

THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

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People Need the Lord!

Alex V. Wilson

Our "What the Bible Teaches" study this month is on judgment. Next month's will be on heaven, followed later by a study of hell. These subjects, two bitter and one sweet, are an urgent reminder that people all around us, people we rub elbows with every day, are heading either to eternal bliss or damnation. And far too many are in that latter category. They need the Lord; and we have the Lord; so, what shall we do?

"Life is short/ Death is sure/ Sin's a curse/ Christ's the cure." I quote those words of some unknown writer at almost every funeral I conduct. Because they are true, we need to ask our Savior to use us in spreading the good news. Oh, we're not all gifted as evangelists, but *each of us can be an important link in the chain of influences* that brings individuals to His feet in surrender.

Links in a chain: Prayer, showing interest in others, deeds of kindness, words of wisdom, forming of friendships, preparing a dessert, inviting him or her to our home or a picnic, inviting him or her to a class or church meeting, listening patiently, answering questions, asking questions, presenting the Lord Jesus, explaining conversion, praying some more -- each can be influential in changing someone's eternal destiny.

In the Philippines my greatest opportunities to share the gospel were not inside church buildings. Rather they were talks I was invited to give in other places. Many were held on campuses, others in homes, and a number in offices -- of banks, an airline, an oil company, the government's department of fisheries, an army base, etc. In each case believers either studied, lived or worked there. They had initiated weekly (in most cases) Bible study groups, often held during lunch break. They themselves might lead them most of the time, but occasionally invite in an outsider like me. It was thrilling to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love in such environments to many who didn't really know Him.

Such group Bible studies, especially in homes, were the #1 means of leading folks to Christ there. But when I mention, hint, suggest, or urge believers here in the U.S. to initiate such classes in their homes, campuses or offices, the silence is deafening. I'm not sure why; are you? Whatever, be sure to read the articles on home Bible classes. I originally saw them in successive issues of *Crusader* magazine in Manila. But maybe they'll have more impact being in the same month. The author makes many excellent points, though he omits mentioning baptism (despite Matt.28:19-20, Acts 2:38, Rom. 6:1-4, etc.).

My article on the claims Jesus made is important but certainly not original. G.K. Chesterton used this approach about a century ago, as did C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, John Stott in *Basic Christianity* (both those books are outstanding), Wilbur Smith in his booklet "Have You Considered Him?" (we can get you copies of that @ \$1.00) and Josh McDowell in *More than a Carpenter*. If you are trying to reach people influenced by skepticism, this is a most helpful approach.

HOME BIBLE CLASSES-- THEIR PATTERNS & PURPOSES

Howard G. Hendricks

Personal evangelism demands personal involvement. Many Christians seem to live as if the doctrine of Biblical separation from sin also means isolation from sinners.

By contrast, notice our Lord's contact with publicans and sinners, as recorded in Mark 2:13-17.

"And He went forth again by the seaside, and all the multitude resorted unto Him, and He taught them. And as He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.

And it came to pass, that as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many publicans and sinners sat also together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eat with publicans and sinners, they said unto His disciples, How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Our Lord called Levi into His glad fellowship. And out of appreciation, Levi invited his friends and associates—the sinners and the publicans—to a feast. This was a sort of informal meeting of the Palestinian "bureau of internal revenue." Here the Holy One of Israel was seated in the midst of publicans and sinners. This beautiful picture is spoiled only by the religionists whose superficial conclusion is, "He's with sinners, therefore, *ipso facto*, He is a sinner."

But our Lord replied, in essence, "Men, you don't really understand what this is all about. I'm a Physician and physicians spend their time with sick people."

What our Lord was, determined *where* He was. He was not guilty of a false transferal of His hatred of sin to a hatred of the sinner.

When I was a student at Wheaton College a number of years ago I took a course in personal evangelism, which included a study of the cults. I remember the professor read a passage from the writings of one of the cults we were studying. It was a blasphemous statement about the person and work of Christ. The following Sunday I went to the Union Station in Chicago to do some personal work. I sat down next to a man and, believe it or not, he was a member of that very cult. And almost verbatim I heard from this man's lips the same blasphemous words concerning my wonderful Lord that the professor had read in the classroom. I'm ashamed to admit that I gave that man a portion of my mind. I mistakenly transferred my hatred of that system to the man holding that system.

Our Lord became *involved* in the lives of many people -- people who were sinners and desperately in need of His grace. Yet, many Christians are seldom in contact with the unsaved. They spend much or all of their time with other Christians. They are afraid to become involved with the lost world, because they fear they may become contaminated by its sin. Jesus Christ kept company with sinners without becoming involved in their sin.

Throughout the United States and in some other parts of the world, home Bible classes are being used by believers as a highly effective means of making contact with non-Christians and winning them to Jesus Christ. The Lord is blessing these Bible study classes in homes because they are following *His* example of contacting sinners where they are.

THE PATTERN OF HOME BIBLE CLASSES

There are three characteristics of effective home Bible study groups.

1. *They must be community-centered.* An interesting sociological phenomenon has developed in our country. Most people live in a community that complements their economic status. People who make a salary of, say, \$6,000 a year tend to live in homes that are comparable to that kind of salary. People who make \$20,000 a year tend to live in an entirely different section. And if you want to reach these various people for Jesus Christ through home Bible classes, you must have a class in their section of the city. So in an effort to reach people in sections of Dallas, Texas, 12 churches in that city are now sponsoring a total of 142 home Bible classes.

In my judgment there are two classes of people that are frequently overlooked by evangelicals. One is the laboring class. The other is the professional class. For some reason we have developed something similar to an inferiority complex with respect to the Gospel. We're

afraid to expose a doctor, a lawyer, or an insurance executive to the Gospel of the grace of God. Yet, experience has shown that when classes in these communities are started people attend them. But they do not go across town to a home Bible class with people in different social or economic strata.

2. *They must be home-centered.* Many people who refuse to go to church will come to a class that meets in a friend's home. Home Bible classes capitalize on the informality and hospitality of a home atmosphere to attract people to the Gospel.

3. *They must be evangelism-centered.* This is the key. If a class degenerates into another Bible study for Christians, it loses its purpose -- evangelism. Home Bible classes are not to be closed clubs for Christians. Instead, these classes are to be for the unsaved; they are effective when they are maintained as means for reaching the unreached for Christ.

After a person accepts Christ, often his first concern is to reach his friends with his newfound faith, much like Levi did.

This kind of evangelism is low-pressured and long-ranged. Many feel it is best never to give an invitation in a home class, that it is best to omit altogether any tactics of undue pressure. This evangelism is long-ranged in the sense that no shortcut to evangelism is sought. It takes time to win some people to Christ. Perhaps God does not always work as quickly as we might prefer, but He *does* work!

For example, an oral surgeon attended a class for two years. Near the beginning of the third year, he came up to the teacher after one of the classes and said, "If what you've been talking about is true, I need to do something about it." The instructor replied, "Why don't we get together during the week? Do you have some time when we can sit down and talk about this?" The surgeon said, "I'll make some time." And the next day that prominent oral surgeon carved out two hours in his schedule, called up his nurse, and said, "I don't want any disturbance for any reason. I'm faced with the most important decision of my life."

The Christian businessman came and explained to him the plan of salvation again, and then the surgeon knelt down in his office and received Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Interestingly the first time I saw the surgeon after that, he lamented, "I don't think the people out at the medical school in our city know about Christ. And the men over at the hospital with whom I am associated don't know the Lord either." He then asked me to teach a class for these fellow-surgeons of his. So we conducted a class in that

doctor's home. Every Thursday night 38 medical men were exposed to the Gospel through direct Bible study! Some people think physicians wouldn't be interested in the Gospel. But there's hardly a class that's any more alive than this one. Home Bible classes -- low-pressured, long-ranged, but always evangelistic in their thrust; giving men an opportunity to make an intelligent decision concerning the Savior.

THE PURPOSE OF HOME BIBLE CLASSES

1. *The first purpose is to provide an opportunity for Christians to reach the unsaved.* Evangelism is the weakest link in many local churches. Unfortunately, some churches are evangelical but not evangelistic. But there may be a reason for this. Perhaps we don't give believers sufficient opportunity to reach the unsaved.

It's not enough to beg and to plead and to clobber Christians to do personal evangelism. We need to provide a practical means of *implementing* their concern for the lost. One year in a church in Dallas 67 adults were led to Christ, and 57 of them were won through home Bible classes. A steady stream of men and women and young people are coming to know the Lord--all because Christians are being given an opportunity to invite lost friends to a class of this type.

2. *Another purpose—and the main one—is to present the Gospel to the unsaved.* I think every person should have an opportunity to make an intelligent decision for Christ. And this, as we've been indicating, is the genius of a home Bible class ministry. It reaches people where they are. Many people have reported that it was in a home Bible class that they first heard the Gospel.

3. *The third purpose is to provide a feeder for the local church.* After people are won to Christ, you should seek to integrate them into the program of the local church. Advertise that your home Bible classes are "nonsectarian." In other words, don't talk in the classes about "our church."

When does reference to the local church come in? In this way: After a person receives Christ as Savior, begin a follow-up program immediately. Among other things, urge him to unite with a good Bible-teaching church. When he asks which one to attend, he will most likely go to the one you recommend.

Home Bible classes become excellent means of building local churches with new converts--and thus adding fresh spiritual enthusiasm to the church.

-- from Crusader magazine

[Part 2 next month]

“YOU CAN WIN MEN”

Paul E. Little

EVANGELISM is one of the keys to spiritual health. I like to call it the fizz of the Pepsi Cola in the Christian life. If you are involved in evangelism, the Christian life sparkles and has verve. If you are not involved in evangelism, you find very often that the Christian life is stale and vapid and tasteless. When a Church congregation is not involved with people on the frontiers, they turn in on themselves and start to “pick fleas” out of each others hair. But when people are turned to the world around them, there is a whole new atmosphere.

PRAYER, for instance, is transformed when we are locked in the spiritual struggle for the souls of men. Have you ever come away from a prayer meeting feeling worse than when you went because it was so depressing and dead? You could predict who was going to say what when and in what tone of voice and the exact vocabulary with the certainty of a railroad timetable. You knew it because you had heard it so many times before. Such a group has lost the vision for evangelism.

On the other hand, if you have been in a prayer meeting where people are involved in attempting to win people for the Lord Jesus Christ, you will find a meeting where there is vibrancy and almost an electric atmosphere in the air.

BIBLE STUDY is transformed, too. Are you having a problem with Bible study being academic? Become involved in evangelism and your whole study of the Word of God will take on a new color.

FAITH becomes revolutionized as we become involved in evangelism. To see a person transformed by the Holy Spirit in front of our eyes does more to lift our faith index and make us convinced supernaturalists than fifty lectures on the subject. In fact, it is amazing how those who are involved on the frontier seeing people changed by the power of the gospel do not have all these problems about the church's relevancy today. They are seeing God at work.

Evangelism then is one of the keys to spiritual health. There are a number of figures of speech in the New Testament that describe us in our role as evangelists and as witnesses. One is in Mark 1:17. Simon and Andrew were walking by the Sea of Galilee. Our Lord came along and said to them, “Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” That little word “become”, by the way, is a great encouragement to me, because it indicates the possibility of becoming something that I may not be at the moment.

One of the first lessons we learn from this figure of speech, "fishers of men," is the painfully obvious lesson in retrospect that in order to catch fish we must go where fish are. We are rather amused by simple Simon, who sets up a barrel, drops in his little line and is very saddened because he doesn't catch any fish. And we think, "How stupid can you be? Fish don't come and jump in barrels: you have to go where the fish are. "But what do we do in evangelism? We set up barrels and we invite the fish to come jump in, and we are very sad when they bypass us by the droves. As Harold Wildish said one time, "The Holy Spirit cannot save saints or seats. There have to be some non-Christians."

Sometimes in our communication of the gospel we are speaking to ourselves and nobody else. The gospel has not lost its power because there is no response; it is simply that there are few or none there to respond to the invitation of the Spirit. There is a place for evangelistic meetings to which we invite people, of course, but basically the method of evangelism that the Lord taught was to go where people are.

Now this has several implications. One is that we must realize that separation from the world is not the same thing as isolation from the world. I believe that in our times many well-meaning and devoted people have become victims of what can only, in terms of its effects, be a heresy, and that is that the index of spirituality is the extent to which you can have absolutely nothing to do with non-Christian people.

This was a problem in our Lord's time. The Pharisees said of Jesus, "Why does this man eat and drink with publicans and sinners?" Our Lord replied, "Don't you understand, those that are well do not need a doctor but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:27-32). In His great high priestly prayer Jesus said, "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15). So this is not a new problem, but it is a devastating problem unless we see through it.

If you want to prevent the spread of measles, what would you do with a person who had measles? You would put him in an isolation ward in a hospital with everybody else who had measles. If you were the enemy of men's souls and wanted to keep the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ from spreading, what device would you use? Wouldn't you try to persuade Christians that the essence of spirituality would be to have nothing to do with those who are around them and to spend all their life with each other? You would have won the battle

without firing a shot. We must go where fish are if we are to catch fish.

There is a second implication. Sometimes the non-Christian in all good faith and generosity says, "Come with us to do such and such," or "Here, have such and such." And we respond almost instinctively, "No thanks, I don't do such and such. I am a Christian." Bang, you can hear the iron curtain clang down. Some think to themselves, "My, I had a tremendous opportunity to witness." But in my opinion we have done two very serious things. One, we have condemned the person out of hand as a pagan in a way that he really doesn't understand. Secondly, we have garbled the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ because we have suggested that inherent in being a Christian is not doing whatever it happened to be at the moment he asked us to do. There are thousands of non-Christians who do not do any of these things. Yet that does not make them Christians. The point is, we have not really gotten to them on the crucial issue. We haven't communicated the gospel until we get to the basic issue. The tragedy is, very often we are treating symptoms rather than the basic disease. The non-Christian's basic problem is that he does not know the Savior. Until we get him to know the Savior it is useless to try to reform these other things. And if we insist that he conform to our behavior pattern before we talk to him, we are going to have a very small audience.

With non-Christians we must look for that which we can honestly commend, and if we are alert, we can find it. And when a person invites us to do something you might say, "No thanks, but let me know when you are going to do such and such." Immediately make an alternative suggestion so that you do not seem to reject him or his friendship. We do not need to be apologetic about it. If you invite a non-Christian to play chess and he is not interested in chess, he does not hem and haw around about it and say, "Well, no thanks, I don't play chess. I am a non-Christian." He just says, "No thanks, chess leaves me cold, but when you are going to play Ping-Pong, let me know."

Another profound lesson that comes to us from this figure of speech, "fishers of men," is that in order to catch fish we must throw out the net. Basically, it is a matter of introducing in a conversation, in a natural way, some spiritual aspect or line of thought to see how the person responds. Some of us go into a "clerical clutch" when we get to the gospel. We tighten up and we can see people backing away, because as we clutch, they clutch. If we relax, they relax. We must ask God for wisdom to talk as naturally about the Lord Jesus Christ as we do about other things.

There is one series of questions that I have found particularly useful, though there is no "formula" of course. These questions are only springboards that may help you get to the crucial subject.

The first question can be asked after there is a reference in the conversation to anything vaguely religious (this happens all the time if people read the newspapers; there is some religious allusion in the press almost every day). Say to a person very casually and in the same tone of voice that you talk about the weather or sports or your children, "*By the way, are you interested in spiritual things?*"

Now that is a very simple planned question and it draws just one of two answers. One is "Yes." The other is "No." If the person says "yes" two questions follow, and knowing what you are going to say next can eliminate ninety percent of your nervousness. A lot of us may know how to make the first break, but then we don't know what to do next, and when the person responds we fumble. An hour later we think of the perfect retort, but by that time it is too late. The second question is, "*What do you think a real Christian is?*"

The average person will define a real Christian as one who reads the Bible, or prays, or goes to church, or gives money, etc., etc. Then you say, "*Well, you know, that is what a real Christian does, but that is not what a real Christian is.*" Then go on to describe to him that a real Christian is one who is personally related to the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour and explain a little bit of what this means.

If you discover there is real interest, the third question is, "*Would you like to become a real Christian now?*"

You will be amazed at the number of people who are just waiting to be asked. They are in a sort of spiritual fog. They would give anything to have certainty of forgiveness of sin and eternal life, but nobody has ever told them how. Many students have said to me, "This is the first time anybody has ever told me how."

Now suppose the person is not interested. Drop it! You do not have to force the gospel on people who are not interested. You cannot do the Holy Spirit's work for him.

We also have an opening when people share their problems and frustrations with us. We can say, if it has been true of us, "You know, Mary or John, I know exactly how you feel. That used to be a problem for me until I had an experience that completely changed my life. Would you like me to tell you about it?" And they will answer, "Yes."

There is a third lesson to be learned from this figure of speech, "fishers of men." There has to be a drawing of the net. The reason some of us have not introduced a person to the Saviour is we have never popped the question. Maybe we have gotten to know people. Maybe we have built a bridge of friendship. But we have never come to the point of saying, "Are you or aren't you?"

The first is, "Well, *have you ever personally trusted Christ? Or are you still on the way?*" To say, "Have you ever personally trusted Christ?" defines it sufficiently that the person who does not know what you mean will usually say, "What do you mean by that?" This is the opening you are looking for and you explain what you mean.

But more often people will say to me, "That is exactly how you describe me. I am still on the way." Then I say to them, "That is interesting. *How far along the way are you?*" Without the slightest embarrassment they will tell me exactly where they are in their thinking. They may not even believe that the Lord Jesus Christ lived. They may believe He was merely a great philosopher and teacher. Or it may be they know the gospel better than you and I do and their problem is not lack of information but simply not responding to the information they have. In either case, we can know exactly where they are in their thinking and adapt ourselves to meet the particular need.

The third question is, "*Would you like to become a real Christian now and be sure?*"

What is the next step of faith and obedience for you in the area of evangelism? Is it to pop the question to somebody whom you already know?

Is it to throw out the net with some people you have gotten to know casually? Or is it perhaps to begin to build a friendship with someone of your circle of acquaintances?

Whatever it is, I hope that what the Lord says to you today you will do with a heart that is responsive and obedient, in love for Christ and for others.

A study of growing congregations showed that they stressed what they termed "lay" evangelism. Says one preacher: "The only people we are winning to Christ are those being reached by our laymen in their homes, schools and places of business. This is really as it should be." Another preacher says: "Our philosophy has been that all evangelism should be conducted outside the church building—preferably in the home." Another says: "Christians must get out of the shelter of the churches to reach people where they are, rather than expect to teach them primarily within the walls of the sanctuary."

THOSE STAGGERING CLAIMS

Alex V. Wilson

It's really about time we set some matters straight. As a preacher of God's Word and editor of this magazine, I -- Alex Wilson -- deserve your most profound respect! After all, your success and comfort in this life, and your destiny throughout all eternity depend on the attitude you take toward me personally and toward my teaching. My intelligence is greater than Einstein's, my writing ability exceeds Lucado's, and your relationship to me will determine your relationship to the Creator of the Universe. Your whole life will be judged by God on the basis of how you react to me. Indeed, I am the One who will decide where you will spend eternity.

...Well, are you still with me? By now you are asking yourself, "What's going on here, anyway? Did some totally insane article get stuck into *Word and Work* by mistake? Or was this part of an article written about a farout cult but quotes from its guru got attributed to the W&W editor due to some computer mixup? Or has avw got some joke up his sleeve? Surely that outstandingly humble fellow would never make such monstrous claims as are written in the preceding paragraph?!"

Well, I wrote all that nonsense at the beginning to stimulate your imagination. And to ask you this question: What opinion would you have formed of Jesus of Nazareth if you had heard *him* teach for very long? You see, Jesus seemed so conceited that some people thought he had a demon. (Check it out.) And at least twice his hearers thought he was crazy. One of those times it was his own friends who said it. They were so embarrassed about what he said that they wanted to spirit him away from the crowd he was addressing. What would *you* have thought if you had been there and heard his astounding personal claims?

Statements we tend to Overlook

Most of us have grown up hearing those staggering statements for so long they never faze us a bit. We take them for granted, never noticing them. But his hearers noticed! On five different occasions they blurted out in amazement, "*Who is this?*" In just one long conversation, mainly between Jesus and the Pharisees, they challenged him, "*Who are you?*".... "*Now we know that you are demon-possessed!*".... "*Who do you think you are?*" He was a real puzzler, all right.

Why? Because this wandering preacher and ex-carpenter made such outrageous assertions about himself. Oh, without a doubt he uttered profound insights and taught numerous wonderful moral lessons.

But then he would come up with personal claims so fantastic that they seemed to ruin all his wise statements.

Time after Time

Do you want instances of what we are talking about? Here are a few, for starters: "I am greater than the prophet Jonah." (Hmmm. You may be right, but shouldn't someone else be saying this rather than you?) "I am greater than Solomon." (Wow!) "Moses wrote about me." (Aw, c'mon.) "Scripture, God's Word, tells about me." (Are you serious?) Ponder those claims, and then proceed to some heavier statements: "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world....If you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins." (Hey, you're taking this too far!)

There are plenty more. A few of them I'll paraphrase, mainly because Jesus often spoke of himself in the third person, as "the Son of man." He said: You must hate all others, including yourself, compared with your loyalty to me. For my sake you must give up your rights to yourself and be willing to go to the firing squad. (What extreme demands! What right did he have to talk like that?) And have you noticed that this rabbi at various times mentioned "my angels." This peasant nonchalantly spoke about "my kingdom" and "my glory." Take Matt. 16: 25-28, for example: "Whoever loses his life *for me* will find it....For I will come in *my Father's glory* with *my angels*, and then *I will reward each person* according to what he has done....Some of you will see me coming in *my kingdom*." (See what I mean by saying he sounded conceited? Imagine your college president making such assertions! Or President Clinton, Billy Graham, or the Pope. Whoever it might be, we would think he'd gone bonkers if he talked that way.)

We aren't through yet. Here are perhaps his most extreme affirmations. Listen a while longer, imagining that you were there and actually heard Jesus of Nazareth make these statements:

I am the light of the world; whether you are an enlightened person depends on whether you follow me.

I will give rest of heart and mind, in this life, to anyone and everyone who comes to me.

I'll raise all the human race from death, at the end of this age.

I'll judge the entire human race, deciding each person's eternal destiny on the basis on his or her response to me.

I am the only way -- the only bridge, as it were -- to God.

I'll give my followers eternal homes in heaven after death.

If you see me, it's the same as actually seeing the heavenly Father.

I and the Father are one.

Important Conclusions

We have examined at least twenty of Jesus' fantastic personal claims, from all four gospels, and could easily add to the list. Based on such statements, we can make the following observations:

Jesus was very different from all other great teachers or religious leaders throughout history. Whether Moses, Krishna, Buddha, Lao-tsu, Confucius, Zoroaster, Socrates, Muhammed, Gandhi or whoever -- nobody made such numerous and drastic claims for himself. Those teachers were basically self-humbling. (Socrates said, for instance, "I'm the wisest man in Athens because *I know nothing* and know that I know nothing. The others know nothing but know not that they know nothing"!) By contrast, Jesus was self-advancing. They said, "*There is the truth*; believe that." Jesus said, "I am the truth; believe in me." They said, "*There is the way*; follow that." Jesus said, "I am the way; follow Me."

Startling Alternatives

Because of his many fantastic claims about himself, Jesus cannot be put on the same level with those others. He is either much Lower or Higher, much Worse or much Better than they. If his claims are false, he is not a good, great man or God-sent prophet at all. If his claims are true, he is far above their level, he is the one and only, the unique.

Think about it. If he knew he was not the light of the world nor the only way to the Father, and he would not raise and judge the human race, etc. etc. but he made all those claims anyway, wanting people to believe him --then he was a liar. And not just any run-of-the-mill liar, either, but **the biggest, worst liar of all time!** If he knew his claims were false but he tried to convince others they were true, we should have nothing but contempt for such a fraud.

On the other hand, maybe he really believed his claims were true, even though they were not. That would absolve him of being a liar, but would make him a lunatic. And not just any run-of-the-mill lunatic, either, but **completely neurotic, totally divorced from reality**, an unmatched case of a man with megalomania (that is, "delusions of grandeur," like the guy who really thinks he is Napoleon).

Some debunkers of the Biblical faith won't take either of those routes. They say his claims were mere legends. That is, Jesus never really made those assertions. Christians who lived later on made them up and attributed them to him. The radical Jesus-Seminar "scholars" take that approach, but despite the publicity given them by the media they are vastly outnumbered by scholars who know their approach is mostly hogwash. Those radicals want to convince us that the Jesus believed in by the church just a few decades after he lived was strikingly

different from Jesus as he really was. Horsefeathers! That theory is exploded by the manuscripts (some partial, some complete) of N.T. writings which have been found. These documents are sufficiently early, numerous and widespread to show the basic continuity between the Christians' views regarding Jesus in 50, and 70, and 90 A.D. No, the Jesus of the N.T. is not a legend.

That leaves three other alternatives: *If Jesus' personal claims were false*, he was -- as said above -- either the biggest liar of all time, or an all-out lunatic. What knowledgeable person would want to take either of those positions?

A liar? How could one of history's greatest moral teachers (to say the least) be a gross deceiver? Could a thorough-going hypocrite preach the Sermon on the Mount? His influence on the human race for truthfulness and love is unsurpassed, yet he himself is a liar? Even his enemies testified to his uprightness, but he's an imposter? Absurd.

A lunatic? Again we ask, how could a megalomaniac be one of history's outstanding teachers? Was a psychotic the author of the story of the prodigal son? Notice his cleverness, if we may use that word, in answering trick questions by which his enemies hoped to snare him. Think of his discernment, his vast insight into human nature. And he's a lunatic? Preposterous.

Suppose his claims were True?

Since the evidence refutes those two alternatives, suppose he was all he claimed to be? *If his claims are true*, he is not just a good, great man or even an influential prophet, but **the Lord of All, the God-Man, the only Savior, the coming Judge**. This fits the picture perfectly. This explains his upright character, sacrificial love, profound wisdom, and his unmatched impact throughout all the centuries and all history on the nations. It also is vouched for by fulfilled prophecies made about him and also by him, plus his miracles, and most of all by his resurrection. All these add up to powerful evidence that he is *All He Claimed to be* -- not only the greatest, but *the One and Only*.

Here's another bit of important evidence. **While his words seemed conceited, his character was humble**. He claimed to be the light of the world and the judge of all humanity, but he associated with outcasts and failures -- and their lives were renovated. One time he told his closest followers, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am." That seems like a haughty statement. But he said it just a few minutes after washing their feet, taking the place of a lowly slave!

Some people have made high claims for themselves, and also -- not surprisingly -- acted in arrogant ways. Others have been humble in their character, but also in their opinions about themselves. Only Jesus

combined such sky-high personal claims with gentle, humble character. Astounding!

Here's another important point. **If his claims were true, he should have made them!** For we urgently needed to know his identity. Suppose that at a concert a man suddenly has a serious heart attack. Immediately a cry goes out, "Is there a doctor in the house?" Actually there is one sitting just a few rows behind the stricken man. But he thinks, "I don't want to admit I'm a doctor. They might think I've got the bighead and am just bragging about my achievements. So I'll keep silent and not let them know." You get the point.

A tool for Evangelism

We strongly recommend that you review and master the material in this article. Not because I wrote it (see the editorial), but because it can be valuable both for defending the faith and spreading it. It calls attention to Jesus himself, and forces people to face up to the two questions, Who is Jesus and what shall I do about him? So we encourage you to memorize the step-by-step "argument" presented here.

It is important for another reason: Many folks who reject Jesus as divine lord and savior also reject the alternative views of his being a liar, lunatic or legend. They'll say, "Wait! He's none of the above. He is more than just a legend, but in no way was he a liar or lunatic. Instead he was a great man, maybe the greatest of all time. **I'll grant that he was an outstanding example, leader, martyr and moral teacher ... but forget all that superstitious stuff about his being the 'eternal, fully divine Son of God who died to save us by shedding his blood.'**"

But Jesus himself, as we saw, did not give us the option of his being just a man, even if the greatest of all men. His unmatched personal claims do not make that alternative possible. He must be either more or less than that. In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis put it this way:

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said, would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic on the level of a man who says, "I'm a poached egg," or else he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was and is the Son of God, or else a madman, or something worse. You can call Him a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God; but don't come up with any nonsense about His being a great moral teacher [but nothing more]. He has not left that alternative open to us.

Since many people try to take this "great moral teacher but only a man" position, we need to show it is not tenable. His claims enable us to do that. Then only the four "L's" are left, and only one of them fits. Let's present Jesus to unbelievers.

VOICES From The FIELDS

**From: Linda Allen, re: Dennis / Betty Allen
in Harbin, North China, a city of about 10 million people!**

Mom and Dad are currently living in a Chinese hotel on a University campus which shelters them from a lot of the city noise and congestion outside. They have the only room in the hotel with air-conditioning (a perk for long term guests?); it contains twin beds, a desk, a low cabinet with a couple of drawers, a TV, a wardrobe, and a bathroom. They take their meals downstairs and took their chances ordering from the menu (mostly in Chinese characters) until they had it translated! Breakfast is a buffet, but not exactly Shoney's! "Breakfast this morning consisted of cauliflower, preserved green peppers and four other vegetables, hard-boiled eggs, about four kinds of congee (soft rice soup) and three or four kinds of bread..." they teach from 9:30 - 11:30 am and from 1:00 - 3:00 pm, usually eating lunch with two of the students daily at a nearby restaurant. Vegetarian dishes are readily available and quite inexpensive. (Dad's health seems to be holding up well.)

The present pilot class of 10 students are all believers and have been wonderful to work with. They are 20 - 30 year olds, all of whom have little or no background in English. It was rough getting started. They love to sing and know many of the same choruses and songs that we do. After the school day officially ends they go shopping with students or visit the zoo or park, or go to the local computer center (where the prompts, to their chagrin, are in Chinese characters) and rent a computer.

The school is currently applying for official permission from the government to advertise its programs in the community at large. Dad has drawn up a curriculum plan for a 3 stage English program which must be translated into Chinese and reviewed by gov't authorities. They don't have much idea of what is involved in the process, only pray that it will be approved quickly and without a lot of red tape.

Mom and Dad have felt much joy in their teaching and fellowship experiences and are full of vision and excitement for the school. However, they have felt keenly the isolation from family and culture. There are few people they can converse with in English. English reading material is hard to get, but they did find a 1/2 hour program of Int'l news in English that is broadcast daily. Traffic is appalling — horrendous traffic jams are the norm as are flagrant violations of road rules. It gets light about 3:30 am and the sun sets about 8:00 pm. For laundry they wash things (5 at a time) in the face basin and hang them up

over the bathtub. They have a phone in their room, but can rarely call anyone successfully — the hotel switchboard always seems to be busy. On one outing they came across a former Russian place of worship, now a tourist attraction and currently the site of an Arts & Crafts exhibition. They have met some keen believers in the city, but many Sundays they are just with the Lord in their hotel room. “The brothers felt it unwise for us to be with them this morning so we have worshipped alone.”

Their schedule is quite demanding and for 2 months all communications have had to be handwritten due to technological difficulty. Mom is not able to communicate with each of you like she would like to. Perhaps this newsletter can communicate for them. If you would like to get in touch with them, please e-mail to dlallen@blueriver.net.

**Crystal Hardin P.O. Box 62, Seoul 140-600, South Korea
August 1999**

I arrived in Seoul on Sunday morning and went to the church that meets in the elementary school. The pastor from Huntsville preaches there and it is a small church with a lot of needs. There are many options here, as there are several English churches. Please pray that I'll go where the Lord wants me.

I live in a three-bedroom apartment with a 23-year-old roommate. There are several famous market areas here, and we went to one of them last week. There were over 1,000 shops, and they had all kinds of stuff. We also had a bona fide Korean meal — everything from rice wrapped in sea-weed to vegetables seasoned with whole (I mean Whole) two-inch fish. WE ate with chopsticks and had a good time. I'm the oldest one of the crew — they are all about the age of my kids, it seems, but they put up with me.

I am teaching two beginning Spanish classes, 8th grade Bible, and two music classes. The music classes are scheduled at the same time as all the other electives, and meet every day for a semester.

Susan Brooks Mozambique July 30, 1999

Cultural Differences

We're back in Maputo and the children are deliriously happy to be back. I'm happy to be back as well, but before I go on too much about life here, I wanted to share about Portugal one last time, before I forget.

During our last week I had a rare opportunity to hear about the U.S. from a Portuguese perspective. Our language teacher had just returned from her first trip to the states. She shared her perspectives, many of which I found hilariously funny after having lived in Portugal for six months. I'll give her Portuguese perspectives, and then put my American "take" on the Portuguese way in parentheses.

1. The Americans are too friendly! The people in the supermarkets are always asking how you are and can they help you find anything! I needed to wear a sign that said, "I'm fine; thank you, and I don't need any help finding anything!"

Once at a restaurant, when a waitress asked how I was, I replied, "Fine, thank you, and how are you?" She proceeded to tell me her life's story. She went on and on about her problems. I thought of asking if I should pray for her! I begged my American friend to find me someone who wasn't so friendly. I was sick of all this friendliness. The American said that maybe if we tried the post office we could find grouchy people.

(First, let me explain that the Portuguese are wonderful people. Our language teachers were so great to us. They went way beyond being just our teachers and helped us settle into the country by picking us up at the airport, arranging housing for us and schooling for Hannah, taking us around to banks and tax offices and helping with any questions we had. They were always happy, joking, patient, and friendly with us. It's just a different culture that isn't outgoing to strangers. When we first arrived, we felt rejected by the Portuguese because on the street or in the supermarket, they don't even make eye contact. We couldn't find anyone to help us in the stores, and if we asked for help, they seemed annoyed with us. For us it was difficult, but for our Portuguese teacher it was difficult to have everyone so friendly. I wonder if the Africans sometimes find us Americans unfriendly. They always have time for strangers. I've been amazed to have a Mozambican drop everything and walk a long distance just to show me where a house is that I'm trying to find. They always have time to talk. They don't need as much "space" as we do. It seems to me the Portuguese may need more "space" than Americans. By "space," I mean emotional, personal, comfort zone, kind of space, which can at times translate into physical space too. For example, the Mozambicans can pack many more people into a truck than Americans can!)

2. There are too many choices in the U. S. restaurant! "Rice or potatoes? Potatoes mashed, baked, or fried? Butter or sour cream? Muffins, cornbread, or biscuits?"

(Can you believe it? At restaurants, they didn't have many choices. They served fries with almost everything.)

3. The coffee (in the U.S.) is no good! Even the Seattle specialty coffees. Imagine! Drinking coffee through a straw!

(She has a point. They do have great coffee in Portugal. I never drank coffee until I lived there. Also they serve coffee in porcelain cups, even at McDonalds in Portugal. By the way, when we returned to South Africa we found a Seattle Coffee Company cafe in a new mall in Nelspruit.)

4. The cheese in the U.S. is the color of carrots! They don't have good cheese.

(We couldn't find cheddar cheese in Portugal. It was all white cheese.)

5. The policeman at the airport was rude to me. Then I found out he was joking. Policemen in Portugal don't joke!

(This is an example of how cultural differences cause confusion. In Portugal, the police are all business. They don't make jokes and seldom smile. How many times have I misunderstood the Portuguese or the Mozambicans because of cultural differences?)

6. There's no traffic in the U.S.! People should honk their horns more!

(The traffic in Portugal is horrendous and people are always honking their horns! The motorcyclists are nuts. They make lanes where there are no lanes. They are sometimes called "organ donors.")

I hope that was fun and helpful for you. People asked if living in Portugal wasn't just like living in the states. It was easier than living in Mozambique, but very different from the states. Pray for us that we'll be able to understand this culture enough to minister to both spiritual and physical needs of the people of Mozambique.

Dan Wilson
July 22, 1999

Camps near St. Petersburg, Russia

Only two teams are left here now. The members of Karrie's group are doing very well in their camp, teaching Bible stories and doing "Redeemer" [a mime presentation] for every cabin group they go to even though I've heard via the camp grapevine that the director, who is extremely nice to us and the team, told the counselors to try to not

let the team put out their "propaganda" but rather just to play with the children. They have not been allowed to tell Bible stories in a couple of the cabins but have in the rest, but have not been able to give out Bibles or children's Bible story books.

We did deliver the rest of the children's Bible story books to Vostok 6, though, as the Fond du Lac team got permission from the director to give them out to anyone. They are doing really well in that camp having received a very warm welcome from the moment they arrived.

I suppose that you have heard about Les Wright and Nick Ray [from Borden] baptizing their translator Boris, a 19 yr. old whom I had never met and only had referred to me at the end of June. Boris is with the Fond du Lac team now and doing quite well. I plan to try to get him into Masha's church as there are several young people his age there and the pastor is good with teens. I also hope to get Dima to go there too. Masha has mentioned to him about going there with her and he is interested but has not been able to get Sundays off. [Dima is a brilliant 14-year old camper who held many conversations with the Seay-Mullins-Wilson team, and read C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* and other books they gave him.]

Over all, it has been a very good summer with very few great difficulties. One baptism, about 1000 Bibles and Bible-story books and lots of Gospel bracelets later, I think much good has been done. Masha [Dan's interpreter] was doing laundry here at Druzhnik and had a long conversation with a couple of the ladies who work at camp. They asked Masha what we believed and why we were here and said that they noticed that we had a joy in life and in our relationship with God that they didn't have. Like so many, they said that they would go to church but just don't have the time, working endlessly for their meager pay.

There is so much more that could be done here. In past years we have had to approach the camp directors looking for camps to host our teams, but this year, because of fewer volunteers and more trust on the part of the directors, we have had the freedom to choose between many camps which are asking for our teams. It seems a shame that Masha and I could be coordinating for at least another 2 or 3 teams right now and maybe another 4 or 5.

**Michiya Nakahara Nakahara Mission Fund August, 1999
19930 County Rd. 324 Terrell, Texas 75160**

For the past two decades, the educational emphasis placed on the children in Japan has monopolized and molded the life styles of our

people. Beginning with kindergarten, children are encouraged to attend "Cram School". (The term Cram School is a household name in Japan for preparing preschoolers for primary school, primary school children for high school, high school students for college, and college students for life.) Given the fact that children attend school from Monday through Saturday and they go to Cram schools after returning from their regular schools, Japanese children do not have free time or privacy and the opportunity to just be a child. Additionally, enrolling youngsters in swimming, dance schools, etc., is virtually a norm set by society in Japan. As a result, children are missing Sunday morning worship services and Sunday Schools. This is a common concern and frustration shared equally by all Christian churches in Japan (and we are few in number). Unfortunately, our congregation had not been an exception to this condition for the past several years. I am reminded of our Lord's words, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

However, the Lord has blessed us with several young married couples in the past few years, and now we have six children under the age of six. We are so excited about the group of young children and are happy to report that we now have a Bible class for the ages 4-6 and a toddler's class. We are presently developing and training new teachers for another level of class for them.

We have been very pleased to see the hunger for the Word of God among our members. Upon their request and concern, we have been studying the book of Galatians and James during our Sunday morning worship service. It is the hope and prayer of this congregation to learn more about our Savior in depth so that we can walk closer to Him each day and win others along the way. We covet your prayers.

What the Bible Teaches about...

JUDGMENT, and SALVATION and REWARDS

(The Relation of Grace & Works, Faith & Faithfulness)

Alex V. Wilson

Contradiction? Eccles.3:17 says, "God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked...." Also Eccles.12:13-14, "Fear God & keep his commands, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." Also 2 Cor.5:10, "We [including Christians] must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."

BUT CONTRAST John 5:24, "He who...believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (RSV).

How can we solve this seeming contradiction? Notice that the NIV translates Jn.5:24, "Whoever believes...will not be condemned." Yes, everyone shall be judged, but true followers of Jesus (born-again Christians) shall not be sentenced to damnation. We know the verdict in our case ahead of time--and it is, "Not Guilty"! That is the key fact. "There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom.8:1). "Since we have been justified [that is, acquitted] through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom.5:1; notice the verb tenses). The Lord laid the guilt and punishment of our sins on Christ (Isa.53:6), and credited His perfect righteousness to us (2 Cor.5:21).

But this raises a question. For what reason does God forgive Christ's followers but condemn other people--those who don't repent and trust in Jesus? What is the basis for our salvation? Is it because all Christians are always better than all nonchristians? Does it depend on how good we are? No.

Saved by God's Grace APART from our Works

An important story told by Jesus is found in Luke 18:9-14. After reading it, try to summarize in one sentence what our Lord taught here. Here's my suggested summary: A good man lost and a bad man saved! But how can that be? Doesn't God want us to be good? And doesn't He hate and punish badness?

Yes, of course He does. But He also knows that none of us will ever be good enough to earn salvation or get to heaven because we deserve it. As Paul put it, "We know that a man is not justified by observing the law...because by observing the law no one will be justified" (Gal.2:16). Run that sentence through again. Earning God's forgiveness and blessing by our obedience or goodness is impossible.

But **WHY?** Why can nobody be saved by their kind deeds, religious acts, high moral character or obedience to duty and to God's commands? Do you know the answer? We may discover it in 2 important verses. "All who rely on observing the law [of God] are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.'" (Gal.3:10.) Did you notice the key word in that last sentence? It's the word *everything*. What does it teach us?

Now notice another passage: "Whoever keeps the whole law [of God] and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker" (James 2:10-11). Let's think about that. Think of a chain with 10 links, suspending a heavy weight in the air. If 5 links break, what will happen? But if only one link breaks, what will happen? Another way of putting it is, How many murders must a man commit to be classed as a murderer? How many robberies must someone commit to be called a robber? In the same way, how many sins must someone commit to be a sinner? This leads us to this basic principle:

**All people are NOT equally SINFUL,
but all people ARE equally SINNERS!**

Therefore all of us equally need someone to save us. For none of us can be saved by our own righteousness. We have fallen far short of the goodness God's justice requires.

Here is why salvation by our good deeds is impossible: **If we seek God's favor on the basis of our works, He must consider our bad deeds as well as our good ones!** Some folks feel, "Well, if I commit more good works than bad ones, God will accept me." But what human court can acquit a man just because for every crime he commits he has also committed two kind deeds or made two donations to charity? That won't work. God is the Judge of the Universe, and must maintain law and order. He cannot overlook our transgressions.

So it is impossible for us to be saved by works--that is, by our own goodness. **The only possible way of salvation is to find a whole different basis--a whole new approach--one that is not dependent on what we deserve.** God, foreseeing our helplessness, provided that new, different basis for us. It is salvation by His **GRACE, unearned and undeserved by us.** We can be made right with God through the loving, voluntary death of Jesus Christ. He died as our substitute, to take our place and to pay our penalty. Peter writes, "Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God." (1 Pet.3:18.) And Paul agrees: We "are justified freely--as a gift--by God's grace thru the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" (Rom.3:24-25). Paul goes on to add, "When we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly....God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom.5:6,8).

Objections and Misunderstandings

Someone may say, "I object! Yes, His death was necessary, but in addition our works are necessary if we are to make our peace with God. We must not only trust in Christ but also do good works in order to become saved." This is more or less the view of Roman Catholicism: A big sign in front of a church said, "Make your retreat to

win the love of God." And a tract ended with these words: "He who lives and dies well will be saved. He who lives and dies in sin shall be damned." Is that true, false, or in between? Think about it. One writer concluded that Roman Catholic doctrine teaches that we must be saved by Christ's death plus water, bread, oil, and fire! (Infant baptism, the eucharist, extreme unction or the last rites, and purgatory.) If that is true, Jesus' death didn't accomplish very much for us, did it?

No, no--such an approach is all wrong! Remember the tax-collector and the Pharisee? The Pharisee regularly performed all the rituals--and more--commanded by God in the Old Testament. But in pride he **relied** upon such observances, and was lost! But the ungodly tax-collector sought God's mercy with a contrite heart, and was saved then and there. Here's another pair of men to consider: Nicodemus, a religious leader among the Jews, and the repentant thief who was crucified next to Jesus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee too. He was **extremely zealous in his religion**. But Jesus told him he was not right with God in spite of it all. Yet the thief, when he humbled himself in the closing hours of his evil life, was pardoned despite his sins. There is a warning here for us church-members. We must beware, and never allow ourselves to feel **proud and self-reliant** because we obey Christ's commands. For example, some people who rely on their obedience feel smug and self-righteous because they have been baptized and they regularly take the Lord's Supper (or Communion). Instead we should be **humbled** by these actions, for they remind us we were unworthy sinners and could be saved only by God's grace!

A wise Filipino once said, "Neither our work for the church, which many Protestants depend on, nor the church's work for us, which most Catholics depend on, can save us. The Lord Jesus is the only Savior."

"Why Do Good Works, Then?"

Someone may say, "Well, since our good deeds don't save us, why do them? If our sins can be freely forgiven by God's grace, why not live sinfully and selfishly?"

There are many answers to that question. We'll just mention, very briefly, several of them; then we'll concentrate on the last one. 1) We are compelled to turn from sin and to follow God's will because of **gratitude**. We work for Christ because He has saved us already, not in order that He will save us as a result.

I would not work my soul to save, for that my Lord has done.

But I would work like any slave because I love God's Son.

2) Because Christ came to save us not only from sin (that is, guilt) but from sinning! "Call his name 'Jesus,' for he shall his people from their sins." From being punished for sins, yes; but also from living in sin. 3) Because when we receive Christ we are united with Him. We become new people; we have a new identity! "We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead...we too may live a new life" (Rom.6:2-4).

4) At our conversion we are given the Holy Spirit of God to live within us. And He plants desires in our hearts which we didn't have before. So, though we still have selfish impulses even after we become born again, alongside of them we have new God-given desires to be loving, kind, forgiving, pure, self-controlled, etc. (Gal.5:16-17,22-23.)

5) We also turn from sin for our own sake! In the long run (and often in the short run too), sin hurts us and holiness helps us. Though it costs to obey God, it pays...and it pays much more than it costs. 6) Because God is holy in character. And as a holy, loving Father He chastens His wayward children when we keep sinning. (Heb.12:5-11.) 7) Because, though we can't be saved because of our good works, we can't be saved without them either! For where there is true faith, good works will always result. Any "faith" which does not produce good deeds is exposed as a "dead" faith (James 2:17). It's only fake, not a genuine faith at all.

8) Because our works will be judged--though not as the basis of our salvation. Since our main topic in this present study is God's Judgment of His creatures, this is the point we will emphasize now. The Bible says in Rom.2:6 (and 8 other places in the N.T. too!) that God will judge our works: 'He will repay each one as his works deserve.'

That sounds as if our salvation is earned by our works after all. But it isn't, as we saw above. Here's the solution to the dilemma: The Lord shall indeed judge the works done by every human being. But NOT as a basis or cause of our salvation or damnation. Instead, His judgment of men and women's lives will determine the degree of punishment measured out to the unsaved in hell, and the amount of rewards given to the saved in heaven. Please re-read those emphasized sentences. First let's think, sadly, of those who will perish. The unconverted will be sentenced to hell because of their sins but also because they refused to turn to Christ, the Savior whom God provided for them. If they had trusted in Him they could have been saved despite their sins. But they rejected God's costly gift of salvation-by-grace! Therefore they will be doomed to hell. All of them will

be sent there. **But they will not all suffer equally there!** Their works in this lifetime--that is, their conduct, the good and bad they do--will affect the degree of their punishment. Jesus made this fact indisputably clear when He said that He "will reward each person according to what he has done" (Matt.16:27).

Some people find this idea surprising, so let's look at other Biblical evidence for it. In Matt.11:20-24 our Lord strongly denounced those cities in Galilee which did not repent even though He performed most of His miracles in their midst. He said, for example, "Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago....I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you." He went on to say the same about Capernaum: **"It will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."** He did not say that Sodom's evil people would escape hell. No, He knew the inhabitants of both Sodom and Capernaum deserved doom. But it's clear that in general the latter would receive heavier judgment than the former. For what reason? Because their opportunities differed. The Son of God Himself had taught and performed miracles in Capernaum, yet they rejected Him. Due to the greater light they had received, the respectable sinners (!) in that privileged city were worse than the grossly wicked people of Sodom. And God's judgment on them would be correspondingly greater.

He taught the same idea in Luke 12:47-48. He drew His lesson from the way owners in those days treated their slaves. He did not necessarily condone their harshness, but He approved of the principle involved. "That servant who knows his master's will and...does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded." The principle is clear: **Penalties for unsaved people will not all be equal. For the guilt of some far exceeds that of others**, due to their greater knowledge, opportunities, etc. (I tremble for the U.S. when I reflect on that fact!)

This truth is also found in the Bible's description of the last judgment, in Rev.20:11-15. "I saw the dead...standing before the throne, and books were opened....The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books....Each person was judged according to what he had done." As their conduct differed, so their punishment will differ in degree. What that means specifically is beyond our ability to grasp. We leave it to the Judge of all the earth, who will surely do what is right. But oh how we thank Him that the passage also mentions another book--the Book of Life. Those whose names are

recorded there will not go to hell at all, for they are redeemed by Jesus our Savior, by God's grace through our faith.

Does This Principle Also Apply to Christians?

Yes. Writing to Christians, Paul says, "We will all stand before God's judgment seat...Each of us will give an account of himself to God." Again, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (Rom.14:10,12; 2 Cor.5:10.) In other places he tells **why** the Lord will examine our lives: The Christian's "work will be shown for what it is." He explains that some will **receive a reward**, while others will suffer loss of reward though they themselves will be saved. He goes on to say that when the Lord returns, He "will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each [born-again believer] will receive his praise from God" (1 Cor.3:13-14; 4:5).

Also our Lord Himself says, "I am coming soon! **My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done**" (Rev.22:12). In His parable in Luke 19:11-26 He makes clear that the rewards He will generously give to His servants at His 2nd coming will differ, according to their faithfulness. So the principle seems clear: **By the grace of God, all saved people will share in the glory of heaven. Yet the eternal rewards of the saved in heaven will not all be equal. For the faithfulness and zeal of some far exceeds that of others.**

So I believe we may draw the following distinctions between salvation and rewards:

SALVATION:

- 1. is Free and Unearned**
- 2. is received by Faith**
- 3. is a Present Possession**

REWARDS:

- 1. are according to Works**
- 2. depend on Faithfulness**
- 3. are Future Prizes**

Of course there are joys and blessings right now, in this life, for serving Christ. But the rewards we've studied above will be given when Christ returns. Will He say to YOU, "Well done, faithful servant"?

THAT'S WHAT CHRISTIANS DO NOW

By Donald E. Wildmon - President, American Family Association

In 1973 The Supreme Court said it was OK to kill unborn babies. Since then, we have killed more than the entire population of Canada. And it continues. A woman's choice? Half of those who have died in their mothers' wombs have been women. They didn't have a choice. It is called abortion.

Me? I go to church, the minister preaches, I go home. That's what Christians do now.

First, it was in dingy, dirty theaters. Then, convenience stores. Then, grocery stores. Then on television. Now it is in the homes of millions via the Internet. It is called pornography.

Me? I go to church, the minister preaches, I go home. That's what Christians do now.

They call it no-fault. Why should we blame anyone when something so tragic happens. Haven't they already suffered enough? Half of the marriages in America end this way. The children suffered. The family broke down. It is called divorce.

Me? I go to church, the minister preaches, I go home. That's what Christians do now.

At one time it was a perversion. We kept it secret. We secured help and hope for those who practiced it. Now it is praised. We have parades celebrating it, and elected officials give it their blessing. Now it is endowed with special privileges and protected by special laws. Even some Christian leaders and denominations praise it. It is called homosexuality.

Me? I go to church, the minister preaches, I go home. That's what Christians do now.

It used to be an embarrassment. A shame. Now a third of all births are to mothers who aren't married. Two-thirds of all African-American children are born into a home without a father. The state usually pays the tab. That is why we pay our taxes, so the government can take the place of parents. After all, government bureaucrats know much better how to raise children than parents do. It is called illegitimacy.

Me? I go to church, the minister preaches, I go home. That's what Christians do now.

At one time it was wrong. But then the state decided to legalize it, promote it and tax it. It has ripped apart families and destroyed lives. But just look at all the money the state has raised. No longer do we have to teach our children to study and work hard. Now we teach them they can get something for nothing. We spend millions encouraging people to join the fun and excitement. Just look at the big sums that people are winning. They will never have to work again! It is called gambling.

Me? I go to church, the minister preaches, I go home. That's what Christians do now.

Not long ago, Christians were the good guys. But now any positive image of Christians in movies or on TV is gone. We are now depicted as the bad guys - greedy, narrow-minded hypocrites. The teacher can't have a Bible on her desk, but can have Playboy. We don't have Christmas and Easter holidays - just winter and spring break. We can't pray in school, but can use foul language. It's called being tolerant.

Me? I go to church, the minister preaches, I go home. That's what Christians do now.

Yes, all these things came to pass within 30 years. Where were the Christians? Why, they were in church. All these things are for someone else to deal with. Times have changed. Involvement has been replaced with apathy.

But don't blame me. I didn't do anything. I go to church, the minister preaches, I go home. That's what Christians do now.

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Crowley, Louisiana...is anticipating the fall revival with Bro. Sonny Childs Sept. 19-22.

SCEC...continues the purposes of SCC: to promote Training for Christian Service. We are hoping that some of you who have received scholarships from SCEC will write and give us some news of your activities, thank you notes, or college recommendations we can publish. We emphasize assistance to post secondary education, and the bulk of the grants provide scholarships for students to attend Christian colleges. For more information re: financial help for scholarship or help on a church project or missionary project you may write: SCEC % Cecil Garrett at 399 College St., Winchester, Ky 40391.

Words of Life...The mission of "Words of Life Radio Program" is to tell the story of Jesus, the Messiah. The goal is to reach the English-speaking world, in need of a Savior. Please consider becoming a team member of the Words of Life Radio ministry. The speaker, announcer and all members of the board of directors, serve without financial compensation. Write us at P.O. Box 221, Sellersburg, IN 47172-0221 (Buford Smith)

Portland Christian School...The heart and soul of PCS remain the same; only the face is changing as PCHS is having a facelift. The summer's project includes an addition, which will connect the two classroom buildings, providing shelter from the elements during inclement weather, additional office space, and much needed restroom facilities. Groundbreaking began May 16 as school officials gathered to dedicate this work to the Lord. What better way to rejoice over 75 years of the Lord's work through Christian education to watch His work growing?

Woodland Bible Camp...Senior Week '99 is now history but will be long remembered. The theme was "A Relationship to last a lifetime." Daily classes were based on several of Max Lucado's books: "Just like Jesus"; "In the Eye of the Storm"; "Grip of Grace"; and "When God Whispers Your Name." Highlights of the week included: "dress-up" dinner; "Hillbilly" dinner; horseback riding & mid-night hayride; 11:30 p.m. worship in the Greene-Sullivan State Forest. The week was a week of spiritual encouragement as well as a week of good Christian fun. We encourage more high school teens to join us next year should the Lord tarry His return. (Alan Borders)

Fisherville (David Tapp)...We report a good VBS June 20-25 with total enrollment of 68. 35 had perfect attendance and 70 came to the closing program. We praise the Lord for 1 baptism. An offering of over \$200.00 was received and given to Maple Manor Children's Home. A **Revival Meeting** is being planned for the week of October 3-8 with Bro. Kenneth Preston speaking. There will be a homecoming service Sunday Oct. 3 at 11 a.m. with a potluck dinner. Fisherville is celebrating her **118th year of service** in the building. We invite and encourage our friends to come and share in this time of revival.

Salem (Mike Chapman) We are nearing the end of a renovation project on the church building, which includes new carpet, new pews, a sound-system, and refinishing the church furniture. The old pews were donated to Hinton United Methodist Church in Harrison Co. who gave some to another church in a rebuilding program following a fire. It's good to see God at work. Also, Salem is planning a large "Homecoming '99" celebration for any and all who ever attended Salem. The date is **October 17th**. Former ministers, friends, and family members are cordially invited to attend. Contact Mike Chapman at (606) 234-4570 for additional information.

Kentucky/Indiana Christian Fellowship (Bud Ridgeway) was great! The day sessions averaged 66 and the evening ses-

sions averaged 240 in attendance. Wednesday night contribution to missions was \$2911.00. The committee wishes to thank each speaker and helper for their service during the fellowship. Without the ones fixing lunch, coffee, and setting up things, it would not have gone as smooth as it did. The committee is looking for several men who would like to serve on the committee for the next three years or just for a year or two. Give Bud Ridgeway a call if you would like to be a part of the committee. (502) 499-0724.

Maple Manor (Ray Naugle) Maple Manor has no empty beds at the present time. There are 42 in the nursing division and 15 on residential. The end of April the go ahead to open the new addition was received from the state. Some residents from the original nursing wing moved into rooms in the new wing. The need now is for full staffing. Make this a matter of prayer. Our goal is to provide for our residents the best care possible. We give God the glory for providing a beautiful and functional building and a staff who put the welfare of our residents above all else.

Corrected Info

Sam and Joan Marsh live at 443 Wendy Bend Lane, Pine Grove, LA 70453. Phone: (225) 777-4192.

It was good to see Sam recently during their visit to their old Ky. home!