

SCRIPTURE ALONE !

The Word of the Lord lasts forever. 1Peter 1:25

**A SET OF BIBLE STUDY GUIDES FOR
THE INSTRUCTION OF ADULTS**

May the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ accompany these lessons so that many may be brought to and grounded in the saving truth of His Word.

Gary Ray Branscome

INTRODUCTION

DISTINGUISHING GOD'S WORD FROM MAN'S WORD

The words, “We have not written anything to you, other than what you read,” tell us that the message that God wants us to get from His Word is so plainly stated that it needs no interpretation (2Corinthians 1:13). In making that statement I am not denying the fact that many passages seem hard to understand, or that men may disagree on what those passages say. What I am saying is that God means exactly what He said, nothing more. If we do not understand everything, so what! Instead of professing ourselves to be wise, and making up explanations, we need to pay attention to the things we do understand, knowing this, that every doctrine necessary to our salvation is stated in passages that are so clear they need no interpretation. And, the only meaning that God wants us to place on His words is the same meaning you are putting on my words as you read this, the plain grammatical meaning of the words. In other words, I am not writing “anything to you, other than what you read” (2Cor. 1:13).

What conclusions you draw from the words of Scripture is an entirely different question, and should never be confused with what the words actually say. Conclusions are the word of man. That is not to say that conclusions are not important. We must arrive at conclusions in order to apply what the Bible says. However, all of our conclusions must be judged by what the Bible clearly and explicitly says. And, any conclusion that contradicts what the Bible explicitly says must be rejected as false (Isaiah 8:20).

Because every doctrine necessary for our salvation is clearly and explicitly stated in Scripture every Christian ought to be able agree on what is taught. However, because of the blindness of the human heart, Satan gets people arguing over all sort of trivial matters and interpreting the Bible to fit their own ideas. And, it is the words of man **not the words of God** that are the source of controversy and division. Therefore, in order to learn what the Bible actually says, you need to put all man-made ideas aside and look at what the words of Scripture actually say.

First of all, much of the misunderstanding that engenders controversy stems from the fact that the word, “literal” has changed meaning. When Martin Luther, and others living in that period, spoke of the “literal” meaning of the words of Scripture, they were talking about the grammatical meaning of the

words, not an unrealistic surface meaning of the words that denies any legitimate figure of speech. Dr. Robert Preus explains it this way.

The literal sense of Scripture is the meaning, or tenor, that the words directly and obviously convey. For instance, in John 3:16 the literal sense is immediately clear. But there is also a literal sense to those passages that are tropical and figurative. Such passages we do not read superficially according to the surface tenor of the words, as when Herod is called a fox or when we are to cut off a hand that offends us — such an interpretation would be absurd. In figurative statements of this kind, not only the words according to their native sense but also the thing or point (*res*) that the words express according to their quondam imagery must be considered. The literal sense, then, is the sense intended by the writer, whatever trope or genre is used. Figures of speech, words, and even ideas all have their literal sense. And the literal sense (meaning, intention) of a pericope is drawn from all these ingredients. Glassius makes it quite clear that the literal sense of a Scripture passage or pericope is not necessarily identical with the surface meaning of the words, but the genre of the text or the tropes therein must also be ascertained, when necessary, to determine the

literal sense of a text. (*The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, Page 321-322).

On other words, the literal meaning is the same meaning that words have in everyday conversation. As I said previously, it is the same meaning that you are placing on my words as you read them. It is the same meaning that any author intends for you to get from his words unless his aim is to deceive. For that reason, Satan does all that he can to blind people to the plain meaning of the words, causing them to imagine all sorts of other meanings. False prophets then twist those meanings as they attempt to make the Bible say what they want it to say. During the middle ages false prophets led the entire church into darkness by ignoring the literal meaning of the words while exalting allegorical meanings (dreamed up by men) as the highest wisdom. Nevertheless, all of the explanations that men have dreamed up are the word of man, not the Word of God. And, no truth of Scripture comes from such explanations (2Peter 1:20).

One argument that Satan uses to lead people away from God's Word, is the claim that Scripture alone is insufficient because it makes no mention of such important doctrines as the "Doctrine of the Trinity". Satan even sends cult people door to door trying to sell that idea to the public. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. While it is true that the word, "Trinity" is not found in Scripture, that word is simply the name we ascribe to a body of doctrinal truths that are each clearly and explicitly stated in Scripture. For example.

1- The words, “Don’t we all have one father? Hasn’t one God created us,” give us the doctrine that **the Father is God** (Malachi 2:10) [See also Mathew 5:16, 45, 48.]

2- The words, “We are in the one who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God, and eternal life,” give us the doctrine that **the Son is God** (1John 5:20).

3- The words, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost... you have not lied to men, but to God,” give us the doctrine that **the Holy Ghost is God** (Acts 5:3-4).

4- And, the words, “There is one God; and there is none other but he,” give us the doctrine that **there is only one God** (Mark 12:32).

In stating those four doctrines I in no way want to imply that the passages I quoted are the only passages of Scripture that teach those doctrines. Nor do I wish to imply that those four doctrines are all there is to the doctrine of the Trinity. There is far more. Nevertheless, those four doctrines constitute the heart and core of the doctrine of the Trinity. And, the point I want to make is that each of them is clearly and explicitly stated in Scripture.

I also want to call attention to the fact that those doctrinal truths are not all found in one place, but are scattered through Scripture “here a little and there a little”. For it is written, “To whom can he teach knowledge? and who will he enable to understand doctrine?... for truth must be upon truth, truth upon truth; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little,” (Isaiah 28:9-10).

Another line of deception that Satan uses over and over again in leading people away from the literal truth of God’s Word, is the question, “Surely you don’t believe that the *Book of Revelation* is to be taken literally? Do you?” The people who repeat that question generally assume that it would be foolish for anyone to take the *Book of Revelation* literally. However, they are failing to make an important distinction, and that brings

me to the **second** point that I want to make. In understanding God’s Word, it is important to distinguish between the meaning of the words, and the meaning of dreams and visions described by those words.

For example: Genesis 41:1-7 describes a dream in which Pharaoh saw seven thin cows eat seven fat cows. There is nothing figurative about the words of the text. Those words give us a straightforward literal description of what Pharaoh saw in his dream. However, that does not mean that the dream itself is a literal description of the events which were to take place. On the contrary, the dream was highly figurative as Joseph’s interpretation revealed.

The same holds true when it comes to interpreting the dream or vision described in the *Book of Revelation*. For example: in Revelation 13:1 we read, “And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea,

having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.” In reading those words, the first thing that I want to call to your attention is that those words give us a straightforward literal description of something John saw in his dream or vision. However, that does not mean that what John saw in that dream or vision is to be interpreted “literally,” or that he was seeing future historical events. On the contrary, the Bible itself tells us that John’s dream or vision was highly figurative when it tells us that the seven heads of the beast, “are seven mountains,” (Revelation 17:9). In contrast, when someone makes up an explanation, like those who claim that the beast John described is really a man, that is not an interpretation of the words but a purely imaginary explanation of the dream. As such it is just something someone made up, a *figment* of someone’s imagination, not something the Bible says. Yet we have people who are so confused that they claim to be interpreting the Bible literally when they make up stories to explain Scripture. In order to avoid such confusion we need to distinguish between God’s Word and man’s word, and stick to the words of the text. When it comes to interpreting dreams, unless the Bible explicitly gives us the explanation – as it did in the case of Pharaoh’s dream (Genesis 41:25-27) – any explanation that men come up with is the word of man. And, the word of man should never be taught as doctrine (2Peter 1:20, Mark 7:9-13). Of such made-up stories Dr. John Theodore Mueller had this to say:

In whatever matter Holy Scripture has definitely spoken the Christian theologian must suppress his own views, opinions, and speculations and adhere unwaveringly to the divine truths revealed in Holy Scripture. In no case is he permitted to inject into the body of divine truth his own *figments and fabrications*, and at no time must he allow his reason the prerogative of doubt, criticism, or denial, but every thought must everywhere be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 2Corinthians 10:5. (*Christian Dogmatics, page 39*)

Conclusion

When God tells us that he created all things “in six days,” we should believe what He said (Exodus 10:11). When Jesus says, “My kingdom is not of this world,” we should believe what He said (John 18:36) When Jesus tells us that He will raise up believers “on the last day” we should believe what He said (John 6:39-44) In short, In every passage God wants you to believe what He has said, and never interpret it to contradict what He has said elsewhere in Scripture (2Corinthians 1:13, Isaiah 8:20). And, to do that we must distinguish clearly between God’s Word and man’s word.

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 1

A SCRIPTURAL GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD

As the children of light, we have a responsibility to deal honestly with the Word of God, to refrain from reading our own ideas into the text, and to learn from that Word the meaning that God intended for it to convey. In saying this I realize that the world in general could care less about the intended meaning. Those who want an excuse to ignore God's Word, rationalize sin, or make the Bible say what they want it to say are quick to claim that "what the Bible says is all a matter of opinion." However, that is not what Christ taught, and a refusal to take His words seriously is not going to advance God's kingdom, or deliver anyone from darkness. Therefore, we need to look carefully at those passages in which God tells us how we are to interpret His Word.

THE NEED FOR FAITH IN CHRIST

2Corinthians 4:4 The god of this world has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

[Comment: This passage tells us that those who do not trust in Christ have been blinded to the truth of the gospel. Therefore, it should be obvious that faith in Christ is a key factor in understanding God's Word.]

Luke 18:10-14 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank you, that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one who exalts himself shall be humbled; and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

[Comment: This story relates to our interpretation of Scripture, not only because repentance goes hand in hand with faith in Christ, but because the Pharisee interpreted Scripture in a way that excused his own sins and

shortcomings, while the publican acknowledged his sin. Applying that example to interpretation, we learn not only the importance of admitting our sin, but the importance of correcting our own opinions in order to bring them into accord with the Word of God (Romans 12:2, 2Corinthians 10:5, Isaiah 8:20).]

James 4:6 God resists the proud, but gives grace unto the humble

Isaiah 66:2 To this *man* will I look, *even to him who is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word.

1 Corinthians 11:31 If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

Luke 10:21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes:

[Comment: Being wise in his own eyes, the Pharisee was too proud to admit his sin, thus the truth of salvation was hidden from him (Luke 1:51 and 10:2 1). In contrast, the publican judged himself, trembled at God's Word, and so received grace (Luke 18:17).]

THE CLARITY OF SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 1:13 We write no other things to you, than what you read or acknowledge; and I trust you shall acknowledge even to the end;

2Corinthians 3:12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:

[Comment: These verses tell us that the meaning God intends for us to get from His Word is not hidden or mysterious. On the contrary, it is exactly what we read, nothing more.]

Psalms 119:105 Your word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Psalms 19:7 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.

2Timothy 3:15 From a child you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

[Comment: These verses tell us that the Word of God is so clear that its saving truths can be known by a child and understood by the simple. In fact, it is only because it is clear that it can be a lamp unto our feet or a light unto our path.]

THE PURPOSE OF SCRIPTURE

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

1John 5:13 I have written these things to you who believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God.

John 20:31 But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name.

[Comment: These verses tell us that the Bible was written to testify of Christ, so that we might believe on Him, and know that in Him we have eternal life. Moreover, because it was written to testify of Christ, its words should be understood in the light of that testimony, and no passage should ever be interpreted to contradict what the Bible says about salvation through faith in Him (John 3:16).]

THE SOURCE OF DOCTRINE

John 8:31 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed on him, If you continue in my word, *then* you are my disciples indeed;

Deuteronomy 4:2 You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish *ought* from it

Proverbs 30:6 Do not add to his words, lest he reprove you, and you be found a liar

Mark 7:13 Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition.

Revelation 22:18 For I testify unto every man who hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of this book of prophecy, God will take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things that are written in this book.

[Comment: These words tell us that we are not to add to, or take from the words of Scripture. Christ wants us to continue in His Word, and we only do that

when we do not go outside of it for doctrine. In other words, the source of our doctrine is to be Scripture alone, to the exclusion of human opinion, tradition, or any other source of revelation. This is important, because God has included in the Bible all that we need to know to be saved, and additions only obscure the truth (John 8:31).]

“In whatever matter Holy Scripture has definitely spoken the Christian theologian must suppress his own views, opinions, and speculations and adhere unwaveringly to the divine truths revealed in Holy Scripture. In no case is he permitted to inject into the body of divine truth his own figments and fabrications, and at no time must he allow his reason the prerogative of doubt, criticism, or denial, but every thought must everywhere be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 2Cor. 10:5. That is the demand which God Himself makes on all who would serve Him as theologians ; in every instance they are to attest and proclaim His Word and not their own.” (Christian Dogmatics, by J.T. Mueller, page 39)

THE UNITY OF GOD'S WORD

2 Timothy 3:16 All scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

2 Peter 1:20-21 No prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. Because prophecy did not originate of old by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

[Comment: Because the Bible is the Word of God, not the word of man, it only contains one theology. Therefore, nothing it says is to be interpreted in a way that makes it disagree with what it says elsewhere.]

[Note: The Law should never be interpreted in a way that contradicts the fact that it cannot make anyone righteous (Romans 3:19-20), and that true righteousness comes only through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:6, Romans 3:21-28, Romans 10:4).]

THE AUTHORITY OF GOD'S WORD

Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, *it is* because *there is* no light in them.

Romans 3:4 Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That you might be justified in your sayings, and might overcome when you are judged.

1John 4:6 We are of God: he who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. Hereby we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

1Corinthians 14:37 If any man thinks himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

Psalm 107:11 They rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the most High:

Romans 12:2 Be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

2 Corinthians 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

2 Peter 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

[Comment: These verses tell us that we are to accept everything that the Bible says, conform our thinking to it, and reject any idea that is not in accord with the truth of Scripture. Any interpretation that contradicts a plainly stated truth of scripture, or is not in accord with all that the Bible says, is to be rejected.]

LETTING SCRIPTURE INTERPRET ITSELF

1Corinthians 2:13 Which things also we speak, not in the words that man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Isaiah 28:9-10 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? *those who are* weaned from the milk, *and* drawn from the breasts. for precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little:

[Comment: Since both of these passages are telling us the same thing (i.e. how God teaches), they explain each other. Together they tell us that the Holy Spirit reveals His doctrine by comparing one line of Scripture with another, or, in other words, by comparing what the Bible says in one place with what it says somewhere else.]

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, those who study God's Word will be blind to the truth of the gospel, and will only twist it to their own damnation (John 16:13, Psalm 56:5, 1John 2:27). However, the Holy Spirit does not enlighten us by giving us private interpretations (2Peter 1:20), but by giving us the faith to believe what His Word plainly says (2Corinthians 1:13). It is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that we are brought to faith in Christ (1Corinthians 12:3). And, the Holy Spirit will never lead anyone to ignore or contradict the truths that have been stated above.

CONCLUSION

The rules that have just been presented are not hard to follow; however, they allow no room for self-deception. You cannot read your own assumptions into the text, teach man-made explanations as doctrine, or explain away what does not fit, and expect to have the truth. In fact, those who do so are trying to make their own word into the Word of God, and that

is a form of idolatry (self-deification). Honesty requires us to admit our errors and correct our own thinking before attempting to teach others, and that means being your own worst critic. We have to be willing to look at our sins and take the criticism of others seriously, while earnestly desiring to find and eliminate every faulty opinion. Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 2

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

The Doctrine of God consists of what the Bible tells us about God, to the exclusion of all opinion and conjecture. Through Scripture God has revealed Himself as our Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier and Judge. Some of what He has revealed has to do with His nature, some with His attributes, but there is much more. The important thing to remember in learning what He has revealed is to stick to what God has said in His Word without twisting His words to make them fit our ideas.

GOD IS A SPIRIT

John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Luke 24:3 9 Look at my hands and my feet, and see that it is really me:
handle me, and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see
me have.

John 1:18 No man has seen God at any time; but the only begotten of God,
who is in the bosom of the Father, has revealed him.

Genesis 18:1-3 And the LORD appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre: as he sat in the tent door during the heat of the day; And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, I pray you, do not pass by your servant:

[Comment: John 4:24 tells us that God is a Spirit. Luke 24:39 tells us that “a spirit” does not have “flesh and bones,” so we know that flesh and bones are not part of God’s nature. And, John 1:18 tells us that no man has seen God at any time. Therefore, when God appeared to Abraham, what Abraham saw was not God Himself, but a visual form that God chose to use. Because the Bible does not explain that appearance, we should never add to Scripture by making up explanations, or interpret any part of it to contradict the first three passages that I quoted, or any other passage of Scripture.]

GOD IS OUR CREATOR

Exodus 20:11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything that is in them, and rested on the seventh day:

GOD IS OUR REDEEMER

Psalm 78:35 And they remembered that God was their rock, and the most high God was their redeemer.

Isaiah 48:17 The LORD, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, says; I am the LORD your God who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way that you should go.

GOD IS OUR SANCTIFIER

Philippians 2:13 It is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Galatians 5:16-17 Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and they are opposed to each other: so that you cannot do the things that you would.

GOD IS ETERNAL

Psalm 90:1-2 Lord, you have been our refuge in every generation. Before you brought the mountains into existence, or formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

GOD IS PRESENT EVERYWHERE

Jeremiah 23:24 Can anyone hide himself in a secret place where I will not see him? asks the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? asks the LORD.

Psalm 139: 7-13 Where can I go to escape your spirit? or where can I flee to escape your presence? If I go up into heaven, you are there: if I make the grave my bed, behold, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and stay at the most distant parts of the sea; Even there your hand will lead me, and your right hand will hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness will hide me; and the light around me will become night. Even the dark does not hide things from you; but the night shines as

the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to you. For you have created my inner being: you knit me together in my mother's womb.

GOD IS HOLY

Leviticus 19:2 Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.

1Peter 1:16 It is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Matthew 5:48 Be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.

GOD IS ALL POWERFUL

Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be perfect.

Matthew 19:26 Jesus looked at them, and said to them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.

GOD DOES NOT CHANGE

Malachi 3:6 For I am the LORD, I do not change; that is why you sons of Jacob have not been destroyed.

GOD IS ALL KNOWING

Psalm 139:1-4 O LORD, you have searched me, and known me. You know when I sit down and when I get up, you understand my thoughts from far away. You watch over my travels and my rest, and know all my ways. Before there is a word on my tongue, O LORD, you know all about it.

GOD IS JUST

Deuteronomy 32:4 All his ways are just: a God of truth without iniquity, just and right is He.

Isaiah 45:2 1 There is no other God besides me; a just God and a Savior; there is none besides me.

GOD IS FAITHFUL

2Timothy 2:13 If we do not believe, he remains faithful: for he cannot deny himself.

1Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

GOD IS MERCIFUL

Psalm 145:9 The LORD is good to everyone: and shows compassion on everything he made.

Exodus 34:6-7 The LORD God, Jahweh, is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet who will by no means overlook sin;

GOD IS LOVE

1John 4:8 He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

GOD IS OUR JUDGE

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 Let us hear the conclusion of the entire matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring everything that is done into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil.

Hebrews 10:30-31 We know him who said, Vengeance belongs to me, I will repay, says the Lord. And again, The Lord will judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

GOD IS TRIUNE

1- Through the words, “Don’t we all have one father? Hasn’t one God created us,” the Bible gives us the doctrine that **the Father is God** (Malachi 2:10) [See also Mathew 5:16, 45, 48.]

2- Through the words, “We are in the one who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God, and eternal life,” the Bible gives us the doctrine that **the Son is God** (1John 5:20).

3- Through the words, “Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost... you have not lied to men, but to God,” the Bible gives us the doctrine that **the Holy Ghost is God** (Acts 5:3-4).

4- Through the words, “There is one God; and there is none other but he,” the Bible gives us the doctrine that **there is only one God** (Mark 12:32).

CONCLUSION

While I could add many other passages, they would only repeat and enlarge upon what has been said. However, I do want to stress the fact that a true disciple of Christ will accept everything that the Bible says about God, without trying to make it conform to the mind of man (John 8:30-31). In contrast, cults will interpret some Bible passages to contradict others, while rejecting and explaining away any that do not conform to their own ideas (1John 4:6).

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 3

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

Since the doctrine of the Trinity consists of truths that are clearly and explicitly stated in Scripture, references to it can be found in both the Old Testament, and in Jewish literature written prior to the time of Christ. Nevertheless, during the fourth century Christians adopted a terminology that made it easier to express certain facts about God without contradicting what the Bible says elsewhere. For example, even though the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, if we referred to them as three Gods, we would contradict the Bible passages that say there is only one God. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion, while making it clear that only one God exists, we refer to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost as three persons rather than three Gods. Furthermore, when we refer to them as "persons," all we really mean is that they have the attributes of a personal being (they love, care, plan, think, speak, etc.). Thus, we refer to the Holy Spirit as a person because the Bible tells us that He has a "mind" (Romans 8:27), "speaks" (1Timothy 4:1), teaches (John 14:26), can "grieve" (Ephesians 4:30), can be "lied to" (Acts 5:3-4) and should be referred to as "He," not it (John 16:13). That terminology makes it clear that the Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force, while working like an index to assure that we do not omit relevant facts about God's triune nature. What follows is a presentation of the doctrine of the Trinity as it is revealed in Scripture.

THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD

Deuteronomy 6:4, Hear O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord. (Mark 12:29)

Mark 12:32, There is one God; and there is none other but He.

1Timothy 2:5, For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men,
the man Christ Jesus.

James 2:19, You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also
believe, and tremble.

1Corinthians 8:6, There is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and
we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by
Him.

Isaiah 43:10-11, I am He: before me there was no God formed, neither shall
there be after me. I, even I, am Jehovah; and beside me there is no
Savior.

Deuteronomy 4:35, Jehovah He is God; there is none else beside Him.

Isaiah 44:6, Thus says Jehovah the king of Israel, and His redeemer Jehovah of hosts; I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.

THE FATHER IS GOD

Deuteronomy 32:6, Do you thus repay Jehovah, O foolish people and unwise? is not He your Father who has bought you? has He not made you, and established you?

Isaiah 64:8, Jehovah, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; and we all are the work of your hand.

Isaiah 63:16, You are our Father though Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: you O Jehovah, are our Father, our redeemer; your name is from everlasting.

1 Thessalonians 3:11, Now God Himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

THE SON IS GOD

Matthew 1:23, Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Isaiah 7:14)

Isaiah 9:6, For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulders: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Psalm 2:7,12, The Lord hath said unto me, You art my Son; this day have I begotten you ... Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

Hebrews 1:8, But unto the Son He says, Your throne, O God , is for ever and ever.

Isaiah 49:26, I Jehovah am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.

Isaiah 54:5, For your maker is your husband; the Lord of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer the holy one of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall He be called.

John 20:28, And Thomas answered and said to Him, My Lord and my God.

[See also, 1 Timothy 1:1, 1 Timothy 2:3, and 1 Timothy 3:16.]

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS GOD

Acts 5:3-4, But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Ghost ... You have not lied to men, but to God.

Job 33:4, The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty has given me life.

Matthew 12:31-32, Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men ... whosoever speaks against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him.

Isaiah 61:1, The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PERSONAL (NOT A FORCE)

Acts 13:2, As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Acts 5:9, Then Peter said unto her, How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?

Ephesians 4:3 0, And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.

1 Corinthians 12:11, But all these works the one and selfsame Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will.

EACH PERSON IS DISTINCT FROM THE OTHER TWO

Matthew 3:16-17, And Jesus when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

John 14:16-17, I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth.

John 14:26, But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things.

YET THERE IS ONE GOD, NOT THREE GODS

Mark 12:32, There is one God; and there is none other but He.

[See all of the Bible passages in the first section which tell us that there is only one God.]

THE THREE ARE ONE

Matthew 28:19, Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name (singular) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

1John 5:7, For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (these tri are une.)

[See, 2Corinthians 13:14, Isaiah 48:16, Genesis 18:1-3, and all of the passages in the first section that tell us that there is only one God.]

JESUS CHRIST IS TRUE GOD, JEHOVAH INCARNATE

Isaiah 49:26, I Jehovah am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty one of Jacob.

[See all of the passages in section three that tell us that Jesus is true God.]

JESUS IS ALSO TRUE MAN, THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH

1Timothy 2:5, For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 42:1, Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect, in whom my soul delights. (Matthew 12:18)

CONCLUSION

The Bible tells us that God teaches doctrine "line upon line, line upon line; here a little, *and* there a little" (Isaiah 28:9-10), and the doctrine of the Trinity gives us a clear example of how that is done. While I could add many other passages, the point I am trying to make is that those who are truly orthodox allow the actual words of Scripture to be their doctrine, and so teach nothing that is not taught in God's Word. Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 4

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

The Doctrine of Christ consists of what the Bible tells us about Christ, to the exclusion of opinion and conjecture. One aspect of this doctrine deals with the fact that He is both true God and true man, another with His states of humiliation and exaltation, and the third with His threefold office as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

CHRIST IS TRUE GOD

1John 5:20, We are in him who is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

John 20:28, Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

John 1:1,14, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.

1Timothy 4: 10, We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those that believe.

Titus 1: 3, According to the commandment of God our Savior.

Matthew 1:23, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Isaiah 9:6, For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

[Comment: Since a true son will be made of the same substance as his father, while a created son (puppet/statue) will not, the ancient creeds speak of Christ as being "God of the substance of the Father," in order to highlight the fact that He is true God.]

AS GOD HE HAS ALWAYS EXISTED

Isaiah 63:16, You, O LORD, *are* our father, our redeemer; your name *is* from everlasting.

Micah 5:2, You, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of you will He come forth to me *who is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.

John 8:58, Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.

CHRIST IS ALSO TRUE MAN

1Timothy 2:5, For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Romans 5:15, The gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded to many.

2Timothy 2:8, Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.

Hebrews 2:16, For truly he did not take on *the nature of* angels; but He took on the seed of Abraham.

John 7:42, Has not the scripture said, That Christ comes of the seed of David?

Romans 1:3, Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.

BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Matthew 1:23, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Luke 1:27, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name *was* Mary.

Luke 1:34-35, Then Mary said to the angel, How will this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you: therefore also that holy thing that will be born of you will be called the Son of God.

AS GOD CHRIST IS EQUAL TO THE FATHER

John 5:18, Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but also said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

Philippians 2:6, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

John 14:9, Jesus said to him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet you have not known me, Philip? he who has seen me has seen the Father?

YET AS MAN HE IS INFERIOR TO THE FATHER

1Corinthians 15:28, And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

John 14:28, My Father is greater than I.

AT THE SAME TIME THERE IS ONLY ONE CHRIST, NOT TWO

1Corinthians 8:6, But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him.

1Timothy 2:5, For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

[To these verses we could add every passage that speaks of Christ in the singular.]

SOME ERRORS THAT CHRISTIANS REJECT

Since there is only one God, Bible believers reject the idea that Christ is half man and half God. Such a being would not be truly God or truly man, therefore, that idea contradicts the passages that tell us that Christ is God, as well as the passages that tell us that He is man. Furthermore, since God said, "I change not" we reject the idea that He changed into man (during the time Christ was on earth) and then changed back (Malachi 3:6). Instead the words "He took on *him* the seed of Abraham" tell us that Christ took the nature of man into His divine nature through the virgin birth (Hebrews 2:16 and Philippians 2:7).

CHRIST'S HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION

While Christ has always been true God, during the time He was on earth he humbled Himself in that He did not make full use of the divine knowledge

and power that were at His disposal. As it is written, "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8).

Since His humiliation ended, all of the attributes of deity are His, even according to His human nature. As it is written, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). [See also Philippians 2:9-10.]

CHRIST, AS PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

The following passages reveal Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King. The Doctrine of His Vicarious atonement deals with what he accomplished as our High Priest.

Acts 7:3 7, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall you hear.

Hebrews 10:14, By one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified.

Hebrews 1:8, But unto the Son *he says*, Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of your kingdom.

CONCLUSION

While I could add many other passages, they would only repeat and enlarge upon what has been said. However, I do want to stress the fact that the true church of Jesus Christ accepts everything that the Bible says about Christ, without trying to make it conform to the mind of man (John 10:27). In contrast, cults will interpret some Bible passages to contradict others, while rejecting and explaining away any that do not conform to their own ideas (1John 4:6).

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 5

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SUBSTITUTIONARY ATONEMENT

Faith in Christ is more than just believing that He lived, it is believing that He died for our sins, and that through His death we have forgiveness and eternal life. Because God will not simply ignore sin, if it were not for the forgiveness that Christ won for us every one of us would wind up in hell (Joshua 24:19). In other words, God did not just decide to overlook our sin or "let us off the hook," Christ paid for our sin. He took those sins upon Himself and died the death that we deserved to die. For that reason, His death is referred to in theology as the Vicarious (Substitutionary) Atonement.

AN OVERVIEW

Passages that either refer to, or allude to, Christ's death in our stead are scattered throughout the Bible. The blood sacrifices that were required of those under the law were designed help us to think of Christ as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Isaiah speaks of God laying "the iniquity of us all" on Christ (Isaiah 53:6). And Paul uses the word "atonement" – a term that is used throughout the Old Testament in reference to blood sacrifice – in reference to Christ's death (Romans 5:10-11). Therefore, let us look at what the Bible says.

THE GOSPEL

In the fifth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans, we read:

Romans 5:6-11. For when we were yet without strength, in due time **Christ died for the ungodly**. For one will scarcely die for a righteous man: although perhaps some might even dare to die for a good man. But God demonstrates his love for us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now **justified by his blood**, we shall be **saved from wrath through him**. For if, when we were enemies, we were **reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only *so*, but **we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement**.

[Comment: When these verses tell us that Christ died "for us" or "for the ungodly," they are saying that Christ died in our place (verses 6&8). They then

explain what that means by telling us that we are "justified by His blood... saved by wrath through Him... reconciled to God by the death of His Son" and "have now received the atonement" (verse 9). I might add, that to be "justified by His blood" is to be justified by what He did, and He did it for us "when we were enemies" and therefore totally unworthy.]

OTHER STATEMENTS BY PAUL Hebrews

9:28, Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.

Hebrews 10:10,14. We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*... For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified.

[Comment: These verses tell us that Christ's death was a sacrifice (He was offered), that He bore our sins, and that through His death we are cleansed and made perfect in the sight of God.]

1Corinthians 15:3, For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.

Galatians 1:4, Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.

[Comment: The first verse tells us that Christ "died for our sins," while the other tells us that He freely "gave Himself" so that by His death He might" deliver us from this present evil world."]

Colossians 2:13-14, And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.

[Comment: These verses tell us that even though we were spiritually dead because of sin, He made us alive through forgiveness, blotting out all of the ordinances that condemned us, through His death on the cross.]

THE TESTIMONY OF PETER

1Peter 3:18 and 2:24, For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit // Who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness.

[Comment: When these verses tell us that Christ "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust" or "bore our sins in His body on the tree" they are telling us that He died in our place as our substitute.]

THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN

1John 1:7, The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1John 2:2, He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

CHRIST'S OWN TESTIMONY

Matthew 20:8, The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many. [See Mark 10:45]

Matthew 26:28, 1Corinthians 11:24, This is my body, which is broken for you // this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

John 3:16, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 11:25-26, I am the resurrection, and the life: he who believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever lives and believes in me will never die.

[Comment: In these verses Christ tells us that His blood was shed so that our sins might be forgiven, and that we receive that forgiveness (and thus eternal life) through faith in Him.]

CONCLUSION

Christ's sacrificial death on our behalf, and the corresponding victory over death that resulted in His resurrection, is the basis of our faith. "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17).

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 6

THE DOCTRINE OF SIN AND SALVATION

Although Bible history forms the heart and center of our Christian worldview, what the Bible says about Christ is paramount. The Christian worldview does not consist of mere events, but events that have a spiritual significance for every one of us. And Christ is the focal point of that significance. He is central to all that we are, all that we believe, and all that we hope for.

The Bible was written to testify of Christ, and the Biblical record of sin and salvation is central to that testimony. Because God has revealed Himself in history, everything His Word says about Christ and our salvation relates to Bible history, and specifically to seven key events. The creation, and fall of man; and the birth, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of Christ. The following Bible passages tell us the spiritual significance of those events.

GOD'S CREATION OF THE WORLD

The first two chapters of Genesis give us God's own record of what took place at creation, and how mankind came into existence. When the Bible says that God made all things in six days, the words mean exactly what they say, God wants us to teach exactly what they say (not the opinions of men), and those who try to make them say something else are rebelling against God. The following passages tell us that God created us in His own image (not with a sinful nature). Because He created us we are accountable to Him, and He is fully justified in punishing our sin.

Exodus 20:11 In six days The Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day.

Genesis 1:27 God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

Ecclesiastes 7:29 God hath made man upright.

Genesis 1:31 And God saw every thing that He had made, and behold it was very good.

Isaiah 64:8 We are the clay, and you our potter.

Romans 9:21 Hath not the potter power over the clay?

THE FALL OF MAN

The historical record of the fall is found in the third chapter of Genesis. The following passages tell us that our nature was changed by the fall, and that we are now by nature "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3).

Genesis 2:16-17 And The Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.

Genesis 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

Genesis 5:3 And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Psalm 51:5 Behold I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Psalm 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.

Romans 3:10-12 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. (Psalm 14:1-3)

Psalm 5:9 Their throat is as an open sepulcher.

Psalm 140:3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders poison is under their lips.

Psalm 10:7 Whose mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: whose tongue is mischief and vanity.

Isaiah 59:7-8 Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent

blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not; and there is no justice in their goings: they have made them crooked paths.

Psalm 36:1 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Genesis 6:5 Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually. (Genesis 8:21)

Ecclesiastes 7:20 For there is not a just man upon the earth, that does good, and sins not.

1 Kings 8:46 There is no man who does not sin.

Isaiah 64:6 We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST

The historical record of Christ's virgin birth is recorded in the first chapter of Matthew, and the first two chapters of Luke. The following verses tell us that, through the miracle of the virgin birth, Christ was conceived and born as both true God and true man, Jehovah incarnate.

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Luke 1:35 The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

Matthew 1:22-23 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of The Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Isaiah 7:14)

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 Behold the days come, says The Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, Jehovah Our Righteousness.

Micah 5:2 But you Bethlehem Ephratah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth unto me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting.

Hebrews 2:16 For he truly did not take upon himself the nature of angels; but he took upon himself the seed of Abraham.

CHRIST'S DEATH ON THE CROSS

All four Gospels record the events relating to Christ's death on the cross. The following passages tell us that because Christ died for our sins, His blood cleanses us of all sin, and in Him we have forgiveness and eternal life.

John 19:16-18 Then delivered he Him therefore unto them to be crucified, And they took Jesus, and led Him away. And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.

1 Corinthians 15:1-3 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received... how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

Isaiah 53:4-11 He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.... for the transgression of my people He was stricken.... He shall bear their iniquities.

John 1:29 Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.

Romans 5:8-10 God commands His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

1 John 1:7 If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Revelation 7:14 These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Ephesians 1:7 In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son , so that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD

All four of the Gospels record the events surrounding Christ's resurrection from the dead. The following passages tell us that Christ rose from the dead in victory over death, and because He lives we shall live also.

Luke 24:1-6 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in and found not the body of Jesus. And it came to pass as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two men stood beside them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but is risen.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel... that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

Romans 4:25 Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.

Acts 2:24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

Psalm 30:3 O Lord, You have brought up my soul from the grave: You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

Psalm 41:10 But Thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.

1 Corinthians 15:17 If Christ is not raised, your faith is in vain; you are yet in your sins.

1Corinthians 15:20-22 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

CHRIST'S ASCENSION UNTO HEAVEN

The most detailed account of Christ's ascension is recorded in the first chapter of Acts. The following passages tell us the spiritual significance of that ascension.

Because Christ has ascended unto heaven He:

1- Has sent the Holy Ghost into the world.

John 16:7-8 It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement... He shall glorify me.

[Note: The work of the Holy Ghost is a doctrine which fits in at this point, but because of its length I will not include it here. In short the Holy Ghost caused the Bible to be written and through it brings people to repentance and faith in Christ. (2Peter 1:21, 1Corinthians 12:3, Romans 10:17)]

2- He lives to make intercession for us.

Romans 8:34 Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

1John 2:1 If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Psalm 68:18 You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive.

Hebrews 7:25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them.

3- He will return again.

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Acts 1:10-11 And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven.

CHRIST'S RETURN TO JUDGE THE WORLD

In regard to the end of the world and the final judgement, there are two key facts that we need to keep in mind. 1- Every person who has ever lived, or ever will live, will be judged and must give account to God. 2-Only those whose sins have been washed away by the blood of Christ will not be condemned.

[Note: The passages that warn of God's judgement are Law, while the passages that assure believers they will not be condemned are Gospel.]

Matthew 24:30-31 Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven unto the other.

Revelation 20:12-14 And I saw the dead small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written

in the books, according to their works... And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast in the lake of fire.

2Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ: that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it is good or bad.

Romans 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.
(See John 5:25-29, Matthew 25:31-46.)

Romans 10:11 Whoever believes in Him will not be ashamed.

1John 1:7 The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us of all sin.

John 5:24 He who hears my word, and believes on him who sent me, has everlasting life, and will not come into condemnation; but has passed from death to life.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

1John 2:28 And now little children, abide in Him; so that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

CONCLUSION

The way of the world is to use imagination and deduction in order to fabricate an abstract framework into which the teachings of Scripture can be fitted. However, Bible history is the framework that God has provided. All of the doctrinal truths of Scripture relate to it, and it is the only framework that does not compromise the statements of Scripture.

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 7

THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

In the third chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul addresses the question of what makes us just or righteous in the sight of God. In chapters one and two he lays the groundwork for his presentation, by pointing out sins prevalent among both Jew and gentile. He then comes to the point by asking, "Are we [Jews] better *than they?* [Gentiles]" (Romans 3:9). That question then leads into his presentation of the doctrine of justification, which consists of two parts. In the first part he explains why the deeds of the law cannot justify anyone (Romans 3:10-20). In the second, he explains how we can be justified apart from the law (Romans 3:21-28).

[NOTE: To justify someone is to absolve them of guilt, vindicate them of any wrongdoing, or pronounce them innocent or righteous in the sight of the law. Therefore, spiritually speaking, a just person is someone who is innocent, righteous, or blameless before God.]

PART ONE

Romans 3:9-20 What then? are we [Jews] better *than they?* [Gentiles] No, in no way: for we have already proved that all men, both Jews and Gentiles, are all under sin; As it is written: **There is none righteous, no, not one;** There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat *is* an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit. The poison of serpents *is* under their lips, whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet *are* swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery *are* in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that **whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.** Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in his sight, for the knowledge of sin comes by the law.

[Comment: In verses ten through eighteen Paul quotes several passages that condemn all who are under the law. He then states two important truths. In verse 19 he tells us that the law condemns everyone who is under it in order to silence every boast of righteousness by showing the whole world to be

guilty. In verse 20 he concludes by saying that the law, can never make us righteous in the sight of God, because God gave it to reveal our guilt.]

PART TWO

Romans 3:21-28 But now **the righteousness of God without the law** is revealed, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, Even the righteousness of God, *that is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all those who believe.* For there is no difference, For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God has set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, *I say,* at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

[Comment: In verses 2 1-28 Paul explains that since the law cannot make us righteous, God has now revealed a way to become righteous without the law (verse 21), even the righteousness that is imputed to all who trust in Christ (verse 22). For if we have all fallen short of what the law requires, being cleansed of sin by the forgiveness that is ours through faith in Christ Jesus (verses 23-26), then we are "justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (verse 28).]

SOME PASSAGES THAT RELATE TO WHAT PAUL SAID

The words, "The forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," tell us that the grace spoken of in verse 24 consists of forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7).

The words, "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin," explain why Paul refers to Christ's blood as a "propitiation" and why he sees faith in Christ's blood as a source of forgiveness (Compare 1John 1:7 with verse 25).

The words, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness," tell us that the faith by which we are justified is faith in God's promise of forgiveness in Christ (Compare Galatians 3:6 with verse 28).

PAUL AND JAMES

Even though the Apostle Paul carefully explains why the law cannot make us righteous, those who want to be motivated by the law are continually trying to find some way around his words. Therefore, as soon as they learn that James said, "by works a man is justified and not by faith only," they assume that the words of James negate what Paul said (Romans 3:28, James 2:24). In their blindness they then feel free to ignore Paul's warnings against trusting in works. However, a careful examination of what James said makes it clear that Paul and James were talking about two different things. When Paul spoke of faith he was referring to faith in Christ. In contrast, the words, "You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe and tremble," make it clear that the faith James regarded as "dead" was not faith in Christ at all. Likewise, when Paul spoke of works he was referring to works of righteousness, or obedience to the law. In contrast, the words, "Was not Rahab the Harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way," make it perfectly clear that the works James had in mind were not works of obedience, or righteousness, but what we would call the fruits of faith (James 2:19, 20, 25). Therefore, James was not saying that we need works of righteousness in addition to faith. Instead he was saying that if a person truly has faith in Christ it will make a difference in their life.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

In the third chapter of Romans the Apostle Paul explains the proper relationship of law and gospel. Verses 10-20 tell us that the law cannot make anyone righteous. And, if the law cannot make us righteous, then it never was intended to make us righteous (Isaiah 64:6). On the contrary, God intended for us to take His law so seriously that we would feel condemned, unclean, and defiled because of our sin. And if people did take it that seriously, they would cry out to God for mercy, trusting in that mercy and in His promise of a messiah and forgiveness (Psalm 13:5, Acts 10:43). In verses 21-28 Paul goes on to explain how we are truly made righteous in the sight of God, namely through the forgiveness that is ours in Christ Jesus (Acts 10:4, 1John 1:7, Galatians 3:6). Whoever contradicts one of these truths, either by claiming that the things we do make us righteous, or by

claiming that faith in Christ is not enough to make us righteous is not rightly dividing the Word of Truth, and is not approved by God (2Timothy 2:15).

Those who profess to trust in Christ, while trying to please God or gain His favor by their works, are not really trusting in Christ at all. If they were, they would be trusting in His blood (not works) to bring God's favor, and they

would believe that since their sins have been washed away God no longer sees any unrighteousness in them.

Those who seek righteousness by the law, generally compare themselves with others, and judge others, by assuming that they are more righteous. However, God sees no difference between the self-righteous and those who sin willfully. As far as He is concerned, both deny their sin and refuse to look to Christ for forgiveness. [Romans 2:1 and 3:19-20, 2Corinthians 10:12, Hebrews 10:26, Galatians 5:4]

CONCLUSION

The Biblical doctrine of Justification by Faith can only be understood and appreciated by those who know that the law condemns them. That is why the Apostle Paul began by making it clear that the law cannot make anyone righteous (Romans 3:9-20). In fact, all who think that the law makes them righteous (even partly righteous) will not be able to understand how anyone can be made righteous through faith. And lacking that understanding, they will assume that Justification by faith is just a way of getting around the law (2Corinthians 4:4).

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 8

THE DOCTRINE OF IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the fourth chapter of Romans, the Apostle Paul clarifies the doctrine of Justification by faith by calling our attention to the fact that both Abraham and David were justified by faith. The doctrine that he sets forth in this chapter has to do with the nature of justification, and the fact that we are not justified by our own righteousness, but by the righteousness that is imputed to us through faith in Christ.

RIGHTEOUSNESS WAS IMPUTED TO ABRAHAM

Romans 4:3-5 For what does Scripture say? **Abraham believed God**, and it was counted (imputed) to him for righteousness. Now **to him who works is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt**. But to him who does not work, but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his **faith is counted for righteousness**.

[Comment: In verse three Paul reminds his readers that righteousness was imputed to Abraham through faith. Verses four and five then apply that knowledge to us by pointing out that those who seek righteousness through works wind up owing a debt, while righteousness is imputed to those who are not working to make themselves righteous, yet trust in Christ.]

RIGHTEOUSNESS WAS IMPUTED TO DAVID

Romans 4:6-8 Even as David also describes the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputes righteousness without works, *saying*, Blessed *are* those whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed *is* the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

[Comment: In these verses Paul cites David as someone who was justified by faith, and the fact that he equates imputed righteousness (verse 6) with forgiving sin (verse 7), tells us that forgiveness is what makes us righteous in the sight of God. Because of that forgiveness, "There *is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus // For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes" (Romans 8:1 and 10:4).]

RIGHTEOUSNESS APART FROM THE LAW

Romans 4:9-12 Does this blessedness *only come* upon the circumcised, or also upon the uncircumcised? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it reckoned? when he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not circumcised, but uncircumcised. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith that *he had* while *still uncircumcised*: that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed to them also: And the father of circumcision to those who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, that *he had* while *still uncircumcised*.

[Comment: In these verses Paul points out righteousness was imputed to Abraham before he had been circumcised. Therefore, one does not have to be circumcised or keep the law in order to be counted as righteous.]

Romans 4:13-16 **The promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.** For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect: Because **the law works wrath:** for where no law is, *there is* no transgression. Therefore *it is* by faith, that *it might be* by grace; that the promise might be sure to all the seed; not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

[Comment: In verse 13 Paul points out that God's promise that Abraham would inherit the world, was not given to him, or to his descendants, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. In verses 14-16 he then explains that if one had to keep the law, the promise would be made of no effect, because the law brings only wrath. (See Romans 3:19-20.)]

RIGHTEOUSNESS TO ALL WHO TRUST IN CHRIST

Romans 4:23-25 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it will be imputed, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

[Comment: In these verses Paul reminds us that what the Bible says about righteousness being imputed to Abraham was not written for his sake alone, but for our sake. For just as righteousness was imputed to Abraham, it will be imputed to all who believe that Christ died for their sins, and was raised again for their justification.]

CONCLUSION

In the preceding verses, Paul stressed the fact that righteousness is imputed apart from the law, in order to make it clear that it is not the law, but the forgiveness we have in Christ, that makes us righteous in the sight of God. In chapter ten he put it this way, "if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and will believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart man believes to righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made to salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 9

THE DOCTRINE OF THE FALL AND REDEMPTION

Since the concept of works righteousness involves a denial of sin, it entails a form of self-deception that seems reasonable to our sin corrupted way of thinking. For that reason, many people find it hard to understand that we are not saved by what we do, but by what Christ did for us on the cross. Therefore, to more effectively get that message across, the Apostle Paul drew an analogy between the sin of one man (Adam), and the obedience of one man (Christ). That analogy is found in the fifth chapter of His Epistle to the Romans.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF ADAM'S SIN

Romans 5:12-14 Therefore, as sin entered into the world by one man, and death by sin; and so **death passed upon all men, for all have sinned:** (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is a type of him who was to come.

[Comment: In verse 12 Paul reminds us that as a result of Adam's sin, we are all going to die, for we have all sinned. In verses 13-14 he then makes it clear that the law will not save us, by pointing out that people were dying (and going to hell) before the law was ever given, and, therefore, before the sins of the law were ever imputed to men.]

THE PARALLEL

Romans 5:15-19 But the free gift is not like the fall. For if through the sin of one many died, much more the grace of God, and **the gift by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, has abounded to many.** Likewise the gift of God is not like the result of that one sin: for the sentence from one sin brought condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if death reigned through one man's sin; how much more shall those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through one man, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as through the sin of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift

came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

[Comment: In verse 15 Paul tells us that even though what Adam did had the opposite effect of what Christ did, there is a similarity because in both cases what was done by one affected all. In verse 16 he points the radical difference between the result of Adam's sin, and the result of God's gift (the gift of forgiveness that Christ won for us through His death on the cross). In verses 17-19 he elaborates on the parallel by pointing out the spiritual significance of both Adam's sin, and Christ's sacrificial death on our behalf.]

Romans 5:20-21 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But **where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:** That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

[Comment: Since Paul told us in verses 12-14 that men were sinners and were dying as a result of sin before the law was given and thus before the sins of the law were ever imputed to anyone, in these two verses (verses 20-21) he assures us that the grace that is ours in Christ is sufficient to cover all sin (both the sin in our nature, and the sin of transgressing the law).]

CONCLUSION

Paul drew this parallel in order to emphasize the fact that we are not made righteous by what we do, but by what Christ did for us. In verse fifteen we are told that grace is a gift, in verse sixteen we are told that justification is a gift, and in verse seventeen we are told that righteousness is a gift. The point being that our salvation is a gift. As it is written, "For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 10

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAW AND THE PROMISES

In the third chapter of Galatians, the Apostle Paul clarifies the doctrine of Justification by Faith, by calling our attention to the fact that we are justified through faith in God's promise, rather than through keeping the law. Beginning with the fact that faith in God's promise was imputed to Abraham for righteousness, he tells us that the promise Abraham believed was the gospel (verse 8). He then explains that as Abraham was justified through faith in God's promise, all who trust in Christ are justified through faith in God's promise (verse 22).

THE LAW AND THE PROMISES

Galatians 3:6-9 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Realize therefore that those who trust *in Christ*, are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, having foreseen that God would justify the heathen through faith, **proclaimed the gospel to Abraham in advance**, *saying*, In you shall all nations be blessed. So then those who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

[Comment: In verse six Paul reminds us that faith was imputed to Abraham for righteousness. In verse seven we are told that all who share that faith are the spiritual children of Abraham. And, in verse eight we are told that the faith being spoken of is the same faith by which we are justified, namely faith in the gospel (the good news of forgiveness in Christ).]

Galatians 3:10-12 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one who does not continue to do everything that is written in the book of the law. But *it is* clear that that no man is justified in the sight of God by the law: for, The just shall live by faith. However the law has nothing to do with faith: for *it says*, The man who does these things will live by them.

[Comment: In verses 10-11 Paul emphasizes the fact the law can never make us just or righteous in the sight of God (see Romans 3:19-20). In verse twelve he then makes it clear that faith is not another requirement in addition to the law, but has nothing to do with the law. (Verse six defines faith as believing God's gospel promise. See Romans 10:17.)]

Galatians 3:13-14 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one who hangs on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

[Comment: In these verses Paul first refers to the fact that Christ took the curse of our sin on Himself, and then tells us that He died in our place so that the blessing of forgiveness given to Abraham might be extended to the gentiles, and that all who believe might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.]

Galatians 3:15-18 Brethren, what I am saying happens in everyday life; Even if a covenant is but a human agreement, *once it is* enacted, no man sets it aside, or adds to it. Now the promises were made to Abraham and his seed. God did not say, And to *your* seeds, as referring to many; but, And to your seed, referring to one which is Christ. My point is this, **the covenant concerning *faith in* Christ, that was confirmed by God at the time of Abraham, cannot be nullified by the law**, which came four hundred and thirty years later, so as to make the promise of no effect. For if the inheritance *comes* by the law, *it is not given* by promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.

[Comment: In these verses Paul uses the fact that once an agreement (covenant) has been made it is final, to illustrate the fact that God's covenant with Abraham was not nullified by the law (which came 430 years later). In verse 16 God himself tells us that Christ is the "seed" mentioned in His promise to Abraham.]

[Concerning verse 17: Since the law did not change the covenant that God gave to Abraham, forgiveness has always been through faith in God's promise of forgiveness in Christ. Therefore, any promise of forgiveness connected with the law (animal sacrifice) was a promise of forgiveness in Christ. Likewise, any promise of forgiveness that God has connected with baptism is a promise of forgiveness in Christ. And, that forgiveness comes to us the same way it came to Abraham, namely, through believing God's promise of forgiveness in Christ. (2Corinthians 1:21, Acts 10:43, Hosea 6:6, Matthew 12:7, Acts 22:16, Psalm 13:5)]

Galatians 3:19-22 What then *is the purpose of* the law? It was added because of transgressions, **until the seed to whom the promise referred had come; and it was put into force by angels in the hand of a mediator.** Now a mediator is not *a mediator* of one, but God is one. *Is* the law then against the promises of God? Absolutely not: for **if there had been a law given that could have given life, righteousness truly would have been**

by the law. But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise might be given to those who believe **through faith in Jesus Christ.**

[Comment: In verse 19 Paul tells us that the law was only added until Christ should come. In verse 21 he explains that if anyone could get to heaven through their own innocence God would never have sent Christ to die on the cross. And, verse 22 summarizes what Paul explained more fully in Romans 3:10-28, while making it clear that what God has promised can only become ours through faith in Jesus Christ.]

[Note: Verse 8 defines Abraham's faith in God's promise as faith in the gospel (no other faith would justify). And, (as verse 22 points out) because God's promises are gospel, what is promised can only be received through faith in Christ. Our faith is faith in what the Bible says, and more specifically faith in God's promise of forgiveness in Christ (Romans 10:17).]

Galatians 3:23-26 But before faith came, we were imprisoned by the law, kept under guard for the faith that would later be revealed. Therefore **the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ**, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

[Comment: These verses explain that the purpose of the law was to show us our sin and need of forgiveness in Christ. However, we no longer need to live under the constant threat of the law, for we are all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.]

[Note: This chapter makes it clear that throughout history, there has only been one way in which God has imparted His grace to men, and that is through faith in His promise of forgiveness in Christ. Baptism and the Lord's Supper (like preaching) are only tools that God uses to give us that promise. "Therefore, we may say that there is but one means by which the

knowledge of grace and salvation, and grace and salvation itself, are imparted to us; it is the Gospel, the glad tidings of the grace of God in Christ Jesus." ("A Summary of Christian Doctrine", by Edward W. A. Koehler, page 189.)]

CONCLUSION

The doctrine set forth in these verses clarifies what the Bible says about Justification by Faith, while defining faith not only as faith in a promise, but more specifically as faith in God's promise of forgiveness in Christ (verse 22). Although our society tends to place esoteric meanings on the word "faith," the

only faith that brings God's blessing is faith in Christ. For that reason, each promise given to us in Scripture must be understood in the light of its relationship to Christ. For example; Abraham's faith in God's promise was only counted as righteousness because his confidence in that promise was faith in Christ [no other faith would justify] (Galatians 3 :6& 16, Romans 4:5).

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 11

THE DOCTRINE OF THE PROPER RELATIONSHIP OF LAW TO GOSPEL

The doctrine that God wants us to believe and teach does not consist of human opinion, or even of what men have deduced from the words of Scripture. On the contrary, the doctrine that God wants taught is the doctrine He has clearly and explicitly stated in the Words of Scripture. He wants us to believe and teach what He has said, not what we (or anyone else) think.

That being said, the Bible contains two totally different and distinct messages, or doctrines, the Law, and the Gospel. The Law is God's message to the unrepentant. It exposes his sin and warns of God's wrath. In contrast, the Gospel is God's message to those who repent and turn to Christ. Through it God assures us of His mercy and forgiveness, and through that assurance He brings us to faith in Christ (Romans 1:16 and 10:17).

The Law Cannot Make Us Righteous

Romans 3:10 As it is written, **There is none righteous, no, not one.**

[NOTE: Paul goes on to quote several passages from the Old Testament which prove that no one is righteous in the sight of God. Ps. 14:2,3, Ps.5:9 and 140:3, Ps. 10:7, Is. 59:7-8, Ps. 36:1.]

Romans 3:19-20 Now we know that **whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law:** that every mouth may be stopped, and **the entire world** may become guilty before God. Therefore no flesh will ever be declared righteous [justified] in God's sight by the deeds of the law: because the knowledge of sin comes by the law.

[COMMENT: Verse 19 tells us that the Law is God's message to those who are "**under the law**" (the unrepentant). And, the fact that the Law makes the entire world "**guilty before God**" tells us that everyone in the world is under the Law. Verse 20 then tells us that no one ["no flesh"] will ever be declared righteous [justified] through doing what the Law demands, because the Law was given to show us our sin (and need of a Savior).]

[NOTE: God works through the Law to call men to repentance and mercy. However, men can make the Law of no effect by rationalizing, or excusing, sin (Mark 7:13). And, those who deny the truth of what the Bible says about

creation and the fall make the entire Law of no effect for many, greatly hindering the work of salvation (1 Cor. 1:17).]

Righteousness Comes Only Through the Gospel

Romans 3:21-24 But now **the righteousness of God apart from the law** is revealed, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even **the righteousness of God which comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all and upon all who believe**: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified [declared righteous] freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Romans 4:3 For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.

Romans 9:30-10:4 What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, who **did not try to make themselves righteous, attained to righteousness**, even the righteousness that is by faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, has **not attained** to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not **seek it through faith**, but through the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling-stone... For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, **they have not submitted** to the righteousness of God. For **Christ is the end of the law** for righteousness to every one who believes.

[COMMENT: The first passage (Rom. 3:21-24) tells us that there is a way of becoming righteous in the sight of God, "**apart from the Law**" and the "**law and the prophets**" [the Old Testament] bears witness to that fact (Rom. 4:3). That righteousness is given to us freely, by the grace of God, "**through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus**". The next passage then tells us that we do not receive that righteousness by trying to make ourselves righteous, but through faith in Christ, "**For Christ is the end of the law** for righteousness to every one who believes."]

[NOTE: Because the Law was given to show us our sin (and need of a Savior), we only submit to [obey] the Law when we admit our sin and look to Christ for forgiveness (Rom. 10:3).]

Salvation Has Always Been Through Faith In Christ.

Galatians 3:8 The Word of God, having foreseen that God would justify the heathen through faith, proclaimed **the gospel** to Abraham in advance, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed.

Galatians 3:6 **Abraham believed** God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Galatians 3:18 If the inheritance comes by the law, it is not given by promise:
but God gave it to Abraham **by promise**.

Galatians 3:17 My point is this, the covenant concerning faith in Christ, that was confirmed by God at the time of Abraham, **cannot be nullified** by the law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, so as to make the promise of no effect.

Galatians 3:7 Realize therefore that those who trust in Christ are the children of Abraham.

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

[COMMENT: These verses tell us that Abraham “believed” the “Gospel” (the good news of forgiveness in Christ, 1Cor. 15:1-3) and through faith in the Gospel received the righteousness that is imputed “apart from the Law” (Rom. 3:2 1). And, if Abraham became righteous in God’s sight through faith in God’s “promise”, then the Law which came 430 years later cannot “nullify” that “promise,” so as to change the way of salvation. On the contrary, the same righteousness that was imputed to Abraham has, throughout history, been imputed to all who believe (Gal. 3:7).]

Genesis 3:15 I will put hostility between you and the woman [Eve], and between your seed and her seed; it will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel.

Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which (faith) he was declared to be righteous.

Romans 4:6-8 David also describes the blessedness of the man, to whom God imputes righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Hebrews 11:13 These all died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them afar off, believed them, and embraced them, acknowledging that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

John 4:42 this is indeed **the Messiah, the Savior of the world**.

[Comment: Adam and Eve received the same promise that was given to Abraham, the promise of a “seed” (descendant) who would break the power of sin. Since righteousness comes only through faith in God’s promise (of forgiveness in Christ), Able was counted as righteous because of his faith in Christ, not works. In the same way, all who were saved before the time of Christ were saved through faith in the **“the Messiah, the Savior of the world,”** not works. (See Heb. 11:1-40 and 12:1-2.)]

All Of God's Promises Are Ours Through Faith In Christ

2Corinthians 1:20 All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God through us.

Galatians 3:5-6 Did God give you His Spirit, and work miracles among you, because you observed the law, or because you heard and believed the gospel? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

Galatians 3:22 Scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise might be given to those who believe, through faith in Jesus Christ. 1John 1:7 The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us of all sin. [COMMENT: These verses tell us that we do not need a different faith for each promise of God, but "all the promises" are ours through faith in Christ. God sees nothing good in those who do not believe (Isaiah 64:6) and nothing bad in those who trust in Christ (1John 1:7, Psalm 32:2).]

In Christ We Are Free From the Law

1Timothy 1:8 **The law is not meant for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious.**

Matthew 5:18 For I tell you truly, Until heaven and earth pass away, **not one letter or stroke will pass from the law.**

Romans 7:6 But now we have been released from the law, having died to that which once bound us; that we should serve in **newness of spirit**, and not in the oldness of the letter.

1Thessalonians 4:11 Do your best to live quietly, mind your own business, and work with your own hands, as we directed you;

1Timothy 2:2 **Lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.**

Hebrews 10:26 If we sin willfully or deliberately after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins remains,

1 Corinthians 10:13 God who is faithful, will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can bear.

[COMMENT: These verses tell us that "not one letter or stroke" has passed from the Law. The Law still condemns the unrepentant. But, we are free from the Law in Christ. Not free to sin willfully, but free to live quiet and peaceable lives "in all godliness and honesty," without being condemned by the Law.]

[NOTE: God first makes us righteous (through faith in the forgiveness that Christ won for us, 1 John 1:7, 1 Cor. 15:1-4), and then, after we are righteous, gives us His Holy Spirit enabling us to resist temptation and avoid willful sin (Gal. 5:16-18).]

True Repentance

Ezekiel 14:6 The Lord GOD says; Repent, and turn away from your idols; and **turn your backs** on all your abominations.

Psalm 51:17 God will not despise a heart that is humbled and **sorry for sin**.

Isaiah 57:15 For the high and lofty One who lives forever, and whose name is Holy, says; I live in a high and holy place, with him who has a humble heart and is **sorry for sin**.

Psalm 32:5 I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD; and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Hebrews 11:6 Without faith [in Christ] it is impossible to please God.

[COMMENT: The purpose of the Law is to bring us to repentance. True repentance involves a **sorrow “for sin”** that will lead us to turn our “backs” on sin. However, repentance is **incomplete without faith in Christ** (Heb. 11:6). The Law shows us our need for the forgiveness Christ won for us. The Gospel assures us of that forgiveness (Rom. 10:17), and faith receives that forgiveness (Rom. 5:1-2).]

Conclusion

The only faith that makes us righteous in God's sight is faith in Christ (Rom. 3:22). Therefore, Law and Gospel are not being rightly divided whenever works are portrayed as what makes us righteous, or faith is portrayed as faith in the Law (believe and obey). Likewise they are not being rightly divided when the unrepentant are given a false assurance of forgiveness by being told that God accepts them because of their works, or when those who repent are robbed of their assurance of salvation by the bogus claim that faith is not enough. Nor are they rightly divided by those who portray salvation as being different during different periods of history.

Because Satan is constantly coming up with new ways of confusing Law and Gospel I cannot begin to list all of them. However, because confusion on this issue hinders the work of the Gospel every serious Christian can profit from reading the book, “LAW AND GOSPEL” by C.F.W. Walther.

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 12

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY GRACE

Although Paul's correspondence with the churches at Rome and Galatia emphasized justification, the second chapter of his letter to the Ephesians focuses on salvation. While justification has to do with our standing before God, and the fact that it is faith in Christ that makes us righteous in His sight; salvation has to do with our final state, and "the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (verse 7, Romans 3:28, Galatians 3:6, John 3:16).

Ephesians 2:1-7 And *he has given you life*, who were **dead in trespasses and sins;** In which you formerly walked according to the way of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience: Among whom we all likewise formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the **children of wrath**, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love for us, Even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And has **raised us up** together with *him*, and made *us* sit with him in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

[Comment: In these verses Paul reminds us that even though we were spiritually "dead in trespasses and sins" (verse 1), and "by nature the children of wrath" (verse 3), we have been "raised" from spiritual death to new life in Christ, solely by God's grace (verses 5-6). (God's "grace" is His mercy and love, compare verses 4 and 5).]

[Note: Verse 6 The spiritual transformation, from being dead in sin to new life in Christ, is the first resurrection (See Colossians 2:12 and 3:1, Revelation 20:5-6).]

Ephesians 2:8-10 For you are **saved by grace through faith;** and that not of yourselves: *it is the gift of God:* Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, that God determined in advance that we should do.

[Comment: These verses tell us that we are saved by grace, that we receive that grace through faith (verse 8, Galatians 3:6), that it is the gift of God not something we earn (verses 8-9, Romans 6:23), and that the good works that follow salvation are a fruit of faith, not something that we do to be saved (verse 10, Ephesians 5:9).]

Ephesians 2:11-13 Therefore remember, that formerly you being Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcised by those who call themselves the Circumcision (that in the flesh made by hands); Remember that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away are made near **by the blood of Christ**.

[Comment: Again Paul reminds his readers that even though they were Gentiles who were totally unworthy of any blessing, without hope, "and without God" (verses 11-12), they were reconciled to God by the blood of Christ (verse 13).]

Ephesians 2:14-18 For he is our peace, **who has made both Jew and Gentile one**, and has broken down the wall of hostility that separated us; Having abolished in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances; in order to make of the two one new body in him, so making peace; And that he might **reconcile both to God in one body by the cross**, having thereby put the hostility to death: And came and preached peace to you that were far away, and to them who were near. **For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.**

[Comment: Through Christ's sacrifice we have peace with God and are no longer cut off from His kingdom (verse 14), for He has abolished the hostility (enmity) caused by the law (verse 15), so that both Jew and Gentile might be reconciled to God by His death on the cross (verse 16). Through faith in Him, we both have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit (verse 18).]

Ephesians 2:19-22 For that reason you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*; In whom the entire building fitly bound together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom you are also built together as a dwelling place of God through the Spirit.

[Comment: Therefore, being reconciled to God by the blood of Christ, we are no longer "strangers and foreigners" [i.e. Gentiles], "but fellow citizens" of God's kingdom (the spiritual Israel, Romans 2:28-29, verse 19). For we are all "built together" as living stones (verse 21, 1Peter 2:5), Jesus Christ being the "chief corner stone" (verse 20), that all believers together (the spiritual Israel, Luke 17:21), might be a "holy temple" (dwelling place) of God (verse 22).]

CONCLUSION

Paul begins by reminding the Ephesians of their background, and the fact that they were in no way worthy of salvation, in order to remind them that God saved them solely by His grace, which they received through faith in Christ, not works. He then goes on to make it clear that even though the law separated gentiles from Israel in the past; because it is not the law, but faith in Christ, that makes us acceptable to God, Jewish and Gentile believers now both have equal status as citizens of God's heavenly kingdom (the true Israel, verse 19, Romans 2:28-29, Luke 17:2 1).

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 13

WALKING IN NEWNESS OF LIFE

The fact that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the law raises the question of how we should live. Because the natural mindset is works oriented, many believers find it hard to conceive of freedom from the law in any terms other than freedom to sin. Without an ironclad set of rules they struggle to understand where the line should be drawn. On one hand the Bible warns them not to seek righteousness by the law, on the other it condemns them if they sin. The Apostle Paul tells them that they are free from the law, yet called for the excommunication of one who was unrepentant. Paul deals with this question in the sixth chapter of his epistle to the Romans.

AN OVERVIEW

The message that Paul is trying to get across in this chapter is that it is possible for us to be good citizens, good neighbors, and honest and upstanding members of the community without trying to make ourselves righteous by living according to a list of dos and don'ts (Romans 9:30-32). That is why he never presents his instructions as a new law or a way to become righteous. And, that is what those who are works-minded find frustrating. Verse four talks about walking in newness of life, verse ten about living unto God, verse twelve about not letting sin reign, and verse nineteen about yielding to righteousness. Yet there is a good reason why those terms are never distilled down into a set of rules.

WALKING BY FAITH

Romans 6:1-7 What shall we say then? **Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Absolutely not.** How shall we, who are dead to sin, continue living in it? Don't you know, that all who were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him through baptism into death: that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we should also walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also continue together *in the likeness of his resurrection*: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that **henceforth we should not serve sin. For he who is dead has been freed from sin.**

[Comment: In these verses Paul explains to those at Rome, that when they came to faith in Christ, their baptism outwardly portrayed the fact that their faith

made them partakers of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. He then uses that fact to introduce and illustrate the concept of walking in "newness of life." In other words, we are to conduct ourselves as we will after the resurrection, once the corruption of sin has been removed from our nature (1Corinthians 15:52-54, Jeremiah 17:9). I might also point out, that Paul does not command us to walk in "newness of life" as if we were under a new law, but instead admonishes us by the gospel. However, it is hard to describe that conduct, without someone twisting what is said into a set of rules. If I described it as "walking in a clean conscience," there would be some that would think they were free to do any evil thing as long as they felt no guilt over it. At the same time, there would be others who would become enslaved to their conscience, as if obeying their conscience was what made them righteous.]

Romans 6:8-11 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that since Christ was raised from the dead he cannot die again; death has no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died to sin once for all: but in that he lives, he lives to God. In the same way regard yourselves as dead to sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[Comment: These verses tell us that as Christ (having died unto sin) now lives to God, we should also live to God as if we were dead to sin. In other words we should do what is right and pure and good, not because we are trying to make ourselves holy, but because it is the right thing to do.]

Romans 6:12-14 Therefore do not allow sin to reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts. And do not yield your members to sin *as* instruments of unrighteousness: but yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and *yield* your members to God *as* instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not have dominion over you: because you are not under the law, but under grace.

[Comment: In these verses Paul contrasts yielding our body to God as an instrument of righteousness, with allowing sin (Satan) to have dominion over us. Here, again, he is not talking about following rules or trying to make ourselves righteous, but about doing the right thing while trusting in Christ to make us righteous. In verse fourteen he says that sin has no

dominion over us because we are free from (not under) the law. In contrast, those who are under the law are under the power of Satan. That statement makes me wonder if those in hell will be forced to keep the law. At any rate, we know that they will be condemned by it.]

Romans 6:15-18 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? Absolutely not. Don't you know, that when you yield yourselves to someone to obey him as servants, you are the servants of the one you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God, you who were the slaves of sin, have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine that was delivered you. And having been freed from sin, you became the servants of righteousness.

[Comment: Since those who seek righteousness by the law are continually trying to excuse their sin, Verse 15 tells us that God is not going to allow Christ's suffering and death be used as an excuse to sin (Hebrews 10:29, James 4:4). Verse 16 then warns those who would sin willfully (as did David in the matter of Uriah) that they are opening themselves up to satanic influence, the end of which is death. Nevertheless, the obedience called for, is not the obedience of the Pharisee but the obedience of the Publican – namely the godly sorrow that leads us to admit our sin and look to Christ for mercy (Luke 18:13, 2 Corinthians 7:10).]

Romans 2:19-23 I am being frank with you because of the weakness of the flesh: for as you have yielded your members as slaves to uncleanness and to iniquity leading to more iniquity; even so now yield your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification. For when you were the slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness. Yet what benefit did you get out of those things that you are now ashamed of? for those things result in death. But now **having been freed from sin, and become servants of God, you have your fruit unto holiness**, and the result is everlasting life. For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[Comment: In these verses Paul contrasts the fruits of evil behavior with the fruits of good behavior. In verse twenty-one he points out that evil behavior brings shame and death. Yet instead of saying that good behavior brings life, he points out that "being made free from sin" (i.e. saved), we "have" eternal life, and right behavior is the fruit (or by product) of our salvation. Then, in order to make it clear that salvation is a gift, not something we earn, he sums up what he has said with the words, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."]

SOME ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

As I pointed out before, it is very hard to describe how a saved person should behave, without saying something that will be twisted and distorted by

those who lack understanding. In chapter eight, Paul contrasts being led by the Spirit with being carnally minded, and his letter to the Galatians makes it clear that to be led by the Spirit is to have the fruits of the Spirit (compare Romans 8:1-10 with Galatians 5:18-25). Nevertheless, those who lack understanding have turned the "leading of the Spirit" into a new law that will bring dire consequences if not obeyed.

If Paul simply wanted to give us a set of rules, he could have told us to keep the commandments. However, he wants us to trust in Christ for righteousness, not works. Therefore, while he portrays deference to the commandments as love, he makes it clear that obedience to those commandments is not what makes us righteous (Romans 3:10-28 and 13:8-10). At the same time, he tells us that sexual immorality is not to be tolerated. 1 John 3:6 tells us that, "Whoever abides in him does not continue in sin: whoever continues to do what is sinful has not seen him, or known him." However, the reason those guilty of willful sin are to be excommunicated does not lie in the sin itself, but in the fact that they are not sorry for their sin (1Corinthians 5:1-5, 2Corinthians 2:6-7). It is hardness of the heart (unrepentance) that destroys faith, and separates us from God (Psalm 5 1:17).

While Pharisees put the emphasis on outward appearance, and on trying to impress men with their piety, we need to put the emphasis on the heart (1Samuel 16:7, Isaiah 66:2). Those who come to faith need understand what it means to rationalize sin and why we should not do it (Proverbs 28:13, 1John 1:9). They need to know how to recognize their sin and see themselves as God sees them, so that they are not blinded to their own sin by the deceitfulness of their own heart (Isaiah 64:6, Jeremiah 17:9). And, they need to understand the importance of having a humble heart and tender conscience before God (Psalm 51:17, Psalm 25:14).

CONCLUSION

As long as someone thinks that the law will make them righteous, they will see freedom from the law as the freedom to sin. For that reason, it is only as we come to see ourselves as God sees us – and know that even our righteousness is as filthy rags – that we can see freedom from the law as the freedom to be righteous (Romans 7:18, Isaiah 64:6). Like Abraham, we should believe that righteousness is ours through faith in God's promise, and, trusting in that righteousness, walk in a clean conscience before God.

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 14

THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PRESERVATION

Although the Bible tells us that salvation is a gift, and that we are "kept by the power of God through faith," many believers are troubled by a fear of losing salvation (1Peter 1:5). They may be familiar with passages that assure us that God is able to keep us from falling, yet they derive little comfort from such passages because other passages seem to contradict what they say. In fact, on the surface it looks like there are two sets of passages, one assuring us that God will keep us from falling, the other warning us of the danger of falling. That fact leaves many people confused. However, what they fail to understand is that one set of passages is law, while the other is gospel.

The passages that are law are God's warning to the unrepentant. Those passages rebuke any unrepentant thoughts and desires that may arise in our hearts, while reminding us of our need for God's sustaining grace. In contrast, the gospel comforts believers by assuring us that God will keep us by His grace. Both are important! The unrepentant need to hear God's warning just as much as those who repent need God's assurance that He is able to keep them from falling. Therefore, those who emphasize only one set of passages to the exclusion of the other set are failing to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

THE LAW

Luke 8:13, Those on the rock are the ones, who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; but they have no root, THEY BELIEVE FOR A WHILE, but in time of temptation fall away.

Galatians 1:6, I am astonished that you are so quickly **turning away** from him who called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel.

Galatians 5:4, Christ is of no benefit to those of you, who seek righteousness by the law; you are **fallen from grace**.

1Timothy 1:19-20, Having faith, and a clean conscience; which some by disregarding have **made shipwreck** of their faith.

1Timothy 4:1, Now the Spirit specifically says, that in the future some will **depart from the faith**, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.

1 Timothy 5:11,12, 15, But refuse the younger widows: for when their desires are in opposition to Christ, they will marry *outside the faith*; **Having**

damnation, because they have cast off their first faith... For some are already turned aside after Satan.

1Corinthians 9:27, Instead I buffet my body, and bring *it* under my control: lest there be any way that I, after having preached to others, might be rejected.

Hebrews 6:4-6, For it is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and became partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance; seeing that they crucify the Son of God anew for themselves, and put him to public shame.

Hebrews 10:26-27, For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, **no sacrifice for sin remains**, But only a fearful expectation of judgment and raging fire, that will devour the enemies *of God*.

Hebrews 10:38-39, Now the just will live by faith: but if any man turns back, my soul will take no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who turn back and are destroyed; but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

2Peter 2:20-22, For if after they have escaped the corruption of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in it, and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment that was given to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned back to his own vomit; and the sow that is washed to wallowing in the mire.

[Comment: Just as the passages that warn sinners of the danger of hell, were intended to show us our need for forgiveness in Christ, the passages that warn us of the danger of falling were intended to show us our need for God's sustaining grace (Jude 1:24, Romans 7:4). In both cases **God wants us to trust in His grace, not in our own efforts**. Therefore, if the verses cited

above trouble you, instead of trusting in your own efforts, believe His promise to keep you from falling, for by so doing you commit your soul to His care.]

THE GOSPEL

John 10:27-29, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
And I give them eternal life; and they will never perish, nor will any *man*
pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave *them* to me, is greater
than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

1Peter 1:5, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation
which is waiting to be revealed at the end of time.

2Timothy 1:12, For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is
able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Jude 1:24, Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you*
faultless before his glorious presence with great joy.

Philippians 4:7, And the peace of God, that transcends all understanding, will
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

2Thessalonians 3:3, But the Lord is faithful, and will strengthen you, and keep
you from evil.

[Comment: The words, "none can keep alive his own soul" make it clear that it is impossible for us to keep ourselves saved (Psalm 22:29). However, the good news is that it does not depend on us. **Just as God brought us to faith through His Word, He strengthens our faith and keeps us in faith through the preaching of His Word** (Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 3:6). Moreover, just as He brought us to faith by leading us to recognize our sin and need of repentance, He keeps us in faith by keeping us repentant, not by letting us sin. We are kept by His grace.]

CONCLUSION

Believing that God will keep you by His grace goes hand in hand with believing that you are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). Therefore, those who think that they can keep themselves saved are just as foolish as those

who think that they can save themselves. At the same time, those who think that they can harden their hearts in unrepentance (by denying their sin or willfully flaunting God's law) yet still be saved, are under a delusion (Galatians 5:4, Hebrews 10:26-27, 2Peter 3:6). Such people need the warning of God's law, while those who have a repentant heart need assurance that God will keep them by His grace. Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 15

THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISM

Baptism was instituted as a means of giving everyone who comes to Christ, God's own promise of forgiveness (Acts 2:38-39, Acts 22:16, Mark 16:15-16). However, even though the Bible clearly promises us forgiveness in connection with baptism, whenever men loose sight of the fact that Christ is the source of that forgiveness the gospel is obscured and distorted. Because forgiveness only comes to us through faith in Christ, we can only receive the forgiveness promised to us in baptism, through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:6-22). In other words, God uses baptism (just as He uses preaching) to give us His promise of forgiveness in Christ, but it is only through personal faith in Christ that we receive that forgiveness (Romans 5:2, Galatians 3:22). With that fact in mind, let us look at what the Bible says.

A BAPTISM OF REPENTANCE Matthew

3:11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance

Mark 1:4 John baptized in the wilderness, and preached the **baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.**

Mark 1:5 And all the land of Judea, and the people of Jerusalem went out to him, and they were all baptized by him in the Jordan river, confessing their sins.

Luke 3:3 And he came to all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, **Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,** and you will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 22:16 And now why are you waiting? Get up, be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

[Comment: Notice how that John and Peter both called upon their listeners to **repent and be baptized "for the remission of sins."** There was no essential difference between John's baptism and Peter's. Both of them held up Christ as the source of forgiveness, while calling for repentance (Luke 3:3, John 1:29, Acts 2:38 and 5:3 1). The source of forgiveness is Christ, not

the ceremony. However, God uses the ceremony to give everyone who comes to baptism, His promise of forgiveness in Christ.]

Mark 16:16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be damned.

Acts 8:12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Acts 8:13 Then Simon himself also believed: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs that were done.

Acts 18:8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with his entire household; and many of the Corinthians who heard believed, and were baptized.

[Comment: Since those who are truly repentant look to Christ for forgiveness, coming to baptism goes hand in hand with believing the gospel.]

Matthew 28:19 Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

[Comment: When we interpret this passage in the light of what the Bible says about baptism being a "baptism of repentance," it is clear that Christ is calling on us to baptize those who repent. (See Luke 24:47, Mark 16:16)]

John 3:5 Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

[Comment: Since the Bible clearly defines baptism as a "baptism of repentance," if the word "water" in this passage is a reference to baptism, it is also a reference to repentance. Therefore, since faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit the words "water and... Spirit" can be seen as a reference to repentance and faith. We are born again through repentance and faith in Christ (John 1:12).]

Colossians 2:11-12 In whom you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with *him* through faith in the working of God, who has raised him from the dead.

[Comment: The circumcision made without hands is not baptism, for hands are used to baptize. Instead, it is the inner circumcision of the heart that takes place when we come to faith in Christ (Romans 2:29). Baptism is referred to because when baptism is carried out as God intended, it goes hand in hand with repentance, and thus with the inner circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4).]

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not by works of righteousness that we have done, but because of His mercy, through the washing of rebirth and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

[Comment: While the Greek word "baptizo" is not used in this passage, because of the reference to "rebirth", there is a clear parallel between this passage and what Christ said about being "born again" (John 3:5). Furthermore, both passages refer to water (or washing) and the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5, John 3:5). Therefore, since the Bible clearly defines baptism as a "baptism of repentance," if this passage is referring to baptism, the words "washing" and "Holy Ghost" can be seen as a reference to repentance and faith. And the Bible clearly teaches that we are born again (regenerated) through repentance and faith in Christ (John 1:12).]

Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but you will be baptized with the Holy Ghost a few days from now.

[Comment: Our sins are not washed away by the outward application of water, but by the blood of Christ (1John 1:7). And, since that inner washing (baptism) takes place when the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Christ, John referred to it as a baptism (or washing) of the Spirit (Galatians 3:6, Mark 1:8).]

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Acts 22:16 And now why are you waiting? Get up, be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

[Comment: To be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," is to be baptized believing that there is forgiveness in Christ, and that He is the source of the forgiveness offered in baptism (Acts 2:38). Therefore, while both of these passages speak of forgiveness in connection with baptism, because the promise is "He who believes and is baptized will be saved," it is only through personal faith in Christ that we receive that forgiveness (Galatians 3:22). That is why the great evangelist and soul-winner Dr. Walter A. Maier said, of baptism:

"Do not be misled by those who say that Baptism is not important. They contradict Christ. They put their own opinion above Scripture. Take Jesus at His word, and you will find that through Baptism — and I mean of course, not merely the performance of the ritual itself, but by your personal faith in Jesus and in His promise — the Holy Ghost unmistakably comes to you." (The Power of Pentecost, 1943)

1Peter 3:21 That water prefigured baptism which also now saves us (not by removing the filth of the flesh, but the promise of a good conscience toward God,) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

[Comment: Because the Bible defines baptism as a "baptism of repentance," Peter's definition of baptism was broad enough to include repentance and faith in Christ. Therefore, when Peter said "baptism... also now saves us," he was talking about conversion, not simply applying water. He was talking about being baptized believing that there is forgiveness in Christ (see my comments on Acts 2:38). When viewed in that light, baptism might be seen to consist of:

- 1- The call to repent, and promise of forgiveness in Christ (Acts 2:38).
- 2- Our response to that call (Acts 2:4 1).
- 3- The application of water according to God's Word.
- 4- The assurance that when we came to Christ our sins were washed away (Acts 22:16).]

THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN

And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the inland districts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He asked them, Have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? And they said to him, We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. And he asked to them, Unto what were you baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then Paul said, John truly baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people, to believe in him who was coming after him, that is, in Christ Jesus. When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (Acts 19:1-5)

[Comment: In reading these verses we should not assume that Paul rebaptized men who had originally been baptized by John the Baptist. After all, Apollos was baptized by John the Baptist and he was never rebaptized, nor were the Apostles. We need to remember that Christ continued the work of John the

Baptist (John 4:1-2), and John held up Christ as the source of forgiveness, and referred to the Holy Ghost in his teaching (Mark 1:8). In fact, Apollos learned the way of salvation from John (Acts 18:25). John also baptized "unto repentance," not "unto John's baptism" (compare verse 3 with Matthew 3:11). Therefore, since these men had not even heard of the Holy Ghost, they may have been baptized by an imitator of John the Baptist, rather than by John himself. There were such imitators, and one group of John's "followers" who never accepted Christ, still exists in the Middle East, where they are known as Mandeans.]

CONCLUSION

All who come to baptism receive God's promise of forgiveness in Christ. That promise is important, for our faith consists of believing what God has promised (Galatians 3:6). However, because Christ is the object of our faith, the focus must be on Christ. He must be seen as the source of forgiveness. Therefore, while God's uses baptism to give us His promise of forgiveness, it is only through personal faith in Christ that we receive what is promised (Galatians 3:22, 2Corinthians 1:20).

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 16

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Everyone who partakes of the Lord's Supper receives a divine promise that Christ's body was "given for" us and that His blood was "shed for" us, "for the remission of sins". That promise is the very heart of the gospel. However, whenever men assume that what is promised comes to us without faith in Christ, the truth of the gospel is obscured. Therefore, before examining what the Bible says about the Lord's Supper, we need to remind ourselves that God's promise of forgiveness in Christ comes to us only through faith in what Christ did for us on the cross (Galatians 3:6-22). In other words, even though God uses the Lord's Supper (just as He uses preaching) to give us His promise of forgiveness, it is only through personal faith in Christ that we receive what is promised (Romans 5:2, Galatians 3:22). With that fact in mind, let us look at what the Bible says.

TAKE EAT THIS IS MY BODY

Matthew 26:26 ¶ As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and broke *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, saying, Take, eat; this is my body.

Mark 14:22 As they ate, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke *it*, and gave to them, saying, Take, eat: this is my body.

Luke 22:19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and broke *it*, and gave it to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

1Corinthians 11:23-24 the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: And after giving thanks, he broke *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

[Comment: While all four accounts (quoted above) include the words, "this is My body," the fact that Christ was physically present with His disciples when He made that statement tell us that He was not giving them His physical body. At the same time, to say that what we receive merely represents Christ's body is to say that it is not Christ's body, and that is the opposite of what Christ actually said. Therefore, Christ's words must have a deeper meaning, which should become clearer as we go.]

THIS CUP IS THE NEW TESTAMENT IN MY BLOOD

Matthew 26:27-28 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you; For this is my blood of the new testament, that is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Mark 14:23-24 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave *it* to them: and they all drank of it. And he said to them, This is my blood of the new testament, that is shed for many.

Luke 22:20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

1Corinthians 11:25 In the same way *he* also *took* the cup, after he had eaten, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of me.

[Comment: By referring to the cup as the "new testament in My blood," Christ makes it clear that the new covenant consists of His sacrifice (His shed blood) not a new set of rules. His words then tell us that he is giving us the blood that was shed for us, and faith is believing that His blood was shed for us. Thus, the ceremony promises us Christ's body and blood as the atonement for our sins, while faith receives what is promised (Galatians 3:6,22).]

[Note: All who believe that Christ's body was given, and His blood shed, for them, are (through faith), "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30).]

WORTHY OR UNWORTHY

1Corinthians 11: 27-32 Therefore whoever eats the bread, and drinks *the* cup of the Lord, unworthily, will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, then let him eat of *the* bread, and drink of *the* cup. For he who eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not recognizing the Lord's body. That is why many among you *are* weak and sickly, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, so that we will not be condemned with the world.

[Comment: Since we are justified by faith, it is faith in Christ (not works) that makes us worthy to partake. Therefore, those who humbly confess their sin and look to Christ for forgiveness are worthy to partake, while those who deny their sin, are not. That truth is illustrated by the parable of the Pharisee and the

publican. The publican judged himself, and admitted his sin, while the Pharisee did not (Luke 18:11-13, 1 Corinthians 11:31).]

THE DISCOURSE AT CAPERNAUM

John 6:51-59 I am the living bread that came down from heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he will live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore *began* to argue among themselves, saying, How can this man give us *his* flesh to eat? Then Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say unto you, Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is truly food, and my blood is truly drink. He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father: so he who feeds on me, will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven: not as the manna your fathers ate, and died: he who eats of this bread will live forever. He said these things in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

[Comment: Since Christ had not instituted His Supper when he made these statements, He was not talking about His Supper. Furthermore, the grammar is entirely different. In these verses, He calls His body "bread" (which is a metaphor), yet in the Lord's Supper He calls bread His "Body" (which is the opposite of a metaphor). In fact, calling bread His "body," is the equivalent of saying, "that door is me" instead of saying "I am the door." Since there is no such figure of speech, such a statement must either be true, or it is absurd. However, while Christ was not talking about His Supper in these verses, what He said does cast light on that Supper, because He equates faith in His sacrifice with eating His body and blood (compare John 6:40 and 6:54). In other words, all who trust in Him, in effect, receive His body and shed blood (His sacrifice) as the atonement for their sins.]

CONCLUSION

All of God's promises, including those connected with the Lord's Supper, were given for a reason, and those who contradict Christ's words cast doubt on that promise, making His words "of none effect," and hindering the work of the gospel (Mark 7:13). Therefore, it is important to believe exactly what Christ said when He instituted His Supper. In regard to the question of how we receive what is promised to us in the Lord's Supper, Martin Luther had this to say:

Now this treasure is conveyed and communicated to us in no other way than through the words "given and shed for you for the forgiveness of

sins." In these [words] you receive the double assurance that it is Christ's body and blood, and that it is yours as your treasure and gift... And inasmuch as He offers and promises forgiveness of sins, there is no other way of receiving it than by faith... that which is given in and with the sacrament cannot be grasped nor appropriated by our body. This is done by faith in the heart, which discerns this treasure and desires it. (Large Catechism)

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 17

THE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

One aspect of the doctrine of Justification by faith has to do with the fact that the forgiveness Christ won for us not only saves us but makes us righteous in the sight of God. That is what the Bible is telling us when it says, “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us of all sin” (1John 1:7). Without that forgiveness God sees no good in us, “all of our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6), but when that forgiveness is ours God sees no fault in us because no sin is imputed to us (Psalm 32:2).

That cleansing from sin is what was accounted to Abraham “for righteousness” (Galatians 3:6,8), and is what is referred to in Scripture as circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 30:6). Because God sees no fault in those who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ they are God’s chosen people, the apple of His eye, and citizens of His heavenly kingdom.

God’s Chosen People

Deuteronomy 30:6 And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live.

Colossians 2:9-11 All the fullness of God dwells in Christ bodily. And you are complete in him... In whom you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands.

Galatians 3:7 Realize therefore that those who trust in Christ are the children of Abraham.

Philippians 3:3 For we who worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in the flesh, are those who are truly circumcised.

Romans 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Romans 9:7-8 And they are not all Abraham’s children, just because they are descended from him: on the contrary, Through Isaac shall your descendants come. That is, It is not the children of the flesh who are the

children of God: but the children of the promise are counted as the descendants.

[Comment: These verses tell us that those whom God sees as being circumcised, and therefore as the children of Abraham, are not those who are circumcised outwardly in the flesh but those who have been circumcised without hands through faith in Christ.]

Gal 3:28-29 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Gal 4:22-26 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a slave woman, the other by a free woman. His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born in fulfillment of a promise. Those events provide an allegory: for the women represent the two covenants. The one from mount Sinai, whose children are in bondage, is Hagar. For Hagar represents mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem as it now is, and she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem which is above is free, and she is the mother of us all.

Galatians 4:28-29 Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are the children of promise. But even as the son born after the flesh then persecuted the son who was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Romans 4:13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Romans 4:16 *It is* of faith, that *it might be* by grace; in order that the promise might be sure to all of Abraham's offspring; not only those who are of the law, but also those who are of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,

Romans 4:17 (As it is written, I have made you a father of many nations,) he [Abraham] is our father in the sight of God in whom he believed, God

who gives life to the dead, and calls things that are not as though they were.

[Comment: These verses tell us that God sees no difference between Jew and non-Jew, for all who trust in Christ are Abraham's seed, and thus God's chosen people. For the descendants promised to Abraham (whose number would be like the stars of heaven) are not those who are his descendants through the flesh, but those who are spiritually his descendants through faith in Christ.]

Matthew 6:33 Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all those things will be given to you.

Matthew 10:7 And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 11:12 And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven advances with power, and those endued with power take hold of it.

Luke 17:20-21 Now having been asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus said, The kingdom of God does not come in a way that is seen: Nor will people say, here he is! or, there he is! for, the kingdom of God is within you.

Ezekiel 47:22-23 And it will come to pass, *that...* the foreigners living among you, who have borne children among you: should be treated as the children of Israel born in the country; they should receive an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel... *that* in whatever tribe the foreigner lives, there you will give *him* his inheritance, says the Lord GOD.

2Thessalonians 2:13 God chose you from the beginning unto salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through faith in the truth.

[Comment: Since no sinner can be a citizen of God's heavenly kingdom, we become citizens of God's heavenly kingdom through faith in Christ alone. For that reason, God sees no difference between physical descendants of Abraham who trust in Christ, and those from other nations who trust in Christ. If God has chosen to bring them to faith in Christ then they are His chosen people.]

God expects His church to teach what the Bible says, not human opinion and conjecture. Therefore, when the Bible tells us that, “those who trust in Christ are the children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7), or, “he is not a Jew, who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart” (Romans 2:28-29), then that is what God wants us to believe and teach.

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 18

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S RETURN

THE RESURRECTION AND RAPTURE

As we look at what the Bible says about the resurrection and the events surrounding it, it is important to stick to what the Bible says, and not let our imaginations run wild. Whenever the doctrine being taught consists of man-made explanations of God's Word, rather than what the Word explicitly says, people are being led away from the Word of God.

John 11:24 Martha responded, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection [singular] **on the last day**. Jesus then said to her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he who believes in me will live, even though he dies: And whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

John 6:40 And this is the will of him who sent me, that every one who looks to the Son, and believes on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up **on the last day**.

1 Corinthians 15:52-53 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For our corruptible nature must be made incorruptible, and our mortal nature must become immortal.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are now God's children, but what we are going to be like has not yet been revealed: however we know that, when he appears, we will be like him; for we will see him as he is.

[Comment: From these verses we learn that; 1- the resurrection will take place **on the last day** (John 11:24); 2- Christ will raise up believers **on the last day** (John 6:40); 3- the last trumpet will sound when Christ raises up believers (1 Corinthians 15:52); 4- we will rise incorruptible, and be changed, never to die again.]

2 Corinthians 5:8 Indeed, we have courage, and would prefer **to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord**.

Jude 14-15 Enoch, the seventh from Adam, also prophesied of these men, saying, Behold, **the Lord comes with tens of thousands of his saints**, To execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and **the dead in Christ shall rise first.**

[Comment: From these verses we learn that: 1- those who have died in Christ are even now present with Christ; 2- When Christ returns (on the last day) He will bring them with Him; 3- And, just prior to the rapture, they will be reunited with their bodies as those bodies rise from the dead.]

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 For we are telling you only what the Lord has told us, that we who are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord will not precede those who are asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ will rise first: Then we who are alive and remain will be **caught up** together with them in the clouds, **to meet the Lord in the air:** and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 Now when it comes to the times and the seasons, brethren, you do not need me to write to you. For you know perfectly well that the **day of the Lord** will come like a thief in the night. For when they are saying, Peace and safety; destruction will come upon them suddenly, as travail comes upon a woman with child; and they will not escape.

2 Peter 3:10 But the **day of the Lord** will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with intense heat, and the earth and everything in it will be burned up.

2 Peter 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, that now exist, have by the same word been **reserved for fire**, being kept for the **day of judgment** and destruction of ungodly men.

[Comment: From these verses we learn that: 1- When the resurrection takes place believers will be caught up (raptured) to meet Christ in the air; 2- this will take place on the "day of the Lord"; 3- no man knows when that day (singular) will be; 4- but on that day (the day when we are raptured) the heavens will pass away, and the earth and everything in it will be destroyed.]

2Thessalonians 2:1-9 Now, brethren, in regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our being gathered together to meet him, we ask you not to be so easily upset, or alarmed, either by revelation, word, or letter allegedly from us, claiming that the day of Christ has arrived. Let no one deceive you by any means: for **that day will not come** unless it is preceded by a great apostasy, and that man of sin is revealed, **the son of perdition**; Who opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God, or is worshipped; so that he sits as God in the temple of God, and says that he is God.... Then the wicked one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will consume with the spirit of his mouth, and will destroy with the brightness of his coming [singular]: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.

[Comment: From these verses we learn that Christ is not going to come back, raise the dead, or rapture believers until after the Great Antichrist (the son of perdition) is revealed. And when he does return (on the last day, John 11:24) He will destroy the Antichrist with the brightness of His coming.]

Luke 17:29-30 **The same day that Lot left** Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. **It will be just the same** on the day when the Son of man is revealed.

Revelation 20: 9-11 And **fire came down from God out of heaven**, and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne, and him who sat upon it, from whose presence the heavens and earth fled away.

[Comment: From these verses we learn: 1- that just as Sodom was destroyed as soon as Lot was out of it, the world will be destroyed as soon as the saints are raptured out of it; 2- The final judgement will take place after fire has

come "down from God out of heaven" to destroy the world. (See 2 Peter 3:10)]

CONCLUSION

Just as there were many false prophets in ancient Israel, there are many today. And, they have spread a number of ideas about Christ's coming that have no basis in fact whatsoever. Therefore, while it is always important to teach only what God's Word says, today we need to stress that fact as never before. As Dr. Francis Piper put it, "The first and foremost duty of the exegete consists in holding the flighty spirit of man to the simple word of Scripture and, where he has departed from it, to lead him back to the simple word of Scripture." ["Christian Dogmatics", Vol. 1, pg. 360]

Gary Ray Branscome

Lesson 19

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S RETURN

THE FINAL JUDGEMENT

Although we may have many questions concerning the events surrounding Christ's return, the doctrine that God wants us to teach consists of what the Bible explicitly says, not man-made explanations and ideas (Jeremiah 23:28). Far too often popular writers wind up teaching opinions that they, or others, have dreamed up instead of faithfully presenting what the Bible says. Therefore, as you read the following verses, pay close attention to what the words actually say, while submitting to God's authority by rejecting and correcting any opinions you have that contradict those words (Isaiah 8:20).

CHRIST WILL RETURN

Acts 1:11 This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will return in the same way as you have seen him go into heaven.

Matthew 16:27 For the Son of man shall come **in the glory of his Father** with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

2Timothy 4:1 Jesus Christ... will **judge the living and the dead at his appearing.**

Acts 24:15 There will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

John 5:28-29 **All who are in the graves** will hear his voice, And will come forth.

Revelation 1:7 And every eye will see him, and *also* those who pierced him.

Matthew 24:30 Then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

2Thessalonians 2:8-9 The Lord Jesus... will destroy [the wicked one] with the brightness of his coming: Even *him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.

John 12:48 He who rejects me, and does not receive my words, has one who judges him: the word that I spoke will judge him on the last day.

John 11:24 I know that he will rise again in the resurrection **on the last day.**

John 6:40 Everyone who looks to the Son, and believes in him, will have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

[Comment: From these verses we learn that: 1- Christ will return in glory; 2- He will judge both the living and the dead at His appearing; 3- All who are in the graves will rise; 4- This will take place on the last day.]

EVERYONE WILL BE JUDGED BY HIM

Matthew 12:36 But I am telling you, That **men will account for every idle word** that they speak, on the day of judgement.

2Timothy 4:1 Jesus Christ... will **judge the living and the dead at his appearing.**

Acts 17:31 Because he [God] has appointed a day, when **he will judge the world** in righteousness by the man he has appointed; having given all men assurance of this, by raising him from the dead.

2Corinthians 5:10 For **we must all appear before the judgement seat** of Christ; so that each may receive the things *done* in the body, according to everything he has done, **whether good or evil.**

2Peter 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, that now exist, have by the same word **been reserved for fire**, being kept for **the day of judgment** and destruction of ungodly men.

Psalm 50:3-6 Our God will come, and will not keep silent: **a fire will devour before him**, and a mighty tempest will rage around about him. He will call to the heavens above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. **Gather my saints to me;** those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice. And the heavens will declare his righteousness: for **God himself is judge.**

John 5:22 **The Father judges no man**, but has committed all judgment to the Son.

[Comment: These verses tell us that when Christ appears: 1- All men, the entire world, both believers and unbelievers will be judged; 2- They will account for everything they have done (good or evil), including every idle word that they speak. 3- On the day (singular) of judgement the world will be destroyed by fire.]

THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

John 5:28-29 **All who are in the graves will hear his voice, And will come forth;** those who have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Matthew 25:31-46 Then he will sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him **all nations will be gathered:** and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats: And he will set **the sheep at his right hand, but the goats on the left.** Then will the King say to those at his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, **inherit the kingdom prepared** for you from the foundation of the world... Then he will say also to those at the left hand, Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels... And they will go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.

Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne, and him who sat upon it, from whose presence the heavens and earth fled; and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book of life:* and the dead were judged according to what they had done, as it was written in the books. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell gave up the dead that were in them: and everyone was judged according to their works. And death and hell were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And **whoever was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.**

Revelation 21:1,2 & 27 Then I saw **a new heaven and a new earth:** for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away; and there was no longer any sea. And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,

coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.... And nothing that is unclean or defiles will ever enter it, nor those who do what is abominable, or deceitful: but **only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

[Comment: These verses tell us that: 1- All who are in the graves (both believers and unbelievers) will rise when Christ returns; 2- Both sheep and goats (believers and unbelievers) will be present at the judgement; 3- Those who are not found written in the Lamb's book of life (unbelievers) will be cast into the lake of fire; 4- But those who are written in the Lamb's book of life (believers) will inherit the kingdom prepared for them, and live with God in a new heavens and a new earth.]

Romans 8:1 *There is* therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh , but after the Spirit.

1John 2:28 And now, little children, remain in him; so that when he appears we may be confident, and unashamed before him at his coming.

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say unto you, Whoever hears my word, and believes him who sent me, has everlasting life, and will not come into condemnation; but has passed from death to life.

Romans 10:4 For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

[Comment: These verses tell us that because it is faith in Christ, not obedience to the law, that makes us righteous before God; when it is time to account for "every idle word," those who seek righteousness by the law will be condemned, but no sin will be imputed to those who trust in Christ.]

[Note: Whenever the Bible describes the final judgement, it speaks of believers and unbelievers standing together before the judgement seat. And the Bible specifically tells us that Christ will raise up believers on "the last day," not before the last day. (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54, Acts 24:15)]

THE LAST DAY

2Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements

will melt with intense heat, and the earth and everything in it will be burned up.

Isaiah 34:4 All the heavenly bodies will dissolve, and the heavens will be rolled together like a scroll.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.

Revelation 11:15 The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and his Christ; and he will reign for ever and ever.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I would not be delivered to the Jews.

Luke 1:33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there will be no end.

[Comment: These verses mean just what they say. The words, "My kingdom is not of this world" mean exactly that. And, the words, "of his kingdom there will be no end" tell us that once He does begin to reign (over the new heavens and the new earth) that reign will never end.]

LET'S STICK WITH THE FACTS

The fact that Christ said He will raise up believers "on the last day," tells us that the rapture and resurrection of believers will take place on the last day (1Thessalonians 4: 13-17, John 6:40).

The fact that it will happen "on the "last day," tells us it cannot take place before the end, or before seven years of tribulation (John 6:40).

The fact that judgement will take place "on the last day" tells us that it will take place on the same day that Christ raises believers from the dead (compare John 6:40 and 12:48).

The fact that, "The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22), tells us that Christ is the one who John saw sitting on the "great White Throne (Revelation 20:11). Therefore the "Great White Throne" is the "judgement seat" ["bema" seat] mentioned in 2Corinthians

5:10. It is also the same seat that is called "the throne of His glory" in Matthew 25:3 1. [Pilate's seat is called a "bema" seat. Matthew 27:19]

And, the fact that the Bible says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," tells us that no one was ever saved by works in the past, and no one will ever be saved by works in the future (Acts 4:12).

CONCLUSION

God expects His church to teach what the Bible says, not human opinion and conjecture. For that reason, our doctrine must be the bare words of Scripture, not an explanation of it. "The whole Christian doctrine is revealed in Scripture passages that need no exegesis, but are an open book alike to the learned and the unlearned." ("Christian Dogmatics", by Francis Pieper, Vol. 1, pg. 347)

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