

## **“Does Doctrine Matter?”**

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### **Romans 6:16-18**

*“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”*

*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.”*

### **1 Timothy 4:16**

*“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”*

When we hear the word “doctrine” we automatically cringe with a seeming dread having misunderstood the beauty and truth ascribed to this word. Our culture has wrongfully defined doctrine as a dogma that is only applicable to theologians for debating purposes, being beyond the grasp of, and relevance to, any normal believer. It is perceived as an abstract subject void of any practical properties whereby the average Christian might benefit from it.

The common Christian immediately feels a negative mood come over him when this word is mentioned ascribing to it thoughts of boredom, or lofty intellectual religious idealism, far too complicated to be useful, or that doctrine is solely purposed for seminary professors and the students underneath their care. Moreover, we trust that our spiritual leaders, such as Pastors and Elders, have a vivid understanding of doctrinal matters and being so, we leave the matter entirely in their hands as we graciously withdraw from the idea exclusively.

The embrace of this negative mood, or the tolerance of it, is the bedding ground for a torrent of unbiblical or extra biblical practices to creep into the church and the private lives of Christ’s redeemed people. Being so, it is my intention in these messages to deliberately and systematically destroy these infected ideas concerning this topic and to firmly establish us in the concreteness of authoritative scripture. First of all let me share with you a passage of scripture in regard to our faulty ideas concerning doctrine.

### **2 Corinthians 10:4-5**

*“For the weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood], but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds, [Inasmuch as we] refute arguments and theories and reasoning’s and every proud and lofty thing that sets itself up against the [true] knowledge of God; and we lead every thought and purpose away captive into the obedience of Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One),” AMP*

I think it is fair and accurate to say that we all have ideas and feelings in regard to certain subjects such as doctrine that are inaccurate, and heavily influenced by our upbringing, our culture, and even our religious teaching in church. These influences are powerful, and they assert themselves in the regulation of what we embrace, what we tolerate, and what we reject and cast away.

The Word of God tells us here that mighty weapons ordained of God are available to refute these ideological strongholds or theories and reasons that are set against the knowledge of God, or Truth. These weapons lead every thought, or idealism, into captivity, unto the obedience of Christ. Simply put, the Word of God, and its assertion, through its anointed declaration or preaching, will demolish these mind-sets, prejudices, and inaccurate beliefs, that we hold fast too the keep us in bondage.

Being so, it is my intention to boldly declare through the preaching of the Word of God, the truth about doctrine and its importance to the preacher and the newest believer alike. It is my prayer that our Lord open up the eyes of our hearts, to enlighten our understanding, that we may embrace pure doctrine with all zeal and passion.

**John MacArthur said:**

Doctrine matters. What you believe about God, the gospel, the nature of man, and every major truth addressed in Scripture filters down to every area of your life. You and I will never rise above our view of God and our understanding of His Word.

Doctrinal preaching certainly bores the hypocrites; but it is only doctrinal preaching that will save Christ's sheep.

**J.I. Packer**

Doctrine is the framework of life – the skeleton of truth, to be clothed and rounded out by the living grace of a holy life.

**Adoniram J. Gordon**

Doctrine is the necessary foundation of duty; if the theory is not correct the practice cannot be right. Tell me what a man believes, and I will tell you what he will do.

**Tryon Edwards**

We may invigorate our faith and renew our courage by reflecting that divine power has always attended the preaching of doctrine, when done in the true spirit of preaching. Great revivals have accompanied the heroic preaching of the doctrines of grace, and that whole lofty mountain range of doctrines upon which Jehovah sits enthroned, sovereign in grace as in all things else. God honors preaching that honors Him. There is entirely too much milk-sop preaching nowadays, trying to cajole sinners to enter upon a truce with their Maker, quit sinning, and join the church. The situation does not call for a truce, but a surrender. Let us bring out the heavy artillery of heaven, and thunder away at this stuck-up age as Whitefield, Edwards, Spurgeon and Paul did, and there will be many slain of the Lord, raised up to walk in newness of Life.

**J.B. Gambrell**

"A nontheological faith cannot explain itself, but too theological a faith loses contact with the reason for its existence. . . . Too much enthusiastic faith without a corresponding degree of theological understanding is almost certain to lead to error, perhaps to serious heresy. Too much doctrine unaccompanied by a living and growing faith is the recipe for dead orthodoxy." Harold Brown

"It is of exceedingly great importance that we should have right notions and conceptions of the nature, attributes, and perfections of God. It is the very foundations of all religion, both doctrinal and practical; it is to no purpose to worship God, except we know what we worship. . . . It is impossible we should love, fear, and obey God as we ought, except we know what He is, and have right ideas of His perfections, that render Him lovely and worthy to be feared and obeyed."  
Jonathan Edwards

Contrary to shallow and unscriptural cultural religion, doctrine does matter. In fact, doctrine is imperative, inasmuch, it is impossible to truly be regenerated apart from sound doctrine. Hear my heart beloved; I am not speaking of dry, dull, incomprehensible religious jargon. On the contrary; I am speaking of the very oracles of God, the very fundamentals of the faith, the very tenants of the Christian life, that define who we are as God's dearly beloved children.

One of the greatest pitfalls in modern Christendom is the doctrinal deficiencies we exhibit. Many good hearted people are passionately following every new gimmick on the market of religious fanfare simply because they are not doctrinally aware and secure. They are like chaff, blown about by every new wind of unsound doctrine, because they are not anchored to Christ in sound doctrine.

#### **Ephesians 4:14-15**

*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*  
KJV

Beloved, if you are not anchored in solid biblical doctrine, you will be tossed about by every cunning and deceitful tactic of satan. Doctrine matters!!! Now, back to our introductory scriptures in Romans and 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy.

- **Biblical doctrine and salvation/freedom from sin are inseparably tied to one another.**

It is altogether likely that the flood of false converts in the church today are a direct result of the false doctrines that have crept into the church. The Apostle Paul in his address to the Church at Rome mentions their former entanglements with sin, and the wholehearted subjection to its power, being eradicated by obedience to the form of doctrine that had been delivered unto them by apostolic preaching. Paul goes on to say, "*being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness.*" This is the effect, but the cause is the preaching of sound doctrine that had been embraced by the hearts of the believers at Rome. It is important that we see the link here between deliverance from sin, and the preaching of biblically sound doctrine. It is not necessary for you to correct me after the service in regards to the work of the Spirit of God in the conversion of souls for I am in wholehearted agreement. But what you may have forgotten is that the Spirit of God works in concert with the agency of the Word of God or sound doctrine, to regenerate the hearts of sinful men.

#### **Mark 16:20**

*"And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen."* KJV

Could it be that the carnality in today's assembly is fueled or empowered by the fleshly doctrines being sown into the hearts of the people on a weekly basis? I believe that it has some

merit, not exclusive, but some merit. It is a biblical truth that the doctrines of grace, regeneration, repentance, faith, and other fundamental doctrines, work as preparatory graces unto the sealing of the Spirit of God.

### **Ephesians 1:13-14**

*“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” KJV*

The modern contemporary church has greatly undervalued the great doctrines of the faith, and placed greater emphasis upon frivolous ideas and practices and thereby robbed its subjects of the greatest need in Christendom; regeneration! The changes in dynamics are noted by the inordinate emphasis being placed upon the benefits of the gospel while neglecting the gospel itself. The secondary has overtaken the primary and the danger lies in the motive underlying the whole thing.

The secondary becoming the primary is indicative of the corruption and greed that strokes the please me nature of Adamic beings. Gospel benefits removed from Gospel context is idolatry my friend. The Gospel declares that we must be crucified upon a personal cross and the rendering of ourselves dead. From this death, by faith and hope, comes a resurrection by the power of God unto salvation and thereby its benefits. The reversal of that order is that we might experience the benefits of redemption while neglecting and avoiding the Gospel altogether. This is acutely heretical my friend, but it is the consensus among a growing number of contemporary professors of Jesus Christ.

Beloved, the Apostle Paul warned young Timothy to *“take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.”* It is the responsibility of the ministers of Jesus Christ to preach biblical doctrine; but it is the responsibility of the followers of Jesus Christ to subject themselves to such preaching, teaching, and exhortation.

It is shameful that we are greatly lacking in doctrinal knowledge. This lack is the cause of our lack to break the bands of wickedness in our lives. This lack is the cause of our weakness against sin. This lack is the cause of our susceptibility to erroneous doctrine. This lack is the cause of our inability to defend the faith. This lack is the cause of our drifting away from truth unto lies. It is the lack of doctrinal knowledge. Again, I am not suggesting doctrine alone is sufficient, it is not. I am aware of the need for the Spirit that gives life, but you must understand our need for doctrinal truths planted in our heart that the Holy Spirit may find something within our lives to which He can agree with and in turn work with.

I am not promoting dogma, or legal Christianity. I am not preaching that hyper-theology replaces obedience, the work of the Holy Spirit, or any such thing. What I am preaching is the need for pure doctrine, deeply planted into our hearts, soundly garrisoned in our minds, and implemented by faith into practical holy living. Paul gave us a grand description of this in his address to Timothy.

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

*“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” KJV*

Many of the pulpiteers of the past fifty years acted as though the first and last object of their calling was the salvation of souls, everything being made to bend to that aim. In consequence, the feeding of the sheep, the maintaining of a Scriptural discipline in the church, and the inculcation (The action of impressing by repeated admonitions) of practical piety, was crowded out; and only too often all sorts of worldly devices and fleshly methods were employed under the plea that the end justified the means; and thus the churches were filled with unregenerate members. In reality, such men defeated their own aim. The hard heart must be ploughed and harrowed before it can be receptive to the gospel seed. Doctrinal instruction must be given on the character of God, the requirements of his Law, the nature and heinousness of sin, if a foundation is to be laid for true evangelism. It is useless to preach Christ unto souls until they see and feel their desperate need of him. **A.W. Pink**

It is my earnest intention, not only to preach to you sound doctrine, but to show you your need of it, and to by the help of the Holy Spirit, to give you a desire for it. Our shallowness in doctrine is the predecessor of shallowness of living. Our lack of stable doctrine is the culprit of instability in our lives. A man never can live beyond his doctrine. It is your responsibility to heed sound doctrine, to embrace sound doctrine, and to live sound doctrine. Not the crusty theology of university professors, but the living doctrines of Jesus Christ! Oh beloved, the character of God is essential doctrine, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is essential doctrine, clothe yourselves in it, test yourself with it, examine yourself by it, and give yourself to the proclamation of it. For in so doing, you will save yourself, and those that hear you!

## ***Does Doctrine Matter? Part II***

### **1 Timothy 4:1-2**

*“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;” KJV*

### **2 Peter 2:1-3**

*“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.”*

*“And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” KJV*

One of the greatest delusions to mark the end of times is a doctrinal delusion. In a generation that all but rejects disciplined study of doctrinal truths we find a snare that is capturing multitudes of church attending professing believers in Jesus Christ and bringing them under strong delusion.

This marked distaste for biblical doctrine is the gateway through which heretical and damnable fallacies flow – leading astray multitudes into exciting new religious experiences, authentic experiences, powerful experiences, yet, demonic experiences that manifest in the corridors of what men have deemed a church. These pandemic episodes are empowered by spirits of seduction, wrapped in the guise of modern fundamental excellence, applauded by cultural acceptance, leading its blinded followers into experiences that are sensually intimate and borderline erotic.

The idealism that I am referring to is not some distant occurrence waiting to fulfill itself in the future. No, this is happening right now, in our city, being participated in by people that you possibly know and love. I mentioned the word pandemic earlier, and emphatically so. The influences of these seducing spirits, and the power of their demonic doctrines, are pandemic.

Many unaware believers are not too concerned about these ongoing and relatively new forms of worship – but beloved they are the most deadly poisons that hell has emitted to date. Those that are fellowshipping within the sanctums of these seductive religious practices are twice dead to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever.

You may question why we need to mention these things in our preaching, and I must instruct us that the lack of biblical doctrine and the practical adherence is the very catalyst that empowers spiritual seduction and opens avenues to fall head-long into doctrinal error or better said demonic doctrines.

Beloved, not everything that looks like Jesus is Jesus. Not every assembly that uses the Name is a true church. There is the use of the Name of Christ amiss. There is an assembly of people in a religious setting that is amiss. Without the foundation being laid of solid biblical doctrine, we cannot call any assembly a church; even if it plays guitars, sings religious songs, lifts up hands, preaches sermons, and makes altar calls. This does not constitute a church beloved.

The reason that we can comfortably coexist with these heretical demonically empowered religious assemblies is because the depth of our doctrinal deficiencies is so acute we can barely tell the difference. Dearest people, if we are not individually and corporately rooted and grounded in scriptural doctrines, truths, we can rest assured that we will gladly cohabitate with the very spirit of anti-Christ that is vehemently set against God and His glorious Truth simply because we lack the biblical foundation to differentiate between the two.

Creeping onto the religious scene is a powerful movement of organized and demonically empowered cultists called emergent Christians. Beloved, this is no Christianity, make no mistake about it! Nonetheless, it is the fastest growing “religious cult” in the western hemisphere. Let me read to you some of their beliefs, and you will see that you know people who claim to be born-again, that have the same beliefs. Mind you, these are not born again!!!

### **Emergent Church Theology**

*www.apologeticsindex.org*

- **The world is radically changing and the church must radically change with it** Emergents believe postmodernity represents a dramatic break with the past and that only an extreme transformation in the church can keep the church relevant and effective in this environment. What is needed, they say, is not just a change in methodology. We need a new *kind* of Christian.
- **Since the Church has been culture bound for so long we must reexamine and question every belief and practice in the Church, finding new ways to define and**

express

these

Visiting emergent blogs, one will find that absolutely any doctrine or moral standard can be questioned. It seems at times that emergents are engaging in a complete reinvention of Christianity accompanied by a radical redefinition of Christian terms.

- **We have no foundation for any beliefs, therefore we cannot know absolute truth**  
Critics of the Emerging Church movement insist that emergents misrepresent epistemological foundationalism (the belief that we do possess some knowledge that serves as a basis for further knowledge) as requiring “bombproof certainty,” something *contemporary* foundationalists insist they do not hold to. What contemporary foundationalists do believe is that we can possess real knowledge that is so certain it requires extraordinary evidence to refute it. [13] D. A. Carson points out that emergent postfoundationalism is based upon yet another of their false antitheses, saying “In effect the antithesis demands that we be God, with all of God’s omniscience, or else forever be condemned to knowing nothing objective for sure.” [14] Additionally, emergents fail to consider the scriptural teaching of faith as something God-given which does possess supernaturally certain knowledge (Mt 21:21, Eph. 2:8, Heb 11:1). Emergents do not seem to realize that critiquing secular foundationalism is not the same as critiquing Evangelical foundationalism. In *A New Kind of Christian* McLaren’s fictional altar ego, Neo, says even Scripture is neither authoritative (in a “modern” sense) [15] nor a foundation for faith. [16]
- **Since we cannot know absolute truth, we can only experience what is “true” for our communities**  
Postmodern philosophers and theologians insist that truth is only known and validated within communities (“There are no Metanarratives only local narratives”). While this implies that truth is culturally relative and that true cross-cultural communication is impossible (those outside a community must first join a community before they can understand the community’s ideas), postmodern authors communicate to people of various communities simultaneously, apparently expecting them to all equally understand their intent.
- **Since we cannot know absolute truth we cannot be dogmatic about doctrine**  
Emergents see orthodoxy as “generous,” [17] that is, inclusive of many beliefs Christians have historically thought of as aberrant or heretical. Many leading emergents echo McLaren’s refusal to assert Christianity’s superiority to other world religions.
- **Since we cannot know absolute truth we cannot be dogmatic about moral standards**  
Absolute stands on issues such as homosexuality are viewed as obsolete. Activities such as drinking, clubbing, watching sexually explicit movies, and using profanities are seen by some emergents as opportunities to show those who are not part of the Christian community that postmodern Christians do not think they are better than them through any false sense of moral superiority. [18]
- **Since we cannot know absolute truth, dogmatic preaching must give way to a dialogue between people of all beliefs**  
Emerging Christians do not posture themselves before the world as though they were the light and the world were in darkness. Instead of “preaching” to the “lost” they join in “conversation,” with people of various beliefs. Conservative Evangelicals seem not to be truly welcome to contribute their distinctive content to this conversation since they represent the old, rotting corpse of “modernism.”
- **Since propositional truth is uncertain, spiritual feeling and social action make up the only reliable substance of Christianity**  
Emergents consider propositional truth a “modern” (and thus outmoded) fascination. Postmoderns think and communicate in narratives. [19] Since the pursuit of truth is portrayed as a never ending journey with no solid starting point, they consider the only

legitimate measuring rods of Christianity to be experience and good works. Without a solid footing in revealed truth, however, emergents have no firm foundation for knowing which experiences are valid and which works are good (something they do not seem to notice).

- **To capture a sacred feeling we should reconnect with ancient worship forms**  
Trappings such as burning candles and events such as silent retreats are popular in the movement. Embracing these premodern forms further breaks their connection with “modern” Christianity.
- **Since sublime feeling is experienced through outward forms, we should utilize art forms in our worship**  
Many participants in the movement see appreciating art for art’s sake as a spiritual experience.
- **Through conversation with them, “outsiders” will become part of our community, and then be able to understand and believe what we teach**  
The postmodern approach is not to try to persuade people to believe, it is to try to befriend people into joining. This is commonly expressed as Robert Webber does when he says “People in a postmodern world are not persuaded to faith by reason as much as they are moved to faith by participation in God’s earthly community.” [20] There is a false antithesis in such statements, however. We do not have to choose between a purely cerebral attempt to talk others into believing correctly on the one hand and offering an open, unqualified invitation to our group on the other. The Bible teaches us to proclaim the gospel message with reliance upon the Holy Spirit to empower, illuminate, and convict ([1 Co 2](#), [1 Thess 1:9](#)). When such proclamation is absent, as it is in the Emerging Church movement, there is no prophetic voice coming from the church calling sinners to repent and believe the Gospel ([Ac 2:38](#), [16:30-32](#)).
- **All are welcome to join the “conversation” as long as they behave in a kind and open-minded manner.**  
Emerging believers reject any posture which hints at exclusivism. Dogmatic Evangelicals, however, are not treated as kindly in the conversation as others are (something many emergents admit).
- **The ultimate goal is to make the world a better place**  
The Emerging Church movement envisions a utopia in which the oppressed of the world are free, the poor are no longer impoverished and the environment is clean. This paradise is achieved through social activism. Many emergent leaders think it is selfish folly to live for the return of Christ.

The masses that are following these demonically empowered lies are captivated by them only because they are not lovers of the Truth! Beloved, it is the love of the Truth, doctrinal Truth that is our safeguard against these doctrinal anomalies. Listen to the Word of God:

## **2 Thessalonians 2:10-12**

*“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” KJV*

Doctrinal neglect fuels doctrinal deficiency which leads to doctrinal apostasy. It is altogether possible to attend a doctrinally sound church and remain a doctrinally unsound pew-warmer. Attending a church that preaches sound doctrine is not a safeguard exclusively. We must be lovers of the truth; believers that diligently search the scriptures to see if these things be so.

A true love of the Truth will be demonstrated by a diligent and disciplined study of the scriptures as well as being submitted to the preaching of the doctrines of Christ. We may ask; “*how can we increase in doctrinal knowledge and revelation?*” The answer may be summed up in the following.

- Prayerful study of the Bible with strict attention being paid to foundational doctrinal subjects.
- Being perpetually submitted to the powerful preaching of the whole counsel of God’s Word.
- Surrounding yourself with like minded believers that are lovers of the Truth.
- Separate yourself from fellowship with those who participate in idolatrous religious practices.
- Read books upon solid biblical doctrinal subjects. IE Regeneration, Repentance, Faith, the Character of God, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ – by doctrinally accurate authors. (most of which are 100 years old or older)
- Spend time in prayer, petitioning the Sprit of Truth, to illuminate the Truths of God’s Word to your heart.

Now, I want to begin a trek in laying a foundation for historic and authorative biblical doctrine. Albeit it is imperative to mention the need for sound biblical doctrine, it is equally imperative for us to understand what constitutes biblical doctrine, and what these doctrines are. Throughout history men have produced documents outlining the fundamentals of pure biblical doctrine. One of these historic documents is the Westminster Catechism. It is biblically sound, lining out the doctrines of the Christian faith as directed by the Word of God. The first three articles of the 107 articles in the shorter catechism are as follows:

Shorter Westminster Catechism

**Question 1: What is the chief end of man?**

**Answer:** Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

**Question 2: What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?**

**Answer:** The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

**Question 3: What do the Scriptures principally teach?**

**Answer:** The Scriptures principally teach, what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man.

The subsequent 104 articles are in proportion to the first 3 articles, albeit important, time constraints prohibit us from doing a lengthy instruction upon them. Now, coinciding with the first article of the Catechism, all biblical doctrine hinges upon and rotates around the principle that man’s chief end is to glorify God; it is the purpose for his creation. Being so, any doctrine that gives emphasis to, or centers around, man’s delight, comfort, happiness, fulfillment, entertainment, or any other man centered purpose is flawed and unbiblical doctrine.

True biblical doctrine is rooted and grounded upon the Truth that God is the center of all things, and that man’s purpose is to glorify God. There are current doctrines being heralded abroad that promote the idealism that God is man’s servant. Whenever man becomes in want, whenever man

becomes uncomfortable, whenever man suffers lack, whenever man is bored, it is the responsibility of God to meet the needs and desires of man.

Beloved, many of you here today have been influenced by these devilish doctrines. Beloved, it is not the responsibility of God to serve you, it is not His responsibility to entertain you, and it is not His responsibility to meet your needs and desires, on the contrary! It is man's responsibility to glorify God and hence meet and to minister to His desires, whence our purpose in creation.

Therefore, any doctrinal issues that deviate from this principle we must deem heretical and void of truth. For example, as we spoke of in our first message upon this topic, when the benefits of the Gospel begin to overtake and overshadow the Gospel itself it begins to deviate away from the foundational truth that man is to glorify God. When the emphasis placed upon the benefits of the Gospel becomes out of balance, the idealism shifts to the purpose of the Gospel to be given to the well-being and blessedness of mankind.

The reality of the true Gospel is that its end is always to the glory of God; even when the subjects of the Gospel are benefited therein. Beloved, as beneficiaries of the Gospel, the chief end of the Gospel's purpose in benefiting man is to glorify God.

### **1 Corinthians 6:20**

*“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” KJV*

Oh beloved, let us think right, let us think biblically, the chief purpose of God in redeeming mankind is not to save man from hell, although mankind is saved from hell by the mercies of our great God. No, the chief purpose of God in redemption is the glorification of God – for His good pleasure.

### **Ephesians 1:5-12**

*“Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;*

*Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*

*In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.” KJV*

### **Psalms 106:7-8**

*“Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea. Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.” KJV*

### **Daniel 9:19**

*“O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.” KJV*

Oh beloved, we truly are the subjects of the benefits of the Gospel, yet, the purpose for each of them is not for the glory of man, but for the glory of God. God is glorified in His omnipotent power being asserted over His dominion. When God ordains mankind to be beneficiaries of the Gospel it is only as He is glorified therein. Man's purpose is to glorify God, and the Gospel is God's chosen means toward that end. Any deviation from this biblical doctrine is flawed and devilish, and it robs God of His glory. Can I make this any clearer? The foundation upon which the Gospel is built is the honor and glory of God.

The premise of much of today's doctrine is wholly man-centered. We call this humanism. It is subtle but evident in many culturally embraced religious communities. This is quickly identified by whom the doctrine gravitates around as its chief subject; more times than not, man is the theme of the doctrine. Just this week I was looking on the web at a familiar church and its messages. The messages centered around the blessedness of man and his well-being while upon earth. How can man become more successful; how can man become happier; how can man earn more money, etc.

Now do not misunderstand, in the new birth there are benefits and we truly are beneficiaries. Yet, the chief end of these benefits is that God might be glorified and not man! Hence, we must understand that all true biblical doctrine has its true expression in the glory of God. Being so, if we hear a gospel that emphatically pronounces and declares the well being and the blessedness of man, or the fulfilled man, the happy man, the overcoming man, when taken out of the context of these being a means to an end – and that end being the glorification of God, we can know this is a damnable doctrine being empowered by seducing spirits.

It is from these doctrines we must flee unto the refuge of Christ, from whence all true and beautiful biblical doctrine flows!

## **Does Doctrine Matter? Part III**

It is quite challenging to traverse beyond this preeminent doctrinal truth unto other truths, simply because of the gross misappropriation of the Gospel in our current religious culture. The love of pleasure that has inundated our society has crept into the hallowed sanctum of the church. Subsequently, the pulpit has cowered down, and traded its birthright for a bowl of cultural porridge.

With this loss of biblical truth, there has in its place come a new gospel that is culturally palatable, hyper-tolerant, seeker-sensitive, and benefit driven. This is a gospel that is accepted among the throngs of pleasure pursuing parishioners simply because it is perceived as a means to their end of self-gratification – through riches, fame, favor, preeminence, and a life filled with pleasure.

Therefore the pulpit spends its time watering the inordinate seeds of wicked desires within its congregation with man-made religious maladies in the name of church growth and cultural religious success. The true Gospel is never preached amongst these seeker sensitive crowds

because of its offensive nature and unpalatable demands. Hence, hours are spent in seminars, and in conventions, instructing these spineless puppets behind the pulpit, how to use the benefits of the Gospel to draw crowds and build great and successful ministries.

All the while, the Spirit of God is grieved, the true Gospel is perverted, and multitudes of unsuspecting church-goers are bound by deception and sin with no power to break free from their dungeon of despair that is ultimately leading them to an irreversible eternal damnation. I am aware that many of you think I am taking this far too serious, or maybe you feel that I am over reacting, or reading into our religious culture a norm that is not as pronounced as I am mentioning.

Beloved, I truly believe it is much worse than I am mentioning, and not better than. If you feel that I am too radical and out of touch, then I am concerned about the power of deception that is being asserted over your mind and heart. It may be that you are a candidate for doctrinal apostasy! Beloved, if the benefits of the Gospel are the motive for your commitment to Christ, you are an idolater and are an enemy of the Gospel and its Sovereign King for you are a lover of His gift and not His person. Beloved, let me ask you a question: “if the benefits of the Gospel were stripped away, would your love for Jesus Christ waiver and diminish?”

I understand the depth of the challenge in that question, but a love that finds its commitment within the dividends that are accrued is a feigned love. But a love that is birthed out of a passionate and abiding adoration for the character, (or the attributes that are ascribed to that individual that makes that person who they are), of that person is a lasting and pure love – regardless of the benefits ascribed therein. It is my great concern, that multitudes of church attending professors of Jesus Christ are in love with what He gives, but they are not in love with who He is in His divine character.

Much of this dreadful condition attributed to the pulpit and the rubbish being fed to the people. It is unfortunate but true, that multitudes of pulpiteers spend the majority of their time discoursing upon the benefits of the Gospel, while grossly neglecting the God of the Gospel. From this malady comes a generation of church attending professors of Jesus Christ that are wonderfully taught about what Christ can give, but sadly they have no idea who Jesus Christ is.

They have not been taught Christ. Just as the Apostle’s address to Ephesus:

### **Ephesians 4:20**

*“But ye have not so learned Christ;” KJV*

Once again I must mention that when the benefits of the Gospel leave our peripheral vision and remove Christ from our direct vision to replace Him, we are in great error! In the Apostle’s address to the Hebrew believers, he stated: “Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith”. This is a challenge for us to fix our eyes, our direct vision, to the person of Jesus Christ, for our growth, maturity, and success.

No where is it mentioned that we should remove Christ from the center of our focus, and for us to fill our eyes with benefits that make our life more comfortable and easy. Once again, it is the chief end of man to glorify God and with this end before us, let us spend our time, energy, and passion, glorifying God – as God!

### **Romans 1:21**

*“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” KJV*

It would be easy for me to camp out here for several more hours, but it might be a little over the top, and there is other things for us to learn in regards to true Doctrine. Now, the second article or question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism is as follows:

**Question 2:** *What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?*

**Answer:** *The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.*

Now, we discussed at length the first article, to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever is the chief end of man. All true, Gospel doctrine flows from this truth. Any doctrinal matter, any scriptural matter, any truth that flows from another direction is a false gospel. Every subsequent truth must flow from this foundation; God must be glorified as God in all things!

Now, the second article of the Westminster Catechism gives us the means whereby this end is attained. We learned the Who, and now we must learn the How. It is one thing for us to have an understanding that God must be glorified in all things, even in our lives, but it is wholly another thing for us to understand how this is to be “fleshed out” or fulfilled in our lives.

Being so, we must know that it is impossible for us to fulfill the chief end of man in the glorifying of God without the second revelation which is the means to achieve the chief end. The means to achieve this end is the Word of God. The second article states that the Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the ONLY rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him.

## **2 Timothy 3:13-17**

*“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”*

*“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” KJV*

First of all let me say that it is impossible to glorify God apart from the Word of God and the knowledge ascribed therein. I read earlier from Romans 1 where the Apostle mentions a people that knew God but did not glorify Him as God. We might ask: “how can someone know God and not glorify Him as God?” To this we must answer that the knowledge of God is inherently or instinctively within every man. Every created being has an instinctive awareness of the existence of the Creator; not justifying faith, but instinctive awareness. It is manifest within them!

So, it is important for us to understand that the knowledge of God that is instinctive is not sufficient unto the glorifying of God – for these mentioned by Paul had knowledge but God was not glorified.

The instinctive knowledge of God must lead us to the Word of God whereby we learn by the Holy Writ how God is glorified by such un-glorious creatures such as we. In my opening remarks I made mention that it is impossible to glorify God apart from the Word of God. The

Word of God is the rule, the only rule, whereby we are directed upon how we must glorify Him and enjoy Him.

As we mentioned earlier in this message, multitudes of church attending professors in Jesus Christ have a knowledge of God. Yet, this knowledge of God cannot glorify God because the rule of their faith is opposed to or deviated from the written Word of God. How you may ask? The chief desire of their pursuit is merely the benefit of the Gospel versus the God of the Gospel and this is knowledge disproportionate to the Truth. Any knowledge that is disproportionate to the Truth does not, nor can it glorify God.

Beloved, all scripture is given by the inspiration of God that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It might be correctly interpreted to say that all scripture is given by the inspiration of God that the man of God might be perfect and thoroughly furnished unto the glory of God, for what value are the good works if they are not for His glory?

One of, if not the greatest obstacle standing between modern Christianity and the glory of God is the great lack in the knowledge of and confidence in the sufficiency of the scriptures. Great hosts of church attending, and good mannered people, are knowledgeable in what their church is teaching, or in what their denomination believes, but altogether ignorant of what the inspired scriptures say. Being so, the foundation of their spiritual lives is laid by quaint sayings, and partial truths of denominational or non-denominational beliefs.

Many of these doctrinal establishments if stripped of all of the money, popularity, cultural power, and witty presentations, would be found greatly lacking in purity of doctrine and scriptural sufficiency. It is with these mentioned artifices that the doctrinal and scriptural deficiencies become palatable and even desirable. Yet, they act as a catalyst to inoculate good intentioned people against their primary end, to glorify God.

### **Acts 17:10-11**

*“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.”*

*“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” KJV*

We will never be free from Rome until we abandon the practices of Rome. Let me explain. In Roman Catholicism in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, and even before, the priests alone were permitted to handle and study the Word of God. The common man was wholly unable to study the Word of God as it was only the learned priests that could understand the native tongues of the manuscripts. Being so, the church controlled what the people believed simply because they were unable to hear anything except what they were told by the clergy. The priests handled the Word of Truth and instructed the people upon what they wanted them to know.

From this, great heretical beliefs were formed and practiced. Most of you here know the history of the reformation – but Protestant reformers diligently labored to put the Word of God in the hands of the common man that he might study and search the scriptures as the Bereans of the Apostles days. Of course we know that great men of God such as William Tyndale burnt and perished at the stake for his work placing the Word of God into the hands of common men in their native tongues.

Now, it is Rome that presses the injustice of clergy alone handling the scriptures, not Christ! Beloved, we must abandon the maligned practice that leaves the study of the scriptures wholly

in the hands of clergy. We as Christ's dear children have a divine mandate to study the scriptures!

## 2 Timothy 2:15

*"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* KJV

Notice the language the Holy Spirit uses; "workman". The Greek translates this as a laborer. This is the common man and not the laity alone being mentioned. Oh beloved, scriptural neglect is the path that scriptural deviation trods upon; and scriptural deviation is the path that scriptural apostasy trods upon; and it is scriptural apostasy that reserves the mist of darkness forever for the apostate!

This gross neglect of the study of the scriptures has led to a demise in the evangelical community at catastrophic proportions. I attribute this to Rome mindsets that leave the diligent study of God's Word to the clergy. Hence, the misinformed evangelical has no plumb line whereby he might measure the truth. He must simply rely upon what he has been told by clergy and the scriptural purity and accuracy is left wholly upon the shoulders of the clergy leaving the parishioner vulnerable to his doctrine.

A book by George A. Marsden, *"Reforming Fundamentalism"* quotes a survey of student belief at one of the largest Evangelical seminaries in the US. <sup>2</sup> The poll indicated that 85% of the students *"do not believe in the inerrancy (free from error) of Scripture."*

This book also lists the results of a poll conducted by Jeffery Hadden in 1987 of 10,000 American clergy. <sup>3</sup> They were asked whether they believed that the Scriptures are the inspired and inerrant Word of God in faith, history, and secular matters: the following stated no.

- 95% of Episcopalians,
- 87% of Methodists,
- 82% of Presbyterians,
- 77% of American Lutherans, and
- 67% of American Baptists said "No."

However, the Christian laity is far more supportive of the inerrancy position. The *Barna Research Group* reported in 1996 that among American adults generally:

- 58% believe that the Bible is *"totally accurate in all its teachings"*
- 45% believe that the Bible is *"absolutely accurate and everything in it can be taken literally."* <sup>4</sup>

Support dropped between that poll and another taken in 2001. Barna reported in 2001 that:

- 41% of adults strongly agrees that the Bible is totally accurate in all that it teaches <sup>5</sup>

They also published beliefs by denomination and metagroup:

- **Above average:**
  - Pentecostal / Foursquare: 81%
  - Assembly of God: 77%

- Christian, non-denominational (mostly Fundamentalist) 70%
- Baptist: 66%
- Seventh-day Adventist: 64%
- Church of Christ: 57%
- **Below average:**
- Presbyterian: 40%
- Methodist: 38%
- Lutheran: 34%
- Latter-day Saints (Mormon): 29%
- Catholics: 26%
- Episcopal: 22%

While I am aware of margins of error in any poll, there is a certain disturbing realism that shows that serious error has entered into the evangelical church and one of the catalysts is the lack on the part of individual evangelicals to study the scriptures personally and diligently. I know that I am getting away from the scope of my message but these issues are worth mentioning.

Oh beloved, the Word of God is the means whereby God is glorified in our lives. It is acutely impossible for us to glorify God as God apart from the Word of God understood and applied in our lives personally. It is imperative that we not only study God's Word but it is equally as important that we teach our children the Word of God and disciplined study habits that their souls may find refuge in Christ and their lives given to the glory of God.

The Word of God is the ONLY means whereby we glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

## **Does Doctrine Matter? Part IV**

### **Psalms 119:89**

*"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." KJV*

### **Isaiah 40:8**

*"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever." KJV*

The chief end of our redemption or regeneration is the glory of God; yet the means to that end is emphatically the Word of God. Throughout the changing corridors of time, there exists an immutable fortress whereby the Saints of God may find not only refuge but all that they need that pertains to life and godliness; that immutable fortress is Gods Word.

There are multitudes of misnomers concerning Gods Word in our religious culture, but the preeminent of them all is that Gods Word is a good source of religious art and sacred anecdotes but it is neither infallible nor inerrant. One author stated that the Word of God is absolute or it's obsolete! Oh beloved, the Word of God is the only means whereby redemption is wrought, it is the only means whereby sanctification is secured, and it is the only means whereby glorification is granted.

There is no other means ascribed whereby mankind is made fit for his purpose in creation apart from the Word of God. As previous stated in this series, it is impossible to glorify God apart from

the Word of God. Being so, it is our privilege as well as our duty, to be good stewards of the Word of God, that we might rightfully divide it, rightfully apply it, and by such appropriation, glorify God.

There is an attack against the infallibility of the Word of God in our generation that is far from subtle. Even in evangelical churches, the Word of God is under scrutiny so as to undermine its divinity, and its relevance in our modern society. The effect of this quaint subversion is noted by the deteriorating value we place upon the Word of God in our daily lives. Our children are vastly unfamiliar with God's Word save a few colossal Bible stories learned in Sunday school or children's church, as the parents have simply deemed it archaic, or unworthy, in light of current routines being religiously practiced such as soccer, baseball, and other sporting activities that occupy our time and subjugate our hearts.

Mom, Dad, when was the last time you sat your children down and systematically taught your children upon the hallowed themes of God's immutable Word for an hour? My case and point; we've abandoned the Eternal Word of God to follow after other practices, all of which hold no eternal value. We can chase after sporting events day and night with our children but to sit them down and instruct them upon the soul saving statutes of Jesus Christ is all but foreign. The influence of our atheistic culture has transcended the secular and began to exercise itself in the sacred!

If the Word of God is the only means whereby we may glorify God and enjoy Him forever, should it not be the chief aim of our parental duties regarding our children? But here we are dangling from a noose flowing from the gallows of cultural expectation, all the while hoping to evade death and retain life for both ourselves and our children. Yet, can we neglect the only means whereby God is glorified and hope to please Him by some other way? We would be foolish to assume that both we and our children will escape if we neglect so great a salvation by neglecting the Word of God.

The value of the Word of God can only be increased in our lives by a revelatory understanding of both its origin and purpose. It may sound somewhat bizarre for me to insinuate that we do not fundamentally understand the origin of the Word of God but it is one of in not the greatest revelatory deficiencies in our religious culture today. One of the challenges that aggressively confronts our work with at-risk youth is the challenge of the Bible being of God and not of man. If this is not the greatest challenge we are confronted with it is in the top five. Why are we so often amazed by this challenge? It was the original challenge proposed by the adversary.

### **Genesis 3:1**

*"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD GOD had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"*  
KJV

This passage is self-explanatory but an emphasis is to be placed upon the words, "*Yea, hath God said*". The argument was not upon the reality that something had been said, but upon whom the author of the saying was. The Lord God commanded the man saying – but we see the serpent not only challenging the command but the authorship of the command; hath God said?

This challenge is alive even until now; hath God said? The challenge is that the Word of God finds its origin solely with man, and being so, it's authority to govern and instruct man is both

unqualified and without equity (justice). Now, let's clear this up once and for all in our hearts and minds.

### **John 1:1-2**

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” KJV*

Our wrongful beliefs concerning the Word of God are the corridors down which our doctrinal troubles flow. The antiquitarian value of the Word of God cannot be measured nor can it be quantified. The Word of God was with God in the beginning! It would also be wrong for us to assimilate that the Word is from God – as something abstract or independent from God. God did not give His Word; God was His Word. The Word of God was not something that God gave that was separate from Himself; as it was the very essence of Himself.

Why is it important for me to mention this? Why bring it before you this morning? There is coming an attack of the adversary, if it has not already come, that wholly undermines the authorship, authenticity, and infallibility of the Word of God. This challenge is coming to confront what you believe and have always believed to be true concerning the Word of God.

This challenge will search us out, not when we are full of faith and victory, but when we are assailed by weakness, adversity, lack (both provisional and spiritual), hardship, when we feel vulnerable and alone. Within these conditions we will begin to hear the hiss of the serpents challenge; *“hath God said?”* Throughout the scriptures we find great men and women of God being assailed by relentless thoughts of doubt and that God had abandoned them.

The taunting voice that cries: *“where is your God”* is the same voice that cries: *“hath God said?”* If the adversary can rob you of the truth by convincing you that the Word of God is fallible, flawed, and of human origin, the total sum of who God is, and what God has said will soon be choked out of your heart leaving you shipwrecked and undone.

### **Psalms 71:9-12**

*“Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.” KJV*

Secondly, we must receive divine revelation of the purpose of the Word of God.

### **2 Timothy 3:16-17**

*“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” KJV*

The purpose of the Word is to equip the man of God unto completion – unto God's glory. The origin of the Word of God is God, but the purpose of the Word of God is God also. Beloved, the universe centers around God and not mankind. Selah! The living Word of God is purposed to the resurrection of those dead in their trespasses and sins; the living Word of God is purposed to

the sanctification of those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit; and the Word of God is purposed for the glorification of those who belong to Jesus Christ.

The Word of God is purposed for our completion; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. All that we lack because of our degeneracy is completed or made complete by the Word of God. It is amazing how we labor, asserting our ingenious to fill our lacking lives; all of which is in vain. We seek riches, honor, power, etc. to complete our lacks but to no avail. As Solomon said, “all is vanity”.

### **Psalms 119:50**

*“This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.” KJV*

As a child of God, my chief desire is to glorify my Lord. Being so, I must pursue the very means whereby I am made complete unto His glory. If I am not pursuing the means whereby I am completed to the glory of God it is because I have doubted in my heart the means as the only means – and thereby pursued other means towards this end, or I have pursued interests of my own desire unto mine own glory.

The neglect of the Word of God is not ultimately unto your loss alone; it is unto the loss of the glory of the Lord. Let me explain. If the chief end of man is the glory of God and His enjoyment, and the Word of God is the only means to secure that end, my neglect of the Word of God ultimately robs God of His glory.

It is hard for our minds to grasp this truth because we have too often heard and pondered how we will become lacking when we withhold the Word of God from our lives. But the larger picture is that ultimately the glory of God is robbed. I understand the challenges this brings before us, and the guilt that it declares – but it is true. God delights in His children’s completion as it glorifies Him. When we neglect or withhold the Word of God, the means by which we are complete in Him, not only is that delight withheld, but we rob God of His glory.

Yet, we are wholly given to our chief end, our purpose in creation, to glorify God. Being this is our chief delight, we diligently search the scriptures, we labor as good stewards of the Word of God, and as we do, we are in a perpetual state of being completed unto the honor and glory of God. As I yield myself to the sacred scriptures, I am being transformed from my lacks to His provision and this daily work is cutting away from me, within me, those frustrating inherited anomalies given to me by Adam’s lineage.

My affliction mentioned by the Psalmist is not always a physical handicap, or a circumstantial hardship. More so than not, it is the inward condition that is corrupt and afflicted with sinful tendencies and practical impurities. Yet, Thy Word hath quickened me! The affliction that has grieved me, taunted me, assailed me, is overcome, overtaken, and conquered by the Word of God and the life that comes to me as I yield myself to its awesome wondrous precepts. Oh beloved, we must rid ourselves of our idleness and take heed according to His Word. For therein is life unto the glory of our God.

### **“Does Doctrine Matter” Part V**

In our perpetual quest to study the great Doctrines of the Christian faith, we come to the monumental task of speaking upon and studying doctrinal tenants that are far beyond the reach,

and absolute understanding, of our finite minds. Nonetheless, there remains a responsibility for such doctrines, or truths, as the Holy Spirit will help us in our weakness; even doctrinal weakness.

As we have only slightly touched upon the colossal subject of the sufficiency of the Word of God, we will only slightly touch the colossal subject of the radical depravity of man. I admonish you to avoid the embrace of dangerous thoughts that would link this doctrinal subject with boredom or unimportant. The subject of the depravity of man is wholly imperative to the grace of redemption being understood and experienced.

Before I go further into this subject let me introduce some statements by Mr. A.W. Pink a renowned man of God, lecturer, and author upon this subject of man's depravity.

### **A Vital Contemporary Question**

*It is our deep conviction that the vital question most requiring to be raised today is this: Is man a totally and thoroughly depraved creature by nature? Does he enter the world completely ruined and helpless, spiritually blind and dead in trespasses and sins? According as is our answer to that question, so will be our views on many others. It is on the basis of this dark background that the whole Bible proceeds. Any attempt to modify or abate, repudiate or tone down the teaching of Scripture on the matter is fatal. Put the question in another form: Is man now in such a condition that he cannot be saved without the special and direct intervention of the triune God on his behalf? In other words, is there any hope for him apart from his personal election by the Father, his particular redemption by the Son, and the supernatural operations of the Spirit within him? Or, putting it in still another way: If man is a totally depraved being, can he possibly take the first step in the matter of his return to God?*

### **The Scriptural Answer**

*The scriptural answer to that question makes evident the utter futility of the schemes of social reformers for "the moral elevation of the masses," the plans of politicians for the peace of the nations, and the ideologies of dreamers to usher in a golden age for this world. It is both pathetic and tragic to see many of our greatest men putting their faith in such chimeras. Divisions and discords, hatred and bloodshed, cannot be banished while human nature is what it is. But during the past century the steady trend of a deteriorating Christendom has been to underrate the evil of sin and overrate the moral capabilities of men. Instead of proclaiming the heinousness of sin, there has been a dwelling more upon its inconveniences, and the abasing portrayal of the lost condition of man as set forth in Holy Writ has been obscured if not obliterated by flattering disquisitions on human advancement. If the popular religion of the churches—including nine-tenths of what is termed "evangelical Christianity"—be tested at this point, it will be found that it clashes directly with man's fallen, ruined and spiritually dead condition.*

*There is therefore a crying need today for sin to be viewed in the light of God's law and gospel, so that its exceeding sinfulness may be demonstrated, and the dark depths of human depravity exposed by the teaching of Holy Writ, that we may learn what is connoted by those fearful words "dead in trespasses and sins." The grand object of the Bible is to make God known to us, to portray man as he appears in the eyes of his Maker, and to show the relation of one to the other. It is therefore the business of His servants not only to declare the divine character and perfections, but also to delineate the original condition and apostasy of man, as well as the divine remedy for his ruin. Until we really behold the horror of the pit in which by nature we lie, we can never properly appreciate Christ's so-great salvation. In man's fallen condition we have the awful*

*disease for which divine redemption is the only cure, and our estimation and valuation of the provisions of divine grace will necessarily be modified in proportion as we modify the need it was meant to meet.*

The revelation of the greatness of salvation is in contrast to the revelation to the horrid and radical depravity to which we are chained by nature. I must agree with Mr. Pink's statements, we are certainly living in a culture that exalts man's moral capabilities while ignoring sin's sinfulness. We have measured our condition against other fallen creatures to diagnose ourselves, hence, we find very little amiss in our condition.

Yet, when we begin to examine ourselves under the search lamp of the Gospel light, drawing comparison to the demands of the Law, we soon find that we are not only sorely lacking, but wholly depraved. The movement today within cultural religion is to focus upon the good and to magnify it to the good of humanity. You can find shelves of books of this flavor to assist in this futile endeavor – enhancing the good in you; books such as your best life now, or seven steps to a more positive outlook or productive life.

Yet the fault is the gross underestimation of the depth of depravity. When depraved men compare themselves to depraved men, their reprobate minds begin to deem certain tendencies as more profitable, and the more profitable is to be enhanced unto moral goodness. Oh beloved, this is the foundations of humanism, man's moral capability and goodness apart from regeneration or the work of grace in redemption.

Nonetheless, it is the doctrinal position of myriads of assemblies that call themselves churches. Their goal is to convince their hearers to commit themselves to attend their congregations and to give to their cause. They are encouraged that they are special and unique and that God has a plan for them. They are taught to capture that moral goodness that is within them and to enhance it and live a good moral live. Soon they are placed in leadership positions to teach or instruct others in like manner.

Never were they told that they are radically depraved, alienated from Christ, without hope, and without God in the world. Never were they told of the miseries of the unconverted or the wrath of God awaiting them that believe not. They were never turned to the Law of God and its demands and their absolute inability to perform it. Never were they told of their absolute inability to rescue themselves from their abhorred position before God and that their only hope is God's mercy.

Being they were never warned, they see no need to flee unto the refuge of Jesus Christ and His atoning work; but they continue following the enhancement of their own moral goodness, even unto perdition.

- ***Mankind cannot rescue himself from his position of depravity.***

Beloved, mankind is as helpless in his condition of depravity as a new born baby is to care for itself. Moreover, mankind in its depraved state cannot even take one step forward unto his deliverance and redemption. We are utterly helpless in our state of degeneracy with no ability to pursue help.

**Ephesians 2:11-17**

*“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;*

*That at that time ye 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 ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*

*Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” KJV*

Oh beloved, the work of redemption begins with God and not with man. Man in his depraved state cannot even acknowledge his depravity; he is spiritually dead and cannot identify his own state. When a man begins to be awakened to his depraved state it is only by the workings of divine grace through the Holy Spirit.

This is illustrated best by the story of the prodigal son. The son had forsaken his first estate of relation, provision, and protection and traveled far away unto a distant land. There he squandered off his inheritance upon riotous – depraved living. Yet, soon we find the young man in a quandary, a famine was upon the land and he became in want. His resources were depleted, the pleasure of sin had run its course, and he was indeed identified with the swine in which he was attending.

The story records a very important phrase, “when *he came to himself*”. This is a biblical pattern of the workings of grace towards the depraved. Oh beloved, just as the whale was ordered to deal with Jonah’s heart, the course of divinely orchestrated events begin to work as graces to prepare the depraved heart for redemption. He came to himself because he was inwardly awakened to the graces of the Father. His lack and want began to work as preparatory graces to awaken him to the realities of the Father’s love and gift.

If this son would have continued in plenty and circumstantial ease he would not have opportunity to be awakened to relational grace. Yet, when the providence of God began to work together for the good of those called of God – it was the dried up sources of pleasure, it was the dried up sources of livelihood, and the exhausting of comforts, that awakened the son of the Father’s love and unconditional acceptance.

The point that I’m making is that if the workings of grace were absent towards our depravity, we would perish in our sins. No, the grace of God hath appeared unto all men, and beloved, we must know that it is the will of God that all men repent, believe the Gospel, and be saved.

It would behoove us to avoid interfering with God’s providential work when He is allowing the effects of sin rage upon those we are praying for to be saved. Notice, the father did not journey to the distant land in search of his wayward son. No, he was patient awaiting him to come unto repentance. God is thus patient with us too, and in the scheme of providential wisdom, the grace of lack and want begin to work in those who are dead spiritually to point them to the Cross of Christ whereby they might live.

I think the most wonderful statement in this discourse upon the prodigal son is the statement the father makes: “*for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found again.*” Depravity beloved is the radical usurping of spiritual death upon the faculties of the total man. This man is “dead” in his trespasses and sins. There is nothing in this man that is good.

### **Romans 3:10-18**

*“As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*

*They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps 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.” KJV*

This is a wonderful declaration of the depraved man; this is the Holy Spirit’s idea of the depraved man. This is the man that is out of the way, and altogether unprofitable, and within the bondage of total wretchedness. We may ask why we need instruction upon this subject, this tenant of the Christian faith. It seems to be a dreary topic that our natural inclinations want to avoid altogether – yet, without understanding this doctrine, we will most assuredly become prone to doctrinal error that promotes moral goodness as a means to salvation.

Moreover, it is imperative that all Christian workers that are engaged in the work of souls have an understanding of depravity to know the depth of the spiritual degradation they are contending with – and that these souls must be resurrected by the power of God alone. Our Lord gave His life in death that through death He conquered the one who had the power of death – the devil.

Moreover, the scriptures say in 1 Corinthians 15:22 *“for as in Adam all die, for even so in Christ shall all be made alive”*. Oh beloved, when we look at unregenerate man and see him wrestling beneath the burden of sin, or pursuing the pleasures of sin, he is only acting within his nature. Those who are under the dominion of sin cannot act contrary to themselves.

Yet, it is not the will of our Lord that we die in this condition.

### **Romans 5:6**

*“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” KJV*

Oh beloved, when the sin-weary man who has found the pleasures of sin to be exhausted and yet he himself in want – the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ begins to reveal the salvation afforded by the Father’s love. It is in this want and lack that the Gospel begins to exercise its power unto salvation.

In Matthew 11 Jesus gives His invitation to those who are weary and burdened. It is those who the effects of the depraved heart begin to be revealed. It is within this revelation that the depraved man is awakened to his condition and to the divine provision for his condition through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ died upon the Cross to deliver those who are in bondage – those whom are totally and radically depraved. It is by His Cross that we are delivered from the curse of this depravity that we might be seated with Him in heavenly places.

“Does Doctrine Matter?”

**Romans 8:5-9**

*“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

*So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” KJV*

It is absolutely imperative that we understand the indictment depravity is upon unregenerate man; those who are dead in their trespasses and sins. We do not want to make the mistake of misconstruing this doctrine to insinuate the redeemed are depraved and or wicked. God forbid! Oh beloved, the sacrifice of the blood of Jesus Christ was and will always remain sufficient to cleanse the filth of sin and the power of the Holy Spirit will always be sufficient to regenerate hearts that are held captive by the power of sin.

When we speak of depravity, we are speaking of man’s natural condition apart from the work of God’s grace. It is the imputed death that mankind has upon and within himself by nature. Imputed simply means to reckon to one what does not belong to him. It is important that we understand that because of an imputed wickedness or degeneracy we can inherit an imputed righteousness.

It is not the occasion this morning to expound upon imputed righteousness, but I believe it is important for us to understand that our sin nature or depravity is imputed.

**Romans 5:17-19**

*“For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence 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.” KJV*

This exposition is a great illustration upon the imputed nature of depravity. It was by one man’s offense that death reigned. Beloved, can you identify a time when death reigned in your life? If you have never had occasion to stare down the dark barrels of your depravity in a moment of grace’s operation, whereby you are wholly undone before a Holy and Majestic God concerning your standing before Him, it is greatly possible that you are yet dead in your sins.

There can be no revelation of the greatness of salvation without the revelation of the greatness of your depravity. This is a not a popular subject, and I have only heard it preached one time in my life, and that was in the last two months. I made mention last week and I want to mention it again; the grandeur of redemption must always have in its back-ground the dark curtain of our depravity. Our salvation shines the brightest with depravity as its backdrop.

Now, it is also important that we understand that the work of the Cross and of Redemption was wrought to deal with the death enacted by Adam's transgression. We often hear about Jesus dying for the sins that we commit but more accurately it was the sin nature that we inherited. We must understand that personal sin is on account of the nature of sin by which has been imputed to all men. We are not foolish enough to believe that personal sin is not dealt with at the Cross, for it was but only in light of sin's nature being dealt with.

Personal sin loses its power in our lives because the nature of sin lost its power at the Cross. This is the basis of the Christian faith. Death has lost its sting only because sin has lost its power. The Apostle Paul mentioned in his letter to the Roman believers: "*that the body of sin might be destroyed*".

### **Romans 6:5-6**

*"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also 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." KJV*

Thayer's Greek says "*the body subject to the thrall (slavery) of sin*". Oh beloved, our identification with Christ's death; that He not only died for us, but He died as us, is a miraculous identification. It is by this identification with and in His death that the death in us is broken; the whole sum of it. The old man is crucified with Him. This is by identification. It is the miraculous working of grace as we by faith are truly identified with Him in the likeness of His death.

Oh beloved, He died as me! Being so, He died for me! If He died in my place, I am identified with Him in this death – and I do so by faith. It is faith that opens the doors for grace to work in us – and grace thwarts and overcomes the body and power of sin. In such manner, we are no longer slaves to sin that we should serve it.

Now it is this carnal mind, this hostile nature that is contrary to God that has been imputed through Adam's transgression. I cannot stress it enough; the brilliance of our redemption is always set in glorious contrast with the dark back drop of our depravity. Leonard Ravenhill always asked the question: "*what have you been saved from?*" It is a valid question. Many evangelicals would answer this; "*from hell*".

Beloved, Hell is the dwelling place of those who are dissimilar to God by nature. It is the place of banishment, the place of eternal separation of between the Holy and the profane. Deliverance from Hell is not the purpose of redemption although it impacts Hell. The purpose in redemption is to break the power of sin and to impute righteousness to unrighteous, fallen man.

### **1 Corinthians 15:45**

*"And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." KJV*

I am introducing this passage to highlight and emphasize what we are instructing. Let's look at the contrast of these two Adams. The first was made a living soul. Yet, we also know God's instruction to Adam, the living soul, the day thou shalt eat thereof thou shalt surely die. We soon find Adam the living soul – dead in his trespass and sin.

Yet, in the fullness of time, the second Adam destroys the power of death that was upon humanity through imputation. Jesus Christ, the second Adam was made a quickening spirit – and this identifies Christ's purpose to bring back to life that which had been stolen away in death through transgression.

Adam could not be a quickening spirit in that the inference that quickening is needed indicates the existence of death. You cannot quicken that which is already alive. Hence, Christ in the incarnation is a quickening spirit – making alive that which death had seized though the transgression of Adam.

It is worth mentioning that man's moral faculties were wholly incapacitated through the fall – and that all moral goodness was reckoned dead. Now, let me address an idealism that might arise if not dealt with. Fallen man can perform good deeds, even religious or works of philanthropy and yet, none of these good deeds are acceptable before a Holy God.

### **Romans 14:23**

*“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” KJV*

John Piper said:

*“Of course totally depraved men can be very religious and very philanthropic. They can pray and give alms and fast, as Jesus said (Matthew 6:1-18). But their very religion is rebellion against the rights of their Creator, if it does not come from a childlike heart of trust in the free grace of God. Religion is one of the chief ways that man conceals his unwillingness to forsake self-reliance and bank all his hopes on the unmerited mercy of God (Luke 18:9-14; Colossians 2:20-23).”*

It is impossible for the depraved man to offer anything acceptable to God, whether it be of good works or even religious acts. The offering of moral goodness is none but Cain worship and it is detestable before God. Beloved, all that we do that is pleasing in the eyes of our God is that it is done in faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God.

The depraved man, although bringing good offerings, cannot bring acceptable offerings before the Lord. The doctrine of depravity has all but fallen asleep in our modern religious world, but beloved; it was the most necessary of doctrines less than one hundred years ago in Christianity.

Listen to the words of these Isaac Watts hymns that were written in the early 1700's.

1 What vain desires, and passions vain,  
Attend this mortal clay!  
Oft have they pierc'd my soul with pain,  
And drawn my heart astray.

2 How have I wander'd from my God,  
And following sin and shame  
In this vile world of flesh and blood  
Defil'd my nobler frame!

3 For ever blessed be thy grace  
That form'd my soul anew,  
And made it of an heaven-born race,  
Thy glory to pursue.

4 My spirit holds perpetual war,  
And wrestles and complains;  
But views the happy moment near

That shall dissolve its chains.

5 Cheerful in death I close my eyes,  
To part with every lust;  
And charge my flesh whene'er it rise  
To leave them in the dust.

6 My purer spirit shall not fear  
To put this body on:  
Its tempting powers no more are there,  
Its lusts and passions gone.

1 Backward with humble shame we look  
On our original;  
How is our nature dash'd and broke  
In our first father's fall!

2 To all that's good averse and blind,  
But prone to all that's ill  
What dreadful darkness veils our mind!  
How obstinate our will!

3 [Conceiv'd in sin (O wretched state!)  
Before we draw our breath,  
The first young pulse begins to beat  
Iniquity and death.

4 How strong in our degenerate blood  
The old corruption reigns,  
And, mingling with the crooked flood,  
Wanders thro' all our veins!]

5 Wild and unwholesome as the root  
Will all the branches be;  
How can we hope for living fruit  
From such a deadly tree?

6 What mortal power from things unclean  
Can pure productions bring?  
Who can command a vital stream  
From an infected spring?]

7 Yet, mighty God, thy wondrous love  
Can make our nature clean,  
While Christ and grace prevail above  
The tempter, death, and sin.

8 The second Adam shall restore  
The ruins of the first,  
Hosanna to that sovereign power

That new creates our dust.

## “Does Doctrine Matter?” Part VII

*“The doctrine of regeneration”*

Once again, I find myself facing a monumental truth, tasked with instructing God’s people upon its hallowed theme, yet, feeling dwarfed by its enormity. The subject matter of the doctrine of regeneration is colossal and my attempt to lay it before you is somewhat frightening; nonetheless it is our cup and it will become our blessing.

### **Titus 3:3-7**

*“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,*

*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” KJV*

I believe that the last two messages upon our radically depraved nature will gloriously project the beauty and wonder of the doctrine of regeneration. One of the great Puritan fathers Stephen Charnock stated: *“Regeneration is a mighty and powerful change, wrought in the soul by the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit, wherein a vital principle, a new habit, the law of God, and a divine nature, are put into, and framed in the heart, enabling it to act holily and pleasingly to God, and to grow up therein to eternal glory.”*

*[God] penetrates into the inmost being of man, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. He infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant; He activates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to produce the fruits of good deeds. **The Canons of Dort***

One of the greatest deficiencies in our modern church culture is the deficiency in instruction upon and understanding of biblical regeneration. Our religious culture has adopted an easy believism or decisionism as a means to salvation – whereby the whole work is contingent upon man and his ideas and not God and His sovereign grace.

Modern American evangelism is greatly influenced by these idealisms simply because we are so influenced by our man-made definitions of success. The easy believism/decisionism idealism is greatly contingent upon God as a means towards man’s end. This gives the gospel call as come to Jesus for what you can get and what He can do for you.

One may offer Jesus as a means to a more financially secure life, the other may offer Jesus as a means to give you a better job or to help you quit this or that. Yet, beloved, this is inconsistent with true biblical doctrine! God is not our means to another end; He is our end and not a means!

Beloved, it is imperative that you understand the purpose of redemption; that the Creator/creature relationship is restored. What Adam gave away through transgression is

restored through Jesus Christ. Are there benefits subsequent to regeneration? Yes, but beloved it is the Benefactor that is the greatest gain – for He was the greatest loss in the fall of man.

One of the deficiencies vexing modern Christendom is the failure to reveal to lost men how lost they really are in their depraved condition. It is an impossible task to impress upon lost men their need for a Redeemer that have not felt the depth of their depravity. Subsequently, modern religion has altogether abandoned the preaching of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ because of its offensive nature – and have begun introducing new techniques that are more familiar with corporate marketing scams than biblical principle.

It is within these modern ideologies that much of our evangelistic approach lies entombed. We offer a Jesus that is passionate about giving you your best life now without warning the people to flee from the wrath that is to come. We boast in our numbers that have responded or made a decision – but the whole system is flawed and devilish.

We wonder why the vast majority of these people never turn from their sin, they never walk in obedience to Christ, they never are found in fellowship with God's people in the local church – simply because their conversion was false and wholly the work of man, emotion, and marketing propaganda.

Oh beloved, regeneration is wholly the work of God in the life of the man/woman that is dead in their trespasses and sins. Now, I am not inclined to believe that man can be uncooperative with the grace of God and still be converted as some men believe. Yet, it is very evident in Scripture that regeneration is wholly the work of God abounding in the lives of those who are dead in their sins.

Our foundational text states: *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”* Notice the terminology; not by what we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us. It is the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost which He shed abundantly upon us!

There are two theological terms that we don't want to spend much time upon but are worthy of mentioning. These terms are Monergism and Synergism. “Monergistic” means that it is the work of one person who exercises his power. In the case of regeneration, it is God alone who is able, and it is God alone who performs the work of regenerating the human soul. The work of regeneration is not a joint venture between the fallen person and the divine Spirit; it is solely the work of God.

The synergists believe that the work of regeneration is wholly the work of God but that man is a free moral agent and must cooperate with grace. Again, I don't want to confuse anyone with these weighty theological terms but it is important that we understand the basics of this doctrine. Which does the Bible support? Is it Monergism or Synergism?

### **Romans 10:13**

*“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* KJV

Again, I do not want us to get too hung up over controversial issues but we need to understand these thoughts and where the Bible stands in regard to them. It is greatly apparent that regeneration is wholly the work of God; a miraculous work. Yet, it is also apparent that regeneration is contingent upon the lost man calling upon the name of the Lord!

I can attest to this work of grace in my personal conversion experience. I was not looking to be saved and I am greatly aware that it was not by my power that I was saved. I was dead in my

sins and saved by God's grace. Yet, I distinctly remember a moment when I knew that I must "choose this day" whom I would serve. I remember the revelation of my depravity – my utter lost condition; yet, I also remember my opportunity. I chose to call upon the name of the Lord – and God worked a miracle in my life.

Now, I have covered a lot of territory, but we need to know that one of the lacks today in evangelical churches is the experience of regeneration. Much of this is due to our methodology in evangelism – marketing Jesus as a means to a desired end instead of Jesus as being the end Himself.

It is impossible to accurately represent Jesus as Savior unless we accurately represent man as a fallen entity. It is important that we address our mankind's fallen nature in our evangelistic work that the lost understand what they are being saved from.

Now let's take a short minute to talk about the effects of regeneration. If regeneration is a radical change of nature, shouldn't there be a radical change in the total life? It is greatly disturbing to me that so many claim to be "born-again" but show no evidences of such a claim. How can we claim to have an encounter with the living God and remain unchanged in our attitudes and conduct? This is impossible!

- **Regeneration is a radical change of our nature.** (Not a change in our nature but of our nature – that which was radically corrupt and wicked is changed to radically pure, holy, and acceptable before God)

## **2 Corinthians 5:17-19**

*"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." KJV*

Regeneration is not the enhancement of the old nature to make society a better place to live, nor is it the betterment of the old to divert us away from the unfavorable or unbeneficial consequences of our corruption. The Gospel is not a therapeutic system that gives us some principles to apply to govern our lives unto a better or an enhanced life now – oh no beloved this is not the case.

Oh beloved, the Gospel of Christ is the revelation of the supremacy of Christ in contrast to the degeneracy of mankind. Moreover the Gospel is the revelation of death being conquered through death and imputed unrighteousness being thwarted by an imputed righteousness, and access being granted by grace through faith.

So, regeneration is absolute and emphatic change in regard to our nature. That which has been degenerate through imputed unrighteousness is regenerate through imputed righteousness. Regeneration not only impacts the total man but re-creates the total man – he is a new creature; or creation.

For a professing believer to continue in his old sins is to refute the totality of the re-creation of regeneration. Beloved, if I am continuing to practice wickedness – understanding the issues of life come from the heart – I must conclude that I am yet unconverted and yet in my sins. Church, if there is no victory over sin, what have we been saved from? With the radical change of nature comes a corresponding change of practices and lifestyle. Regeneration is the divine

operation of God that renders the power and the nature of sin null and void. Sin shall not have dominion over you! Romans 6:14

### **Ephesians 4:2**

*“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” KJV*

### **1 John 3:9**

*“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” KJV*

### **1 John 5:18**

*“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” KJV*

Beloved, regeneration is not a revocation of the possibility of sin; it is the revocation of the power of sin. The heart that has been regenerated is not free from the possibility of sin but from the love and pursuit of sin. The regenerate may find himself caught up in a sin, but he is undone by his sin whereas before he gave no thought to his sin.

J.C. Ryle said “If he said that he had no sin, he would be lying (I John 1:8). But he can say that he hates sin and that the great desire of his soul is not to commit sin at all. He cannot prevent bad thoughts from entering his mind, or shortcomings, omissions, and defects from appealing in both his words and his actions. He knows that “in many things we offend all” (James 3:2). But he can truly say, in the sight of God, that these things cause him grief and sorrow and that his whole nature does not consent to them.”

A person, who has been born again, or regenerated, does not habitually commit sin. He no longer sins with his heart and will and whole inclination. There was probably a time when he did not think about whether his actions were sinful or not, and he did not always feel grieved after doing evil. There was no quarrel between him and sin; they were friends. But the true Christian hates sin, flees from it, fights against it, considers it his greatest plague, resents the burden of its presence, mourns when he falls under its influence, and longs to be completely delivered from it. Sin no longer pleases him, nor is it even a matter of indifference to him; it has become a horrible thing which he hates. However, he cannot eliminate its presence within him.

- **A second evidence of regeneration is victory over this world**

### **1 John 5:4**

*“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” KJV*

A man who is born again does not use the world's opinion as his standard of right and wrong. He does not mind going against the world's ways, ideas and customs. What men think or say no longer concerns him. He overcomes the love of the world. He finds no pleasure in things which seem to bring happiness to most people. To him they seem foolish and unworthy of an immortal being.

He loves God's praise more than man's praise. He fears offending God more than offending man. It is unimportant to him whether he is blamed or praised; his first aim is to please God. The regenerate man finds himself at odds with this world and the sum of its system. He cannot make this world his home – for he is not born of this world but of God. Hence, the treasures of this world are not his portion, for his portion is that which is to come. Earthly mammon is not the object of the pursuit of the regenerate – but the true riches that come from knowing Christ.

The truly regenerate cannot find his home in this world, it is his pilgrimage not his paradise. Oh beloved, if we have made this world our home, if its lure is our passion and pursuit, we can know that we could yet be its natural born citizens and alienated from Christ. The truly regenerated heart is a sojourner upon this earthen journey and not a citizen. Beloved, is your home in the here and now or in the Kingdom this is to come?

*Awakened by Sinai's awful sound Awakened by Sinai's awful sound,*

*My soul in bonds of guilt I found,*

*And knew not where to go:*

*Eternal truth did loud proclaim,*

*“The sinner must be born again,”*

*Or drink in endless woe.*

*I heard the law its thunders roll,*

*While guilt lay heavy on my soul –*

*A vast oppressive load;*

*All creature-aid I saw was vain;*

*“The sinner must be born again,”*

*Or drink the wrath of God.*

*The saints I heard with rapture tell*

*How Jesus conquered death and hell,*

*And broke the tempter's snare;*

*Yet when I found this truth remain,*

*“The sinner must be born again,”*

*I sunk in deep despair.*

*But while I thus in anguish lay,*

*The gracious Savior passed that way,*

*And felt His pity move;*

*The sinner, once by justice slain,*

*Now by His grace is born again,*

*And sings redeeming love.*

Samson Occum

## Does Doctrine Matter? Part VIII

### *The doctrine of regeneration II*

#### **Ezekiel 36:25-28**

*“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.” KJV*

Regeneration presupposes a total resurrection of our nature whereas we have actually passed from death to life.

#### **1 John 3:14**

*“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” KJV*

For us to escape the experience of a wholly new and Christ-like nature seizing and overtaking us, evidencing itself by a total reformation of actions and conduct is only proof that we are yet dead in our trespasses and sins. Beloved, true regeneration evidences itself in the reformation of our lifestyles. If we truly have been regenerated we will produce fruit consistent with the new nature that we've been given.

Now, I have purposed to continue where we left off in our first part of this message upon the doctrine of regeneration as we were speaking upon the effects of true biblical regeneration. Where there is the profession of regeneration without the effects of regeneration we know there

is a false conversion. It is wholly impossible for us to be regenerated by the supernatural work of the Holy Ghost and remain unchanged in our daily lives and lifestyles.

Our culture not only permits but empowers these fallacious beliefs. Christianity in our culture has been watered down to a quaint term that we apply to ourselves that has no real significance outside the social setting. Any suggestion inferred correlating reformed living to redemption is deemed legalism or works and is negatively viewed in main-stream cultural religion.

Yet we find within the scriptures God-breathed Truths revealing the impossibility of poison water springing forth from a sweet well and bad fruit being born upon a good tree. Therefore we must stand with Truth assenting that biblical regeneration will always be accompanied by evidences consistent with its nature.

- ***Faith in Jesus Christ***

It is beneficial for us to take a few minutes to examine the evidences that correspond with biblical regeneration. One of these evidences is a steadfast confidence in the person and the work of Jesus Christ.

### **1 John 5:1**

*“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.” KJV*

A man who is born again, or regenerated, believes that Jesus Christ is the only Savior who can pardon his soul, that He is the divine person appointed by God the Father for this very purpose, and beside Him there is no Savior at all. In himself he sees nothing but unworthiness. But he has full confidence in Christ, and trusting in Him, he believes that his sins are all forgiven. He believes that, because he has accepted Christ's finished work and death on the cross, he is considered righteous in God's sight, and he may look forward to death and judgment without alarm.

He may have fears and doubts. He may sometimes tell you that he feels as if he had no faith at all. But ask him if he is willing to trust in anything instead of Christ, and see what he will say. Ask him if he will rest his hope of eternal life on his own goodness, his own works, his prayers, his minister, or his church, and listen to his reply.

Consequently, his hopes are built upon nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. This man or woman may not be theologically endowed but nothing can shake their confidence in the person of Jesus Christ – the Author and Finisher of their faith.

This confidence is proven upon the battle ground of temptation and persecution. When the winds of persecution begin to assail this saint of God – he finds his refuge in the finished work of Jesus Christ; it is to Him alone that he flees in this conflict. Moreover, when the adversary begins to taunt and tempt the regenerate engages as he yields the shield of faith – wherewith the adversary's arrows and darts are soon quenched.

When comforts and pleasure are stricken and situational circumstances are white hot with displeasure – the regenerate finds his hope, comfort, and consolation in the provision and person of Jesus Christ and in Him alone. The truly regenerate sings his anthem with the Apostle Paul:

### **Romans 8:35-39**

*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” KJV*

- **Practicing Righteousness**

### **1 John 2:29**

*“If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” KJV*

The man who is born again, or regenerated, is a holy man. He endeavors to live according to God's will, to do the things that please God and to avoid the things that God hates. He wishes to continually look to Christ as his example as well as his Savior and to prove himself to be Christ's friend by doing whatever He commands. He knows he is not perfect. He is painfully aware of his indwelling corruption. He finds an evil principle within himself that is constantly warring against grace and trying to draw him away from God. But he does not consent to it, though he cannot prevent its presence.

Though he may sometimes feel so low that he questions whether or not he is a Christian at all, he will be able to say with John Newton, "I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am."

Beloved, the true convert is righteous in his conduct solely because he is righteous in his nature. Whereas in his former estate he was wicked in practice simply because he was wicked in his nature. It is not that we earn a meritorious status before God by doing right – for we all know that we are not saved by our own good works.

Yet, when the Holy Spirit of God regenerates the wicked human heart – He thoroughly creates righteousness where righteousness has never been known. Henceforth, this man does good because God has made him good – wholly by God's grace.

Mark this in your hearts beloved, where there are no evidences of righteousness by practice there has been no visitation of grace. For the actions to be given to corruption is illuminate the mastery of the heart. We are saved by grace – but unto good works!

- **Love for other believers**

### **1 John 3:14**

*“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.” KJV*

A man who is born again has a special love for all true disciples of Christ. Like his Father in heaven, he loves all men with a great general love, but he has a special love for those who share

his faith in Christ. Like his Lord and Savior, he loves the worst of sinners and could weep over them; but he has a peculiar love for those who are believers. He is never so much at home as when he is in their company.

He feels they are all members of the same family. They are his fellow soldiers, fighting against the same enemy. They are his fellow travelers, journeying along the same road. He understands them, and they understand him. They may be very different from himself in many ways—in rank, in station and in wealth. But that does not matter. They are his Father's sons and daughters and he cannot help loving them.

In my own personal testimony I can attest that when I was converted there was an unexplainable love for and connection with the people of God. I had no more desire to be yoked together with unbelievers. My heart yearned for the companionship and communion of the saints of God. This love could not be explained nor could it be measured; it was the love of God shed abroad into my heart by the Holy Spirit.

It is quite baffling to me that there are those who maintain a profession of faith while wholly disconnected from the people of God. Moreover, it is disturbing to me to find those who are professing believers who are yet yoked to the wicked through relational ties. They see no offense in participating in the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils simultaneously. Brethren, this should not be!

Biblical regeneration works powerfully to tightly knit together the people of God while working powerfully disconnecting the citizens of His kingdom from the citizens of this world.

- **Keeping ourselves pure**

### **1 John 5:18**

*“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” KJV*

A man who is born again is careful of his own soul. He tries not only to avoid sin but also to avoid everything which may lead to it. He is careful about the company he keeps. He knows that evil communications corrupt the heart and that evil is more catching than good, just as disease is more infectious than health. He is careful about the use of his time; his chief desire is to spend it profitable.

He desires to live like a soldier in an enemy country—to wear his armor continually and to be prepared for temptation. He is diligent to be watchful, humble, prayerful man.

### **2 Corinthians 7:11**

*“For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” KJV*

The regenerate is very zealous to guard his heart against the upraising corruptions that have been mortified. Also, the passions and enticements of this world are guarded against with holy

vigilance. Although there be many in main-stream religion that disregards the warnings against the appearance of evil – the regenerate trembles at the warning giving it strict heed.

The true convert never forgets the filth from which he has been cleansed and he sets his heart to never to become entangled and overcome in its mire again. Although there are many in religious circles that embrace practices that are questionable, the regenerate shuns them all – hating the garments that are spotted with the stain flesh.

Now the question comes to us, have we these evidences in our lives? I am aware of the levels of maturity in grace and that some of these graces may be more pronounced in some than in others. Yet, the question is still valid; have you any of these evidences in your life? Is your regeneration merely verbal or a self-appointed title? Are there evidences that spring forth from your regenerated heart that testify of its authenticity? If not, you my friend may still be dead in your sins; albeit you are religious. This is not a condemning indictment – but your depraved heart is an indictment unto your condemnation.

A spiritual kingdom requires a spiritual nature, and in order to the acquisition of that the natural man must be regenerated (born again), divinely regenerated, for the creature can no more quicken himself than he can give himself a natural being. Why not? Because regeneration is no mere outward reformation, process of education, or even religious cultivation. No, it consists of a radical change of heart and transformation of character, the communication of a gracious and holy principle, producing new desires, new capacities, a new life. The new birth is absolutely imperative, but this is the work of the Spirit of God from the very nature of the case. Birth altogether excludes the idea of any effort or work on the part of the one born, hence it is written “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing” (John 6:63).

## **I.C. Herendeen**

### **“Does Doctrine Matter?” Part IX**

#### *“The Doctrine of Repentance”*

For salvation, “repentance unto life” is just as necessary as is faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. No sinner was ever pardoned while he remained impenitent, while he remained in rebellion against God and His authority, and without submitting himself whole-heartedly to His Lordship. This involves the realization in his heart, wrought therein by the Holy Spirit, of “the sinfulness of sin” (Rom 7:13), of the awfulness of ignoring the claims of God and of defying His authority. Repentance is a “holy horror and hatred of sin, a deep sorrow for it, a contrite acknowledgment of it before God, and a complete hear forsaking of it.” **I.C. Herendeen**

There is a radical distinction between natural regret and God-given repentance. The flesh can feel remorse, acknowledge its evil deeds, and be ashamed of itself. However, this sort of disgust with past actions can be quickly shrugged off, and the individual can soon go back to his old wicked ways. None of the marks of true repentance described in 2 Corinthians 7:11 are found in his behavior. Out of a list of 10 men in the Bible who said, “I have sinned,” we believe only five actually repented. They were David (2 Sam. 12:13), Nehemiah (Neh. 1:6), Job (Job 42:5,6), Micah (Micah 7:9), and the prodigal son (Luke 15:18). **Author Unknown**

Richard Owen Roberts stated in his book upon repentance: “There are a number of reasons why the doctrine of repentance is so largely neglected and is having relatively little impact upon the church and society.

First, there is a general disregard for biblical doctrine in the church. It is common to hear religious leaders say, “You must not preach doctrine! It is divisive! The great hindrance to the growth of Christianity in today’s world is the lack of unity among Christians. Stress on doctrine adds to this disunity.” How valid is such a statement? It is certainly true that doctrinal preaching is divisive.

Preaching the great doctrines of the Bible divides the sheep from the goats. Without careful, searching, doctrinal preaching the church becomes an assorted lot of flesh and spirit that is nearly impossible to effectively pastor. A mixture of sheep and goats are a shepherd’s nightmare. Further, the world cannot believe in Christ because it cannot believe in the mixed multitude that calls itself Christian.

It has no means whatsoever of distinguishing between the sheep of Christ’s flock and the goats of the world that sit side by side in the same sanctuaries and mouth the same religious jargon.

Secondly, portions of the church that still believe in doctrinal preaching have allowed themselves to become grievously negligent about the doctrine of repentance. Many who sincerely believe repentance is necessary have simply failed to give the doctrine its rightful place. They have sought to make converts who neither understand nor practice biblical repentance. Thus the strength of these churches is diluted by unrepentant and unconverted persons in the membership who, nonetheless tragically, suppose themselves “Christians.” Massive confusion and ineffectiveness are the result.”

I fearfully and reverently trod upon these seldom traversed paths of doctrinal truths; especially the doctrine of repentance. I am quite aware of the pioneer work set before me in this series; especially in this message, for I painfully acknowledge that I am nearly alone in this dark hour of the church seeing the necessity of this doctrinal truth, save a few lonely men of the same pioneer spirit.

With a sense of tremendous weight upon me, mingled with a sense of enormity before me I reverently begin my quest to unveil to you the doctrine of repentance by the grace of God.

### **Malachi 3:7**

*Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, wherein shall we return? KJV*

During the last two messages we learned that we must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit if we are to claim the title of “Christian” and inherit the bounties of the new birth – namely Christ and subsequently the benefits ascribed to Him. Yet, there can be no regeneration, there can be no new birth, there can be no relational grace without the grace of repentance.

One of the misnomers I want to address before I begin is the wrongful negative aura in our culture and generation concerning repentance. This is outlandish! Any God wrought grace towards mankind and his reconciliation to the Almighty should never be deemed negative or dreary. Beloved church, repentance is a gift not the gallows. It is a gift unto life albeit it addresses the dreary and dark condition of our hearts and lives – yet repentance is glorious and wonderful.

The mood of the world has crept into the church – the mood that refuses to accept any indictment against sinful practices or subjection to divine ordinances. The mood that rejects any responsibility for moral law or divine decree is the law of the unregenerate – yet it has permeated the atmosphere where people come together and call themselves a church.

## **Judges 17:6**

*“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” KJV*

There is a principle here in this text. Where the law is written by our own pen, the life is governed by its own principle, and its king is its own imagination. Why is it that repentance is perceived as a negative subject in our culture and in the modern church? Because it presupposes an existing indictment upon our lives for violating God’s Holy Law and this presupposition is viewed as intolerable being we feel it unjust or untrue because we have measured our own hearts by the laws we have chosen to submit to; those we have created after our own likeness.

Yet those who read the Bible and assent to its Truth understand the justice of the indictment that is upon mankind – even our own lives. Being so, we shudder at the thought of the judgment for sin that is upon us nonetheless we see it is just – knowing we are deserving of this judgment because we are violators of God’s Holy Law.

To us, repentance is not a negative thing but a life saving Grace! Before we go any further it is important that we understand what we are talking about when we say repentance or repent.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines repentance this way:

“Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of true sense of his sin, and appreciation of the mercy of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavor after, new obedience.”

John MacArthur said:

The Greek word (*metanoeo*) behind repent means more than regret or sorrow; it means to turn around, to change direction, to change the mind and will. It does not denote just any change, but always a change from the wrong to the right, away from sin and to righteousness... Repentance involves sorrow for sin, but sorrow that leads to a change of thinking, desire, and conduct of life.

True repentance first of all involves understanding and insight, intellectual awareness of the need for moral and spiritual cleansing and change. Second, it involves our emotions. We come to feel the need that our mind knows. Third, it involves appropriate actions that result from what our mind knows and our heart feels.

- **Biblical repentance is not a suggestion but a mandate**

## **Luke 13:3**

*“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” KJV*

Beloved, there is no hope of salvation without a repentant heart and a repentant life. For us to embrace the thought that repentance is unnecessary is to grossly underestimate our own wickedness and God’s perfect holiness and the incompatibility between the two. We are living in a generation that is subscribing to this very thought – and it is caused by a faulty perception or revelation of the sinfulness of sin and their participation in and fellowship with it; and God’s judgment upon it. Moreover, there is a faulty perception of the holiness of God and His absolute abhorrence of and intolerance to sin.

The importance of repentance is illuminated best by the place our Lord gave to it in His ministry upon earth; it is the very first word of the Gospel.

#### **Matthew 4:17**

*“From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” KJV*

Here we find our Lord entering the wilderness of temptation directly following His baptism by John and the filling of the Holy Spirit. Immediately after the wilderness season ended our Lord’s ministry begins – and from that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

We will cover the means of repentance but today I must bear down upon our need for repentance. The means can never outrun the need – meaning without revelation concerning our need for repentance there can be no further revelation concerning the means whereby repentance is attained. Being so, we must reveal our need firstly and then move on to the means whereby it is attained.

Richard Owen Roberts said: “The great natural gulf that exists between the Creator and the created proclaims loudly the need for repentance. The changeable nature of mankind over against the immutability of God demonstrates the propriety of repentance. Our self-aggrandizing (proud) nature demands repentance.

Our tendency to play about on the surface of eternal issues makes true repentance all the more urgent. The all-seeing eye of God guarantees the impossibility of hiding anything from Him, especially sin. Even our noblest efforts at religion can be nothing better than works of death. Every failure in repentance robs heaven of one of the joys that rightfully belongs there.”

One of the pitfalls regarding our need for repentance is the blindness we have concerning the magnitude of our offenses against God’s holiness and His perfect law – mingled with the consequences ascribed therein. Beloved, for this revelation to envelop us we must be biblically minded – not culturally driven. I have earlier described the character of culture – we all do what is right in our own eyes.

Yet, the biblically minded man – or the man who desires to be guided by biblical principle is painfully aware of the acuteness of his guilt and the enormity of his crime against God in His holy persons.

Paris Reidhead in his sermon “Ten Shekels and a Shirt” said:

“What about you? Why did you repent? I'd like to see some people repent on Biblical terms again. George Whitefield knew it. He stood on Boston Commons speaking to twenty thousand people and he said, "Listen sinners, you're monsters, MONSTERS OF INIQUITY! You deserve Hell! And the worst of your crimes is in that criminals though you've been, you haven't had the good grace to see it!" He said, If you will not weep for your SINS and your crimes against a Holy God, George Whitefield will weep for you!" That man would put his head back and he would sob like a baby. Why? Because they were in danger of Hell? No! But because they were MONSTERS OF INIQUITY, who didn't even see their sin or care about their crimes. You see the difference? You see the difference? The difference is, here's somebody trembling because he is going to be hurt in Hell. AND HE HAS NO SENSE OF THE ENORMITY OF HIS GUILT!!! AND NO SENSE OF THE ENORMITY OF HIS CRIME!!! AND NO SENSE OF HIS INSULT AGAINST DEITY!!!

He's only trembling because his skin is about to be singed. He's afraid and I submit to you that whereas fear is good office work in preparing us for grace, it's no place to stop. And the Holy Ghost doesn't stop there. That's the reason why people cannot savingly receive Christ until they've repented. And persons can repent that persons has been convicted. And conviction is the work of the Holy Ghost that helps a sinner to see...**THAT HE IS A CRIMINAL BEFORE GOD AND DESERVES ALL GOD'S WRATH. AND IF GOD WERE TO SEND HIM TO THE LOWEST CORNER OF A DEVIL'S HELL FOREVER AND TEN ETERNITIES, THAT HE DESERVED IT ALL!** And a hundred fold more. Because **HE'S SEEN HIS CRIMES!**"

Oh beloved, the first step in repentance is the revelation that we are in need of it. This sense of need is wrought by a biblical revelation of our own sinfulness in light of God's holiness and requirements. I must take time to ask you my friend; "Have you seen your crimes against God and His holy Law and requirements?" Do you see that the slightest offense you have committed is the very indictment against your soul making you a child of the devil – deserving of wrath and hell?

Do you and have you felt the enormity of the crimes you have committed against God? If not, you are unrepentant and in your natural born condition and the wrath of God awaits you. Oh beloved, it is imperative for us to ponder upon the magnitude of our offenses against God – that we might feel our need for this grace of repentance.

Our Lord came to save this untoward generation and the first sermon out of His mouth was upon repentance; for there is no saving of the untoward without repentance.

## **“Does Doctrine Matter?” Part X**

### *“The Doctrine of Repentance II”*

To exhort sinners to be saved by “Accepting Christ as their Saviour” without pressing upon them the imperative necessity of repentance is dishonest, and is to falsify God's terms of salvation, for “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 17:3) is the Divine dictum. The sinner must either repent or perish, there is no other alternative. And since “All have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) all therefore need to “repent and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15) else they will be “punished with everlasting destruction” (2Thess. 1:9). To delay repentance then is most perilous. **I.C. Herendeen**

The greatest lack in modern evangelism, as well as in evangelicalism is the grace of repentance. The absence of repentance is the cause of catastrophic failure within the church. Until the need for repentance is realized and seized upon we can only expect chaos and disorder to rule and reign within the church.

We have been speaking upon our need for repentance, in due time we will speak upon the means of repentance, followed by the marks of the repentant. It is important that we do not grow dull in our hearing concerning these doctrinal matters – as they are life. If you are murmuring within your own heart, thinking that you already know what you believe and have no need to hear these truths I must remind you of the Apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 10:12 “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.*”

There are many reasons why the sinful do not repent but the chief reason is the lack of awareness of their need. Last week I mentioned the lack of knowledge of the sinfulness of sin mingled together with the lack of knowledge concerning the holiness of God – and the judgment of God upon sin. Today it is my desire to continue to speak about the need for repentance and I want to break it into two parts; actual need and realized need.

When I mention actual need for repentance we must know that it differs from realized need in that it illuminates the holy standard of God contrasted by the horrific iniquity of mankind without man being awakened unto his need for repentance. We can speak of the righteous requirements of God such as; “*be ye holy for I am holy*” (1 Peter 1:16, Leviticus 11:44) but until these requirements are realized, not only realized but revealed, we cannot repent.

Also, these lofty and righteous standards of God must bear down upon and illuminate our present condition which is horrifically fallen and in grievous violation of God’s righteous standards. So, actual need is the Truth about God and His righteous standards as well as the Truth about man in his fallen condition. This is actual need; the position of God with His requirements and the position of man in his lack and shortcoming.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel we find David the king of Israel grievously sinning against the Lord and in need of repentance. The 11<sup>th</sup> chapter is a discourse of the event of his sin against the Lord with Bath-Sheba being in actual need of repentance while lacking in revealed or realized need of repentance. We all know the story quite well – how the King of Israel sinned against the Lord in taking Bath-Sheba unto himself in the King’s house and subsequently ordering the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite.

Of course we know the Lord’s righteous standards had been profoundly declared through the Prophet Moses forbidding Murder and Adultery. Yet we find these righteous standards being violated by the King’s actions in taking Bath-Sheba unto himself and ordering Joab to have Uriah murdered. David is in actual need of repentance – he has fallen short of the glorious standards of God – albeit he is not awakened to his need of repentance.

His need is actual but not realized. Being so, God sent a Prophet, Nathan the Prophet to reveal to the King his need for repentance. In Chapter 12 we find the Prophet in the company of the King utilizing a story to reveal to the King his sin and his subsequent need of repentance.

## **2 Samuel 12:1-6**

*“And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.*

*And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.”*

As we see here, the Prophet used this story to establish the “actual need” - for it established a violation against justice. A little lamb that was esteemed and loved had been unduly taken away from a poor man for the gratification of the rich. This injustice caused the King to fly into a rage proclaiming indictments against the rich man – yet the need for repentance is only actual and not realized or revealed.

Yet, in the next statement the need for repentance is personally and powerfully revealed to the King – Thou art the man!

## 2 Samuel 12:7-14

*“And Nathan said to David, **Thou art the man.** Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul; and I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.*

*Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.” KJV*

Why have I spent so much time upon the subject of actual need and realized need for repentance? Because our generation is under the indictment of the Lord for her sins and her need for genuine repentance is great – but her realization of this need is greatly lacking. The revelation that we have sinned greatly against the Lord is the beginning means toward repentance. Nathan the Prophet revealed to the King his offense against the Lord – bringing forth the repentant decree of Psalm 51:

### **Psalms 51:3-4**

*“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.” KJV*

Beloved, the great lack today in evangelical churches is the lack of men of God that will as Nathan – proclaim loudly our sins against the holiness and righteous standards of God – and that we’re personally responsible for them before God.

Where are the Nathan’s that proclaim; “*You’re the man!*”? Where are the men of God that stand before the people with boldness and holy unction – bringing the actual into the realm of the realized or revealed by passing the indictment to guilty men?

Again, our culture shrinks back at the thought of such preaching for culture is pure in its own eyes albeit not yet washed from her filthiness. Nonetheless, the power of culture has brought many pulpits to its knees and quieted its voice against sin and those who boldly expose it – and it is within this malady that our generation is blinded concerning her sins – and it is within her eyes alone that she is pure; although she is stained with the blood of guilt.

The true Gospel as it is faithfully proclaimed is as Nathan the prophet; it reveals our guilty position before God as offenders against God’s person and Law. Listen to this indictment handed down by the Holy Spirit:

## **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:” KJV*

Without the faithful preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ there can be no realization of our need for repentance. We would error to believe it is the pulpit alone that holds responsibility for the proclamation of the Gospel. Every true follower or disciple of Jesus Christ shares in this responsibility. In a generation that is blinded concerning its doomed position before God – the church must accept its mantle that brings the need for repentance from the realms of the actual to the realized by preaching the Gospel to those under the indictment of sin.

Our Lord never intended to place this burden upon the shoulders of those behind the pulpit alone; it is the mandate of our Lord for every true believer. Once again, we need to forsake the practices of Rome that forfeits all biblical mandates and leaves them within the hands of laity alone. Listen to the last words of Jesus, shortly before this ascension:

## **Luke 24:45-49**

*“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that **repentance and remission of sins** should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” KJV*

The Word of God is choked full of examples of realized need for repentance but we often times have skimmed over the top of the scriptures missing its message. Let me just identify a few of these passages before we leave this morning:

## **Matthew 5:6**

*“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” KJV*

I'm sure many of you have read this passage of scripture for many years not realizing it is speaking of repentance. First of all, hunger and thirst are biological triggers that indicate a lack. Secondly, they vary in degree from discomfort to acute pain according to the depth and duration of their work. Thirdly, the only remedies are giving proper sustenance to the lack or death.

Now, the lack that is causing the sensations of pain is the lack of righteousness. What is the lack of righteousness? Beloved, the absence of righteousness is sinfulness and evil. I'm quite aware that you may have never thought of this glorious passage in this light but set aside what you have always thought for a moment and see if these things are true.

Beloved, the sensations of hunger and thirst in this passage are triggered by a revelation or realization of horrific lack in the subject hungered and thirsted for. This is a man who has come unto awareness of his moral lack; his sinful and wicked ways and being. This is the man who identifies with David's mournful heart as revealed in Psalm 51 or an Isaiah 6 *“Woe is me, for I am undone”*.

The realization for our need of repentance is not reason for celebration. There are many who by the glorious grace of God feel their need of repentance without ever repenting. There are those who harden their hearts against the inward workings of grace and resist the Holy Spirit. You may say, how ridiculous, how could a man resist such a wonderful gift? There are those who love the wages of unrighteousness more than the benefits of God's glory.

## **2 Peter 2:12-15**

*“But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;” KJV*

Nonetheless, there are those who feel the horrible sensations of complete inadequacy, those who are being crushed beneath the terrible weight of their sins, those who feel the sting of the enormity of their crimes against God’s perfect Law and Person – awakened to their condition of absolute lack. Yet, in this condition they behold the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world – and in this age old dilemma they call upon the Name of the Lord – and they are filled.

Their garments of filthy rags are taken away and a garment of righteousness is donned in its place. Oh beloved, as we begin to pass from actual need to revealed need as the Gospel awakens us to our frightful condition, we may cooperate with the grace of God that is at work producing godly sorrow and repent of our sin and have this weight lifted and this indictment acquitted.

It is good to speak upon the doctrine of repentance but it is better that we experience repentance. Oh beloved, have you felt this sense of hunger and thirst? What about the sinful heart that dwells within you? What about the wrath of God that is awaiting you? Can you bear it? Have you a sense of its awfulness?

## **Romans 2:5-9**

*“But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God "will give to each person according to what he has done." To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.” NIV*

Friend, if you are feeling a sensation of guiltiness, a sense of remorse, a sense of shame, a sense of your sin, you may be the subject of the awakening of the Holy Spirit of God concerning your condition. You may be experiencing hunger and thirst for righteousness due to your lack therein. Will you resist the inner-workings of grace and remain unrepentant? Will you continue in your sin, loving the wages of unrighteousness more than the glory of God?

Beloved, the sensations of hunger and thirst will subside if they are not met. Within the final stages of starvation the awful sensations of hunger and thirst disappear and death soon seizes its victim; laying claim to its own.

You may have thought yourself Christian but even now your soul is anxious and burdened by your sins. There is a want of true unfeigned righteousness deep within your soul but you are a foreigner to the grace of God albeit you’ve been deeply religious and even devoutly religious. Yet, there has been no victory over sin, and sin is yet your master dictating your every move.

You’ve been a great zealous person for religion’s sake but the grace of God is only a term in your vocabulary but not in your heart. Saul of Tarsus was devoted to religion, and quite zealous as well – yet, he was void of the grace of God.

Have you the witness of the Holy Spirit; that you are a child of God? Or is your heart crying out in desperation for a righteousness which is of faith that is foreign to you? Are your thoughts and motives evil? Have you been sitting through this service with your mind upon earthly things, giving no room for the things of God?

Has the pattern of sin gone uninterrupted in your life save a few attempts in the power of your flesh to resist it? Are you as Agrippa beneath the discourse of the Apostle Paul saying; “*Thou almost persuadeth me to become a Christian!*” Has the Kingdom of God been very near to you without your passing from death to life? Do you lay at night without the peace of Jesus Christ that passeth all understanding? Is your heart troubled and is your life a testimony of graceless anguish and shipwreck concerning faith?

Have you made this world your home, loving its temporal delights, satisfying yourself with its sinfully forbidden delicacies? If so, you have disqualified yourself from being a soldier in our Lord’s army – for you are a foreigner by birth and are not permitted to the fold.

How long will you waiver between two opinions? How long will you resist the grace of God? How long will this hunger and thirst work in you before it flees being rejected repeatedly? Oh beloved, why not allow the doctrine of repentance work in you to bring you unto repentance? We have the promise of being filled with righteousness from our Lord; we have the promise of sharing in the peace of our Lord – as well as in His glory.

Will you exchange the glory of God for a morsel of meat? Will you trade your inheritance and birthright for a bowl of porridge? Oh beloved, consider your ways.

**Haggai 1:5-7**

*“Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.” KJV*