that when the master came back the servant was not fulfilling the duties assigned to him. Instead he was abusing those in his charge and engaging in a licentious lifestyle.

Note the severity of the punishment. It is more severe than any other punishment mentioned in the other parables told by Jesus. Is it because he was an overseer of others? He was “cut to pieces” and consigned to hell with the hypocrites.

Once again we see an example of a person who started well, but finished badly. He was condemned to hell with punishment more severe than that described in other parables.

Suppose the “food” he was to give to the servants was the teachings and commands of Jesus, just as Jesus commanded at Matthew 28:20. Consider all the church leaders of today who refuse to give the people in their

charge their food – the eternal life-giving teachings and commands of Jesus. Aren't these church leaders unfaithful servants who are in rebellion against the head of the church, the Lord Jesus?

Salvation is conditional! Unless a person has a saving faith they will not be saved. One condition of salvation (which includes many others) is that a person must have a saving faith. For a thorough treatment of a saving faith you may read my book *Saving Faith* in its entirety at www.bereanpublishers.com | Book: Saving Faith.

Consider other conditional statements. John 15:10: If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love; John 15:14: You are my friends if you do what I command; Hebrews 3:14: We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

In passages reviewed earlier, Paul also conditioned salvation upon perseverance: By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:1-2). And, "But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation — if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel" (Colossians 1:22-23).

There is much more to say on the subject of the false doctrine of unconditional eternal security than is mentioned here. See a more complete review of the many proofs against that false doctrine at www.bereanpublishers.com | False Doctrines | Is the Believer Eternally Secure?

Chapter 7

ANOTHER CHILD OF ANTINOMIANISM

FRAUD IN THE PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL

Followers of the false doctrines of antinomianism and unconditional eternal security change, misinterpret, or ignore the many scriptures that prove them wrong. As a result, their presentation of their false “gospel” is contaminated by fraud and deceit.

Fraud is defined as intentional misrepresentation (or reckless disregard of the truth) intended to cause a person to act to his injury in reliance upon the misrepresentation. I’m aware of the definition because of my training as an attorney.

I suspect that few of those guilty of fraud in the presentation of the gospel intentionally misrepresent the truth; likely almost all make their false representations with reckless disregard for the truth.

In Chapter 1, I stated that the initial *rebellion* – the denial that he must be the Lord of all who will be saved – has to do with the person of Jesus Christ. Similarly, the primary *fraud* perpetuated by church leaders has to do with how they present Jesus to their people.

The present emphasis in the Christian church seems to be on Jesus Christ as Savior. The invitations from the pulpit are usually, “Accept Jesus as your Savior and you will have eternal life!” There is a variation that states, “If you believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins you will have eternal life.” Are those statements biblically true?

Nowhere in Scripture does it say or suggest that believing in, accepting, or receiving Jesus as Savior can save us. It is clear from Scripture that Jesus must be our Savior if we are to have eternal life. The first announcement of his birth stated, "a Savior has been born to you" (Luke 2:11). The Christian culture has carelessly assumed that because Jesus must be our Savior then we need only to accept him as Savior.

Likewise, nowhere does Scripture say or suggest that we can have eternal life by believing in something Jesus did. Virtually all the scriptures that speak of salvation exhort us to believe in him – the person of Jesus (see John 2:11, 3:15,16,18, 6:40, 7:39, 8:30, Romans 4:24, 1 Peter 1:8).

If we're not to believe in, accept, or receive Jesus as Savior (or believe in something he did) in order for Jesus to be our Savior and to gain eternal life, then what are we to do? Let's review some scriptures we looked at previously that answer that question.

What did Jesus say? Jesus told his disciples, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord', and rightly so, for that is what I am" (John 13:13). Jesus said, "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins" (John 8:24). He described his authority as Lord when he said, "All power and authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18).

Scripture states we are to believe in and receive Jesus as our LORD! Perhaps the most familiar salvation scripture is Romans 10:9, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Likewise, Paul told the Philippian jailer, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household" (Acts 16:31). That was the message of the early church – the church that persevered through intense persecution! They received Jesus as Lord (Colossians 2:6). Paul exclaimed, "We do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord!" (2 Cor.

4:5). An especially convincing scripture is Paul's summary of his ministry to the Ephesians: "I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:21). He taught the same to the Thessalonians, "God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9) and to the Romans, "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23 – see also Romans 5:21).

Peter confirmed Paul's teaching. At Pentecost he preached, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Acts 2:21). He concluded his sermon, "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Later he taught, "In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord" (1 Peter 3:15).

What does it mean for Jesus to be our Lord? He must be our master, our King, our sovereign, the one who has total authority over our lives. As I explained it to my grandson, "He must be your boss."

If we listen to what is preached in many of our churches we would surely declare that the primary message of Scripture is that Jesus is our Savior. But is that the primary message of Scripture? Not at all. In the New Testament, Jesus is called Savior only fifteen (15) times. Nine (9) times God the Father is referred to as Savior. Jesus is referred to as Lord 618 times, forty times more often than as Savior. It is significant to me that two-thirds – eighteen – of the New Testament books don't mention the title Savior. Two of the four Gospels don't mention Savior, neither do Romans, Colossians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Galatians, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2nd and 3rd John, Jude, nor Revelation.

Is the distinction between Savior and Lord important? Is it important that we believe in Jesus as our Lord? Our answer determines whether or not we have eternal life. The proof is found in an unusual scripture. Paul taught:

“For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living” (Romans 14:9).

How can that be? Doesn't Scripture teach that Jesus died and rose again to atone for our sins, to redeem us, so that we may be justified before God, so that we will be reconciled to God and presented holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation? Of course it does. Can Romans 14:9 be reconciled with those redemptive purposes for which Jesus died and rose again? Yes, by recognizing that all those redemptive purposes are valid only for those for whom Jesus is Lord! The reason Jesus died and rose again was so he might be Lord of all, knowing that he would be Savior only of those for whom he is Lord.

Christianity is sometimes referred to as a relationship, not a religion. The distinction in relationships is important as we note the differences that would arise from receiving Jesus as Savior versus receiving him as Lord. If he is only our Savior, then the relationship would be between Savior and the one saved. When Jesus is our Lord, the relationship becomes Lord and servant.

Which relationship does the New Testament teach? We are taught repeatedly that the believer is a servant, or even a slave, of the Lord Jesus. Scripture teaches: “You are not your own; you were bought at a price” (1 Cor. 6:19). Isn't this how a slave is described – one who is not free, but owned by a master?

The New American Standard Version correctly defines our relationship to the Lord Jesus as bond-servants. The bond-servant was a special type of servant who after seven years – when he was to be set free – chose to remain with his master. The process of becoming a bond-servant is described at Exodus 21:5-6: “But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and

pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life." This might be a person who had voluntarily sold himself into slavery to repay a debt, but found his condition as a slave far better than his prior condition, so he chose to stay with his master as a bond-servant. The master often honored him with a gold earring as a symbol of his special status as a bond-servant.

The conditions of a bond-servant are: (1) It is voluntary, (2) confessed publicly, (3) out of love for his master, (4) slavery – giving up everything, and (5) for life. Those are the same requirements for those who would follow Jesus and receive him as their Lord.

The New Testament writers declared themselves to be bond-servants: Paul (Romans 1:1), James (James 1:1), Peter, (2 Peter 1:1), Jude (Jude 1:1) and John (Rev. 1:1). Scripture declares all true believers to be bond-servants: "THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated *it* by His angel to His bond-servant John, . . ." (Revelation 1:1, NAS).

Just as our relationship with Jesus is dramatically different when he is our Lord, so is our response to him as our Lord. If Jesus were only our Savior, then our response to him would be gratitude for saving us from God's wrath. When Jesus is our Lord and we are his bond-servants, our primary response to him is obedience out of love.

Let's review scriptures that confirm that obedience is our proper response to our Lord Jesus. 1 John 5:3 says that love for God is to obey his commands. Jesus said, "If you love *me*, you will obey what *I* command (John 14:15). The writer to the Hebrews related salvation to obedience: "He (Jesus) became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:9). Jesus expected obedience from his followers. He asked those who claimed to follow him as Lord but did not obey, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). *Jesus said there is no salvation without obedience:* "Not everyone who says

to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but *only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 7:21).

As his servants, obedience is the natural, expected response to our Lord Jesus. It is also evidence that Jesus is truly our Lord. It should come as no surprise that Jesus made obedience a part of his last instructions to his church. First he declared his Lordship: "All power and authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto me" (Matthew 28:18). Then he told his followers what he expected them to do in his absence. "Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). He told them two things they were to do to make disciples: "Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

If I were in a court of law prosecuting the church for fraud in its presentation of the Gospel, I believe the leaders of many churches would stand convicted. Does your church, and do you, present Jesus Christ as Lord? Does your church, and do you, make it clear that there is no salvation unless Jesus is Lord? Does your church, and do you, teach that one's obedience to Jesus' commands is evidence to God that Jesus is one's Lord? Finally, does your church, and do you, obey Jesus' final command to teach new converts to obey everything Jesus commanded?

Those who present salvation as merely accepting Jesus as Savior, almost invariably fail – or refuse – to teach that obedience to the teachings and commands of Jesus is necessary for salvation. Some adhere to this belief system because that is the prevalent view in this Christian culture. Naturally, the antinomians and the adherents to unconditional eternal security fail and refuse to teach obedience to Christ's Law because they believe they are not under law, but under grace, and that conduct is not important to salvation.

That double error leads to still another salvation-denying problem concerning the Holy Spirit.

It is correctly stated that all true believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches it is essential to have the Holy Spirit if we are to have salvation: "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ" (Romans 8:9). We know we must belong to Christ to be saved because Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). True believers have been bought with a price – they are the bond slaves of the Lord Jesus. They belong to him. See 1 Corinthians 6:20 and 7:23.

Many church leaders apparently believe that the Holy Spirit automatically indwells those who "accept Jesus as Savior". But is that what Scripture says?

Jesus told us how and under what conditions the Holy Spirit is given: "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth" (John 14:15-17). The condition is that we must commit to obey Jesus out of love. Then he will ask the Father who will give us the Holy Spirit. Scripture corroborates this teaching at Acts 5:32 where it describes Peter defending the disciples before the Sanhedrin. Speaking of the Holy Spirit Peter said, "... the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

Jesus explained the relationship that results from obedience to his commands:

"Whoever has my *commands* and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him" (John 14:21).

And again he said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my *teaching*. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who

does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me" (John 14:23-24).

It is those who love Jesus and obey his commands that are loved by God the Father and Jesus. Jesus and the Father will come and make their home with those who love and obey Jesus.

Those who are not taught to believe in and receive Jesus as their Lord, likely are not taught to obey him. Those who do not commit to obey Jesus will not receive the Holy Spirit. Those who do not receive the Holy Spirit do not belong to the Lord Jesus. Thus, the initial fraudulent representation of the Gospel – that Jesus need not be Lord – has led to three different reasons why such people will be denied salvation.

Consider again Jesus' chilling warning: "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers! [lawless ones!]" (Matthew 7:22-23). Who are these people that Jesus never knew? They are those who had not received him as Lord, nor did they obey him, nor did they receive the Holy Spirit. But didn't they prophesy in his name, drive out demons and perform many miracles in his name? Yes, indeed. That is part of the great deception that even now is in the church. Didn't Jesus warn, "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible" (Matthew 24:24). They will deceive by doing these things in Jesus' name.

A church that lacks teaching on the need to obey and is not empowered by the Holy Spirit has been deceived by a fraudulent representation of the Gospel. It is part of a Christian culture that I call Churchianity. It lacks power and discernment. It is lukewarm; its members are hardly distinguishable from the rest of the world, and it likely

compromises fundamental beliefs. Ultimately it might question the infallibility of Scripture, the deity of Jesus, and the truth of the resurrection. Perhaps it openly allows sin in the church and pulpit by accepting adultery, fornication, homosexuals and ordaining homosexual pastors. Such churches might also chase after various claimed manifestations of the Spirit but lack the discernment to know whether such manifestations are of the Holy Spirit.

How closely does that describe some of our churches today? I fear many of our churches are part of Churchianity. They are not firmly anchored on the unchanging, immovable rock – the Lord Jesus and his words.

In a court of law, fraud is actionable. Contracts can be voided when fraud is used to induce a person to enter into a contract. Leaders of many churches make fraudulent representations that induce people to make decisions that will alter their lives. These decisions have far-reaching ramifications. Those who believe and accept these fraudulent representations are probably assured that they have done all that is necessary to secure eternal life. They will give money to their church and often serve there in some capacity. They take time, sometimes sacrificially, from other activities. If they are induced into making a decision based on fraud the result can cause immeasurable harm. Not only might these persons not have a saving faith, and thus not have salvation, but they also might become disillusioned and never again be willing to make a commitment to the Lord Jesus.

Years ago I began to suspect that one of the evidences of fraud in the presentation of the gospel is the high percentage of people who quickly desert the church after having “made a commitment.”

Ray Comfort's *The Way of the Master (Bridge-logos)* confirmed my suspicions. Ray quoted statistics of a major denomination in the United States that disclosed that it obtained an incredible 294,784 decisions for Christ in

1990. Yet, in 1991, it could only find 14,337 in a Christian fellowship. There were 280,447 decisions that couldn't be accounted for. The leadership had no clue as to why this happened, but could only conclude, "Something is wrong!" The trend continued. In August 1996 a leading U.S. denomination revealed that during 1995 it secured 384,057 decisions, but retained only 22,983 in fellowship. It couldn't account for 361,074 supposed conversions. Ray told of another crusade at which 600 decisions were obtained, no doubt with much rejoicing. But 90 days later, follow-up workers couldn't find even one person who continued in the faith. In 1991 in Cleveland, Ohio, 400 decisions were obtained in an Inner City Outreach, but again, not one person could be found who continued in the faith.

Ray quoted Charles E. Hackett, the Division of Home Missions National Director for the Assemblies of God in the U.S.: "A soul at the altar does not generate much excitement in some circles because we realize approximately 95 out of every 100 will not become integrated into the church. In fact, most of them will not return for a second visit."

This phenomenon is not unique to the U.S. According to Ray, a pastor in Boulder, Colorado, sent a team to Russia in 1991 and secured 2,500 decisions. The next year they found only 30 persevering in their faith. In Leeds, England, a visiting U.S. speaker acquired 400 decisions for a local church. However, six weeks later only two were continuing in the faith, but they eventually fell away. A pastor who traveled to India every year since 1980 told Ray he saw 80,000 decision cards stacked in a hut in the city of Rajamundry, the "results" of past evangelistic crusades. But he maintained that one would be fortunate to find even 80 Christians in the entire city. That is 1/10 of 1percent.

Ray also cited statistics of the Barna Research Institute that indicated 62 percent of Americans say they have a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ. However, a Gallup Poll, taken around the same time, revealed

something interesting about a special group of 6-10 percent of Americans who say they are Christians. Mr. Gallup said of them:

"These people are a breed apart . . . they are more tolerant of people of diverse backgrounds. They are involved in charitable activities. They are involved in practical Christianity. They are absolutely committed to prayer."

Neil Anderson in *The Bondage Breaker*, page 107, states a similar statistic, saying, "It is my observation that no more than 15 percent of the evangelical Christian community is completely free from Satan's bondage." Though Neil generously speaks of the remainder as Christians, from his description of them they have the behavior traits of those described in Galatians, Ephesians and Revelation who (Scripture says) have no inheritance in the Kingdom of heaven.

Ray Comfort's emphasis is that we don't tell the truth – again fraud and deceit – when bringing people to Christ. As a result, the seed is scattered on stony ground and though received with rejoicing the person falls away quickly in times of difficulty and/or persecution.

Before we look at the issue of deceit in the presentation of the Gospel, we must look at the following example of fraud often present which leads to the deceit we will examine in the next chapter.

Salvation is a gift. Scripture says so at Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (See also Ephesians 2:8-10). The fraud is in how that gift is described. Often the pastor, teacher, or evangelist says, "Salvation is a FREE gift! It costs you absolutely nothing!"

Is it free? If there are costs, what are they? Only then can the person decide if he or she is willing to pay the price. Jesus taught that anyone who chooses to follow him should

know the cost in advance. Otherwise he may be unable to finish and will be mocked. See Luke 14:28-30.

You may be mentally scratching your head thinking, "I thought salvation is free and that Jesus paid the entire price on Calvary." As with most fraud and deceit, part of that answer is true. Salvation is not free, but Jesus did pay the entire price for the forgiveness of our sins on Calvary. Jesus made it possible for us to be saved by shedding his blood and dying for us. His shed blood permitted us to have our sins forgiven; by his death he atoned for our sins and made it possible for us to be reconciled to God. That is the gift, by grace (unmerited favor), given before we could know to ask for it. Nevertheless, it is sometimes accurately said, "Salvation is the most expensive gift you can ever receive. It costs everything you have!"

The cost of salvation does not earn salvation and forgiveness of sins. There is nothing we can pay or do to earn salvation. But Jesus told us of the costs (or conditions) necessary to qualify to receive the gift of salvation and eternal life. Some call these "conditions that must be satisfied" in order to receive eternal life. I sometimes refer to them as "salvation issues."

Let me illustrate these conditions in this way. Suppose you purchased a new car a few months ago and the dealer sent you a notice saying that all the purchasers of that model and year car from that dealer are eligible for a free oil change. This is an offer of an oil change to a limited group of people – those who satisfy the conditions. The conditions are that you purchased that model and year car from that dealer. If you go to the dealer asking for an oil change, but do not have the correct model car, you would not receive it. If you came and you had an older car than the year specified, you wouldn't get the oil change. If you bought the correct model and year car from another dealer, you wouldn't get the oil change. You have to satisfy the conditions. If you do, the oil change will cost you nothing. It is free for all who satisfy the conditions.

Likewise, God has graciously made the gift of salvation available to all who satisfy the conditions.

Let's look next at the conditions (costs) Jesus said are necessary to gain salvation. Let's evaluate whether seekers – people who are considering becoming followers of the Lord Jesus – should be told about these conditions prior to making a decision to follow Jesus. All these conditions are found in the teachings and commands of Jesus. You and I can satisfy all these conditions by obeying the teachings and commands of Jesus.

Chapter 8

ANOTHER CHILD OF ANTINOMIANISM

DECEIT IN THE PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL

Let's distinguish deceit from fraud. Fraud involves relating something false intending that others will rely on it to their detriment. Deceit is the omission of a material fact intending to cause a person to act to their detriment. In both cases, the requirement that it be intentional is also satisfied by a reckless disregard for the truth. The truth is readily apparent from God's word, as we are seeing here. When "another gospel" is presented that is different than God's word, it is fraud if it is a false material representation, or deceit if it is the omission of important, material facts that could cause a person to act to his detriment. Antinomianism and unconditional eternal security involve both fraud and deceit.

The combination of fraud and deceit is likely the reason that 95% or more of the people who "make a decision" quickly fall away. The stakes could not be higher; fraud and deceit in the presentation of the Gospel cost millions their salvation. Knowingly, or unwittingly, many pastors and teachers are in rebellion against the Lord Jesus and his word. Intentionally or otherwise they follow after the teachings of men rather than the teachings and commands of the Lord Jesus. They follow and perpetuate false doctrines. This chapter will deal with rebellion through deceit.

Let's use a practical example to understand deceit. Suppose you were going to buy a used car and the law required the seller to tell prospective buyers everything materially wrong with the car – particularly those things

that couldn't be seen by simply looking at the car. Suppose that you went to a used car lot and saw a car that was just what you wanted, and at a price you could afford. The salesman walked around the car with you, pointing out features of the car, but said nothing about anything wrong with the car. You bought it.

Sadly, after a short time you notice something wrong with the brakes. A repair shop tells you they are badly worn. Then smoke begins to show in the exhaust. Further examination shows the engine has been damaged and will require a major overhaul. Next the transmission begins to behave strangely. It too will be costly to repair.

What has happened? Did the salesman commit fraud by telling you a lie? No, the problem lies in what he didn't say – his deceit. He didn't say what he knew (or should have known) to be wrong with the car even though the law required that he divulge these things to you. As a result of his deceit you would have the right to bring a lawsuit to rescind the transaction and get your money back.

How does that example apply to presenting the Gospel to an unbeliever? Jesus told us that we are supposed to tell an unbeliever the costs that are material to his/her decision to follow Jesus. Jesus used a parable to teach about having all the facts – knowing the cost – before making a decision to follow him:

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish’” (Luke 14: 28-30).

The statistics of those making a decision for Christ show that 95% were not able or unwilling to finish. Why? One reason might be that if you are assured there are no costs – you were told that salvation is a free gift, but then find out there are many costs, you know you have been

deceived. Or, if you were assured that once you made this decision, you were forever saved and could not be lost, then why would you bother to continue in the church? You already have your life preserver for the afterlife.

There are costs involved in following Jesus. These “costs” could also be referred to as “conditions” or as “qualifications” – something we must do to *qualify* for salvation. Although I will use these terms interchangeably, they mean the same. This chapter will recite many conditions that we must satisfy in order to qualify for salvation.

Does the church often commit deceit as it urges people to follow Jesus? You decide after we review some of the costs, conditions, or qualifications Jesus spoke about.

The first and best-known condition is found in John 3:16:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Does this verse say everyone will be saved? No. The promise (and condition) is “whoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” How about those who don’t believe? Jesus continued, “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s only begotten Son” (John 3:18). Jesus confirms this at John 3:36: “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him.”

Now you understand what “qualify” means. The gift of eternal life is available to all. To qualify for eternal life, one must “believe in him,” that is, have a saving faith. It is at this precise point that some churches commit deceit. They fail to truthfully explain what it takes to have a saving faith. They fail to even explain what it means to really believe in Jesus. You can find a more in-depth explanation

of this subject at www.bereanpublishers.com | Book: Saving Faith | Chapter 1: Believe in Him.

Faith is often explained as a one-dimensional concept, as if only mental assent is sufficient. A saving faith, as defined in Scripture by Jesus, is like a multi-faceted diamond. From a distance, a diamond looks like one unit, just like faith does; however, upon closer examination we can see its different facets – each brilliantly reflecting light, similar to the different elements of a saving faith.

The following is an example from law to help illustrate the concept that faith has several components. The Common Law definition of burglary is defined as the breaking and entering a dwelling house at night for the purpose of committing a felony. Each of these requirements must be present in order for a burglary to have been committed. If it is not committed at night, it is not a burglary. If it is not a dwelling house, it is not a burglary. If it is not a breaking or an entering, it is not a burglary. If it is not for the purpose of committing a felony, it is not a burglary. Each element must be present.

In like manner, if any of the necessary elements of a saving faith are missing, it is not a saving faith and the person will not gain eternal life. If we do not understand that a saving faith contains multiple elements, we will misrepresent a saving faith and commit deceit in presenting the Gospel. An essential element of a saving faith can immediately be recognized because Jesus said that without it you cannot be saved. Examples of salvation conditions are: without it you cannot be his disciple, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven, cannot be forgiven your sins, he will disown you before the Father, you will be cut off and burned, and have believed in vain.

Dr. John R. Armstrong wrote, "Surely here is the missing note of almost all evangelical preaching in our time. We have treated faith as assent, as decision, or as mere recognition. But faith, by definition, is tantamount to obedience."

Obedience is the most important element of a saving faith. It is the over-arching element that includes all the others as sub-elements. We see this from Jesus' statement at Matthew 7:21:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Only those who obey – who do "the will of my Father" – will enter the kingdom of heaven. Thus we see that obedience to the will of God is a critical, essential element of a saving faith. Without it you cannot be saved and go to heaven. The writer to the Hebrews made the same point: "he [Jesus] became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

Jesus said that everything he said and did while on earth was what his Father told him to say and do (John 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10, 14:24, and 14:31). Thus, everything Jesus said and did was the will of God. Is it any wonder he is the source of salvation for all who obey *him*? Or that he ended his great commission with the command to teach new disciples to obey all that *he* commanded them? (Matthew 28:20).

Obedience to Jesus' teachings and commands is necessary in order to have salvation. You will immediately see that obedience to these elements of a saving faith are incompatible with the false doctrines of antinomianism and unconditional eternal security. Each element is a teaching or command of Jesus – part of the "law of Christ." These false doctrines claim that obedience to any law is not required for salvation; they claim that salvation is only based on what you believe and that conduct is inconsequential.

We will now review elements of a saving faith from the teachings and commands of Jesus. Contrary to the

teachings of antinomianism and unconditional eternal security, you will see that command after command states that you will not have salvation (or will not enter the kingdom of heaven) if you don't *do* what it says. Now you can understand the great chasm between biblical salvation and the false, imaginary salvation presented by the antinomians and those claiming unconditional eternal security.

I've begun each command with "Jesus said" to reinforce in your mind that each of these teachings and commands came directly from Jesus, which in turn came directly from God. I also want to reinforce the importance of teaching others to obey the teachings and commands of Jesus, just as he commanded us to do.

We must repent. Jesus said, "But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). Jesus' first command was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17). Certainly Jesus was not speaking about physical death (all his hearers would one day experience that). Instead, he was warning about perishing spiritually if they did not repent.

We must be born again. Jesus told Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). Those who have a saving faith are born again. A saving faith (and being born again) includes the commitment to obey Jesus' commands (John 14:15-17). Can a person see the kingdom of God without being born again? No. Jesus said it is an absolute requirement.

We must be more righteous than the Pharisees. Jesus said: "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20). Speaking of the Pharisees and teachers of the law, Jesus said, "But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." As followers of Jesus we must be *doers*, not hearers only.

As James said, “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says” (James 1:22).

We must not do evil. Jesus said, “The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.” See Matthew 13:40-43.

We must not be wicked. Jesus said, “This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” See Matthew 13:47-50.

We must forgive. Jesus taught, “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:14-15). Jesus explained that in a parable at Matthew 18:21-35. The king who had forgiven a servant a huge debt *reinstated the debt* when the servant refused to forgive another servant. Jesus said: “In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed” (Matthew 18:34). The chilling part of the story is found in the next verse. Jesus said, “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart” (Matthew 18:35). Those who refuse to forgive will receive the punishment of the unbelievers – torture forever in hell – because none of us can ever pay the debt of our sin on our own.

We must love Jesus more than any other person and more than our own lives. Jesus said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). Our marching orders are “to make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Surely no one will suggest that we can be saved if we are not a disciple of Jesus.

We must deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). If we do not come after Jesus we cannot have eternal life.

We must not disown or deny Jesus. Jesus said, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

We must persevere in the faith. Jesus warned, "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22). Paul confirmed this fact: "Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain" (1 Corinthians 15:1-2).

We must bear fruit. Jesus warned: "He [God] cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful" (John 15:2). Branches *in* Jesus were cut off because they bore no fruit.

We must remain in Jesus. Jesus said, "If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned" (John 15:6). We must remain in Jesus if we would be saved.

We must be humble like a little child. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Luke 18:17)." See also Matthew 18:3, "... unless you change and come like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

We must do the will of God. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of God, but only he who does the will of my Father in heaven." This command includes everything that Jesus taught and commanded. Everything Jesus said is the will of God.

We must not cause children to sin. Jesus said, "But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!" (Matthew 18:6-7).

We must not continue to sin. Jesus said, "If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell" (Matthew 18:8-9). Jesus condemns sinful conduct.

We must not sexually lust. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). The Jews knew that all adulterers are condemned – they were to stone them to death. It is Paul who made the specific connection with adultery and condemnation by God: "Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). This is all about conduct.

We must not divorce, except for marital unfaith-

fulness. Jesus said, "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5:31-32).

We must not remarry if wrongfully divorced. Jesus said, "I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9).

We must not be evildoers (lawless ones). Jesus said, "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:22-23). The word "evildoers" can properly be translated here as antinomians or lawless ones – the same people who are in rebellion against the Lord Jesus and his words.

We must not be careless in the words we use. Jesus said, "I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matthew 12:36-37). Words are conduct.

We must not want to save our life. Jesus said, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it" (Matthew 16:25).

We must do it God's way. The invited guest was not wearing wedding clothes. Jesus said, "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Matthew 22:13). Obviously, proper conduct – wedding clothes – was required, just as obedience to the teachings and commands of Jesus – Christ's Law – is required of those who will be saved. Nevertheless, the antinomians and

unconditional eternal security people claim otherwise – that conduct doesn't matter.

We must be faithful servants. Jesus first tells about the faithful servant who was rewarded by his master. Then Jesus said, "But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." See Matthew 24:45-51. In this parable, the master did not ask what the servant believed. He looked at what he had done. The master had given duties to his servant. One was faithful; one was not. There were rules and commands the servant was to follow. The wicked servant failed to follow the rules laid down by the master. His conduct mattered; he was condemned.

We must be ready for the Lord's coming. Jesus taught the parable of the ten virgins, some who had extra oil for their lamps; others did not. When the bridegroom approached, those who were prepared and had extra oil for their lamps went in with the bridegroom while the others had gone to find oil. Jesus said, "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." See Matthew 25:10-13.

We must put our talents to good use. In the parable of the talents, the master gave talents of varying amounts to three servants. When he returned, two had doubled the amount they had been given; the other hid his talent. He simply returned it to the master. Jesus said, "... throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (See Matthew 25:26-30). This is

all about conduct. The condemned servant didn't believe his conduct mattered.

We will be judged according to what we have done. This comes from Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats. Jesus separated the sheep from the goats, putting the sheep on his right, the goats on his left. He commended the sheep for caring for those who were his brothers. Jesus continued: "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'... 'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'" See Matthew 25:41-43, 46.

This parable is a dagger in the heart for the antinomian and the unconditional eternal security adherents. While they claim conduct does not matter, this parable is all about conduct. Conduct matters! Tragically, most of those claiming conduct does not matter will likely be among the goats of whom Jesus said, "they will go away to eternal punishment."

We must not be ashamed of Jesus or his words. Jesus said, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels" (Mark 8:38). There will be no salvation for those who are ashamed of Jesus. What about those who don't preach Jesus as Lord because they're afraid of those who oppose the Lordship of Jesus? Are they ashamed of him? How about those who fail and refuse to teach the commands of Jesus as Jesus commanded they do? Are they ashamed of Jesus and his words?

We must believe. Jesus said, "Go into all the

world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). Did Jesus expect to find faith on the earth when he returns? Jesus asked, "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8). The word "believes" is a verb whereas "faith" is a noun. Here, "believes" is as broad as is multi-faceted saving faith, with all the elements part of it.

We must not get too comfortable. Jesus said, "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets" (Luke 6:24-26). Jesus did not call us to a comfortable lifestyle, but one of service and sacrifice.

We must obey Jesus as our Lord. Jesus asked, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). Obviously Jesus expects us to obey. We understand the seriousness of obedience to Jesus when we read Paul's warning at 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10: He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power...

Those who deliberately disobey will be punished severely. Jesus warned, "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows" (Luke 12:47-48). What about those who know that Jesus' command to his followers is to teach new converts to obey all that he commanded them, but refuse to do so? How about the refusal and disregard of the teachings and commands of Jesus by the antinomians and unconditional eternal security adherents? How does this

apply to them? See also Hebrews 10:26: "If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."

We must be reconciled to God. Jesus warned, "As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled to him on the way, or he may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny" (Luke 12:58-59). This is similar to Jesus' warning about unforgiveness at Matthew 18:34-35: "In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." We know we can never pay enough to atone for our sins; we must be reconciled to God through the Lord Jesus. See Colossians 1:21-23.

We must make every effort to enter through the narrow door. Jesus said, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to." When those outside plead for entry, he will answer, "I don't know you or where you come from." Those outside will say, "We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets." And then the frightening response from Jesus: "I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!" See Luke 13:22-27. Once again, the Lord's rejection was not based on incorrect doctrine, but on wickedness. He called them evildoers. It was their evil *conduct* that condemned them.

We must give up everything we have to be Jesus' disciple. Jesus said, "Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:31-33). Is it any wonder the antinomians refuse to accept the teachings of Jesus? Are these teachings and

commands too hard for seeker-friendly churches to present to those who attend their churches? If so, aren't they ashamed of Jesus and his words?

We must be trustworthy. Jesus said, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?" (Luke 16:10-12). Again the emphasis is on conduct! The salvation issue is apparent when explained through the parable of the talents. There the two servants who were trustworthy and gained more were put in charge of many things. But the untrustworthy servant, who buried his talent, was thrown outside into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. See Matthew 25:14-30. See also the similar parable of the ten minas at Luke 19:12-26. There, the untrustworthy servant who hid away his mina was called wicked.

We must be careful of the dangers of wealth. Jesus told the story of the rich man and Lazarus. He said, "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day." Lazarus, the beggar, and the rich man died. Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom; the rich man went to hell. Abraham told the rich man, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony." At Luke 6:24-26, Jesus said, "Woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your reward." Jesus also warned, "Still others, like seed among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful!" (Mark 4:18-19). See also Revelation 3:15-18. Once again, the warning of condemnation is because of conduct.

We must be careful – always on the watch! Jesus warned, “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:34-36).

We must believe in him. Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 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, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s only begotten Son” (John 3:16-18).

We must believe God the Father. Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24). To believe the Father is to believe every word Jesus spoke; he said he spoke only what his Father told him to say (John 8:28, 12:49-50, 14:10, 14:24, and 14:31). To believe the Father is to obey the Son.

We must believe the Son – the Lord Jesus. Jesus said, “I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:36-40). How tragically true this is in our day. Pastors

in millions of churches preach from the Bible, but so very few dare teach the words of Jesus through which their listeners can gain eternal life.

We must believe Jesus is who he said he is. Jesus said, "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins" (John 8:24). At John 13:13, Jesus said, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am." When arrested by the Jews, the high priest said to Jesus, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." (See Matthew 26:63-64.) In these few verses, Jesus claimed to be Teacher, Lord, the Christ, the Son of God, and the Son of Man.

We must hold to Jesus' teaching. To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32). Verse 32 is often quoted, but it is conditional upon verse 31 being true. To be a disciple of the Lord Jesus, we must persevere and obey – hold to his teaching. Only disciples of the Lord Jesus will be saved.

We must keep Jesus' word. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death" (John 8:51). The word "keeps" is a combination of persevering in, knowing and treasuring, and obeying Jesus' word.

We must accept Jesus and his words. Jesus said, "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day" (John 12:48).

We must come to the Father through Jesus, and him alone. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and

the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him" (John 14:6-7).

We must love Jesus and obey his teachings. Jesus said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching" (John 14:23-24). Hebrews 5:9 states that Jesus became the source of eternal salvation for all those who obey him. It is essential that we love Jesus and obey him if we would have salvation.

We must remain in the vine and bear much fruit. Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned" (John 15:5-8).

We must remain salty. Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men" (Matthew 5:13). That passage sounds as if once the saltiness has been lost it cannot be restored. At Hebrews 6:4-6 we find a parallel passage: "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace."

These commands pertain to *conduct* and are consistent with the many scriptures that say we will be judged according to what we have done – our conduct. But

Scripture also says we are saved through faith. These seemingly different statements are consistent with each other because obedience comes *from* faith. See Romans 1:5. Faith emanates obedience which commands our conduct. Obedience to the commands of Jesus is equal to doing the will of our Father in heaven. Unless we do the will of God, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. See Matthew 7:21.

In order not to be guilty of deceit, we must teach seekers and new converts the conditions – the elements of a saving faith – that must be satisfied in order to gain salvation.

Is it really necessary to explain each and every requirement? According to Jesus, we should count the cost before we begin. All the above are elements of a saving faith. But is there a minimum that should be communicated to a seeker to avoid being guilty of deceit? I think so.

There are two non-negotiable facts that must be accepted by anyone who would be saved. *First*, Jesus must be Lord of all who would be saved. And *second*, if Jesus is Lord, he must be obeyed. It is an oxymoron to claim Jesus as Lord and not obey him.

In order not to be guilty of deceit, it is also important to make sure the seeker understands that those who follow the Lord Jesus must give up everything they have (Luke 14:33). All other “costs” are included within this overarching cost. Those who learn from the beginning that they must love Jesus more than their spouse, children, and other family members, and that they must also take up their cross and follow him, won’t be surprised later because they already knew the cost of following the Lord Jesus.

The Lord guided my journey to a saving faith in a way that illustrates the problems we’re discussing here. After reading the Bible for several months, I remember walking down the stairs one morning believing the Bible to be true. I believed that Jesus died for my sins, that he is the Son of God, and other basic facts about the faith that I hadn’t

believed the night before. The church believed I was a new convert and so did I. Though I changed my party friends for church friends, and stopped swearing, my life was not really changed. I carried my Bible to church instead of reading it.

After several months I got bored and wondered if this was all there was to Christianity. Fortunately for me, the Lord drew me back into his word. This time everywhere I looked I saw "Lord", "Lord," and "obey," "obey." I studied the issues of Jesus' lordship and the need to obey him because to my knowledge, I had never heard a sermon about the need for Jesus to be my Lord or that I needed to obey him. To compound the problem, when I asked my friends at church about obeying the Lord, they said we could never obey because we sin hundreds of times each day.

One day I went to the Lord in prayer and said, "Lord Jesus, as best I can see from your word, you're supposed to be my Lord and I'm supposed to obey you. If that's what you want, that's what you've got. Please be my Lord and I'll obey you the best I can the rest of my life." That's when my life was transformed. Suddenly I had love, joy and peace in my life that I had never known before. I didn't even know what had happened to me until I read John 14:15-17 and found out that my confession of faith in Jesus as my Lord and my pledge to obey him caused Jesus to ask the Father to give me the Holy Spirit. When I read Galatians 5, I found that the love, joy and peace that I experienced are the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Seekers who receive Jesus as Lord and pledge to obey him with all their heart will be born again when the Father gives them the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-16). Both before and after their decision, seekers and new believers should be pointed to the Gospels and the teachings and commands of the Lord Jesus. Seekers will gain a greater understanding of what it means to follow Jesus. New believers will learn how to live in the kingdom of their Lord (Matthew 28:20). One of the evidences of true conversion is that a new-born

babe in Christ will hungrily seek after the milk of the Gospel, often spending endless hours studying Scripture. Likewise, evidence of persevering in the faith is shown by continuing daily in God's word to have spiritual, daily bread.

As the new believer pours over Scripture, he quickly learns about the requirements for those who seek to follow the Lord Jesus. Those who have truly received Jesus as their Lord happily receive his instructions and seek to follow them in their lives. Those who were deceived into making a decision for Christ may be disillusioned and turn away when they learn there are many conditions they must satisfy in order to gain salvation.

While discussing fraud earlier in this chapter, we learned statistics from Ray Comfort's *The Way of the Master (Bridge-logos)* that showed 19 out of 20 people who made decisions for Christ in major denominations quickly fall away from the faith. Could fraud and deceit in the presentation of the gospel be the reasons that so many quickly fall away? I think so. People who know the truth tend to stand firm. When trials and tribulations come, they are neither surprised nor discouraged.

Some regard Charles Finney as the greatest American evangelist. His method was different than most. When he held an evangelistic campaign in a city, he would preach every night for three or more hours for months on end. When starting a crusade, he wouldn't let anyone make a decision for Christ until at least the fourth or fifth night. He wanted them to know the cost before committing to follow the Lord Jesus. Subsequent surveys found that 85 percent to 90 percent of the people who committed to Christ in his campaigns continued with the Lord. Cities were changed. Crime dropped.

Since Finney's time, there seems to be an ever-greater reluctance to tell a seeker the truths of the faith for fear they are too hard. Instead, making a commitment has degenerated to a "sinner's prayer" in which people are told

to “pray after me” a simple prayer, often of repentance and in which they purport to accept Jesus as their Savior (not as Lord). Then they are often assured that they are now saved.

I once heard Hal Lindsey on a radio program when we were in Seattle. He had just given such an invitation. Afterward he promised those who had prayed with him that he would see them in heaven. Hal committed fraud because he didn't lead these people to Jesus as Lord. He committed deceit because he didn't tell them that there are multiple conditions that each believer must fulfill if he would go to heaven, all of which are part and parcel of a saving faith.

Youth leader Dave De Roles said that the Gospel is often presented in such a way that almost all the youth will happily accept the invitation. He said this causes grave problems. There is rarely fruit showing these youth have really become Christians and they seem to be inoculated against later receiving the truth.

Is it any wonder that 19 out of 20 have fallen away? Are we afraid to do it Jesus' way? We should be eager to do whatever our Lord says in the way he says to do it. If we do it his way, we can trust him to bless and empower his work.

Evangelist Graham Ashby wrote: “As anyone who has had a pulpit ministry knows, 'we can make' people do what we want them to do – such deceit. Rather, wait for God to do the saving than induce premature decisions . . . the results, well, the statistics say it all.”

Now perhaps we can get a better understanding of the reality of Jesus' teaching about the narrow gate: “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

How tragic that so many pastors and teachers who are entrusted to lead those they teach to eternal salvation deprive their congregants of the truth by teaching them another gospel – a false gospel that leads to damnation instead of salvation.

Chapter 9

SEEK FIRST ... HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

At Matthew 6:33, Jesus made righteousness a high priority when he commanded: “Seek first his *kingdom* and his *righteousness*, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

In this chapter, we'll examine Jesus' command to seek first God's righteousness. It is this command that is so terribly violated by the antinomians, the adherents to the doctrine of unconditional eternal security, and the church culture I call Churchianity.

Jesus made righteousness a condition of salvation when he said,

“For I tell you that unless your *righteousness* surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly *not* enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

The last phrase of the sentence makes righteousness a condition of a saving faith. We will not be saved unless our righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees.

Many will scream, “We can't be righteous! It's not possible!” Really? Where did that idea come from? Joseph was called a righteous man (Matthew 1:19). Simeon was called righteous and devout (Luke 2:25). Being righteous is a matter of choosing to do what is right – a matter of the will. The Apostle John said, “His commands are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

The Apostle John seems to be speaking to such people at 1 John 3:7: “Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who *does* what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.” Did you notice the word “does”? Once again the emphasis is on conduct! We must *do* what is

right and we will be righteous. If we *do* what is sinful, we will be wicked.

Can a person do what is sinful and be saved? Many say, "Yes, of course!" The Apostle John disagrees. He taught, "He who *does* what is sinful is of the devil" (1 John 3:8). "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not *do* what is right (act righteously) is not a child of God" (1 John 3:10). Contrary to popular thinking, John taught that those who are unrighteous – those who *do* what is sinful (act wickedly) – are of the devil; they are children of the devil.

The Apostle Paul confirmed that continued sinfulness cannot exist in the lives of true believers: "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness" (2 Timothy 2:19). All true Christians who confess the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness. That is what repentance really is – confessing our sin and turning from it to God. Unless we repent (another condition of a saving faith) we cannot be saved. Unless we confess our sin and turn from it, we will not be saved.

You may ask, "Are you saying that if I sin I am of the devil?" You could be, but that is not what I am saying, or what I believe the text is saying. The word "does" is a continuing verb; thus it is reasonable to rephrase John's statement by saying, "He who *continues to do* what is sinful is of the devil" which is consistent with what the Apostle John said on another occasion: "No one who lives in him *keeps on* sinning. No one who *continues to sin* has either seen him or known him" (1 John 3:6). The person who continues to do what is right is righteous. The person who continues to sin is wicked; he is of the devil; he has neither seen the Lord nor has he known him.

Jesus told the following parable that teaches the standard by which men are judged at the end of the age:

“The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who *do* evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the *righteous* will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear” (Matthew 13:41-43).

The judgment at the end of the age is based only on whether the person causes or *does* evil. Those who *do* evil are condemned. They are thrown into the fiery furnace. They were judged according to whether they *did* evil or were righteous – not on what they believed.

A saving faith is evident through righteousness. A false faith (or no faith) is evident through evil and wickedness. In this parable, Jesus made sure we understood that there is only fiery judgment for those who *do* evil, but blessings in his kingdom for those who are righteous.

Let’s look at some of Jesus’ teachings that contrast righteousness and wickedness – a theme in Jesus’ teachings. Immediately following the requirement to do the will of God (Matthew 7:21), Jesus tells us of judgment day when many will say to him, “‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” Remember that on this occasion, the word translated “evildoers” can properly be translated as “antinomians.”

Jesus called these people evildoers – those who *do* evil. Heaven is for those who *do* the will of God; condemnation is for those who *do* evil. Once again, please note that Jesus is speaking of conduct – *doing* evil. Did you notice that those Jesus said were evil tried to convince him they belonged in heaven by their works – prophesying in his name, driving out demons, and performing many miracles? The powerful lesson here is that being righteous – doing the will of God – trumps anything you claim you do for

God. We must first become *like* Jesus before we are credited for doing things *for* Jesus.

Paul taught the same at 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing." The Lord Jesus commanded that we love one another as he loved us. Paul taught that the sin of not loving God and one another voided good deeds. Again, disobedience and sin will be punished; we are called to be righteous.

Jesus spoke often about what will happen at the end of the age. At Matthew 13:49-50, Jesus said "The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Those condemned were said to be wicked; their conduct was evil.

At Matthew 18:23-31, Jesus told the story of the servant forgiven a vast sum by the king, but who thereafter had a fellow servant thrown in prison for failing to repay him a small sum. Jesus said the forgiven servant was wicked. When the king learned of his unforgiveness toward his fellow servant, he reinstated his debt and turned him over to the jailers to be tortured until he should pay back all he owed. In verse 35, Jesus emphasized that we too will be considered wicked if we do not forgive others: "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Again the lesson is condemnation for wicked conduct – the refusal to forgive.

Let's revisit the story of the faithful and wise servant versus the unfaithful servant. Both were servants of the master. The first is commended for his faithfulness. But Jesus characterizes the servant who did not remain faithful as wicked. Jesus said his master "will cut him to pieces

and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24: 51). The wicked servant failed to do what he was supposed to do and then did evil – he began to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. His evil conduct caused him to be condemned.

We also looked previously at the parable of the talents where three servants were given talents to manage in the absence of the master. Two did well by doubling the amount that was given to them, but the third hid his talent, then simply returned it to the master. The first two servants were characterized as "good and faithful" servants. The master said to the one who hid his talent, "You wicked, lazy servant!" What was the master's command regarding this servant? The master ordered, "Throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." See the entire parable at Matthew 25:14-30. A similar teaching is found in the parable of the minas at Luke 19:12-27.

Jesus described conduct in these teachings! He characterized people in each parable as wicked because they did not *do* what the master commanded. All were condemned to hell – into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The people who were commended were those who *did* what they were asked to do. Both the wicked and those commended were judged on the basis of what they *did*.

America and western nations are now said to be post-Christian nations. Instead of Christianity being an important component of national life, there is frequently overt hostility toward the faith. Jesus prophesied about a time such as now:

"At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of

most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24: 10-13).

We see many turning away from the Christian faith. Many false prophets have appeared to deceive many people. Antinomians and those advocating unconditional eternal security are among many who are deceiving many people. Why does the love of most grow cold? It is because of the increase of *wickedness* – the opposite of righteousness.

The Lord Jesus consistently condemned evil and wickedness and those who were evildoers and wicked. It is astonishing to me that many who claim to be Christians continue to proclaim that evil behavior and wickedness do not affect salvation, that it is only what one believes that matters. Is it any wonder that Jesus asked, "When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).

Are you seeing clearly how the antinomians will fare at the judgment? Their claim that believing rightly is the only thing that is important, and that conduct does not affect salvation, is totally false.

Their false teachings can produce only condemnation and damnation for those who continue in sin, convinced that they have salvation because they believe rightly. But the antinomian does not believe rightly. What he believes is fatally flawed because it allows and promotes living in sin and indulging self, which assures damnation for all who live this way. While the antinomian falsely claims salvation, the Apostle John says such people do not know God and have never known him.

The antinomian belief is widespread. Coupled with unconditional eternal security, it is probably the prevailing doctrine in most present-day western church. Divorce statistics in America prove this point. We saw in an earlier chapter that Jesus allowed divorce only when there has been adultery by one of the parties.

The Barna Research Group found that professing Christians had moderately *higher* rates of divorce than the general population, including atheists and agnostics. Looking at the statistics more closely shows even more surprising trends: 27 percent of those describing themselves as “born-again Christians” are previously or currently divorced compared to 24 percent of the general population. But in the Baptist and nondenominational Protestant churches which dominate the Bible belt in the U.S., 29 percent and 35 percent, respectively, were divorced, more than any other Christian denomination.

In this instance, it is not that the church has become like the world, it is worse than the world. The non-believing world has no religious restraints against divorce, yet Christians, who are commanded not to divorce by the Lord Jesus, do so at a greater rate than those with no restraints. The Baptist denomination, which has a divorce rate 5 percent higher than the general population, adheres to the false doctrine of unconditional eternal security, the child of antinomianism, as expressed by Charles Stanley.

We have repeatedly reviewed the teaching of Jesus at Matthew 7:21 that says that only those who “do” the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven and that the teachings and commands of Jesus are the will of God. We have seen in a prior chapter that the many conditions that are part of a saving faith are found in the teachings and commands of Jesus. When we are obedient to the teachings and commands of Jesus we fulfill God’s conditions for a saving faith and satisfy the salvation requirement that we *do* the will of God. Obedience to Jesus’ commands does much more. Those who obey his commands show Jesus that they love him. In turn they are loved by the Father and the Lord Jesus (John 14:21, 23). Jesus said, “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love” (John 15:10). Jesus told his disciples, “You are my friends if you do what I command” (John

15:14). We saw earlier that receiving the Holy Spirit is dependent upon committing to obey the Lord Jesus (see John 14:15-17 and Acts 5:32). Finally, salvation itself is for those who obey Jesus: "He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

For more on the subject of righteousness, see my article: www.bereanpublishers.com | Salvation Issues | Must Christians Be Righteous?

Chapter 10

POPULAR ANTI-RIGHTEOUSNESS EXPRESSIONS

We're not under law ...

Because the call to be righteous is so pervasive in Christ's teaching, there are many attempts on the part of purveyors of false doctrines to nullify Jesus' commands. They frequently quote Paul when he said: "We're not under law, we're under grace!" (Romans 6:14-15). The law Paul was referring to was Old Testament law, the law the Jews were given by Moses. We know it was Old Testament law because of the confrontations that arose in Galatia where the Judaizers tried to force the Galatian Christians to observe Old Testament rules and regulations, e.g., circumcision (see Galatians 2:4-5). Paul confronted Peter saying, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" (Galatians 2:14).

Paul said that he was under law: "I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law" (1 Corinthians 9:21. See also Galatians 6:2). By equating God's law with Christ's law, Paul recognized that the teachings and commands of Jesus – Christ's law – came from God. Paul taught that believers must obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus (2 Thessalonians 1:8-10).

Imputed Righteousness

Another attempt to subvert the teachings and commands of Jesus is to claim that the only righteousness believers need is the *imputed*, perfect righteousness of Jesus. They say that if they believe rightly, God will see in them the perfect righteousness of Jesus, notwithstanding their conduct which may be wicked. They rely on scriptures such as,

“For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law” (Romans 3:28). Again they rely on a statement that refers to the Old Testament Law, not Christ’s law which is composed of his teachings and commands. They claim that God only looks at the righteousness of Jesus and imputes his perfect righteousness to those who believe in him.

Though Paul stated that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law, it was Paul who told us his mission statement at Romans 1:5: “Through him and for his name’s sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the *obedience* that comes *from* faith.” According to Paul, his primary mission was not to teach people what to believe, but to call people to the *obedience* that comes from faith. Obedience to whom? To the Lord Jesus. What are we to obey? Everything the Lord Jesus said in his teachings and commands. Isn’t it amazing that the antinomians dare to claim that what Paul declared as his life work, for which he received grace and apostleship, does not apply to them?

We have seen throughout this book numerous references to conduct. Almost all of the teachings and commands of Jesus are about our conduct, yet our conduct would be irrelevant if God required nothing more than Christ’s perfect righteousness imputed to us.

John defined righteousness when he said, “He who *does* what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who *does* what is sinful is of the devil” (1 John 3:7). John brought us back to conduct again, not an imputed righteousness. He also said, “We know we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, “I know him, but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4). What does John say about the claims of the antinomians and other purveyors of this false gospel that conduct doesn’t count? John says they are of the devil, that they are liars and that the truth is not in them. (See 1 John 2:4 and 3:10.)

Unconditional love of God

Another phrase that has become very popular is “the unconditional love of God.” That is part and parcel of the teachings and doctrines that claim that one’s salvation is also unconditional. The “once saved, always saved” false teaching is defined by Charles Stanley’s claim that if one ever had a moment of faith, then one is unconditionally saved. The supporting statement for that false claim is another false claim – God’s unconditional love.

God’s love is not unconditional. The teachings of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, reveal God’s *conditional* love. Let’s look first at John 14:21 and 23-24 as examples of God’s conditional love:

“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. *He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him* and show myself to him” (John 14:21).

Jesus replied, “*If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me*” (John 14:23-24).

In verse 21 (above), Jesus first defined the person who loved him as the one who has his commands and obeys them. Then he states that both he and his father will love *those who love him* – that is the condition. In verse 23, Jesus states that his Father will love the person who loves him (the person who obeys his teaching). The condition for God’s love is that the person loves Jesus and shows it by obeying his teaching. In verse 24, Jesus declares that those who do not love him will not obey his teaching. Then he assures us that those words are not his own, but belong to the Father who sent him. In these verses, the Father’s

love (and Jesus' love) are *conditioned* upon the person loving Jesus and obeying his teachings and commands.

Without considering additional scriptures, we already see that the antinomians, adherents to unconditional eternal security and all others who claim conduct does not matter to salvation, are people who do not love the Lord Jesus. How do we know this? Because they do not and will not obey his commands. They declare they are under grace, not law. Can you hear the screams of protest? "What? You claim I don't love the Lord?" Love for God is defined in Scripture: "This is love for God: to obey his commands" (1 John 5:3). The Lord Jesus said the same at John 14:15: "If you love me, you will obey my commands." According to the definitions in Scripture, such people do not love the Lord Jesus. They are in rebellion against him. They have concocted a false doctrine that claims they don't have to obey the Lord Jesus and can still be saved.

What happens to those who don't love the Lord and don't obey him? The New Living Translation of John 3:36 states,

"Anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment."

See also the ASV and RSV. The RSV translates the last phrase: "... he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him." The ESV, TLB and NIV state that "... God's wrath remains on him." Where is the unconditional love of God here? It doesn't exist. For those who don't obey the Son, the wrath of God remains on them. See Ephesians 2:3.

These verses are extremely important in exposing the total falsity of the claims of the antinomians. The antinomians claim to believe in God's Son and say that because they believe they have eternal life. However, they also claim they have no need to obey the Lord Jesus because they are not under any law, thus admitting that they are lawless.

But the translations cited above agree that “anyone who doesn’t *obey* the Son will never experience eternal life.” The proper way to reconcile “believing and gaining eternal life” with “not obeying and remaining under God’s wrath” is very simple. Those who believe will obey. Those who claim to believe but do not obey do not believe according to the biblical definition – the one that is important to God. We know they do not have a saving faith because obedience comes from a saving faith. Even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). Faith without deeds is dead (James 2:26).

Let’s examine biblical definitions versus secular dictionary definitions. The Bible is a unique, self-contained book. When lawyers interpret a contract, they must look “within the four corners of the document” – an expression commonly used in the legal community. They search for term definition and an explanation of provisions within the contract itself. If there is no evidence of the parties’ intended meaning of a term or provision within the contract, the lawyers are allowed to look for their meaning elsewhere. This same principle is certainly true for the Bible because the definitions used in Scripture are not necessarily the definitions we’d find in a dictionary. For example, most of us have a sense of what it is to “love” someone, though likely our definitions vary. But what is love for God? Would you take your definition of love and apply it to describe love for God? If so, you would almost certainly be wrong. Scripture tells us that: “This is love for God: to obey his commands” (1 John 5:3). Likely, none of our definitions of love for God would have been similar to the biblical definition. That is why Jesus could say “If you love me, you will obey me” (John 14:15). He knew that those who obey him are the ones who love him. By applying the definition of loving God to himself, Jesus declared himself to be God.

The same is true of the definitions of “believe” and “faith”. The meaning of these words in Scripture is not mental assent – merely believing something to be true. Instead, at Romans 1:5, we learned that obedience comes from

faith. The conditions we saw earlier, without which we cannot be saved, are instructions and standards of righteousness from God that were given to us by Jesus in his teachings and commands, all of which are to be obeyed. Because we are saved by grace, through faith, and this not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9), we know that when we find a scripture that says we must fulfill a condition in order to be saved, such condition must be part of faith! Faith indeed is multifaceted – it is comprised of many elements. A non-biblical definition cannot begin to describe it.

God's love is conditional, not unconditional. For a more thorough study see www.bereanpublishers.com | False Doctrines | Is God's Love Unconditional?

I'm just a sinner saved by grace.

A pastor might tell his congregation, "I'm just like you, a sinner saved by grace." A sinner is one who sins. Perhaps the pastor is seeking a common bond with those in his congregation. Is there biblical truth to this expression? Not at all. In the entire New Testament, there is not one instance in which a true follower of Jesus is ever called a sinner. Nor is there any example of a person who is a sinner who is "saved." Followers of Jesus will not be sinners; they will not continue in sin. That is not to say that followers of Jesus will never sin. Remember what the Apostle John said about continuing in sin? He said, "No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him" (1 John 3:6).

When someone comes to faith in the Lord Jesus, he is a new creature. From that point on he is referred to as brother, saint, servant, slave, bond-servant, bond-slave, etc., but never as a sinner.

Nevertheless, you can understand how comforting such a phrase is to the antinomian who thinks he can freely sin

because salvation, he believes, has nothing to do with his conduct. He knows he's a sinner. For him, God's grace is everything. Tozer rightly said, "Antinomianism is the doctrine of grace carried by uncorrected logic to the point of absurdity. It takes the teaching of justification by faith and twists it into deformity."

To learn more about the issue of believers not being sinners, see www.bereanpublishers.com | Important Issues | Are Christians Sinners or Saints?

God loves the sinner, but hates the sin.

Another expression that has come out of the antinomian doctrines in the church is, "God loves the sinner, but hates the sin." It is very important to the antinomian and the adherents of the unconditional eternal security doctrine that God love the sinner. They believe they are sinners and that no real effort is necessary to be free of sin because they have falsely determined that conduct (sin) has no relevance on whether they will gain salvation. A sinner is a person who continues in sin.

Does God love the sinner? Let's see what Scripture says. At Psalm 5:4-6, David wrote, "You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you *hate* all who do wrong. You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the LORD abhors." This scripture plainly says that God hates all who do wrong and that the wicked cannot dwell with him. At Psalm 11:5, David wrote, "The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence his soul *hates*." Hosea wrote, "Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal, I *hated* them there. Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house (Hosea 9:15. See also Jeremiah 12:8).

Now it becomes easier to understand John 3:36 where Jesus said that God's wrath remains on those who do not obey the Son. God hates those who are wicked – those who do not obey the teachings and commands of Jesus.

Are those pastors and teachers wicked who refuse to obey Jesus' command to "teach them to obey all that I have commanded you?" (Matthew 28:20).

Both prospective and past sins are forgiven.

Another phrase used by the antinomians and adherents to unconditional eternal security is "When you repent of your sins, both prospective and past sins are forgiven." Have you noticed how God's word preempts false doctrines by providing the truth ahead of time? Because the Bible is one consistent message system from God, the entire Bible can be used to explain itself. In the case of prospective forgiveness of sins, God spoke to this issue when Peter wrote, "But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his *past* sins" (2 Peter 1:9). Yes, when we repent, we are cleansed from our *past* sins, from the very sins of which we are repenting.

Further corroboration can be seen in the Lord Jesus' letters to the seven churches. To the church at Ephesus Jesus said, "Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place" (Revelation 2:5). This was a church Jesus was writing to. If all prospective sins had already been forgiven, why would Jesus command the church to repent?

To the church at Pergamum, Jesus spoke of those advocating sexual immorality and those who "hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Revelation 2:15-16). Why should they repent if their future sins have already been forgiven? They need to repent because their prospective sins have *not* been forgiven. We need to repent as quickly as we can each time we realize we have sinned. We will then be restored to being holy in God's sight – without blemish and free from accusation (Colossians 1:22).

As a final example, let's look at what Jesus said to the church at Thyatira:

“Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds” (Revelation 2:20-23).

In this passage Jesus calls for Jezebel and those who commit adultery with her to repent. Jesus makes plain he will punish those who continue in sin and will repay each according to their deeds. None of this would be true or possible if repentance were prospective. Jesus' call to repentance proves that one can only repent of past sins, never prospective sins.

Likely this false claim results from misunderstanding what repentance is. It is *not* simply feeling sorry for one's sin and asking God's forgiveness. It *is* turning from the sin and turning to God. Those who continue in sin have not repented though they may have sought forgiveness. Repentance involves forsaking the sin, turning from it, doing one's best not to repeat it. This is not possible with prospective sin.

It is easy to see why prospective forgiveness of sins is so important to the antinomians and adherents of unconditional eternal security. Because they believe that all they need is a moment of faith in order to be eternally secure, they created a doctrine that will deal with future sin. Dr. Stanley says that no future sin will compromise one's salvation if once saved. This false doctrine is made

possible by claiming that when one has once repented of his sins, both past and prospective sins have been forgiven.

You can see how one false doctrine leads to many other false doctrines.

Knowing what you know now about the importance of righteousness, you can see how Satan finds ways to oppose righteousness by infiltrating the church with false doctrines that teach that being righteous is not necessary or better still, that it is impossible, or best of all, that our righteousness comes only through Jesus – an imputed righteousness that has nothing to do with our personal righteousness. Surveys show that many professing Christians live just as wickedly (unrighteously) as those in the world who make no profession of faith.

The great deceiver is always trying to deceive those who want to be loyal followers and disciples of the Lord Jesus. He wants them to believe the lie that personal righteousness does not affect one's salvation. He wants them to follow the ways of iniquity and unrighteousness and become his followers – children of the devil. In far too many cases, this is precisely what has happened.

Romans 7 misunderstood.

Many years ago when I was a new believer, a few of us would go to breakfast after church. I raised the subject of the need for righteousness. I was immediately told, "We can't be righteous. We sin hundreds of times every day. All we have to do is ask God to forgive us. Even Paul continually sinned. Are we better than Paul?"

I already knew about 1 John 3:6, "No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him." I didn't buy into that response. It seemed to me that this person was badly mistaken. He was referring to Romans 7:14-24 where Paul said,

“We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate to do. ... As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing. Now If I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it” (Romans 7:14-20).

I wondered if this is what Peter meant when he wrote about Paul’s letters: “... His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:16).

I knew this could not be a confession from Paul that as a Christian he was sold as a slave to sin. At Romans 6:15-18, Paul explained just the opposite:

“Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey – whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”

How utterly different these passages are. This latter passage is consistent with all we’ve seen about Jesus’ call to righteousness and condemnation of those who are slaves to sin. Here Paul says we are to be slaves to obedience, which leads to righteousness. Then he says to those receiving his letter, “You have been set free from sin and

have become slaves to righteousness." Didn't Paul state that he was unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin?

The difficulty is in the verb usage. In the Romans 7 passage, Paul is using present-tense verbs that seem to indicate that he is presently in that condition. Let's take a closer look. In the Preface to *Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*, the translator tells us of a principle to understand about Hebrew writers:

The Hebrews, in referring to events which might be either past or future were accustomed to act on the principle of transferring themselves mentally to the period and place of the events themselves, and were not content with coldly viewing them as those of a bygone or still coming time; hence *the very frequent use of the present tense* (emphasis added).

This is exactly what Paul did. He used present-tense verbs to describe his condition before coming to Christ. Because this is not the way we write or speak in Western society, this scripture has caused much confusion. Once we acknowledge this, the passage can be easily understood. Paul was talking about himself *before* coming to faith in Christ. Before knowing the Lord Jesus, Paul said of himself, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:24). But he answers his own question in the next verse: "Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

At Romans 8:1-2 Paul gives the solution to the problem he posed in chapter 7: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."

There is even more evidence that the Romans 7 passage could not be referring to Paul's condition while serving the Lord Jesus. Paul recounted his life before the believers: Paul said that he has a "clear conscience" (2 Timothy 1:3),

has "fought the good fight ... finished the race ... and kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7). He said, "Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God" (2 Corinthians 1:12). "We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have exploited no one" (2 Corinthians 7:2).

Paul set himself up as a model for others to follow: "Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice" (Philippians 4:9). "I plead with you, brothers, become like me" (Galatians 4:12). "I urge you to imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:16). "What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching" (2 Timothy 1:13). "Join with others in following my example, brothers" (Philippians 3:17). "For you yourselves know how *you ought to follow our example*. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but *in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow*" (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9). Paul's writings agree with these interpretations.

It is not surprising that the antinomians and unconditional eternal security adherents would try to find comfort in a wrong interpretation of that passage. They know full well that they live in sin; they want the assurance that the Apostle Paul also lived in sin. If he did, they must be alright in both their life of sin and in their false interpretation of Scripture.

For a more comprehensive study of Romans 7, please read my article "Romans 7 Revisited," at www.bereanpublishers.com | False Doctrines | Misunderstood | Romans 7 Revisited.

Chapter 11

REPENT, CHANGE, AND TEACH!

In an article titled, "A Shocking 'Confession' from Willow Creek Community Church," dated October 30, 2007, Bob Burney reported that mega-church Willow Creek Community Church released the results of a multi-year study on the effectiveness of their programs and philosophy of ministry. The study's findings are in a recently released book titled *Reveal: Where Are You?*, co-authored by Cally Parkinson and Greg Hawkins, executive pastor of Willow Creek Community Church. Hybels himself called the findings "earth shaking," "ground breaking" and "mind blowing." And no wonder: it seems that the "experts" were wrong.

The report reveals that most of what they have been doing for many years, and what they have taught millions of others to do, is not producing solid disciples of Jesus Christ. They are producing numbers, but not disciples. It gets worse. Hybels laments:

"Some of the stuff that we have put millions of dollars into thinking it would really help our people grow and develop spiritually, when the data actually came back it wasn't helping people that much. Other things that we didn't put that much money into and didn't put much staff against is stuff our people are crying out for."

If you simply want a crowd, the "seeker sensitive" model produces results. If you want solid, sincere, mature followers of Christ, it's a bust. In a shocking confession, Hybels states:

"We made a mistake. What we should have done when people crossed the line of faith and become Christians, we should have started telling people

and teaching people that they have to take responsibility to become 'self feeders.' We should have gotten people, taught people, how to read their bible between services, how to do the spiritual practices much more aggressively on their own."

Incredibly, the guru of church growth now tells us that people need to be reading their bibles and taking responsibility for their spiritual growth.

The website "Out of Ur," commented on the same facts and observed:

In other words, spiritual growth doesn't happen best by becoming dependent on elaborate church programs but through the age old spiritual practices of prayer, bible reading, and relationships. And, ironically, these basic disciplines do not require multi-million dollar facilities and hundreds of staff to manage.

Does this mark the end of Willow Creek's thirty-year influence over the American church? Not according to Hawkins:

"Our dream is that we fundamentally change the way we do church. That we take out a clean sheet of paper and we rethink all of our old assumptions. Replace it with new insights. Insights that are informed by research and rooted in Scripture. Our dream is really to discover what God is doing and how he's asking us to transform this planet."

Is it a surprise that tens of thousands of dollars spent for programs does not produce disciples? It shouldn't. Jesus told us to make disciples by teaching them to obey all that he commanded. Bill Hybels and the Willow Creek Church staff still haven't learned. They now think the way they should have done it was to get people to read their bible between services and be taught how to do the spiritual practices [whatever that is] on their own.

The commentators and Greg Hawkins have missed the point. Amazingly, after applying men's wisdom all these years and falling short, they intend to wipe the slate clean and rethink all of their old assumptions. Isn't it a pity that instead they don't read Matthew 28:18-20 to see what the head of the church commanded them to do to make disciples?

If you are a pastor or teacher who has failed or refused to make disciples by teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded, you must repent of your rebellious and sinful behavior. Scripture is clear about what happens to those who deliberately continue in sin:

If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God (Hebrews 10:26-27).

If you didn't have the knowledge of the truth before, you have it now. You are without excuse if you continue in this rebellious behavior.

There is not a more important issue in Christendom. The people who are attending our churches are experiencing a famine of the word of God. They came to hear about God, how they can please him, and how they can gain entrance to the kingdom of heaven. Instead, in far too many cases, they are given a false gospel that cannot and will not save. If you have not taught those in your charge to obey the teachings and commands of the Lord Jesus, you have been teaching a false gospel. There is no other Gospel by which men can be saved. Paul warned,

He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

God wants all of us to change and to obey his word, as the Lord Jesus told us. This book is a call to obey Jesus' command to make disciples by "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). You can change, but you must have the courage to follow God and not men. We've all often done things that have displeased God – we were often unaware of the gravity of our sin. If we do not repent and change, we will be judged more strictly (James 3:1).

My heart goes out to the millions of people who attend churches that do not preach the gospel of our Lord Jesus, who may sacrifice in giving of their time and treasure, yet are headed for hell because they are not obeying those teachings and commands of Jesus that say that unless they do (or do not do) a certain thing, they will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

When the teachings and commands of Jesus are taught as Jesus commanded, many people come to know God and willingly seek to obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus as his disciples.

How will you do that? First, you can use the Bible study on the Teachings and Commands of Jesus that I have written and taught over the last ten years. You can find it at www.bereanpublishers.com | Bible Study. The title of the study is *KNOWING AND LOVING GOD Through Learning and Obeying the Teachings and Commands of Jesus*.

I first wrote and taught the teachings and commands of Jesus in New Zealand. It was overly complex. Although it was simple for me to teach, it would have been difficult for others to do so. In four and a half years, I got as far as the middle of Luke.

When we returned to the states, I rewrote the study in its entirety. I concentrated on making it a study that did not require a seasoned Bible teacher to teach. I recently taught the new study for the first time. I was overjoyed to

see the transformation that took place in only 43 weeks of this study as opposed to four and a half years of teaching it in New Zealand. It isn't the study that is responsible for the changed lives; the words of Jesus are responsible. His words are truly spirit and they are life!

"Ah," you may be thinking! "Now we find that he wrote this book just to market his Bible study!" I don't blame you if you are thinking that, considering the rampant commercialization of the Gospel.

No, this study is on the Internet in its entirety and it is FREE! No charge! Nada! All you have to do is download and print as many copies as you wish.

The study is divided into four units of 12 weeks, 13 weeks, 12 weeks, and 5 weeks. It is divided this way so breaks can easily be taken between units if you prefer. Here in the Arizona desert we often take a break during the hottest part of the summer because lots of people leave the area for cooler climates.

The first three units contain all the teachings and commands of Jesus, without repetition. There is considerable repetition in the Gospels. It can be argued that God uses repetition to make sure certain teachings and commands get extra attention. However, I wanted to make sure that each person study all the teachings and commands once as soon as possible. Repetition would have delayed this.

There are 382 separate headings in the first three units. Each includes at least one teaching or command. Unit four is composed of 80 separate headings that review the teachings and commands that are the most obvious salvation issues – those that state or imply they must be obeyed in order to gain salvation.

I will share with you some methods I use to teach the study effectively. These might also be helpful to you. I print a certain number of copies for four weekly sessions at

a time. I print more copies as more people join the group. It is easy to adjust the number of copies needed every four weeks. I make a few extras for people who join between printings.

I buy generic white notebooks with clear plastic covers at Costco. I slip the bible study cover sheets behind the clear plastic covers to identify the study. The covers can be downloaded and printed from www.bereanpublishers.com | Bible Study.

Ten to twenty people have attended the last two studies. Groups this size are ideal because people are less apprehensive about participating. One group had a little over twenty people and it worked well.

I conduct the study in an incredibly simple way. The students have five days of homework which consists of very simple work such as filling in blanks, selecting multiple choice, etc. The home work must be done before the next meeting. Our weekly sessions last approximately one and a half hours. We start promptly at 7 p.m. I ask one of the students to open in prayer. We sit in close proximity so we can all hear each other. We then begin to read through the material we covered during the week. Each person reads, except me and those who have not done their homework (it is seldom that a student does not complete the assignments). The students are allowed to interrupt at any time if they have any questions or comments. I interrupt occasionally to add to or clarify a point. I divide the reading into half or full pages for each student to read. We then close in prayer at approximately 8:30 p.m.

The students discussed the study after one session. I was surprised to hear them say that they loved doing the homework. The hard part, they said, was stopping at only one days' work. They often wanted to continue. I've instructed them to take the study one day at a time so they can better understand what they've learned and be able to apply it.

There were some interesting developments during sessions of the last study. As the students grasped the importance of what they're learning, they suggested that everyone in the church should take the study, including the entire pastoral staff. They were convinced it would change the church as it had changed them.

We are blessed that our pastor, Trent Renner, is preaching through the teachings and commands of Jesus – in spite of being warned that it would be a big mistake. Many said that you can't teach a study longer than 4-8 weeks because you'll lose the people's attention. Trent was convinced of the importance of the study and ignored the warnings. He recently completed his first year – approximately 50 weeks – of preaching through the teachings and commands of Jesus. As of this writing, he is up to Matthew 14. For the first time the church continued to grow through the hot summer months. Trent sent me an email he received from a pastor he sent the study to: "Thanks again for forwarding Bernie's material last year. I started the series in December and it is going incredibly well. I really think that this series will have a lasting impact."

I highly recommend that everyone take the Bible study. It can be utilized for home fellowship groups, youth groups, adult groups, etc. You may be saving innumerable people from an eternity in hell by teaching it. Each person who doesn't learn to obey Jesus' teachings and commands from us is another person who may not be able to enter the kingdom of God. They may not *do* the will of God because they won't *know* the will of God.

If you choose to preach through the teachings and commands of Jesus, the study may be helpful to you, as it often provides supplemental scriptures that help explain the teaching or command.

The people who have taken the Teachings and Commands study will be your biggest cheerleaders.

Conclusion

We conclude this book with the warning of our Lord Jesus that you have read multiple times:

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who *does* the will of my Father who is in heaven”
(Matthew 7:21).

The teachings and commands of Jesus are the will of God. Your job, and mine, is to do whatever we can to help people know the will of God by teaching them to obey the teachings and commands of Jesus, just as Jesus commanded us at Matthew 28:18-20. The rest is up to God.

May God bless your efforts to obey the Lord Jesus and to extend his kingdom as you study and teach his commands.