

The background of the cover is a scenic landscape. In the foreground, there is a calm body of water. Behind it is a dense forest of evergreen trees. The middle ground shows rolling hills and mountains with patches of snow. In the background, there are large, rugged mountains with significant snow cover under a cloudy sky.

The
Eleventh
Commandment

D. L. Stephens

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Printed in the United States of America.

The Eleventh Commandment

By

D. L. Stephens

34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”¹

John 13:34-35

¹ *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.* (1995). (Jn 13:34–35). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

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Love has more than one meaning

There is the story of the father and son who were returning from Sunday bible class in which they studied the topic of the Ten Commandments. The boy asked his father, “Daddy, what does it mean when it says, ‘Thou shalt not commit agriculture?’” The father did not hesitate to answer, “Son, that just means you are not supposed to plow the other man’s field.”

The answer satisfied both father and son.²

Words of a language have many meanings, and sometimes a speaker conveys the meaning by implication. Regrettably, indirect references to meaning can lead to misunderstanding, but people use indirect references anyway.

Writers, and for that matter speakers, have a tendency to avoid harsh or suggestive words and instead to employ other words that convey a meaning similar enough to that intended, but with milder or more pleasant meanings. These milder and pleasanter words are called euphemisms. Euphemisms are common in the Bible. Jesus used such a euphemism when he said the daughter of Jairus was “asleep.” He spoke similarly of Lazarus. Edersheim says that the rabbis—the Jewish teachers of that time—frequently used the term “to sleep” instead of “to die.” The word “*demakh*” meant “to

² Michael P. Green, (1990 *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, p. 17.

sleep” in the sense of an overpowering and oppressive sleep.^{3 4 5}

John, in his gospel, told of what Jesus said when he spoke of Lazarus,

John 11:11 ... after that He said to them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.” 12 The disciples then said to Him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover.” 13 Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that He was speaking of literal sleep. 14 So Jesus then said to them plainly, “Lazarus is dead,”

Modern speakers and writers are no different in the use of euphemisms. Fiction writers and screen writers often use the word “love” instead of “sex.” In this way they obscure the meaning of the word love and cause it to be confused with something else.

³ Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 1, p. 630). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co. The Rabbis also frequently have the expression ‘to sleep’ (*demakh* דמך, or דמך, when the sleep is overpowering and oppressive), instead of ‘to die.’

⁴ Matthew 9:24.

⁵ Kaiser Jr., W. C. (2007). *How Has Archaeology Corroborated the Bible?* In T. Cabal, C. O. Brand, E. R. Clendenen, P. Copan, & J. P. Moreland (Eds.), *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 1171). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers. Permanent sleep is merely a metaphor or euphemism for physical death (Ps 76:5). This verse does not teach about what happens after death; that is taught in passages such as Is 66:24 and Heb 9:27.

The writers of the New Testament in most cases used the word *agape* (ah-gah'pay), for 'love.' Of the three words for love in the Hellenistic world, *agape* was the least common. The other two words were *eros*, which meant sexual love, and *philos*, which meant friendship. Even the meanings of these three words could vary according to the context in which they appeared.⁶ Another word, *astorgos*, refers to a lack of love or affection for close associates, or family. It means, to be —'without normal human affection, without love for others.'⁷ Paul used a variation on *astorgos* in his Roman letter which is *philo-storgos*.⁸ Thayer says that *philo-storgos* means the mutual love of parents and children; also of husbands and wives. It is loving affection, or to be prone to love, loving tenderly; used chiefly of the reciprocal tenderness of parents and children.⁹

The New Testament never uses the word ἐρῶς [*erōs*] a word that means lust.¹⁰

⁶ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In *Harper's Bible dictionary* (1st ed., p. 14). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

⁷ Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:2-3.

⁸ Liddell, H. G. (1996). *A lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott's Greek-English lexicon* (p. 865). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc. **φῖλό-στοργος**, ον, (στέργω) *loving tenderly, affectionate*, of the love of parents and children, brothers and sisters. Romans 12:10.

⁹ Joseph Henry Thayer, D. D., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1962. φῖλό-στοργος, p. 655.

¹⁰ Robertson, A. T. (1933). *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (1 Th 1:3). Nashville, TN: Broadman Press.

Love, sometimes called Christian love or charity, is something that can be commanded. Jesus said to His disciples,

John 15:12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.”¹¹

This type of love is not primarily an emotion, although love in this sense involves a genuine affection. It is the idea found in the story of the rancher whose barn burned down. The rancher could only watch as flames consumed his barn and all the equipment inside. Later, as he sat in his house lamenting his loss, he heard a knock on the door. When he opened the door he met his neighbor’s son who said, “My father is sorry he could not come himself at this time, but he sends his love. It’s out in the wagon. Won’t you come and help me unload it.”

Paul wrote,

Romans 13:10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Love is active good will as seen in the neighbor of the rancher who lost his barn. Thayer defines it as, “...to be full of good-will and exhibit the same.”¹² Vine says of Christian love, “Love can be

¹¹*New American Standard Bible*: 1995 update. (1995). (Jn 15:12). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

¹² *Ibid.*, Joseph Henry Thayer, D.D., ἀγαπάω.

known only from the actions it prompts. God's love is seen in the gift of His Son, 1 John 4:9, 10.¹³

Love in the Bible is also expressed in terms of affection. This type of love is not commanded.¹⁴ Sometimes children are the best to show this type of love. Harry Pickup, a preacher widely known for his talent, friendliness and affable personality, worked at Florida College in Temple Terrace and preached in Florida for many years. In a sermon at the MacDill Avenue church of Christ in Tampa he told of a time when he was preaching, and he was in the middle of his sermon. He was "just getting wound up," when he saw a child, a little girl, get down from a pew and start down the aisle. He watched her as she came toward him. Not knowing what she had in mind he walked toward her to meet her. All the while he kept preaching. As she drew close to him, he bent down to pick her up. Then to his

¹³ Vine, W. E., & Bruce, F. F. (1981). *Vine's Expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words* (Vol. 2, p. 21). Old Tappan NJ: Revell.

¹⁴ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. Vol. 1, p. 293). New York: United Bible Societies. φιλέω or φιλία : to have love or affection for someone based on association. Love as affection is not commanded. Though some persons have tried to assign certain significant differences of meaning between ἀγαπάω^a, ἀγάπη^a and φιλέω^a, φιλία (25.33), it does not seem possible to insist upon a contrast of meaning in any and all contexts. For example, the usage in Jn 21:15–17 seems to reflect simply a rhetorical alternation designed to avoid undue repetition. There is, however, one significant clue to possible meaningful differences in at least some contexts, namely, the fact that people are never commanded to love one another with φιλέω or φιλία, but only with ἀγαπάω and ἀγάπη.

surprise, as he bent over, she tiptoed as high as she could, and planted a kiss right on his cheek.

This could have been the one time that Harry Pickup had a loss for words. We will never know. But the incident shows us what love as *phileo* ought to be. It is like the spontaneous affection that is shown by a little child. It should be as Peter says,

1 Peter 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,

It should be a “sincere love,” a sincere affection (*philadelphia*), and fervent love (*agape*) from the heart.

Love of God

An individual makes his Christian love (*agape*) evident by seeking the good for a neighbor or a friend. Love is also, and is in truth, primarily, seeking the greater good for God. Matthew wrote in his gospel,

Matthew 22:35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”

37 And He said to him, “ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ 38 “This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 “The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ 40 “On

these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

- The Lord spoke of *agape* in this conversation.
- The love of God is the foremost commandment. The Ten Commandments were expressions of love.
- The love of God is to be total; i.e., the whole being of man is involved, including the heart which is the causative source of a person’s psychological life in its various aspects, but with special emphasis upon thoughts. This love involves the heart, or the inner self. You must love God with all your being—this includes all you desire and think; together with your faculties of understanding, reasoning and thinking.¹⁵

The New Bible Dictionary says of the love of God,

Love for God (is to be done) with the whole personality (Dt. 6:5) (and is) God’s demand; though this is not to be understood as meaning merely a punctilious observance of an impersonal divine law but rather as summoning to a relationship of personal devotion created and sustained by the work of God in the human heart (Dt. 30:6).

¹⁵ Ibid., Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A., Vol. 1, p. 320). New York: United Bible Societies.

It consists in the simple joyful experience of communion with God (Je. 2:2; Pss. 18:1; 116:1), worked out in daily obedience to his commandments (Dt. 10:12, it is ‘to love him, to serve the Lord your God’; Jos. 22:5, it is ‘to love the Lord your God and to walk in all his ways’). This obedience is more fundamental to the nature of love for God than any feeling. God alone will be the judge of its sincerity (Dt. 13:3).^{16 17}

The testing of Abraham is the classic example where the crucible of choice sets a man’s love for God against another object that is dear to the man. In this case Abraham’s choice is between his son, Isaac, and God.

God had fulfilled a promise to Abraham and had given him a son in his old age.¹⁸ And Abraham loved his son. But Abraham also loved God. And then a day came when God tested Abraham.

Genesis tells what God said,

Genesis 22:2 ...“Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”

¹⁶ Palmer, F. H. (1996). Love, Beloved. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 701). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

¹⁷ I have inserted parenthetical phrases for readability. Author.

¹⁸ Genesis 15.

Abraham was a devout believer in God, but he also loved his son, Isaac. The command placed Abraham upon the merciless horns of a dilemma. He must either obey God and slay his only son, or he must ignore the command of God and preserve Isaac, alive. Whom did he love more, Isaac or God? If he offered up Isaac he would destroy his only offspring and eliminate all his posterity. If he did not offer up Isaac then he would bring down the wrath of God upon himself. What could he do? Whom did he love more?

Genesis says that Abraham rose early in the morning, split wood for the offering, and went to the place of which God had told him.

Genesis 22:5 Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” 6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac, his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. 7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” 8 Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” So the two of them walked on together.

The dilemma brought Abraham’s love of God, and, therefore, his faith, into the crucible of choice. “Where is the lamb, my father?” Isaac had asked. Surely, the boy’s words broke Abraham’s heart, but

Abraham answered in faith. God will provide the sacrifice.

Then they came to the place for the sacrifice, and Abraham built an altar. He put the wood on the altar and then placed Isaac on the wood. Abraham had made his choice. He would obey God. So he stretched out his hand, took a knife and prepared to slay his son.

Genesis 22:11 But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

So, Abraham then found a ram caught in a thicket and offered it up in the place of Isaac. In this way Abraham demonstrated his love for God above all else.

Jesus said,

John 14:15 "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

John 15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

King David fell into temptation when he valued the illicit love of Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite, over obedience to the commands of God. His desire for Bathsheba led him to commit adultery, then to attempt to cover his sin with deception, and finally to conspire in the murder of Uriah the Hittite. In doing this David did not abide in the love of God. David suffered for his sin, but to his credit, he repented.

Jesus healed a man at Bethesda of his infirmity on the Sabbath and His Jewish opponents accused Him of breaking the Sabbath. Among the things that Jesus said to them was this,

John 5:39 “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; 40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. 41 “I do not receive glory from men; 42 but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. 43 “I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. 44 “How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?

- These men did not have the love of God in themselves.
- These opponents of Jesus sought approval from others like themselves. They should have sought the approval of God above all else.
- A person who seeks God’s approval obeys the commands of God.

1 John 2:3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

- The person who knows God keeps His commandments.
- The one who does not keep God’s commandments, but says he knows God, is a liar.
- Love of God is seen in the one who keeps God’s commandments.¹⁹

In the Old Testament book of 1st Samuel the Bible says that the prophet of God, Samuel, told King Saul,

1 Samuel 15:2 “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. 3 ‘Now go and strike

¹⁹ Palmer, F. H. (1996). *Love, Beloved*. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 701). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. “So closely related is God’s love for man and man’s for God that it is often difficult to decide whether the phrase ‘the love of God’ denotes a subjective or objective genitive (e.g. Jn. 5:42).

Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’ ”

Samuel had anointed Saul as king of Israel. It was a lofty office and laden with responsibility, but on this occasion Saul did not listen carefully to what Samuel told him. God commanded him, through Samuel, to repay the Amalekites in kind for what they had done to Israel when they came up out of Egypt.

So it happened that Saul gathered his army and struck the Amalekites, and his soldiers wrought great destruction among these enemies of Israel, but he did not destroy them as God had commanded. The bible says,

1 Samuel 15:9 But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

Despite the clarity of the command, Saul failed to carry it out. Moreover, he convinced himself that he had done what God wanted, and this to the extent that he set up a monument to himself at Carmel. When the prophet came to him he told Samuel that he had carried out the command of the Lord.

The “bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen” convinced Samuel otherwise. Saul then attempted to shift the blame to the people, but Samuel would have none of it. Samuel told him,

1 Samuel 15:22 ...,

“Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices

As in obeying the voice of the LORD?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,

And to heed than the fat of rams.

23 “For rebellion is as the sin of divination,

And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry.

For his disobedience Saul fell out of God’s favor, and lost his office as king of Israel.

- We must conclude that Saul did not really know God.
- King Saul did not have the love of God in his heart; else, he would have kept God’s commandment.

There is a story told in Benjamin Franklin’s autobiography of a clergyman who was ordered to read the proclamation issued by Charles I, bidding the people to return to sports on Sundays. To his congregation’s horror and amazement, he did read the royal edict in church, which many clergy had refused to do. But he followed it with the words, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” and added: “Brethren, I have laid before you the commandment of your king and the Commandment of your God. I leave it to you to judge which of the two ought rather to be observed.”²⁰

²⁰ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 1392). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

Obedience above all else

Love of God involves obedience to God above all else. Even the king—or the emperor—must subordinate himself to God. Ordinary men are tempted to place ambition or desire, or even obedience to men above God. Such should not be.

As the legend goes, The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste were Roman soldiers in the *Legio XII Fulminata* who had been converted to Christ.²¹ They were soldiers known as the “Emperor’s Wrestlers.” They were stalwart men, picked from the best and the bravest of the land, recruited from the great athletes of the Roman amphitheater. In the amphitheater they upheld the arms of the emperor against all challengers. Before each contest they stood before the emperor’s throne, and their voices rose through the courts of Rome crying out: “We, the wrestlers, wrestling for thee, O Emperor, to win for thee the victory and from thee, the victor’s crown.”²²

A day came when their Legion was on a campaign in the high mountains of Armenia, in Asia Minor. It was winter and bitterly cold. It was then that the Roman Emperor Licinius issued a decree to the commanders of all his armies that on a given day the soldiers had to march past a statue of the Emperor, do obeisance, pour out a libation of wine, and drop incense on the fire. These were acts of worship to Caesar, treating Caesar as a god.

²¹

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forty_Martyrs_of_Sebaste.

²² Ibid., Tan, P. L. (1996). (p. 786).

At the appointed time the trumpets blew and the Legion marched past the statue of the Emperor. All the soldiers bowed their heads, poured out the wine, and offered the incense to the Emperor as to a god—all, except the Forty. These Christians refused to pay divine honors to a man. They believed such devotion was reserved for God alone. Thus, they kept their confession of Christ.

Their commander, a centurion named Vespasian, who thought highly of them, begged them to obey the decree. It is said that they considered the offer, the sweetness of life, and their families at home, but in the end they answered the centurion, “For Rome we will fight on any field and under any sky. In the service of the Emperor, if necessary, we will die. But we worship no one save our Master, Jesus Christ.”

With sorrow the commander pronounced judgment upon them. They were stripped of their armor, their helmets, breastplates, shields, spears and swords, Then the commander ordered that their garments be taken from them, and their sandals. Naked, they were driven out in the sub-zero cold upon a frozen lake.

Night fell, and the soldiers of the legion sat around the fires in their bivouacs. They could hear the voices of the Forty as they sang, “Forty wrestlers, wrestling for thee O Christ, claim for thee the victory, and from thee the crown.”

As the night passed their voices became weaker and weaker as, one by one, they succumbed to the cold and died. At length, only one survivor was left. This one failed in his resolve, and he sought the warm baths near the lake which had been prepared for any soldier who might abandon his confession.

Shivering and trembling, he presented himself before the tent of the commander and said to the guard, “I will drop the incense, and pour out the wine.”

But the guard, who had been moved by the heroic faith of the men who had been condemned to death, said, “Since you have proved a coward, and have broken your fellowship with the Forty, I will take your place.” With that he stripped off his armor and his clothing then went out into the night to take his place upon the frozen lake. As he stood among the thirty-nine who had fallen he sang, “Forty wrestlers, wrestling for thee O Christ, claim for thee the victory, and from thee the crown.”

At last, he too fell dead. When the morning sun rose above the wintry Armenian mountains it looked down upon forty martyrs who had kept their confession and had died for Christ.

- Love and loyalty are closely allied.
- Love and loyalty gain respect; cowardice does not.
- Jesus said, “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. 33 “But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”²³

The Apostle John wrote,

1John 3:16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

²³ Matthew 10:32-33.

Love and wealth

Durant says that “Nearly everybody in Rome worshiped money with mad pursuit, and all but the bankers denounced it.”²⁴ They were much like the people of modern America.

In the Roman Empire of about the 2nd Century AD a legal distinction arose which divided the body of citizens into two classes: the *honestiores* (i.e., men of honors, such as senators and equestrians) and all the rest, which were the *tenuiores* (the weak) and *humiliores*, (the lowly). To the *honestiores* belonged the Roman senators and knights with their families, soldiers and veterans with their children, and men who held or had held municipal offices in towns and cities outside of Rome, including their descendants. All the other citizens belonged to the *tenuiores*, unless wealth or ability brought them into public office.²⁵

The two highest groups among the *honestiores* were known as "orders," and were composed of first senators then knights. The members of the lower of the two highest groups was the Equestrian Order. To enter this class one had to possess a minimum of 400,000 sesterces,²⁶ and have the specific

²⁴ Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1944. p. 332.

²⁵ Ibid., Will Durant, p. 332,

²⁶ The **sestertius** (plural **sestertii**), or **sesterce** (plural **sesterces**), was an ancient Roman coin. During the Roman Republic it was a small, silver coin issued only on rare occasions. During the Roman Empire it was a large brass coin. The name *sestertius* means "two and one half", referring to its nominal value of two and a half *asses* (a bronze Roman coin, singular *as*), a value that was useful for commerce because it

nomination of the prince. At the summit of the social scale was the Senatorial Order. A member of this order had to possess 1,000,000 sesterces. Appointments to administrative office depended upon the social class and the amount of money a person had.²⁷

It was at about this time, when Antoninus Pius became emperor of Rome, that the Roman government inaugurated a severe persecution against the Christians. The emperor remained silent while they subjected the followers of Christ to scourging, consigned them to the flames, or sacrificed them to the wild beasts in the arena.²⁸

Christ and His disciples taught people not to be lovers of money. But that was not popular then and it is not popular today.

As was the Roman regard of Christ so was their regard of Christians in the Roman world. Paul wrote,

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 11 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.

was one quarter of a denarius, a coin worth ten *asses*.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sestertius>.

²⁷ F. R. Cowell, *Life in Ancient Rome*, A Perigee Book, 1980. p.p. 193-194.

²⁸ Jerome Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, pp. 52-53.

- The pursuit of love begins with the pursuit of God.
- The love of money is a root of all sorts of evil.

Jesus said,

Matthew 10:37 “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

Paul wrote,

Galatians 2:20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

- Love of Christ must be greater than love of all else.
- Love is seen in self-sacrifice.

Love of one’s brother

The Apostle John wrote further in Chapter 3,

1John 3:17 But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little

children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.²⁹

- The love of God abides in the one who helps his needy brother.

There is the story of the missionary who went to South Africa to proclaim Christ to the people who lived there. He came one day to the top of a hill from where he could look down on a farm. It was a farm where lepers tended the fields, and he could see two of them at work sowing peas. One of them had no hands; the other had no feet. Leprosy had deprived them of the limbs that are so necessary for work. Yet, in spite of these infirmities they labored. The one who had no hands was carrying on his back the one who had no feet. The one who had no feet carried a bag of seed from which he dropped a pea in measured cadence which the other pressed into the ground with his foot. In this way they managed the work of one man even though they were two.³⁰

Such help and cooperation ought to be found among all men and especially in Christians. Love abides in the one who helps his needy brother.

Jesus is the foremost example of self-sacrificing love because he laid down His life so that all who believe in Him would live.

²⁹ Ibid., Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Vol. 1, p. 293). New York: United Bible Societies. **25.44 ἀγαπάω^b**: to demonstrate or show one's love—'to show one's love, to demonstrate one's love.' μη ἀγαπῶμεν λόγῳ μηδὲ τῇ γλώσσῃ ἀλλὰ ἐν ἔργῳ 'let us show our love, but not by just word and talk, but by means of action' 1 Jn 3:18.

³⁰ Elon Foster, 6000 Sermon Illustrations, p.428.

In his *Legend of the Eagles* George d'Espartes says that the most heroic piece of self-sacrifice known to history occurred in the building of a bridge. In the depths of winter the French army, pressed on all sides by the Cossacks, had to cross a river. The enemy had destroyed all the bridges and Napoleon was almost at his wit's end. Suddenly came the order that a bridge of some sort must be thrown across the river, and the men nearest the water were the first to carry out the almost impossible task. Several were swept away by the furious current. Others, after a few minutes, sank through cold and exhaustion; but more came, and the work proceeded as fast as possible.

At last the workers completed the bridge and the army crossed to the opposite bank in safety. Then followed the most dramatic scene, and one of the most touching, recorded in the annals of history. When the men who had built the bridge were called to leave the water, not one moved. Clinging to the pillars, they stood silent and motionless, frozen to death.

Even Napoleon wept.³¹

- Love involves sacrifice.
- Love your brothers.

1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment

³¹ Ibid., Tan, P. L. (1996). (p. 1181). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

- A person who hates his brother does not love God.

There is a famous poster showing two young boys. The older boy is pictured carrying the other on his back. When a man remarks about the weight the first was carrying, the young man replied, “He’s not heavy. He’s my brother.”

1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

- The test of whether we love God’s children is when we love God and keep His commandments.
- The love of God consists in keeping His commandments.

Lucian was an ancient satirist and rhetorician who lived in about the years 120 AD to 200 AD. Upon observing the warm fellowship of Christians he remarked, “It is incredible to see the fervor with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator (Jesus) has put it into their heads that they are brethren.”³²

Jesus said to His disciples,

³² Michael P. Green, (1990 *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, p. 225.

John 13:34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

- Mutual love among Christians is what characterizes them and distinguishes them from the world.
- Christians act in the best interest of their brethren; that is, they seek the greater good of their brothers.

Paul wrote,

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

- God extends His benevolent providence to those who love Him.
- In this He expresses His love for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose.

What “love” means

Repeating Vine’s comment, “Love can be known only from the actions it prompts. God’s love is seen in the gift of His Son, 1 John 4:9, 10. But obviously this is not the love of complacency, or affection, that is, it was not drawn out by any excellency in its objects, Rom. 5:8. It was an exercise of the Divine will in deliberate choice made without assignable cause save that which

lies in the nature of God Himself; cp. Deut. 7:7, 8.³³

The meaning of love as *agapao* may be seen in the contrast of behaviors as shown by God's command in Leviticus,

Leviticus 19:18 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

- Love does not take vengeance.
- Love does not bear a grudge.

The Apostle Paul gave this meaning to love:

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- Love is patient – despite difficulties.
- Love is kind – it provides something beneficial as an act of kindness.
- Love rejoices with the truth – is happy together with the truth.
- Love bears all things – it endures the annoyances.

³³ Ibid., Vine, W. E., & Bruce, F. F. (1981 (Vol. 2, p. 21).

- Love believes all things – has complete trust, or confidence, in all things.
- Love hopes all things – it looks forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial.
- Love endures all things – it bears up despite difficulty and suffering.

- Love is not jealous – does not experience envy and resentment against someone.
- Love does not brag – it does not praise itself.
- Love is not arrogant – is not haughty or puffed up.
- Love does not act unbecomingly – does not act shamefully, indecently or disgracefully.
- Love does not seek its own - does not demand something for itself. Love is unconditional.
- Love is not provoked – does not become seriously emotionally stirred at someone or something.
- Love does not take into account a wrong suffered – it does not keep a mental record for future action to be taken because of an injury.
- Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness – it is not happy with an unjust deed.

LOVE—is patient in doing good.

Years ago the asylums for the mentally ill were crude, primitive, more jails than hospitals. One had a dungeon where they put the most unmanageable, the most violent, the most hopeless. Into this dungeon they put a little girl. The only thing they knew about her was her name--Annie.

Sometimes, she would be violent and abusive. At those times Annie would throw herself at the bars of her cage when anyone approached. Then there were times when she would sit in stony silence.

There was an elderly woman who worked at this asylum, and she was approaching retirement, having spent many years in caring for the mentally ill. She took her lunch one day and went down to the dungeon. Near that cool and damp cage she found a seat and ate. She offered some food to Annie, but Annie refused--protesting loudly.

The elderly woman had no success that day, nor the next, nor for many days after, but in spite of the discouraging results she persisted. She came every day to eat her lunch beside the little animal-like girl, to receive her abuse, and to offer her some food. One day she brought some brownies, and offered some of these to Annie. Annie refused. So the woman left some of the brownies where Annie could reach them--and the woman left. When she returned, the brownies were gone.

That was the beginning of a slow and agonizing treatment for the mad little girl. Slowly, Annie regained her faculties--through kind and loving care, until one day she stood before the doctor's of the asylum fully recovered. They said to her, "You may leave now, and go anywhere you wish."

She said, "I don't want to leave. I prefer to stay where I have received the kindest treatment. I want to repay in kind what I have received so generously myself."

Her name was Anne Sullivan. You might remember her as the woman who patiently labored with Helen Keller so that the blind and deaf Helen might learn to communicate with the world, and gain world fame for her help of the handicapped. Helen Keller became a respected author, and lecturer. She graduated from Radcliffe College, but all of it became possible because of the labors of Anne Sullivan.

Helen Keller was blind and deaf because of a childhood disease, and because of her misfortune became violent and abusive to anyone who was sent to care for her. Annie Sullivan had been over that road before. She had suffered from eye trouble, and had learned the manual alphabet at the Perkins Institute. She was uniquely equipped to be a companion to Helen Keller.

Anne Sullivan married to become Anne Sullivan Macy. Anne Sullivan received from Queen Victoria an award for the one who greatly exemplified service to mankind.³⁴

- "...and the greatest of these is love."
- And let us not forget the love of the elderly woman who remains unnamed. It was she who began a story of love.

³⁴ Source: Zig Ziegler, WNN Radio, June 4, 1988. Et. al.

Love – when obedience is difficult

Jesus and his disciples observed the Passover meal in an upper room in a home in southwest Jerusalem. Afterward, they traveled to the Mount of Olives, northeast of the city. Nearby, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus, apparently knowing that the time of his death was near, suffered great mental anguish, and, as described by the physician, Luke, his sweat became like blood.

Matthew wrote,

26:37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. 38 Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.” 39 And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.”

The hour of His death was upon Him. And the difficulty He faced we can see not only in the sweat that became like blood, but in His anguished appeal to His Father. He had humbled Himself and now He faced death for every man. As Paul wrote,

Philippians 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming

obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

He did this because He loves you.

The Slave of God

The prevalence and evil of slavery

The evil of slavery has lain as a curse on the nations of the earth throughout history. At the time of Christ the greater part of humanity lay bound in the appalling conditions that attended the ownership of a man by another man. Even in what were called civilized nations—Greece and Rome—the slaves were more numerous than the free-born and the free men.

The slave-owners also held shameful attitudes toward the slaves. The greatest of the ancient philosophers vindicated the system of slavery as a natural and necessary institution. Aristotle declared that all barbarians are slaves by birth, fit for nothing but obedience.

Schaff wrote concerning the legal conditions of slaves in the Roman Empire,

Slaves were held *pro nullis, pro mortuis, pro quadrupedibus*^{35 36}; nay, were in a much worse state than any cattle whatsoever. They

³⁵ *Collins Latin-English, English-Latin Dictionary*: held as worth nothing, as the dead, as the four-footed beasts.

³⁶ John Francis Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church*, p. 26. Maxwell wrote, “A slave was a mere nullity at civil and praetorian law. He was denied the juridical (justice; or legal, DLS) attributes of personality. He was reduced to mere property to be used up or disposed of at will or treated like an animal by his master who had absolute power over him. Convert Christian slaves in Apostolic times possessed none of the religious and other human rights which had belonged both to Israelite and to foreign slaves under the Mosaic law.”

had no head in the state, no name, no title, or register; they were not capable of being injured; nor could they take by purchase or descent; they had no heirs, and therefore could make no will; they were not entitled to the rights and considerations of matrimony, and, therefore, had no relief in the case of adultery; nor were they proper objects of cognation or affinity, but of quasi-cognation only; they could be sold, transferred, or pawned, as goods or personal estate, for goods they were, and as such they were esteemed; they might be tortured for evidence, punished at the discretion of their lord, or even put to death by his authority.³⁷

Schaff also remarks that “Hadrian, one of the most humane of the emperors, wilfully destroyed the eye of one of his slaves with a pencil. Roman ladies punished their maidens with sharp iron instruments for the most trifling offenses.”³⁸

Further to illustrate the Roman attitude toward slaves was the saying of Cicero, “The slave is the *instrumentum vocale*, as distinguished from the beast, which is the *instrumentum semi-vocale*, as distinguished from the ordinary tool, which we might call the *instrumentum mutum*.”³⁹

In other words, a hammer or saw is a tool that cannot talk; a horse is a tool that makes a sound, and a slave is the tool that talks.

³⁷ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 1, p. 445, 447.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 445.

³⁹ Howard Fast, *Spartacus*, p. 31.

Such was the regard for slaves under the Roman Empire. In the later years of Rome the treatment of slaves was ameliorated. But could the slave obtain his freedom? The answer to this question is, "Yes," but the answer must be qualified. The release of a slave from his slavery involves the idea of manumission. There were several ways in which a slave might be freed: a good deed toward the owner, friendship with the owner, self purchase by the slave (this was seldom done because few slaves had the money to pay), or by the last will and testament of the owner. Yet even though a slave might be freed certain limitations remained.⁴⁰

The Hopeless Condition of the Slave.

Man cannot free the slaves.

About seventy years before Christ a slave named Spartacus owned by the Roman Lentulus Batiatus led a revolt of gladiators at Capua, a city of Rome. Spartacus was a Thracian, and as Plutarch said, "...a man of not only high spirit and bravery, but also in understanding and gentleness superior to his condition." Spartacus issued a call to the slaves of Italy to rise in revolt; soon he had an army of 70,000 men hungering for liberty—and revenge. He taught them to make weapons, and to fight with order and discipline. And fight they did. For years they defeated every Roman army sent against them. Spartacus' army eventually increased to 120,000 at

⁴⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/>

[wiki/Slavery_in_ancient_Rome#Emancipation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_ancient_Rome#Emancipation)

which point he stopped accepting recruits because he could not feed them all.

Finally, the Roman General Crassus came against him with 40,000 legionnaires, and many of the nobility. Spartacus held them off for a year. Then Pompey returned from Italy with his legions and the Romans defeated Spartacus and the slaves in a decisive battle. It is said that Spartacus killed two centurions, and then others struck him down. Unable to rise he continued to fight on his knees until he was killed. Most of his army of slaves perished. Six thousand were crucified along the Appian Way from Capua to Rome. The Romans left them hanging there as Durant says, "...so that all masters might take comfort, and all slaves take heed."⁴¹

- The story of Spartacus illustrates the hopeless condition of the slave.

The record of Israel in the Old Testament teaches us that man does not win his freedom by his own strength. For Israel, either God provided the victory, or they were defeated. Freedom that the slave gains in the world by his own strength is tenuous and brief and is frequently restricted.

The Psalmist wrote,

Psalm 108:12 Oh give us help against the
adversary, For deliverance by man is in
vain

The Psalmist wrote concerning the redemption of one's brother,

⁴¹ Will Durant, *The Story of Civilization-Caesar and Christ*, Simon and Schuster, p. 136-138.

Psalm49:7 No man can by any means
redeem *his* brother

Or give to God a ransom for him—

8 For the redemption of his soul is costly,
And he should cease *trying* forever—

9 That he should live on eternally,
That he should not undergo decay.

The *New Bible Commentary* says of the meaning of the words the Psalmist employs here,

Redeem ... ransom, the first word emphasizes finding the price, the second, covering the need. But no payment is sufficient to buy eternal life. The Hebrew says ‘even a brother’, *i.e.* even in a case where love would hold nothing back.⁴²

Walvoord commented on the Psalmist’s admonition, He says that the Psalmist noted,

... that the proud and arrogant cannot redeem another person’s life. Life is too costly for a man to ransom, even by great riches. Wealth cannot prevent death.⁴³

Matthew wrote that Jesus said,

⁴² Motyer, J. A. (1994). The Psalms. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 517). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

⁴³ Ross, A. P. (1985). Psalms. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 830). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Matthew 16:26 “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Adam and Eve and the Fall into slavery.

In the beginning, God created man, and man was free. In a way we can neither understand nor appreciate Adam was free on his own responsibility—with the Garden, and with himself.

Genesis 2:16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die."

- This command of God—a righteous command that was subverted and disobeyed—became the basis of enslavement of the human race. Satan took the command, and through his seduction and temptation of Adam and Eve placed them in bondage.

The Power that Enslaves.

The Apostle John wrote concerning the power of Satan,

1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

- The power of Satan is worldwide.

Jesus said of Satan,

John 12:31 “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

- Satan is the ruler of the world.⁴⁴

The writer of Hebrews said,

Hebrews 2:14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- Satan rules the world through the fear of death.
- Men are in slavery to Satan because of the fear of death.

The Apostle Paul described the condition of man in the following way,

Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is

⁴⁴ Matthew 25:41 indicates that the Devil is destined for the eternal fire; however, that final judgment awaits. In the meantime he rules. ἐτοιμάζω: to prepare, make ready, is used of the eternal fire for the Devil and his angels. Vine, W. E., & Bruce, F. F. (1981). Vine’s Expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words (Vol. 2, p. 204). Old Tappan NJ: Revell.

now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

In the passage quoted above the Apostle told the Ephesian Christians that they—before their conversion to Christ—were “dead in trespasses and sins;” that is, they were separated from God, and under the power of Satan. Their manner of life followed the dictates of Satan and they were under his power. For this reason their characters were such that they deserved the wrath of God.

- It is a most foolish man who thinks he can escape the snare and bondage of Satan outside of Christ; for there are only two masters to serve, Christ or Satan.
- Today Satan keeps people enslaved through the fear of death.

The Spiritual condition of man

The physical slavery of ancient Jews was typical

The spiritual condition of man, however, is much like the Jewish people under Egyptian bondage. In Exodus the Scripture says,

Exodus 1:8 Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of the sons of Israel are more and mightier than we." 10 "Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply and

in the event of war, they also join themselves to those who hate us, and fight against us, and depart from the land." 11 So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor. And they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom and Raamses. 12 But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and the more they spread out, so that they were in dread of the sons of Israel. 13 And the Egyptians compelled the sons of Israel to labor rigorously; 14 and they made their lives bitter with hard labor in mortar and bricks and at all kinds of labor in the field, all their labors which they rigorously imposed on them.

- The Israelites suffered under cruel bondage from which they could not deliver themselves.

God, however, delivered the sons of Israel from Egyptian bondage.

Exodus 13:3 Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the LORD brought you out from this place.

Present condition of Israel outside of Christ

Paul wrote to the Galatians explaining the condition of the children born to Sarah, the wife of Abraham and Hagar, the handmaid of Sarah.

Galatians 4:23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the

flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. 24 This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. 25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

The sons of Israel are as it were enslaved under the Law of Moses and may be set free only by becoming children of promise. Children of promise are those who are born again in Christ.

The present condition of Gentiles outside of Christ

John in his gospel tells of a statement Jesus made to His disciples,

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”

Expositor’s, commenting on this passage, says of the meaning of Jesus’ statement,

‘Every one who lives the life of sin is a slave.’⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *The Expositor’s Greek Testament, The Gospel of John*, Marcus Dods, D.D., p. 777.

The two choices

Some years ago in Los Angeles a man walked down the street with a sign on his shoulders. The front of it read, "I am a slave for Christ." The back of it read, "Whose slave are you?"⁴⁶ He might have been the only one in Los Angeles who realized that the question was relevant to the present condition of mankind.

Regardless of whether a human being is considered to be a slave or free by human standards, by the Apostolic Doctrine, and even that of Christ, a man is in one or the other of two conditions. He is either the slave of sin, or the slave of righteousness.

Paul wrote to the Romans,

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? 17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

- See also, 2 Peter 2:19.

Before the Apostle Paul was born, the Roman Empire had a law stating that no freeborn man could be enslaved. Therefore, a man could literally sell himself into slavery, collect the proceeds, then

⁴⁶ Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p. 348.

have a friend come and attest to his status as a freeborn man, and he would have to be released at once. This caused havoc with the Roman economy, which was well oiled with slave labor. Because of this, just before Paul's day, the Roman government enacted a new law whereby any man who sold himself into slavery could no longer claim free status after the sale. The previous law could no longer help him. It was clear, therefore, to Paul's readers in Rome when he said, "...to whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, his slave you are."⁴⁷

- Men are slaves of the one they obey—Satan, or Christ.

All of us are slaves to one or the other of two masters—sin or righteousness. We have no other choices. And since sin is personified in the Devil, and righteousness is personified in Christ, those are our only two personal choices. By the very nature of our humanity, we are made to serve and to be controlled by forces beyond our power. It is well to recognize this fact of our existence.

The Apostle John wrote concerning Christians in contrast to the world,

1 John 5:19 We know that we are of God,
and that the whole world lies in the
power of the evil one.

Therefore, Christians are of God; the rest, the world, are of the Devil.

⁴⁷ Michael P. Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p. 423.

And Paul who used the metaphor of slavery extensively in his letters wrote the following to the Romans,

Romans 3:9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; 10 as it is written,

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS,
NOT EVEN ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO
UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR
GOD;

12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE,
TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME
USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES
GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

The phrase, “faustian bargain,” is from the medieval legend of Faust, who made a contract with the Devil, exchanging his soul for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures. One of the fundamental problems with this legend is that Faust, like all other men, did not own his soul. The Devil already owned it. This basic truth has escaped the notice of the majority of mankind. It is, truly, as Paul wrote to the Romans,

Romans 7:14 For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

The man of flesh is “sold in bondage to sin.” He has no title to his own flesh much like the slaves under ancient Roman law.

The Apostle Paul also said concerning the spiritual condition of man,

Romans 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

After hearing this one should ask himself: then to whom does he belong? There are only two choices: If one does not have the Spirit of Christ then he does not belong to Christ. One might argue, “I am sovereign. I belong to myself!” But Christ has already said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”

Think about it.

The Entrance of Sin.

Sin brings about death. Death brings about bondage.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

and,

Romans 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense, who is a type of Him who was to come. (Rom. 5:14)

- There are no exceptions. All men die. All men are sinners.
- As a result all men are in slavery.

Death reigns over man.

Sin and Debt.

In the N.T. the word *opheilē*⁴⁸ means debt, that which is owed.

The Unmerciful Slave and his unpayable debt.

Jesus told the following parable,

Matthew 18:23 "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. 24 "And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 "But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment be made. 26 "The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.' 27 "And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. 28 "But that slave went out and found one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he

48 Vine, W. E., ὀφειλή, debt:

seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' 29 "So his fellow-slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' 30 "He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. 31 "So when his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. 32 "Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. 33 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow-slave, even as I had mercy on you?' 34 "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. 35 "So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

- The debt owed by the Unmerciful Slave is analogous to the debt a man owes to God for sin.
- Man by his own effort cannot repay the debt.

The Lord's Prayer, the Lord implied that sin and debt are analogous,

Luke 11:4 ...and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

- In the Lord's Prayer sin and debt are equated.

The reason a man cannot pay the debt of his own sin is that he does not have the means of payment. The currency is simply not available to any one. The Bible in the Old Testament lays down the principle on which sin may be forgiven. In Leviticus we read,

Leviticus 17:11 ‘For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.’

- Atonement; i.e., forgiveness of sin, is obtained by blood sacrifice which God has approved.
- There is no other way. Doing good will not atone for sin because doing good is what is expected.

Speaking to His disciples, Jesus said,

Luke 17:10 “So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’ ”

- There are no works of merit; i.e., good deeds to perform that will atone for sin.

Manumission.

The Ancient Custom.

The Temple of Apollo at Delphi is inscribed with numerous ancient records of manumission. These records have endured for nearly two thousand years. They are the principal records by which we

may learn of the ancient custom. The custom involved a fictitious purchase of the slave by some divinity. The transaction occurred when the owner brought the slave to the temple where the slave was sold to the god. For payment, the owner of the slave took money from the treasury of the temple. In most cases the slave had paid the money into the temple treasury out of his own savings. The custom provided that the slave then became the protege of the god—not the slave of the temple. A protege in this case is one who is under the special care and protection of the god. Against the world, and especially against his former master, the slave becomes completely free.

The sale of the slave always took place before witnesses, a record was taken, and the result frequently cut in stone. The usual form of the document is shown in the following example:

Date. Julius (the owner) sold to the Pythian Apollo (the god) a male slave named Demetrius at a price of 10 minae--for freedom (or on condition that he shall be free). Witnesses, Conditions, etc.⁴⁹

"Manumission" is the act of emancipation. The word comes from "manumit" meaning: "to release from slavery." Manumission was widely practiced among the ancient Greeks. It was also practiced among the Jews.

⁴⁹ Deissmann, A., & Strachan, L. R. M. (1910). *Light from the ancient East*, (p. 327). London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Paul's Use of the terms.

The Apostle Paul refers to this custom when he speaks of our being made free by Christ. The idea of a slave being freed for the payment of a price was a vivid reality to the people of the First Century. So when the Apostle wrote to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 6:19 ...you are not your own?
for you were bought with a price...

They fully understood that they had become the slaves of Christ, transferred from the ownership of Satan, by the fact that Christ had bought them. He also alluded to this principle when he wrote to the Colossians:

Colossians 1:13 For he delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.

Redemption.

As God delivered Israel from bondage down in Egypt, so the Son of God delivers us from bondage in the Egypt of the world.

Peter said:

1 Peter 1:18 ...you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ."

The word "redeemed" is translated from a Greek word which means: release for a ransom, deliver, or liberate.⁵⁰

The servants of Christ have been "liberated" by the payment of blood—innocent blood, the blood of Christ. When Christ shed His blood on the Cross He did it to effect the only means of payment possible which could pay the debt of sin. There is no other currency that can be used. The debt could only be satisfied by the offering of innocent blood in payment.

Slave of Christ.

Christ buys His disciples.

In Acts, Luke tells what Paul said to the Ephesian elders,

Acts 20:28 Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Please do not think that the “church” is a building. The “church” is the called out of God, an assembly of Christians. Christ purchased the elect people of God with His own blood.

And in his letter to the Ephesians Paul said,

⁵⁰ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 487). New York: United Bible Societies. **λυτρώομαι; λύτρωσις, εως f; ἀπολύτρωσις, εως f:** to release or set free, with the implied analogy to the process of freeing a slave—‘to set free, to liberate, to deliver, liberation, deliverance.’

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, 8 which He lavished upon us.

The principle at work in the shedding of Christ's blood is the same as mentioned in Leviticus, the Lord told Moses:

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.

"Bloodshed" means death; especially does it mean loss of human life. Christ laid down his life by going to Calvary. It was an act of divine love. It was God Who gave Adam the command not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and pronounced the punishment for disobedience as no less than death should he eat of the tree. Adam ate. Now, true to His loving and gracious nature, God takes the punishment of the command upon Himself. Where man is condemned to die, God has interposed Himself for man and died in his place.

Paul said to Titus that Christ,

Titus 2;13 ...gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Christ sets you free.

When Jesus entered into His ministry He made his announcement by quoting Isaiah,

Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. 15 And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. 16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

18 “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,

BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.

HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,

AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,

TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,

19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.”

20 And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to

them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Christ has set us free. He has liberated us from bondage to sin and death through His suffering in the flesh and His death on the cross. Paul, accordingly, advises,

Galatians 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Having gone to great lengths to pay the debt of His servants and to redeem them from the bondage into which they had fallen, Christ then sets us free! He said:

John 8:36 "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed..."

And in Galatians,

Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Therefore, in view of the two choices open to us, let us choose Christ and the freedom He offers.

Appendix

Romans 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!”

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

Quotations taken from the NASB95.

New American Standard Bible: 1995 update.
(1995). (Ro 8:12–17). La Habra, CA: The Lockman
Foundation.

Jesus Christ – and Him Crucified

Will Durant in his book, *Caesar and Christ*, wrote that,

When Augustus visited Greek Asia in 21 B.C. he found that his cult had made rapid headway there. Dedications and orations hailed him as “Savior,” “Bringer of Glad Tidings,” “God the Son of God”; some men argued that in him the long-awaited Messiah had come, bringing peace and happiness to mankind. The great provincial councils made his worship the center of their ceremonies; a new priesthood, the *Augustales*, was appointed by the provinces and municipalities for the service of the new deity.⁵¹

Thus did the Romans and their conquered peoples readily receive their emperor as their savior.

The reception has not been the same with the Lord God.

In the Old Testament book of 1st Samuel the Bible tells the story of how the elders of Israel became concerned over the age of the prophet Samuel, and since he was the leader of the people they feared lest they be deprived of a ruler if Samuel should die. So, it happened that...

1 Samuel 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at

⁵¹ Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1944, p. 226.

Ramah; 5 and they said to him, “Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations.” 6 But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, “Give us a king to judge us.” And Samuel prayed to the LORD. 7 The LORD said to Samuel, “Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.

The elders of Israel feared the loss of Samuel through death, and they did not desire to have one of Samuel’s sons rule over them because of the sons’ bad reputation. That was their outward argument presented to Samuel, but their true reason is revealed in verses 19 and 20,

1 Samuel 8:19 Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, “No, but there shall be a king over us, 20 that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.”

They said they wanted to “be like all the nations.” Afterward, Samuel anointed Saul to be king of Israel, and as God had said, “...they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.”

- The Israelites rejected God and in His place they put a man on the throne of Israel.

- Evidently, God and many of the people Israel differed on who should be ruler of Israel.

Despite the difference in opinion that developed between Samuel and the people over the nature and personality of the king who should sit on the throne of Israel there developed a longing in Israel for the Great King who would come and sit upon a righteous throne and restore the fortunes of Israel. This one was to be the Messiah, the King of Israel.

Alfred Edersheim says that the Jewish rabbis had an expectation of a messiah, but that their conception did not include the idea of a divine person appearing in the flesh. He wrote,

First, the idea of a Divine Personality, and of the union of the two Natures in the Messiah, seems to have been foreign to the Jewish auditory of Jesus of Nazareth, and even at first to His disciples. Secondly, they appear to have regarded the Messiah as far above the ordinary human, royal, prophetic, and even Angelic type, to such extent, that the boundary-line separating it from Divine Personality is of the narrowest, so that, when the conviction of the reality of the Messianic manifestation in Jesus burst on their minds, this boundary-line was easily, almost naturally, overstepped, and those who would have shrunk from framing their belief in

such dogmatic form, readily owned and worshipped Him as the Son of God.⁵²

So, while the idea of a messiah of nearly divine nature existed among the Israelites it was difficult for them to bridge the gap between man and God.

The difficulty Jesus faced in trying to bridge the gap in Jewish understanding of his Personality and Nature may be seen in his reception by His own community. When Jesus came to the synagogue in Nazareth and read from the prophet Isaiah, a scripture that announced His coming, the people rejected Him and His words,

Luke 4:28 And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; 29 and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, He went His way.

John also wrote of confrontations Jesus had with the Jewish rulers,

John 8:56 “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.” 59 Therefore they picked up

⁵² Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 1, p. 171). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.

Again, Jesus told his opponents,

John 10:30 “I and the Father are one.” 31
The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

- The Jews would have none of that kind of talk and picked up stones to stone Him.

And in the account of John concerning the trial of Jesus before Pilate,

John 19:14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!” 15 So they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

Thus did the rulers of the Jews reject Jesus.

There is the story of the citizen of Tel Aviv who went to court against a stone mason who refused to chisel A.D.⁵³ dates on his father’s gravestone. The court referred the case to the Rabbinate (the highest religious body) for an opinion. The Rabbinate rejected the citizen’s appeal, saying that the Christian-Gregorian calendar was unacceptable since it was based on the birth of Jesus. However, the court overturned the Rabbinate’s opinion, noting ruefully that the rabbis’

⁵³ A.D. – i.e., *anno Domini*, after date; year of our Lord. Merriam-Webster.

statement was dated 1972 A.D.! Had they been consistent they would have used the Jewish calendar which was at that time 5733.⁵⁴

- Many of the Jews of today reject Jesus as the Christ and will not acknowledge any of the Christian calendar dates.
- The rejection arises from a deeper rejection of Jesus as Messiah.
- Christianity offends the Jews in many ways, but chief among them are two: they reject the idea that Jesus is the Messiah of Old Testament Prophecy; and they refuse to believe that they crucified their Lord.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians in his first letter,

1 Corinthians 1:21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,

And,

1 Corinthians 2:1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

⁵⁴ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

- Paul had decided that he would know nothing among the Corinthians but that Jesus was the Messiah, and that He had been crucified.
- The faith of the Corinthian Christians, therefore, rested not upon the persuasive philosophy of the Epicureans or the Stoics as might be heard at the Areopagus in Athens.
- It rested upon a crucified Galilean and His words of promise.

Jesus Christ and Him rejected, humiliated, sacrificed.

Mark, in his gospel, tells us that a day came when Jesus came to Nazareth, His home town, for a visit,

Mark 6:1 Jesus went out from there and came into His hometown; and His disciples followed Him. 2 When the Sabbath came, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? 3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. 4 Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household." 5 And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His

hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And He wondered at their unbelief.

- The people of Jesus' own hometown rejected Him.
- Even His own relatives rejected Him.

John wrote,

John 1:9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. 11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.

- When He came into the world the world did not know Him and He is their Creator.
- His own people did not receive Him.

Isaiah said,

Isaiah 53:1 Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? 2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no *stately* form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. 3 He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Jesus was rejected by His own family,

John 7:1 After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. 2 Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near. 3 Therefore His brothers said to Him, “Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. 4 “For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.” 5 For not even His brothers were believing in Him.

- Even the brothers of Jesus did not believe in Him.

The Jewish authorities, on the other hand, rejected Jesus because He represented a threat to their positions of authority in Jerusalem.

Matthew 21:23 When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, “By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?” 24 Jesus said to them, “I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. 25 “The baptism of John was from what source, from heaven or from men?” And they began reasoning among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ 26 “But if we say, ‘From men,’ we fear the people; for they all

regard John as a prophet.” 27 And answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” He also said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

Then Jesus told them two parables. The second of the parables was this:

Matthew 23:33 “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who PLANTED A VINEYARD AND PUT A WALL AROUND IT AND DUG A WINE PRESS IN IT, AND BUILT A TOWER, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. 4 “When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. 35 “The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. 36 “Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. 37 “But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38 “But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ 39 “They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Matthew 23: 40 “Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers?” 41 They said to Him, “He will bring those wretches to a

wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons.” 42 Jesus said to them, “Did you never read in the Scriptures,

‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,

THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone;

THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD,

AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES’?

43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. 44 “And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.” 45 When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. 46 When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet.

This is reminiscent of the Second Psalm,

PSALM 2:1 WHY ARE THE
NATIONS IN AN UPROAR
AND THE PEOPLES DEVISING A
VAIN THING?
2 THE KINGS OF THE EARTH
TAKE THEIR STAND

AND THE RULERS TAKE
COUNSEL TOGETHER
AGAINST THE LORD AND
AGAINST HIS ANOINTED,
SAYING,
3 “LET US TEAR THEIR FETTERS
APART
AND CAST AWAY THEIR CORDS
FROM US!”

- They rejected the Lord because they felt as if they were in handcuffs when under His government.

The rulers of Israel rejected Jesus as their king and, instead, chose the Roman Caesar.

John 19:8 Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; 9 and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 So Pilate said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” 11 Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.” 12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.” 13 Therefore when Pilate heard these

words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!” 15 So they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

- This was the final and complete rejection of Jesus as the Christ.
- They were in many ways like their fathers.

Sometime ago the U.S. Treasury Department received an allocation of coins for redemption. Among them was a coin that they rejected. But a clerk redeemed the coin and gave it to a congressman of North Dakota, who sent it to the Smithsonian Institute for identification. Later he received word that the coin belonged to the year A.D. 284, and was circulated in the time of the Emperor Diocletian.

This coin was a valuable relic and is worth many times its weight in gold.⁵⁵

- It is a coin that was rejected, but proved in the end to be extremely valuable.

The Apostle Peter wrote about Jesus, saying this,

⁵⁵ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

1 Peter 2:4 And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture:

“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”

7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve,

“THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,

8 and,

“A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE”;

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.

In the year 1602 there appeared in Europe at Leyden a pamphlet telling about a Jew who had taunted and struck Jesus as he passed on his way to the cross, shouting at him, “Go quicker!” Jesus is said to have answered, “I go but you shall wait until I return.”

This is the legendary story of the wandering Jew, a man who was condemned to wander the earth as a homeless fugitive, and one who would

wait until Christ comes again. Despite the doubtful nature of the story, the design of it was to illustrate the loneliness of sin. In the scriptures we read about Cain that after he murdered his brother, the Lord cursed him to become a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and "...he went out from the presence of the Lord." (Gen. 4:16). Sin always drives a man out—out from his friends, out from himself and out from God.⁵⁶

- Sin separates man from God.
- And there is nothing in man by which he can reconcile himself to God.
- The lesson is that if you reject Christ then you will wander in sin—forever.

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.' 24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 "And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall,

⁵⁶ C. E. Macartney, *Macartney's Illustrations*, p. 337.

for it had been founded on the rock. 26 “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 “The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”

- The ones the Lord rejects on that day are the same ones who have rejected him—here.
- They are the same ones who have rejected the grace of God offered to them through the gospel.

In his book, *Duel of Eagles*, Peter Townsend told of a meeting of Adolph Hitler and fourteen of his military leaders as Hitler was about to order the invasion of Poland. That invasion, more than any other act, launched the Second World War. Included in the meeting were the Luftwaffe Commander in Chief, Herman Goering, his personal staff officers Bodenshatz, Milch, and Jeschonnek—they sat in a half-circle facing the Fuehrer. Beyond them lay the Obersalzberg bathed in glorious sunshine. Hitler said to them, “There will be no shrinking back from anything. It is a life and death struggle. I shall give a propagandist reason for starting the war—never mind whether it is plausible or not. Close your hearts to pity. Act brutally! The stronger man is right!”⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Townsend, Peter, *Duel of Eagles*, New York: Pocket Books, 1972. pp 182-183.

Hitler's government was reminiscent of the kingdom of the Antichrist. Falsehood. Pitiless. Brutal. Might is right.

Then there was the group of men who were characterized as "Bible scholars" who decided that there were portions of the sayings of Jesus that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John did not report correctly. To determine whether the sayings were properly recorded the "scholars" voted on selected passages. To vote they used white, red, and black marbles that they dropped in a box. White indicated a yes vote, red was maybe, and black was no. Among the sayings they rejected was, "The meek shall inherit the earth."⁵⁸

They rejected it, but Jesus said it.

What else did Jesus say?

The King James Version says in its rendering of the Sermon on the Mount,

³ Blessed *are* the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed *are* they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

⁵ Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

⁷ Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

⁵⁸ Source: "News Notes," Harry Reasoner, WINZ Radio, Nov 21, 1985.

⁸ Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.⁵⁹

These were the words of the King they rejected.

Macartney, in his book of illustrations, describes a painting by the artist Holman Hunt in which Christ is depicted as a weary traveler standing at the door—the dews of night distilling upon his brow, a lantern in one hand, and knocking with the other, the head bent forward eagerly to hear if there is an answer to his knock. Macartney said that this is perhaps the most moving thing in the Book of Revelation, not the sound of many waters, not the sea of glass mingled with fire, not the fourfold hallelujah that rings out over a reconciled

⁵⁹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (1995). (electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version., Mt 5:3–12). Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

and conquered universe, not the New Jerusalem, but Christ knocking at the door.⁶⁰

For the Lord Himself said,

Revelation 3:20 ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”

And in Mark’s gospel,

Mark 8:38 “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

Accept Christ.

⁶⁰ C. E. Macartney, *Macartney’s Illustrations*, p.p. 49-50.

The church – the alive with Christ

Louis XV, also known as Louis the Beloved, became King of France at the age of five. He was born in 1710 and died in 1774. It is said that the extravagance, corruption, immorality and inefficiency of his court ruined the treasury and prepared the country for the French Revolution that began in 1789.

One might conclude from the corruption of his court that the king cared little about the consequences of his decadence, but that was not the case. He had a conscience, and the spectre of his own death must have reminded him of his debt to morality.⁶¹ History tells us that Louis XV ordained and ordered that death was never to be spoken of in his presence. Nothing that could in any way remind him of death was to be mentioned or displayed. He

⁶¹ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition. Vol. 1, p. 315). New York: United Bible Societies. **φόβος**^a, **ου** *m*: a state of severe distress, aroused by intense concern for impending pain, danger, evil, etc., or possibly by the illusion of such circumstances—‘fear.’ **ἔνοχος**^c, **ου**: pertaining to being subject to the control of someone or of some institution—‘controlled by, under the control of, subject to.’ ὅσοι φόβῳ θανάτου διὰ παντὸς τοῦ ζῆν ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας ‘as many as were subject to slavery because of the fear of death throughout all their lives’ He 2:15. In this context one may render ἔνοχοι ἦσαν δουλείας as ‘slaves’ and then render the whole expression as ‘as many as were slaves all their lives because of their fear of death’ or ‘... because they were afraid to die.’

sought to avoid every place, sign and monument that in any way suggested death.⁶²

Louis XV was in denial. He was like many others of this world who live in moral and spiritual darkness. Some of these fear death. A few don't, even though in large part they are already spiritually dead. Although it is likely unknown to them it is the latter death that poses the greater risk. Matthew in his gospel comments on the spiritual condition of death when he wrote about the travels of Jesus,

Matthew 4:12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; 13 and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. 14 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: 15 “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 “The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great Light, And those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a Light dawned.” 17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

- They were sitting “...in the land and shadow of death.”
- See also, Luke 1:67-80

⁶² C. E. McCartney, Death, p 85.

Legally dead.

It happened once to a man named Donald Eugene Miller who was a resident of Hancock County, Ohio, that a court declared him legally dead. This ruling came eight years after he disappeared from his rental home. Miller was 61 years old when a court upheld the earlier court's ruling, but even though alive, as far as the flesh was concerned, he lost his Social Security number and his driver's license. A dead man can have neither. Despite the obvious fact that Miller maintained his bodily existence, it did not matter to the judge who ruled that in the eyes of the law Miller was a dead man.

Former condition

No doubt it would come as a shock to someone to learn that the court had declared them dead. Nevertheless, that is the actual spiritual condition of anyone who is not in Christ. They are dead in sin, and dead to God. And of those who do not realize their condition now all of them will surely find out about it later; that is, when they stand before God for the final reckoning. It will likely come as a surprise, but the Lord regards those who are not His to be dead.

The Apostle Paul wrote about the condition to the Ephesians,

Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is

now working in the sons of disobedience.
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And Jesus alluded to the condition in a statement he made to His disciple,

Matthew 8:21 Another of the disciples said to Him, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” 22 But Jesus said to him, “Follow Me, and allow the dead to bury their own dead.”

- He admonished him to let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. Service to Him is more important.

“You were dead in your transgressions” is a Jewish manner of speech; its force is illustrated by a Midrash (Jewish commentary) on Eccl. 9:5 which speaks of ‘the wicked who even in their lifetime are called dead’. Those bound in sin are doomed to death, and so already belong to its realm; the very thing they think of as ‘life’ is but a foretaste of death, because it is without God.

The Greek word *nekrous* in verse 1 of Eph. 2, therefore, means spiritually dead, and what has been said of the power of God in Christ's case is now applied to the case of the Ephesians readers themselves. The power that raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him to Heaven is also the power that took the Ephesians out of the state of spiritual

⁶³ Verse 1 - *paraptoma* -- points to sin as a fall (trespasses, a deviation from uprightness and truth) **“in your trespasses and sins” i.e., in your trespasses (*paraptoma*) and sin (*hamartais*); *hamartia* -- is sin as a failure (sins) No clear distinction in the plural).**

death and gave them a new life and a new dignity with Christ.⁶⁴

Death is a separation⁶⁵

When the Roman Emperor Valens⁶⁶ sent messengers to lure Eusebius into heresy by fair words and glowing promises, Eusebius answered them: “Alas, sirs, these speeches are fit to catch children; but we, who are taught and nourished by the Sacred Scriptures, are ready to suffer a thousand deaths, rather than permit one tittle of the Scriptures to be altered.”

Then the emperor threatened to take by force all his goods, to torture him, banish him, and even kill him. Eusebius answered:

“He needs not fear confiscation, who has nothing to lose; nor banishment, to whom heaven is his country; nor torments, when his body can be

⁶⁴ Ephesians 2:1-6.

⁶⁵ The idea of separation is basic to the meaning of the word “death” (Greek: *thanatos*) Thus Paul could say of Christians that “we died to sin” (6:2), meaning that they have been set free or separated from the power of sin that once dominated their lives as unbelievers. Paul used the word “death” with reference to both physical and spiritual realities when he described “the wages of sin” as death (6:23). Spiritual death is a condition of separation from God: “The mind of sinful man is death” (8:6). It is the present state of non-Christians which if unchanged ends in eternal death, a final separation from God. A life controlled by sin “leads to death” (6:16). Because all people are children of Adam, all begin life under the dominion of death (5:14).⁶⁵

⁶⁶ *Flavius Julius Valens Augustus*, Eastern Roman Emperor from 364 AD to 378 AD.

destroyed at one blow; nor death, which is the only way to set him at liberty from sin and sorrow.”⁶⁷

The emperor would have banished Eusebius from the Roman Empire, but to Eusebius the Emperor words were not a threat. Eusebius gloried in the separation. But the idea of separation is basic to the meaning of “death” in the scriptures. As in the case of Adam who was banished from the presence of God for his sin. God drove him out of the Garden of Eden and into the land of shadow and of death. True to the law of God which said, “In the day you eat of it you shall surely die,” Adam died by being banished from the garden and separated from God. The first man was then considered dead, dead to God and dead to paradise.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 994). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.

⁶⁸ **Θάνατος, ἀθάνατος** [*thanatos /than·at·os/*] n m. From 2348; TDNT 3:7; TDNTA 312; GK 2505 and together with Strong's 1 as GK 115; 119 occurrences; AV translates as “death” 117 times, and “deadly” twice. **1** the death of the body. 1a that separation (whether natural or violent) of the soul and the body by which the life on earth is ended. 1b with the implied idea of future misery in hell. 1b1 the power of death. 1c since the nether world, the abode of the dead, was conceived as being very dark, it is equivalent to the region of thickest darkness i.e. figuratively, a region enveloped in the darkness of ignorance and sin. **2** metaph., the loss of that life which alone is worthy of the name,. 2a the misery of the soul arising from sin, which begins on earth but lasts and increases after the death of the body in hell. **3** the miserable state of the wicked dead in hell. **4** in the widest sense, death comprising all the miseries arising from sin, as well physical death as the loss of a life consecrated to God and blessed in him on earth, to be followed by wretchedness in hell.

The Ephesians formerly lived a worldly life, a life in death as it were. Paul says that they were dead in their trespasses and sins,

Ephesians 2:2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

- The “course of this world” is the world-period (an age)—the world as transitory; the spirit of the age.⁶⁹
- The phrase conveys the three ideas of tenor, development, and limited continuance. The course of the world is evil; the world is evil, and to live in accordance with it is to live in trespasses and sins. One of the companions of Paul surrendered to the lure of the spirit of the age in which he lived. The Apostle wrote, “Demas having loved the present world (aeon), has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica.”⁷⁰

One has to wonder what was so appealing to Demas that he abandoned his part in the Kingdom of God to enjoy the pleasures of Thessalonica for a season.

⁶⁹ The **kosmou** is the world as the objective system of things, and that as evil. The **aeon** is the world as a world-period (an age)--the world as transitory. In such a connection as the present, comes near what we understand by "the spirit of the age," but is perhaps better rendered "course" as that word.

⁷⁰ 2 Tim. 4:10.

If we consider our personal experience when the world around us governed our own course of life it seemed only natural, and inevitable and proper at the time, but that hidden impulse that seemed to be only natural and inevitable and proper was actually Satan, himself—the prince of the power of the air. Satan is the controlling force in the course of this world.

The Apostle then used a phrase telling where the spirit of the age is now working. He called the people affected the, "...sons of disobedience." This means that their disobedience characterizes them. These people are not merely in a state of unbelief, but are in obstinate opposition to the Divine Will.⁷¹

The Jews also were sinners

Ephesians 2:3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Paul used a Hebrew idiom to describe human nature and does not separate the Jew from the Gentile in his description of the human condition.

⁷¹ *Tois uiouis tes apeitheias*- sons of disobedience. *huiouis*- It is often used metaphorically of prominent moral characteristics. "The Lord Jesus used *huiouis* in a very significant way, as in Matt. 5:9, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God,' and vv. 44, 45, 'Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be (become) sons of your Father which is in heaven.' The disciples were to do these things, not in order that they might become children of God, but that, being children (note 'your Father' throughout), they might make the fact manifest in their character, might 'become sons.' See also 2 Cor. 6:17, 18.

Further, as indicated by the context of Ephesians 1 and 2, the Apostle spoke of God as putting together both Jew and Gentile in Christ and making a new man. The “we too” of verse 3 (above) refers to the Jews, who believed that salvation would be accorded to them merely because they were lineal descendents of Abraham, but Paul rejects that idea labeling the Jews also “children by nature of wrath” just like the Gentiles (the rest).⁷²

Because of the Fall, man lost the guidance of God and came under the spiritual domination of Satan. Because Satan has ruled man so long his rule is now unrecognized and is considered “natural,” or, “human nature.” However, even though mighty spiritual forces of wickedness are in control of the natural man, this is not an excuse for bad behavior. Moreover, if it weren’t for the grace of God—His love and restraint—we would perish in the spiritual catastrophe. As Paul wrote to the Romans,

A mind set on the flesh is death

Romans 8:6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it

⁷² *we were, in our natural condition* (as descendants of Adam), *children of wrath* Eph 2:3 *phusei: nature*. 1. *natural endowment or condition*, inherited fr. one’s ancestors. *orges: anger, indignation, wrath*, of God’s future *judgment*, Men are *by nature children of wrath*, i.e. subject to divine wrath Eph 2:3.

is not even able to do so; 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

- The mind set on the flesh is death.
- The mind set on the spirit is life.
- The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God.
- The mind set on the flesh does not subject itself to the law of God.
- The mind set on the flesh is not even able to subject itself to the law of God.
- Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.
- These are conditions outside the power of man to remedy.

The rebirth—made alive together with Christ.

The rescue of man from the death which is the consequence of his sin is not merely a continuance of his bodily existence. The reclamation is much greater; it is equivalent to a renewal, a rebirth. This idea stands out prominently in the interview Nicodemus had with Jesus.

John 3:1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; 2 this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4

Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 “Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

In answer to Nicodemus’s suggestion—that Jesus was working signs that were obviously from God—Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Nicodemus thought he had seen evidence of the kingdom of God in the miracles. But Jesus said, “You have to be born again⁷³ to see the kingdom of God.” In another statement to the Pharisees Jesus said,

Luke 17:20 Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 21 nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

⁷³ 41.53 γεννάω ἄνωθεν (an idiom, literally ‘to be born again’); παλιγγενεσία, ας f: to experience a complete change in one’s way of life to what it should be, with the implication of return to a former state or relation—‘to be born again, to experience new birth, rebirth.’

The phrase “in your midst” may also be read as, “within you,” as in “the kingdom of God is within you.” This makes much more sense when we realize that Jews in Jesus’ day used the phrase “kingdom of God” to refer to **the rule of God**. In this connection Edersheim wrote,

A review of many passages on the subject shows that, in the Jewish mind, the expression ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ referred, not so much to any particular period, as in general to the Rule of God—as acknowledged, manifested, and eventually perfected.⁷⁴

And,

According to the Rabbinic views of the time, the terms ‘Kingdom,’ ‘Kingdom of heaven,’ and ‘Kingdom of God’ (in the Targum on Micah 4:7 ‘Kingdom of Jehovah’), were equivalent. In fact, the word ‘heaven’ was very often used instead of ‘God,’ so as to avoid unduly familiarising the ear with the Sacred Name.⁷⁵

Similarly, the tradition continues today where some Jewish writers spell the word “God” as “G-d.” In the same spirit the ancient name YHWH was considered too sacred to pronounce; so *’adōnāy* (‘my Lord’) was substituted in reading, and the vowels of this word were combined with the

⁷⁴ Edersheim, A. (1896). *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Vol. 1, p. 267). New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

⁷⁵ Ibid., Edersheim, A., Vol. 1, pp. 266–267.

consonants YHWH to give ‘Jehovah’, a form first attested at the start of the 12th century AD.⁷⁶

Also, the phrase “born again” had a dual meaning, and may also be read as, “born from above.”⁷⁷ However, Nicodemus understood Jesus’ statement as meaning ‘again.’^{78 79} In that day the Jewish people also referred to proselytes as people who were born again. This involved receiving baptism, but the waters of baptism were to the proselyte little more than a bath of regeneration. As Edersheim wrote,

The waters of baptism were to him in very truth, though in a far different from the Christian sense, the ‘bath of regeneration’ (Titus 3:5). As he stepped out of these

⁷⁶ Manley, G. T., & Bruce, F. F. (1996). *God, Names of*. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 421). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁷⁷ It is also possible to understand ἄνωθεν in Jn 3:3 as meaning ‘from above’ or ‘from God’ (see 84.13), a literary parallel to the phrase ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν in Jn 1:13. In Jn 3:3,

⁷⁸ (see 67.55) and γεννάω as ‘physical birth’ (see 23.52)

⁷⁹ Παλιγγενεσία: διὰ λουτροῦ παλιγγενεσίας καὶ ἀνακαινώσεως ‘new birth and new life by washing’ tt 3:5. The metaphor of ‘new birth’ is so important in the NT that it should be retained if at all possible. In some languages ‘new birth’ can be expressed as ‘to cause to be born all over again’ or ‘to have a new life as though one were born a second time.’ see also 13.55. Louw, j. P., & Nida, e. A. (1996).

*** in the sense of John 3:3 and Luke 17:20, to see the kingdom one must undergo the rebirth, i.e., be born again. DLS.

waters he was considered as ‘born anew’— in the language of the Rabbis, as if he were ‘a little child just born’ (Yeb. 22 *a*; 48 *b*; 97 *b*), as ‘a child of one day’ (Mass. Ger. 100. 2.). But this new birth was not ‘a birth from above’ in the sense of moral or spiritual renovation, but only as implying a new relationship to God, to Israel, and to his own past, present, and future.⁸⁰

Nicodemus would have had difficulty picturing himself as a “proselyte” of the Kingdom of God. He would have thought that he had already taken upon himself the yoke of the kingdom.

Yet, Jesus told Nicodemus that he would have to undergo a complete change in his inner man or he would not be able to see the kingdom of God. But Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and Pharisees thought they were already qualified to see the kingdom. Nor would he have thought that he needed repentance to enter it. The Pharisees would not receive the baptism of John because they thought it would be a humiliating experience for one such as they— someone who was already righteous. To a Pharisee, the statement of Jesus presented an impossible condition. They thought their manner of life prepared them for the kingdom of God.

It was a superficial view.

In the song “Mansions over the hilltop” there is a line in it that reads:

“I’m satisfied with just a cottage below, a little silver and a little gold; but in that city

⁸⁰ Ibid., Edersheim, A., Vol. 2, p. 746.

where the ransomed will shine; I want a gold one that's silver lined.”

One's interpretation of the meaning of this song will depend upon the person's mindset: if you are thinking in a superficial way, a materialistic way, you will expect a literal mansion of gold and silver; but if you are thinking spiritually you will be thinking of a spiritual body much superior to the fleshly body you have now.

So, in the case of Nicodemus, his mindset [as a Pharisee, a lawyer, a member of the great Sanhedrin,] did not prepare him to perceive the spiritual truth about which Jesus spoke to him. And so it is with everyone who wishes to see the kingdom of God—not just Pharisees; they must be born again. That rebirth is **a coming to life again**, much like a resurrection. In fact, Paul refers to the idea in his treatment of what transpires in Christian baptism.⁸¹

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁸¹ Romans 6:1-11.

That “newness of life,” the birth, or regeneration, comes from above.

Titus 3:5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The former condition of the Christian was spiritual death.

People seldom consider the greatness of the miracle that God performed in the raising of Christ from the dead. We may glimpse the extent of it when we realize that the entire human race lay in spiritual death, but God, in Christ, raised all of the believers in Christ from the dead.

Colossians 2:13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

- God made the Colossians (and all believers) alive with Christ.
- Being made alive accompanies forgiveness of sins.
- “Dead” is used figuratively here of the condition of the person (the sinner) before they became a Christian.

The return to life may be seen in the story of the Prodigal Son. After he is forced to see the error of his reckless and profligate life the prodigal decides to return to his father and plead for mercy,

Luke 15:20 “So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 “And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 “But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; 23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.

His father said of him when he returned that “...this son of mine was dead (*nekros*) and has come to life again, he was lost and has been found. Luke 15:24. As it was with the Prodigal Son so it is with worldly people who live in sin. The Father considers them dead, but He is willing to welcome them back to life.

The alive in Christ

The resurrection of Christ was the act of God’s power whereby He raised not only Christ but the church as well. Paul wrote,

Ephesians 2:5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together

with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

- God "...raised us up with Him..."

It is frequently true of soldiers who go into battle that they count themselves as already dead—in order to bear up under the strain of combat. A strange corollary to that method of thought stands in the Viet Nam Veteran's Memorial in Washington, D. C.

The memorial is striking for its simplicity. Etched in the black granite wall are the names of 58,156 Americans who died in that war. Since its opening in 1982, the monument has stirred deep emotions. Some visitors walk its length, slowly, reverently and without pause. Others stop before certain names, remembering a son, a brother or a fellow soldier. Some wipe away tears as they trace the name with a finger. But there are three veterans—Robert Bedker, Willard Craig, and Darrall Lausch—for whom a visit to the memorial is especially poignant. They can walk up to the ebony wall and find their own names carved in stone. They were mistakenly listed as killed in action. These three are listed as dead, but are alive. Alive from among the dead.

This in some ways is a description of the Christian. He was once considered dead, but now is alive.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together

with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

The dark picture that Paul painted of the condition of both Jew and Gentile—under the dominion of Satan—is now used as the background against which God’s riches and mercy are shown.

The “you” and the “we” give way to “But God...”

Under the conditions that now prevail upon man it is only the intervention of God that can turn aside the evil course of man’s life from inevitable disaster. The sole motivation of God was His love—and He was rich in mercy. He was not motivated by something man did or does, but only by His great love.⁸²

The new life is in Christ Jesus.

That renewal to life is in Christ, and is offered freely to those who would abandon the life of the world.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of

⁸² See John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...”

the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

- God extends His grace to all sinners, telling them to abandon sin and return to Him where they may live.
- Christ has already died to pay the penalty for their sin and to release them from bondage to Satan.
- In Christ they would be dead to sin, but alive to God.

God gives life through His Spirit.

Romans 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. 10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin,

yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. 12 So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

- God gives life through His eternal Spirit.
- If you live according to the flesh you must die.
- If you live by the Spirit...you will truly live.

From being dead to being alive in Christ

On the Friday before the Passover that occurred during the governorship of Pontius Pilate a Roman Centurion reported to the governor that Jesus of Nazareth had died on the cross at Golgotha. Pilate then granted the body of Jesus to Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Great Sanhedrin. Joseph, accompanied by Nicodemus, another ruler of the Jews, removed the dead body of Jesus from the cross, bound it in linen wrappings, along with spices which Nicodemus had brought, and then took the body to the tomb for burial. Having buried Jesus they rolled a great stone before the entrance to the

tomb and went away. Thus they consigned the body of Jesus to a new and otherwise empty tomb where he reclined in death.

But on the third day following God raised Jesus from the dead. Paul wrote what God did in that death,

Colossians 2:11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; 12 having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions...

- God makes the Christian “alive” with Christ.
- The circumcision of the Jews was a sign of the covenant they had with God.
- It implied that they were keepers of the Law of God.
- In Christ the circumcision is total.
- Baptism signifies the death of the old self (through faith in Christ) and then the rising in the new life in Christ.

This happened through the power of God—”He made you alive with Him” when “you,” the Gentile, were still dead in transgressions and the moral

condition in which your corrupt desires still operated.

Ephesians 2:6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The experiences of Christ are to be the experiences of the Christian—rising from the dead.

The Christian is a member of that chosen assembly, the church, and has been brought back from among the dead to enjoy a new life in Christ.

Home

During the Civil War, and after the battle at Shiloh, a boat traveled down the Tennessee River carrying wounded soldiers toward a place where they could rest and recover. A man went about the deck giving the wounded a drink of water. At length he came to an injured soldier who made no answer when he spoke to him, so he told the surgeon about him.

The surgeon looked at the soldier and said, "He cannot recover. He has lost too much blood."

The first man said, "I can't find out his name, and it seems a pity to let him die without knowing who he is. Don't you think we can bring him to?"

At the surgeon's direction the man gave the wounded soldier a little water and brandy. As he was doing this he asked another soldier standing by if he knew the boy's name.

The soldier answered, "I do. He is my friend. His name is William Clark, and he has a widowed mother."

Presently, the young man opened his eyes, and the first man said to him, "William, do you know where you are?"

Still dazed, the young man looked around for a moment. Then he said, "Oh, yes, I'm on my way home to mother."

"Yes, you are on your way home, William," the first man said, "but the surgeon says you won't reach your earthly home. I thought I'd like to ask you if you have any message for your mother?"

At that the young man's face strengthened and he answered, "Yes, tell my mother that I died trusting in Jesus."

- And so it is for all of us that if you can't reach you earthly home, be sure that you have a heavenly home—where you'll be welcome.

Mingled with thoughts of returning home are feelings that at home we will find rest and relief from the injuries and wounds of life, and respite from its rigors and troubles. After Shiloh, William Clark evidently saw his home as the place of comfort where he might regain his health. When he realized that was not to be, he reverted to the eternal home where every burden is lifted, and every pain is relieved.

The Christian should never forget where his home is. He may be in a land convulsed by war, or in a land blessed with peace; nevertheless, he is a sojourner. The Christian's experience is like that of the sons of Israel as they suffered captivity in a strange land beside the Euphrates. The Psalmist lamented in Psalm 137,

BY the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down and wept,
When we remembered Zion.
2 Upon the willows in the midst of it
We hung our harps.
3 For there our captors demanded of us
songs,
And our tormentors mirth, *saying*, "Sing us
one of the songs of Zion."

4 How can we sing the LORD's song
In a foreign land?
5 If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
May my right hand forget *her* skill.
6 May my tongue cleave to the roof of my
mouth,
If I do not remember you,
If I do not exalt Jerusalem
Above my chief joy.⁸³

The heavenly Jerusalem is the Christian's
home.

Solomon spoke of man's eternal home in the
book of Ecclesiastes,

Eccl. 12:1 Remember now your Creator in
the days of your youth, Before the
difficult days come, And the years draw
near when you say, "I have no pleasure in
them": 2 While the sun and the light, The
moon and the stars, Are not darkened,
And the clouds do not return after the
rain; 3 In the day when the keepers of the
house tremble, And the strong men bow
down; When the grinders cease because
they are few, And those that look through
the windows grow dim; 4 When the
doors are shut in the streets, And the
sound of grinding is low; When one rises
up at the sound of a bird, And all the

⁸³ Scripture quotations: *New American Standard Bible: 1995 update*. (1995). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

daughters of music are brought low; 5
Also they are afraid of height, And of
terrors in the way; When the almond tree
blossoms, The grasshopper is a burden,
And desire fails. For man goes to his
eternal home, And the mourners go about
the streets.

The Bible tells us that Abraham, Isaac and
Jacob,

Hebrews 11:13 ... died in faith, not having
received the promises, but having seen
them afar off were assured of them,
embraced them and confessed that they
were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

What promises were these? They did not
receive them during their earthly pilgrimage. They
only saw them afar off, and greeted them as the
wanderer greets his longed-for home, even when he
comes in sight of it at a distance drawing himself it
were, magnetically, and embracing with inward
love that which is yet far off. They were like the
psalmist who wrote in Psalm 84,

- 1 How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD
of hosts!
- 2 My soul longs, yes, even faints For the
courts of the LORD; My heart and my
flesh cry out for the living God.
- 3 Even the sparrow has found a home, And
the swallow a nest for herself, Where she
may lay her young; Even Your altars, O
LORD of hosts, My King and my God.
- 4 Blessed are those who dwell in Your
house; They will still be praising You.

C. E. Macartney wrote,

"Years ago people brought skylarks from England, and set them loose in one of the eastern sections of the United States. The birds found a home. Soon their numbers increased. One day an ornithologist came across some of them. Interested, he listened to the song of the emigrant birds. As he listened he saw an Irish laboring man suddenly stop, take off his cap, and turn his face skyward. On his countenance he had a look of surprise. The joy of pleasant memory overspread his face as he listened to the song of a bird that he had heard in his youth. He had heard the larks sing in Ireland. To the bird expert it was only a scientific observation, but for the Irishman it was the sound of home.⁸⁴

You love the land in which you live, but is it your home? Is it that permanent dwelling you long for? Despite its familiarity and its beauty do you see it as your perpetual and everlasting abode? Or, do you see it as the place where you live—for now, a place that you expect to abandon one day?

As it was with the Irishman and the skylarks, so it is for the Christian and the scriptures. In the gospel of Christ there is the song that tell us of our heavenly home. It is by love that toward that home we are prompted and driven, As Milligan wrote,

... by one of the strongest and deepest natural instincts of the human heart. And hence, though many may, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, wander about as pilgrims and sojourners for awhile, it is always with a

⁸⁴ Clarence. E. Macartney, *Macartney's Illustrations*, Abingdon Press, New York, Nashville, 1946, p. 168.

view of securing a permanent home somewhere.⁸⁵

The Hebrew writer said,

14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. Hebrews 11:14-16.

Some of us have migrated to our present homes from other states of the United States, others have migrated from other countries. Many of us are like Abd Er Rahman.

Abd Er Rahman was the first Caliph of Cordova, Spain, There, thousands of miles from his native haunts along the banks of the River Euphrates, the Moslem prince set up his kingdom and ruled over the conquered Spaniards. But always he was homesick for Mesopotamia (the land between the rivers). He had a palm tree brought to him and planted in the courtyard of the palace at Cordova, to remind him of his home. Never could he gaze upon that palm tree without bursting into tears.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ R. Milligan, *New Testament Commentary, Epistle to the Hebrews*, Gospel Advocate Company, Nashville, 1961, p. 312.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, C. E. Macartney, p. 168.

The palm tree was the reminder to the caliph, but the Lord himself gave us our reminder, the reminder that our citizenship is in another country, that our allegiance is to another king, that our home is in another place. On the night he was betrayed, the Lord

1 Corinthians 11:23 ... took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

So we eat the bread and we drink from the cup, and we remember. And as Paul said to the Corinthians,

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 18 while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made

with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

In this life we look for friends, and find only a few. Regrettably, the world is not our home and many of the people who belong to it are not our friends.

The Roman Emperor Vespasian began the construction of the Coliseum but his son, Titus, finished it. This was the Titus who also conquered the Jews. The Romans built the Coliseum to satisfy their lust for the spectacular and the exciting, for bloodshed and for cruelty. Covering five acres of ground, the colossal bowl could accommodate eighty-five thousand of the populace of Rome. Built in the shape-of an ellipse, and founded on eighty acres, it rose to the height of 160 feet. The outside consisted of four rows of columns, representing successive orders of architecture—Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian—and it was encrusted with marble and

decorated with statues. Inside, tiers of stone benches rose one above the other. Huge canopies could be spread over the seats to protect the spectators from rain and sun. Sixty-four exits, or vomitories, in a short time admitted or poured forth the blood-loving throngs. And to this day you can see the Roman numerals on fragments of the arches showing the number of the entrance corresponding to the ticket held by the patron.

C. E. Macartney said of the Coliseum,

...gushing fountains cooled and refreshed the air and aromatics diffused a pleasant odor to offset that of the wild beasts. The open space in the center was called the arena, from the Latin word for the sand with which it was carefully overlaid. Under the lowest tier of benches were the dens of the wild beasts, for which the whole earth had been ransacked, and side by side with them the gloomy caverns where the prisoners and martyrs spent their last hours before they were thrust forth into the blazing arena to fight with beasts."⁸⁷

When Domitian, the son of Titus, came to the throne he launched a bitter persecution against Christians. His hatred caused the arrest of thousands, many of whom were put to death by torture. Others were sacrificed to wild beasts in the arena of the Coliseum."⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Ibid., C. E. Macartney, p. 63.

⁸⁸ Robert H. Brumback, *History of the church through the ages*, Mission Messenger, St. Louis, p. 14.

For Christians, then and now, the world holds nothing but "Coliseums" in one form or another, because the world knows nothing but its lust for pleasure, its scorn and hatred of a just and quiet life, and its prideful boasting in towers and Coliseums, in palaces and glittering images. The world knows Christians only as impediments, as outsiders saying untactful and discomfoting things.

Peter wrote in his first letter,

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 11 Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

When the ten thousand Greeks fought their way out of Persia the one hope that sustained them and made them brave in battle was the thought of reaching the sea toward which they were marching. For when they reached the sea they knew they would not be far from home. The sea was the hope that, like a banner, floated before them as they fought and marched. Let the thought of the soul's true home be often in your mind. Think on its joys, its powers, its enterprises, its fountains of

knowledge, its happiness, its absolute harmony with the soul's deepest desires, think of catching up the broken threads again and finishing what we began here. Think of the company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect, the Lamb on the throne, and those thrilling reunions.⁸⁹ And as Henry Alford wrote,

"O then what raptured greetings
On Canaan's happy shore,
What knitting severed friendships up
Where partings are no more."

As Isaiah wrote,
Isaiah 33,

17 Your eyes will see the King in His
beauty; They will see the land that is very
far off.

18 Your heart will meditate on terror:
"Where is the scribe? Where is he who
weighs? Where is he who counts the
towers?"

19 You will not see a fierce people, A
people of obscure speech, beyond
perception, Of a stammering tongue that
you cannot understand.

20 Look upon Zion, the city of our
appointed feasts; Your eyes will see
Jerusalem, a quiet home, A tabernacle
that will not be taken down; Not one of

⁸⁹ In the spirit of Macartney.

its stakes will ever be removed, Nor will any of its cords be broken.

21 But there the majestic LORD will be for us

A place of broad rivers and streams, In which no galley with oars will sail, Nor majestic ships pass by

22 (For the LORD is our Judge, The LORD is our Lawgiver, The LORD is our King; He will save us);

Let heaven be on your mind.

And remember what the Lord Himself said,

John 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

The Athenians used to have a race in which the runners carried lighted torches. The victors who were crowned were those who arrived at the goal with their torches still burning. May you come to your goal—reach the end of your journey—with your torch still burning.

Let home be on your mind.