

# SPECIAL REPORT:

## WHAT IS A BELIEVER?

by  
Martin Zender

Dear Friends in the Faith,

In June of 2000, at the annual Northern Ohio Conference in Willard, Ohio, I delivered a message that shocked many people. My message was so controversial that I was asked not to teach on it at a conference later that summer. One man even said he would not attend a conference he had planned on attending, simply because I would be teaching there. My message scandalized this man.

And yet, immediately after I delivered my talk, two mature saints approached me privately, both of them teachers. One whispered, “The spirit of God witnessed to your message tonight. I think you are right.” The other merely shook his head and said, “You make me think.” Yet another teacher called me days after the conference and said, “I know you are right. But for God’s sake, tone down your delivery. Can’t you see? Your audience can’t handle this.”

What was the message that caused such a stir? Namely this:

*Unbelievers do not have eonian life.*

In other words, people to whom God has promised eonian life *will* believe certain truths. “But isn’t this an era of grace?” people asked. “Why does anyone need to believe anything? Isn’t salvation completely free?”

### **A primer on eonian life**

“Eonian life” is a Scriptural phrase, appearing forty-four times in the New Testament. You’ve probably never heard of it is because the phrase has been mistranslated “eternal life” in our common English translations—the *King James Version*, the *New American Standard Bible*, the *New International Version*—and others. “Eonian life,” not “eternal life,” is the promise given to those who believe God’s message of salvation in this lifetime.

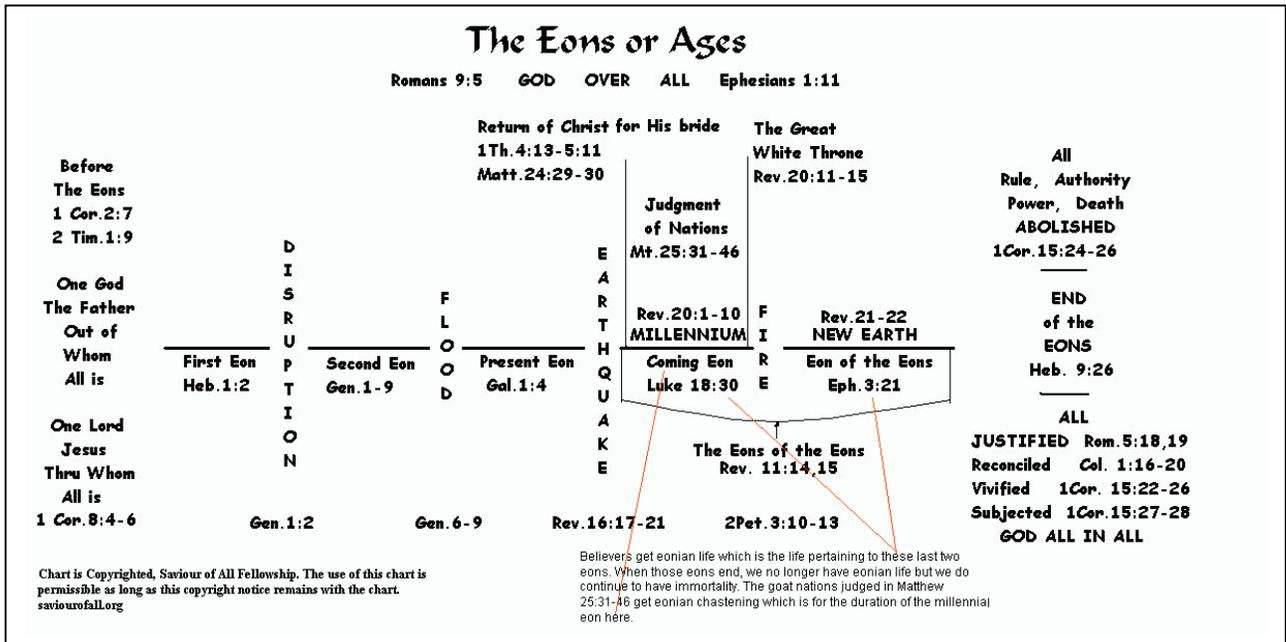
“Eonian” is the adjectival form of “eon,” a word that appears over seventy-five times in the New Testament. (Again, this word has been severely mistranslated, giving way to heinous Christian doctrines such as eternal torment.) An “eon” is a limited period of time. “Eonian,” therefore, pertains to a special kind of life that endures for a limited period of time (in our context, these limited periods of time include the coming Millennium, during which Christ reigns on Earth, and the New Heavens and New Earth, spoken of in Revelation, chapter 21 (see chart on next page).

“Eonian life” is life that continues up until the time *everyone* has life.

I once saw a church sign that said, “Where will you spend eternity?” This stupid church sign (sorry for the redundancy) posed the wrong question. Everyone spends eternity with God. Why? “God is the Savior of all humans” (1 Timothy 4:10). Jesus Christ died on the cross for the sake of all those condemned in Adam (Romans 5:18). Jesus Christ’s work on the cross exceeded the work of Adam (Romans 5:15-17), and therefore, all those condemned in Adam (everyone ever born) will be justified and saved by Christ to eventually (that’s a key word) live with God for eternity.

However ...

Not everyone lives during the coming two eons. This explains the second half of 1 Timothy 4:10— “God is the Savior of all humans, *especially of believers.*” Everyone lives forever with God, *eventually*. Believers live forever with God earlier than unbelievers—this is the key to understanding eonian life. It is entirely the choice of God who believes in this lifetime, and who does not—and therefore who lives with God earlier. This touches on my subject: “What is a believer?” Before I delve into it, please study the following chart. The two red lines point to the times when believers will begin living for eternity with God (the Millennium and the New Earth). Those to whom God has not given belief in this life will not begin living for eternity with God until the time called the Consummation (1 Corinthians 15:24-26), also noted in this chart as, “the End of the Eons” (Hebrews 9:26). This corresponds to the time when death is abolished and God becomes “All in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28).



You may panic and say, “But, Martin, if you say that the eonian life God promises me as a believer is limited to the upcoming two eons, then do I die after the eons are over? I thought I had eternal life.”

You *do* have eternal life. But there is not one verse in all of Scripture that specifically *says* you do;

Scripture speaks of *eonian* life. There *is* a verse, however, which says that your body will be changed and made into an immortal body (1 Corinthians 15:53-54). Immortal people can't die. So yes, you live forever, but not because of the term "eonian life." You live forever because God will make you immortal (sooner than everyone else). The term "eonian life" applies only to your life during the upcoming two glorious eons. When these eons end, your *eonian* life ends, but certainly not your immortality.

Think of it this way: When you passed through your teenage years, you were called, "a teenager." When you turned 20, you were no longer a teenager. Does that mean you were no longer a person? Did you die at age 20? No—you just lost the particular appellation, "teenager." Likewise, when the eons end (and they will), it doesn't mean you die. It just means you lose the particular appellation, "eonian life." How can you still be a teenager when you're 20? How can you still have eonian life when the eons end?

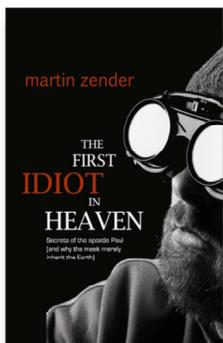
So now you know that in this report, "What is a Believer?" I am not at all talking about who will live with God for eternity and who won't, because—as I have said—*everyone* will *eventually* live with God for eternity. I am talking about those certain people chosen by God who will live during the upcoming eons. These people will believe certain truths.

This should modify the shock you are about to experience as you read, "What is a Believer?" Why shock? I claim in this report that most people who think they are believers, really aren't. They're fake believers, and don't even know it. They're fake believers because they believe the lies of Christianity, which *imitate* the truths of Christ. These lies are *near* the truth, but oh, so *far* away. I am trying to "shake the tree" and wake people up to the fact that they are probably believing slickly packaged Christian lies, rather than the truth of God. Believing these lies, in this life, will not prevent these people from living with God for eternity (as I've already told you), but no one who believes "near-but-far" things about God, has eonian life; none of these people come in *early*.

### Body-of-Christ believers

The believers I chiefly refer to in this report are those who believe in the truths of Paul's evangel and are therefore members of the body of Christ.

In my book, *The First Idiot in Heaven*, you learned there is a difference between the gospel of the Circumcision (the message Jesus Christ brought to Israel while He was on Earth), and the Gospel of the Uncircumcision (the message that the glorified Christ gave to the apostle Paul, after Christ had ascended to heaven and was no longer an Israelite). Believers in the Circumcision gospel are called, "the bride of the Lambkin" (Revelation 21:9), and believers in the Uncircumcision gospel are called, "the body of Christ" (Ephesians 5:29-30). There *is* a difference, not only between what these respective believers *believe*, but between their destinies. Circumcision believers stay on Earth and will work to bring the Earth under subjection to God in accord with the promise God made to Abraham (Genesis 12:3).



Uncircumcision believers go to heaven to reconcile the celestial world to Him, in accord with what God told the apostle Paul (Ephesians 2:6-7).

There are three groups of “believers” in this life. (I put “believers” in quotation marks because only two of the three groups I’m about to describe are actual believers; the third group (the group that gets the quotation marks), are those whom Paul calls “feigned” believers (1 Corinthians 15:2). These are the ones believing the near-but-far lies of Christianity. They are also the ones Paul warns about in Galatians; they believe a false gospel that mixes elements of the Israel gospel (law-keeping), with elements of the gospel the glorified Christ gave to the nations through Paul (total grace; no law-keeping whatsoever). (You read about this in chapter 14 of *The First Idiot in Heaven*.) The gospel of the Circumcision is a legitimate gospel, and the gospel of the Uncircumcision is a legitimate gospel. The *illegitimate* gospel is, again, the “gospel” that *mixes* the Circumcision gospel (law) with the Uncircumcision gospel (grace), producing such Frankenstein statements as: “You must work to earn your free salvation.” The result is a message that is no true gospel at all, but rather a mass of confusion.

### **What will Circumcision-Gospel believers *believe*?**

Even though Paul’s message is one of pure grace, it’s easier to believe the Israel gospel heralded by Peter. When Jesus asked Peter, “Whom do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). All an Israelite—or a follower of the Israel message—needs to be saved, is to believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah of Israel. Well, there’s just a little more. An Israelite—or follower of Israel—must (must!) follow up this belief with good works such as obeying the Ten Commandments (or else), forgiving all enemies every day (or else), and producing fruit worthy of repentance (or else).

When I say, “a follower of the Israel message,” I am talking about those people who are not natural-born Israelites, but who love the Israelite message and lifestyle (they love ritual; they love feeling worthy) and want to be associated with God’s chosen people. These people are known as “proselytes,” and one of them was Cornelius, described in Acts, chapter 12.

What is the highest expectation—for the eons—of a believer in the Israelite message? *Earth*. Remember, the promise God made to Abraham was that his seed (Israel) would one day bless all the nations of the Earth (Genesis 12:3); Jesus said, “The meek shall inherit the Earth” (Matthew 15:24); Revelation 5:10 says, concerning Israel, “Thou dost also make them a kingdom and a priesthood for our God, And they shall be reigning on the Earth.” Are you catching a theme here? The highest expectation of an Israelite was always Earth. Proselytes who embrace the Messiah as God’s answer and produce fruit worthy of repentance also gain earthly glory as a reward, but—even on the New Earth—they will be second-class citizens to natural-born Israelites.

In the meantime, where will believers in Paul’s gospel be?

### **What will Uncircumcision-Gospel believers *believe*?**

Believers in Paul’s gospel will be in heaven, for that is where they inherently belong (Philippians 3:20). Israel’s job is to reconcile the nations of the Earth to God, but the job of the body of Christ is to

reconcile antagonistic celestial beings to Him. We will be “displaying God’s grace among the celestials (Ephesians 2:7).

What will a person to whom this destiny applies be believing? They will believe four main things, described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. We will be getting to the details of these important points, but here are the highlights: Believers in the gospel of the Uncircumcision (Paul’s gospel) will believe in: 1) the death of Christ, 2) the death of Christ *for sin*, 3) the entombment of Christ, 4) and the resurrection of Christ.

Sounds simple, doesn’t it? It’s not.

### My proposition

I contend, and propose to you today, that not all who *claim* to be believers, are believers, and therefore not all who claim to be saved, are saved.<sup>1</sup> Eonian life is much rarer than we thought.<sup>2</sup> Eonian life is still a gracious gift of God, but a gift rare and precious. I also believe we have seriously misapprehended the grace of God, especially such grace as revealed in the evangel brought by Paul. Rather than apprehending grace as the *nature* of the new message (that is, that Paul’s message is *gracious*), we have made grace a slosh bucket that eliminates lines of belief and distinctions between what is true and false. In other words, we have made grace say, “Who cares what you believe? This is grace.” As one brother put it, “God’s grace can cover even wrong belief.”

Yes, God’s grace *can* cover even wrong belief, but does it choose to do so? If this is God’s present design for grace, my question would be: “Then why isn’t Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran, saved? *He* has wrong belief. If the grace of God covers even wrong belief, then Ahmadinejad qualifies for salvation under those terms. So does everyone else, for that matter. In fact, if this statement is true, then believing the truth has absolutely nothing to do with eonian life.”



Reader, are you willing to say that believing the truth has nothing to do with eonian life? If so, are you willing to take this to its logical conclusion and contend that Ahmadinejad is now your “brother in the Lord” and a fellow-member of the body of Christ? I am not. Not because I don’t have agapé love for the president of Iran and for all of humanity. I do. Rather because such a scenario is inconsistent with what Scripture says concerning those who do have eonian life. I find, in the Scripture, that those who have eonian life will be found believing certain vital and fundamental truths concerning Jesus Christ and His work.

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<sup>1</sup>Throughout this study, unless otherwise noted, the word “saved” means having eonian life. I do not speak of eternal life. Eternal life is the portion of all humanity, whereas eonian life is the portion only of believers.

<sup>2</sup>For the duration of this report, unless otherwise noted, “eonian life” refers to that life specific to members of the body of Christ. I distinguish this from eonian life specific to members of that Israelite ecclesia known as “the bride of the Lambkin,” who attain their eonian allotment through a combination of works and grace.

If God's grace covers even wrong belief, we make a mockery of Paul's evangel. We say, in effect, 1) those who believe Paul's evangel are members of the body of Christ, and 2) those who *don't* believe Paul's evangel are also members of the body of Christ. Where does that leave Paul's evangel? Non-essential for eonian life. It makes a mockery of the great care Paul exercised in communicating his message accurately, and in reiterating its core elements.<sup>3</sup>

I propose to you today that it *does* matter what one believes, and that it is important for our belief to be sincere and founded on revealed facts concerning Jesus Christ and His work. Believing Paul's message is essential for eonian life.

### **Avoid misunderstanding**

In light of this, some may now be tempted to ask, "Martin, are you making salvation a matter of correct doctrine? Are you saying that one cannot have eonian life unless one's doctrines line up?"

No. I am not saying that at all. I am not making salvation a matter of doctrine, but am rather making doctrine a matter of salvation. Allow me to explain the difference.

I believe Ephesians 1:4-5, which says members of the body of Christ are chosen in Him before the disruption of the world, designated beforehand for the place of a son. Those who are chosen and designated beforehand will, at some point during their lifetime, be given faith to believe the truth. (For the record: Truth is the opposite of falsehood. I speak chiefly of the falsehoods of human religious traditions, which pervert the nature of God and deny the completeness of Christ's sacrifice.) So you see how I put the horse where it belongs, in front of the cart. We are not saved because we believe right things about God; we believe right things about God because we are saved. Being designated beforehand according to God's sovereign choice is the horse; our believing God's truth is the cart that follows.

I must also make doubly sure you understand that it is eonian life I am speaking of throughout this report, not eternal life. Of course, I believe that God is the Savior of all humans (1 Timothy 4:10), and that at the consummation of the eons, God will be All in all (1 Corinthians 15:28). I know well that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will live for eternity with God, because Jesus Christ died for his sake (2 Corinthians 5:14). As Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was constituted a sinner with us all through Adam's transgression, so will he be constituted just with us all through the singular work of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:19).

Yet I also know that it is "each in his own class" (1 Corinthians 15:23). Some are given saving belief *now*, others are given it *later*. If someone believes the vital truths of Paul's gospel, today, then that's evidence he or she is called *now*. If one does *not* believe the vital truths of Paul's gospel, today, (that is, that person is currently an unbeliever), then that's evidence he or she is not called now.

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<sup>3</sup>I do not wish to downplay the effect Paul's gospel has had in revealing God. For even if no one received eonian life, Paul would not have labored in vain *in that* he has given us a deep appreciation and reverence for God—in this life. Throughout this study, however, I am primarily concerned with the evangel as it applies to the eonian life of the believer. This should not be construed as selfish, but simply as the chosen slant of the article. And so, as touching the eonian life of the believer, Paul *would have* labored in vain if those whose lives he touched were members of Christ's body *with or without* a God-given realization of Paul's message.

Those who are given belief today are the “especially” believers of 1 Timothy 4:10: “God is the Savior of all humans, *especially* of believers.” Everyone is saved at the consummation, but only believers have an “especially” salvation. This “especially” salvation is eonian life, that is, life that endures through the coming eons:

Now on hearing this [Paul’s words in Antioch], the nations rejoiced and glorified the word of the Lord, and they believe, whoever were set for life eonian. —Acts 13:48

This verse supports two of my foregoing conclusions, namely that 1) eonian life has to do with believing the word of the Lord, and 2) whoever are set for eonian life (that is, designated beforehand for the place of the son) will believe the word of the Lord.

### **My purpose**

Hopefully, I have whetted your appetite to hear more on this important subject. Before I delve too deeply into this report, I must clarify for you why I have embarked upon such a study in the first place. I am not setting myself up as some kind of “belief police,” bent on determining through various tests who is a believer and who is not. I am no arbiter in matters of the human heart; only God is that. I am not, through means of this study, recommending that we seek to constantly classify our fellow humans into categories of “believer” and “unbeliever” (though I am not exactly discouraging it, either). While Paul *does* provide means of proving who is saved and who is not, and Paul calls on us to shun those who have a form of devoutness yet deny its power, this is not my chief reason for writing.

My reasons for writing are six-fold:

- 1) I wish for you to realize just how rare eonian life is, and how rare a gift it is to have been called out of religion to hear the true voice of God. I wonder if any of my readers are as thankful as I am today to have been rescued out of the darkness of religion. My gratitude stems from having already assimilated and embraced the information you are about to read. When you see how rare is your call, how rare is your destiny, how hard it is (nay, humanly impossible) to escape the snares of the deadliest and most seductive religion on Earth (Christianity), you will fall on your knees and thank God as you have never thanked Him before. You will thank Him for miraculously delivering you from the raging river of deception that even now sweeps most of humanity to eonian destruction.
- 2) I wish to magnify the importance of Paul’s evangel. As I have already stated, if people have eonian life whether they believe Paul’s testimony or not, we make Paul’s testimony non-essential to eonian life. This makes a mockery of the man (and others like him) who literally risked his life to bring us a new message, “through which also you are saved” (1 Corinthians 15:1), from the glorified Christ. It makes a mockery of verses such as Acts 13:48 and others, which relate eonian life to believing in something specific, namely, the work of Christ.
- 3) I wish to magnify the importance of holding to the sufficiency of Christ’s work. Some people have suggested that, whether one believes in oneself for salvation (i.e., holds to the false

teaching of human free will), or believes that Christ's work alone is sufficient for salvation, doesn't matter.

I say it does matter. I will prove to you in this study that belief in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice is essential to the evangel of the grace of God—a vital part of “the word of the Lord,” and therefore essential to eonian life. I will also prove to you, if it is not already evident, that the doctrine of human free will necessarily denies the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, and is completely incompatible with a reliance on Jesus Christ as Savior.

- 4) I wish to stress the importance of believing right things about God.
- 5) I wish to convince you of the importance of our heralding. Heretofore, we have believed that the truths God has given us to share (truths which are opposed to the traditions of humans held by the Christian religion) such as the sovereignty of God, the sufficiency of Christ's work, and the salvation of all, are non-essential teachings. That is, we have considered our teachings as “nice for people to know,” but surely not necessary for anyone's eonian life. “As long as one ‘believes in Christ,’” we have glibly asserted, “one is saved.” What we have somehow failed to realize is that “believing in Christ” includes these teachings of ours. And so, instead of these teachings being merely “icing on the cake,” they *are* the cake.

How could we have so underestimated the importance of these truths? Sadly, the spiritual state of the modern church has become so low that we, ourselves, have “lowered the bar” of truth. In a day of such horrid apostasy, we grandly suppose our message to be “mature teaching,” when in fact our revelations are basement elements of Paul's gospel. Indeed, they form the very foundations of faith.

Thus, our heralding is not simply a matter of bringing those who already believe into maturity. Rather, our heralding is a matter *of* believing, and therefore a matter of eonian life and eonian death.

An apprehension of this can only increase our fervor for true evangelism. (Even as our failure to apprehend it explains the phenomenon of limp evangelistic effort.)

- 6) I wish to reveal the deviousness and subtlety of Satan's work. Certainly not to glorify Satan, but to make you aware that we, even we, have seriously underestimated the subtle genius of our adversary. We are blind to the damage he is now accomplishing by means of his most cherished heresies, disseminated through the Christian religion.

As a prime example, consider “free will.” This demonic invention (rank humanism disguised as godliness, and therefore Satan's most effective—and disguised—weapon against God) has become so commonplace that many of us are now calloused to its destructiveness. I compare the doctrine of free will to a deadly virus that kills everyone it touches. We are initially terrified at the virus, agog, moved to action. If the virus stays on awhile, however, it loses shock value and becomes simply another part of our existence.

Before long, we are immune to its horror. In order to cope, we enter into a practical denial, or

a mode of “refusing to think about it.” It’s the same thing we do when an ambulance or a fire truck races down the street. How many try to picture the victim in the ambulance? How many sit and imagine a child being asphyxiated by smoke?

Because free will has “stayed on awhile,” it has lost its horror. Now we consider it a mere “doctrinal flaw,” rather than what it really is: a killer. Satan has invented the doctrine of free will to keep millions from the vital beliefs that distinguish those who have eonian life from those who don’t. And I will prove he is doing just that, right under our noses.

### The foundations

What must one believe to be saved? Paul puts it very simply to the Philippian jailor in Acts 16:31— “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved.”

With this one verse, we have already accomplished much. For one thing, we have eliminated Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from eonian salvation; he does not believe on the Lord Jesus. (We take no pleasure in this determination; it is simply a fact.) We have also discovered what the brother who said, “God’s grace can cover even wrong belief” meant to say. He meant to say: “God’s grace can cover wrong belief *concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.*” (I still believe he’s wrong, but I will get to that later.)

So even though we live in an administration of the grace of God, it is still important to believe a certain thing, or rather, on a certain Someone.



Even Pontius Pilate believed that Jesus Christ existed.

“And there is no salvation in any other one, for neither is there any other name [besides Jesus Christ, the Nazarene], given under heaven among men, in which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

But is it enough to merely utter His name? In Matthew 7:22-23, Jesus said, “Many will be declaring to Me in that day, ‘Lord! Lord! Was it not in Your name that we prophesy, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do many powerful deeds?’ And then shall I be avowing to them that ‘I never knew you! Depart from Me, workers of lawlessness.’”

It is not enough to merely utter His name.

Is it enough to merely believe that Jesus Christ existed? Pontius Pilate believed He existed. Is it enough to admit that Jesus Christ came from God? Even the Pharisees believed that.<sup>4</sup> Is it enough to avow an acquaintance with God? Many who do so deny their avowal by their acts.<sup>5</sup> Is it enough to

<sup>4</sup>“Now there was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus his name, a chief of the Jews. This one came to Him by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, *we are aware that Thou art a Teacher come from God*” (John 3:1-2).

<sup>5</sup>“They are avowing an acquaintance with God, yet by their acts are denying it, being abominable and stubborn, and disqualified for every good act” (Titus 1:16). I am reminded of a modern-day saying, “Actions speak louder than words.”

believe there is only one God? Demons have that much figured out.<sup>6</sup>

We must look past Acts 16:31. Indeed, Paul told the Philippian jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved.” But the account does not end there. As he stands in the jail listening to Paul, with rocks still crumbling around him, the Philippian jailor does not yet believe. How can he? He still has no details concerning this Jesus. He has no information. As distasteful or unspiritual as this may sound to some of my readers, saving knowledge of Jesus Christ comes through the relay of information concerning Jesus Christ, by the mouths of God’s appointed heralds, for “faith is out of tidings” (Romans 10:17).

The very next verse in Acts chapter 16 reports the subsequent action Paul and Silas undertook on behalf of the jailor: “And they speak to him the word of the Lord, together with all those in his house.”

Then our apostle Paul and his fellow laborer relayed the vital details concerning Christ. Thrill with me with what is next said concerning the jailor, in verse 34: “Besides, leading them up into his house, he sets a table before them, and exults with all his household, *having believed God.*”

It is not enough to utter the name of Jesus.  
 It is not enough to believe that Jesus existed.  
 It is not enough to admit that Jesus Christ came from God.  
 It is not enough to believe that God is one.  
 It is not even enough to avow an acquaintance with God.

Saving faith is *believing what God has to say concerning His Son, Jesus Christ.*

Just what does God have to say concerning His Son, Jesus Christ? Just what is it that those who have been “chosen before the disruption of the world for the place of a son” (Ephesians 1:4-5) will believe?

### **The basics of Paul’s gospel**

Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the evangel which he first brought to them. Here then are the foundational elements of Paul’s gospel of grace, with context. These are the basics of the foundation that those who have been set for eonian life will believe:

Now I am making known to you, brethren, the evangel which I bring to you, which also you accepted, in which also you stand, through which also you are saved, if you are retaining what I said in bringing the evangel to you, outside and except you believe feignedly.

For I give over to you among the first what also I accepted, that *Christ died for our sins* according to the Scriptures, and that *He was entombed*, and that *He has been roused* the third day according to the Scriptures. — 1 Corinthians 15:1-5

I highlight the key elements this way:

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<sup>6</sup>James 2:19

- 1) Christ died
- 2) Christ died *for our sins*
- 3) Christ was entombed
- 4) Christ was roused

You will agree with me that these are the essentials through which, and by the believing of which, we are saved for eonian life. But will you agree that probably not even one in 100,000 Christians believes any of these foundational points? Many of you would not agree with me, there. Not yet, anyway.

I have told you that Satan is very devious. Thus, our adversary has laid snares—trip wires—in front of every one of these vital points of doctrine. Satan is not stupid. He knows that members of the body of Christ will be seated above every sovereignty and authority in the heavens (Ephesians 1:20-23), which means that members of Christ’s body will be seated above *Satan*, for he is an authority in the heavens. Knowing this, Satan does everything in his power *now* to prevent people from becoming members in the body of Christ. Lying is Satan’s forte. Thus, Satan will lie about the truth. Every one of Satan’s lies is a denial of truth. Therefore, Satan’s lies are falsehoods.

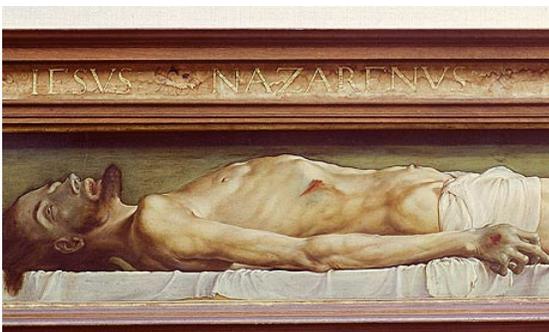
Satan knows where to construct his snares. Again, he is not stupid. He will construct them *before* the vital elements of Paul’s evangel, not after them. Satan wishes to trip people before they enter into eonian life, not after. Thus, his trip wires will keep people from believing the necessary elements of truth, and therefore from having eonian life, and therefore from being seated above him.

These snares, these trip wires, are called “false doctrines.” In 1 Timothy 4:1, Paul specifically calls them “the teachings of demons.”

### The death of Christ

You may not be aware that the doctrine of the Trinity is a false doctrine, a teaching of demons finding no support at all in the Word of God. Phrases such as “the godhead,” “God the Son,” and “the Trinity” are not found in any rightly translated Scripture. These are false expressions, which expressions will accompany the teachings of demons (1 Timothy 4:1).

The genius of the doctrine of the Trinity (from Satan’s point of view), is that it prevents people from believing in the death of Jesus Christ. A person who thinks that Jesus Christ is the same person as God the Father (rather than the *Son* of God the Father, as Scripture describes Jesus), cannot, at the same time, believe that Jesus Christ died. For even the person who embraces the Trinity will admit that God cannot die.



Jesus Christ died.

“Who was running the universe while God was dead?” I ask people who hold to the Trinity. “Because if Jesus Christ was the same person as God, and Jesus Christ was dead for three days, then God also was dead for three days.”

The typical response is that Jesus Christ was not actually dead, only His body was dead. *He* was in heaven, waiting to return to His body. In other words:

“Jesus Christ did not die.”

So now you see how, by means of the doctrine of the Trinity, Satan has kept millions who claim to be believers from believing in something as simple and foundational as the death of Christ. I cannot put it more simply: those who embrace the Trinity do not believe that Jesus Christ died. One who believes that God cannot die, cannot believe that Jesus Christ is the same person as God *and* believe that Jesus Christ died. One cannot. It is impossible.

Only an enemy as crafty as Satan could have invented so subtle yet destructive a doctrine as the Trinity.

### **Satan’s masterpieces**

You will protest that I am nit-picking. You will protest that there is no vital difference between believing that Jesus’ *body* died, and believing that *He* died. Yet there is a *vital* difference: the difference between believing the Scripture—that Jesus Christ died—and believing a lie—that Jesus Christ did not die. If only the body of Jesus died, then only the body of Jesus was entombed, and only the body of Jesus was roused from the dead; *Jesus* experienced none of these things. We are not saved by Jesus, then, but by His body. On one hand, we are speaking of *Him*, on the other hand we are speaking of a mass of bone and flesh. You still see no difference between the two?

Satan is pleased and his purposes are furthered when we say: “It makes no difference whether someone believes in the Trinity or believes in the death of Jesus Christ; one is a member of Christ’s body either way.” A person who says such a thing, even if he or she doesn’t believe in the Trinity, plays into Satan’s hands. One accomplishes this by downplaying Satan’s doctrines, making them non-issues, making them issues of scant importance, or making them mere “doctrinal misalignments.” But what is the difference between a mere doctrinal misalignment and a doctrine that dissuades people from believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ? The difference is huge—it’s the difference between membership in the body of Christ and eonian death.

The doctrine of the Trinity, along with the doctrines of free will and eternal torment, are Satan’s masterpieces. I do not think many of my readers realize how sophisticated these doctrines are. These false teachings did not enter the world by accident, neither are they spread haphazardly. They do not confuse as many millions as they do by some trick of human ingenuity. These doctrines emanate from intelligences far greater than our own. They were designed with a specific goal in mind, “to blind the apprehensions of the unbelieving so that the illumination of the evangel of the glory of Christ, Who is the Image of the invisible God, does not irradiate them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). No, these doctrines are not scattered willy-nilly about the Earth, but are placed with great care and premeditation before vital elements of Paul’s evangel, elements which must be believed for membership in the body of Christ.

These doctrines do not stand alone apart from a context. As medicine is encapsulated, thus also is falsehood. Satan has packaged his teachings within the context of a religion—itsself of demonic invention—that utilizes the name of Christ. The religion itself is no child’s play, but a systematized deception (Ephesians 4:14). Satan knows well the human craving for order, protocol, and comfort. As long as there is order, protocol, and comfort, there will be acceptance of teaching.

Diabolical Genius and Carefulness. Intelligent Thinking, Planning, and Execution. Thus may we describe the nature and occupation of Satan. Satan craves religions that are very near the truth—religions that satisfy the human need to reach out to God. Yet at the same time, the religions must deny the *essence* of God and turn the seeker inward toward the human heart, which is deceitfully wicked.

One day, on a hill called Calvary, the Son of God took the world’s sin upon Himself. He hung on the cross and said, “It is finished.” When He died, He carried the sin of the world—*the world*—with Him to the grave. Then He rose from the dead, for death could not conquer Him. Thus, He removed the sting of death and assured the reconciliation not only of humankind, but of the entire universe. Not only this, but God had made an end of human effort.

Now everyone can rely on God, apart from self-occupation. Now all humanity can quit its ceaseless striving and rely wholly on the Creator of the universe, Who proved His love for them by sending His only Son to die for them, to take away their sins. What a blow this was to Satan, to his need to appropriate worship, to his need to direct human focus inward toward its own deceitful heart, from the center of which he dispatches hate and destruction throughout the world.

With the sending of Christ, it became necessary for Satan to invent a new religion, one that closely imitated this new work of God, but that at the same time denied it. It would have to be a mass religion that seduced its adherents into *thinking* they were worshipping Christ, while at the same time causing them to worship themselves. It must give them liberal doses of the “warm religious feeling” they so craved, thus deadening them to true spiritual understanding. But at the same time the religion must deny the work of Christ at its core, while turning the “worshippers” into self-absorbed creatures of pride and *self*-righteousness.

The trouble was that God’s new message was so simple: “It is finished.” The work of Jesus Christ was so obviously sufficient. Who else could have taken the world’s sin, died on a cross, and risen from the dead? The death and resurrection of our Savior was so verifiable, so witnessed, so ... *there*. Satan could not deny the work of Christ, nor could he deny His resurrection; it was now a world event, nay, an event of universal moment. Now, millions would flock to Him.

Satan then needed a means by which he could trick the many into *thinking* they were embracing this new truth, while at the same time pushing that truth just beyond their grasp.

Such a task was beyond human invention, yet well within the powers of celestial sovereignties, authorities, and world-mights of darkness. With every ounce of God-given intelligence these dark powers, collectively, could amass, there came into existence at a specified time in universal history “teachings of demons,” doctrines drafted explicitly to deal with new truths of love and grace, being announced upon the Earth by a troublesome workaholic preacher named Paul.



Satan injected the doctrine of the Trinity into humanity in the fourth century, via the Council of Nicea.

Carefully and meticulously crafted to deceive even the most intelligent among humanity, the new teachings would accomplish the “impossible.” That is, they would cause self-worshipping beings to think: *We are worshipping Christ.*

It was done. The teachings of demons, then fashioned, are among us still, as dark as sin and night, whitewashed by such innocuous titles as, “free will” and “the Trinity.”

\* \* \*

Sadly, even some of our own are asleep to the dangers. The following was related to me by a mature saint who ordinarily says sensible things: “As long as one believes in the death of Christ, one may hold to the Trinity.” More directly stated: “As long as one believes Jesus died, one may also believe He did not die.”

I marvel at Satan’s craft, I do. He has hoodwinked even mature believers into amalgamating mutually exclusive doctrines.

- 1) “You must believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ,” but ...
- 2) “It’s also acceptable if you *do not* believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Satan has made fools of us.

### **“For our sins”**

By conservative estimate, not one in 100,000 who call themselves “Christians” and “believers” believe that Jesus Christ died for their sins. The majority of these so-called Christians and believers adhere to the doctrine of “human free will,” which doctrine begins with the premise that, in spite of what Jesus Christ endured at Calvary for your sake, your sins still stand against you.

The doctrine of free will is perhaps the most clever and destructive of all the teachings of demons.

Again, the teaching of free will begins with the premise: “At this moment, subsequent to the death of Jesus Christ for your sins, your sins still stand against you.” This demonic doctrine also causes people to believe at the same time that Jesus Christ took away the sin of the world. You may say, “This is impossible. No one is that stupid.” I say, it is humanly impossible, but Satan has done it. He has fashioned such a doctrine that makes imbeciles of the most intelligent members of our race.

Some readers will consider my assessment of the free will doctrine—your sins still stand against you—overly harsh. But this assessment is true. Free will retains sin, for it insists that, unless one properly exercises one’s will and accepts Jesus Christ, one is damned to an eternity of separation from Jesus Christ. The cause of this damnation? *Sin*. Thus, belief in free will requires Jesus Christ not to have taken sin away, and not to have saved anyone from sin.

Free will *requires* the failure of Christ. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Free will claims He did not accomplish this, for only those who can stop sinning long enough to

choose Him (choosing Him, of course, is not a sin) are saved.

The most graphic way to state free will is:

If you rely on Jesus Christ *alone* for the removal of sin, you will be doomed because Jesus Christ did not save you; He did not remove your sins. All His suffering on the cross was insufficient toward salvation, in that, apart from your contribution, your sins remain against you. Your contribution is to believe that Jesus Christ *attempted* to remove your sins, and this contribution, *in addition to* Christ's attempt, is what saves you.

Also, you cannot count on God to make you believe. Because if God makes you believe, He would necessarily have to violate your free will, which He cannot do. Thus, you must rely on yourself to believe. The removal of your sins hinges on your ability to believe what Jesus Christ attempted on your behalf. If you can manage to believe, your sins will be taken away and you will be saved. If you cannot manage to believe, your sins will remain and you will be damned. Now, will you take away your sins, or will you not?

Satan recoils at so honest an evaluation of human free will (and will doubtless battle me to keep these words unpublished), but there it is.

### **He did, but He didn't**

During my talk at the Willard, Ohio, conference, I read some portions from a tract I picked up at my local grocery store. This tract vividly exposes the folly of a Christian man completely entangled by a doctrine of demons, namely, free will. It is glaring evidence of Satan's ability to make people think they believe in the work of the cross, while at the same time keeping them from that belief. As I said, the doctrine of free will is a satanic masterpiece. See it now in action.

This tract is called *Salvation Plain and Simple*. It was written by Dr. Curtis Hutson and copyrighted by Sword of the Lord Publishers.

Concerning the removal of sin, Dr. Hutson writes on pages 12 and 13:

In order for an infinitely holy God to forgive the sinner, someone had to pay the debt. Someone had to bear the burden. That is where Jesus comes in. The Bible teaches that God took every sin we ever have committed and ever will commit, and laid those sins on Christ two thousand years ago at Calvary. Isaiah 53:6 says, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Every sin we have ever committed or ever will commit if we live to be a thousand years old, God placed on Christ. The Bible says in 1 Peter 2:24, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree ..." 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God ..."

The greatest truth that ever coursed through my brain is the truth of the substitutionary death of Jesus, that Jesus Christ actually took all my sins, past, present, and future, and bore them in His own body.

Friend, God looked down through the telescope of time and saw every sin you would ever commit. Then He put those sins in one big package and laid them on Christ, "The Lord hath laid

on him the iniquity of us all.”

I have underlined Dr. Hutson’s most zealous and far-reaching comments concerning sin. These comments are accurate. Anyone reading them would thrill to hear of the completeness of Christ’s victory over sin. But Hutson makes a hypocrite (and a fool) of himself eight pages later by denying his own words and rejecting the Scriptural testimony that he himself just quoted. His about-face occurs on page 21:

“The worst sin in the world is not trusting Jesus Christ as Savior, and that is the only sin for which a man will go to Hell.”

Several in the congregation that Friday night laughed when I read this statement of Hutson’s on page 21. I did not laugh. I did not laugh because I recognized the source of Hutson’s retraction. I recognized the sinister force that keeps this man from a saving knowledge of the gospel. I pictured the many people deceived through Hutson’s words who would die placidly in their unbelief, convinced of a lifelong reliance on Christ.

The laughing saints did not yet grasp the consequence of error. (Many still don’t, but someday they will.) Without emotion, I beheld those smiling faces in the Willard hall and said: “It’s not funny.”

With the doctrine of free will, Satan has accomplished the seemingly impossible; he has caused a learned man, an “expert” in the Scriptures, to say two opposite things within eight pages of a tract, without even realizing it. Who would have believed it could happen? In effect, Satan has made Hutson theologically drunk. Satan tricked him, early in the paper, into confessing Christ’s death for his sins, while making him, at the last, deny the very same thing. Is this not a wonder? You should be amazed. You should be in awe. You should cry. Hutson will swear he believes in Christ’s death for his sins. But *when it comes down to it*, he does *not* believe in Christ’s death for his sins. Rather, he believes in the making of a personal decision for his sins. Does this belong to saving faith? Does a belief in *self* for salvation lead to eonian life? It does not.

Like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Dr. Hutson is an unbeliever.

### **Trusting in trust**

Yet the deception becomes more subtle still. I know I am belaboring the point. Yet I feel I must. If I did not think it necessary, I would not do it. But the saints are asleep, and I am sounding the alarm.

Note this about whitewash: It is always applied to the outside of the building. In Matthew 23:27-28, Jesus compares the scribes and Pharisees to “whitewashed sepulchers which outside, indeed, are appearing beautiful, yet inside they are crammed with the bones of the dead and all uncleanness. Thus you, also, outside, indeed, are appearing to men to be just, yet inside you are distended with hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

The two portions I read from Hutson’s tract demonstrate the placement and lure of whitewash. The doctor lures seekers into his tract by quoting Scripture and employing extravagant terminology promising the removal of sin. This is the whitewash:

- “God took every sin we ever have committed and ever will commit and laid those sins on Christ.”
- “Every sin we have ever committed or ever will commit if we live to be a thousand years old, God placed on Christ.”
- “Jesus Christ actually took all my sins, past, present, and future, and bore them in His own body.”
- “Friend, God looked down through the telescope of time and saw every sin you would ever commit. Then He put those sins in one big package and laid them on Christ.”

This is the outside of the tomb. The words appear beautiful and just. And they are. But these are *only* words. They are only the words that conceal the substance of Hutson’s message, which substance is: ***You must save yourself.***

For now we look within. We probe beneath Hutson’s promises of a “well-message” (that is, of a “gospel”), to see what we find. What we find is uncleanness, hypocrisy, lawlessness. We find the bones of dead doctrine. We find a disgusting pile of death. We must appropriate the attempt Christ made to save us. Therefore, Christ is not the mighty Savior of their whitewash advertising, but rather the weak end of a formula that requires our contribution.

We, as hopeful seekers, walk away shaking our heads. It all sounded so good, it looked so beautiful. But it was just another heap of bones, another challenge to overcome our own mortality and sin. We must find the energy to become worthy of Christ’s work. Alas, there is “still one sin which will send us to Hell,” and it is our own human inability, the same millstone that has plagued us from birth. We are killed, turned again to dust. We are discouraged from ever again probing into those works that might be God’s.

### **Another wall of whitewash**

Yet another whitewashed wall rises from this tract, on page 16. This wall promises a total reliance on the work of Christ. It promises the elimination of any human effort toward God’s plan of salvation. The wall is constructed this way:

If you try to add anything to what Jesus has done, no matter how good the addition may be, you are saying by your actions, “I am not really satisfied with the payment Jesus made.” It is not the death of Jesus Christ on the cross plus my baptism that saves. It is Jesus alone ... If I trust Jesus Christ ninety percent and something else ten percent: The ten percent destroys the ninety. The ten percent says I am not fully trusting Christ.

The whitewash is brilliant and pleasing. But now enter the tomb and behold the bones. I have underlined them. The bones are on page 17:

To show that we are fully satisfied with the payment, we must cease to trust any and everything else and trust Jesus alone. I must cease to trust my good works, no matter how good they may be. I must cease to trust my church membership, no matter how good my church may be. I must cease to trust my baptism, no matter how beautiful the ordinance. I must cease to trust my good life, no matter how pure and noble. In order to show God that I am satisfied with the payment made, I must trust Jesus Christ completely.

Sepulchers are very dark and bones are not immediately evident. One must take a light into the tomb to see what uncleanness lurks within. What Hutson insists the seeker must do for salvation on page 17 opposes the very thing he promised he would not do on the previous page. He promised, with a stroke of whitewash, to rely solely on Jesus Christ for salvation. There can be no trust in anything else, he said.



Dr. Curtis Hutson

Except for human trust. Yes. Because now Hutson insists that the seeker *must trust completely* in Jesus Christ. Stop the film. There. Did you see the magician's hands? By insisting that a person *must* trust in Jesus Christ "alone," Hutson denies the "aloneness" of Christ's work, for according to him, the work of Christ *fails* apart from human trust. Thus, in *having* to trust "completely in Jesus," the seeker does *not* trust completely in Jesus, but rather in his or her *ability* to trust in Jesus.

Rewind the film and watch it again. You must slow the action to see it. You must bring a strong light into the tomb. Watch. Did you see it? Watch it again.

Rewind the tape. Watch it again. Rewind. Watch again. Isolate each millisecond of action. With the enabling of God's spirit, you will detect movement in the corner. The movement is so quiet, so small. Remember, this deception was crafted by otherworldly intelligence. It requires more than human ability to discern it. It requires the armor of God. For only the armor of God will enable you to "stand up to the stratagems of the Adversary" (Ephesians 6:11).

And so millions, literally, who think they are "trusting completely in Jesus," are, *in reality*, trusting in themselves.

Confidence in flesh for salvation is *not* a part of Paul's evangel of grace. Confidence in flesh is *not* the path that leads to eonian life.

### Then what is trust?

Then what is trust? Trust is belief, and belief is a gift of God.<sup>7</sup> Belief is a gift of God that follows salvation, and in no way precedes it. We are not saved because we believe—we believe because we are saved. God gives belief to acquaint us with an already-accomplished work: "He has saved us." For "God *is* the Savior of all humans, especially of believers" (1 Timothy 4:10). Our belief cannot save us, for salvation occurred 2,000 years ago. Faith says: "I believe what happened then." Faith does not say, "I believe what was *attempted* then, which only happens now." That is the subtle lie. But no. Salvation is the deposit in your account that makes you rich. Belief is the gift that acquaints you with your wealth.

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<sup>7</sup>Romans 12:3; Philippians 1:29

## Hell, heaven, and back

Rarely will a Christian publication lay its bones outside the tomb, but I found one. It is an advertisement for the Greentown Church of God in Greentown, Ohio, and it appeared in the *Canton Repository* on September 27, 1998. The article is titled, “Extreme Relevance” and begins like this:

Many decisions face me today, some of which are life-altering; but there is one extremely relevant decision that will determine where I spend eternity: that decision deals with *my* response to this question: **What am I going to do about Jesus?**

How rare for a Christian publication to announce straightaway that it is *my decision* that will determine my eternal residence. How forward. But I believe the honesty to be inadvertent, for the very next statement is whitewash quickly applied:

The Bible is a progressive account of how God meets humanity’s greatest needs through His Son, Jesus.

Strange. I am transported from the hell of determining my own eternal destiny, to an able God Who, through His Son, has met my greatest need. But this confuses me. Which is it? Do I need to stop sinning long enough to make a righteous, life-altering decision, or has *God* met my greatest need and delivered me from the debility of sin? The writer now applies another coat of his product to lure me further away from a challenge to personal righteousness into what will surely bring joy and peace:

God is the compassionate Judge Who provided a sufficient substitute to pay the debt you owe—He gave Himself. You are free! God has accomplished this through His Son, Jesus Christ, Who lived a perfect life.

At last, Someone has lived the perfect life. I certainly have not been able to do that. But God’s own Son did do it. And the writer calls the work of this Son “sufficient.” The word “sufficient” thrills me. The dictionary says “sufficient” is “adequate for the purpose; enough.” Then I am saved! No. I am still not saved. The word “sufficient,” whose definition is “adequate” and “enough,” has proven to be false advertising. It is *not* enough, I am *not* saved, because the tour is not finished. The writer who has jerked me from hell to heaven is returning me hellward. At the last, I am tugged by a bony hand into the tomb where it all began. All emphasis here is mine:

God is still offering all these things today—full pardon, full payment, and full entry into Heaven for eternity. In order to receive this incredible gift of eternal value, we must first of all repent of our sins and place our complete faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Then Jesus commands His followers to be baptized just as He was. Then the balance of our lives must be lived in loving, grateful obedience to Him.

And now, finally, into the darkest depths of sepulchral despair:

But before you decide, remember that thousands of years from now, your eternal residence will still be determined solely by this extremely relevant decision about Jesus. We’re here to help with that decision because God has entrusted His Church with the responsibility of telling every person on Earth this wonderful news. In light of what’s at stake, we’re taking God at His Word. How about you?

Signed, Pastor Don A. Deremer, CrossView Christian Church  
Pastor F. Dale Senseman, Greentown Church of God

I have painstakingly demonstrated for you the subtlety and all-pervasiveness of Satan's teachings. Dr. Hutson, along with Pastors Deremer and Senseman, belong to different organizations within Christianity, yet all three speak the same hypocrisies (of which all three are blissfully ignorant), and all three assume a belief they do not actually possess. How can we explain this, except that Satan has systematized his deceptions and has spread his lies (which are remarkably consistent) by means of easily-remembered "sound bites," disseminated by the Christian religion?

I have demonstrated for you the effect of these teachings on otherwise intelligent minds. You have touched Satan's power. Are you prepared to behold the power he has had over *you*?

### ***Only confusion?***

For the past fifteen years, I have vigorously exposed these teachings of demons, and have rebuked their champions. I thought myself cognizant of the full damage of deception. I was not even close. God began showing me verses I had not seen before.

The verses from the first chapter of Corinthians, for instance. As I began concentrating on the basics of Paul's gospel, I began to see that false Christian teaching actually *opposed* these things. This observation was simple, yet profound. At least, the implications were profound.

I began asking obvious questions I had not asked before: "If someone believes that Jesus did not really die, how can they believe He *did* die?" Part of me countered: "But, Martin. They really *do* believe Jesus died; they're just confused because of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity has confused them."

But then I read passages like 2 Corinthians 4:3—

If our evangel is covered, also, it is covered in those who are perishing, in whom the god of this eon *blinds the apprehensions* of the *unbelieving* so that the illumination of the evangel of the glory of Christ, Who is the Image of the invisible God, does not irradiate them.

So a person with a blinded apprehension was constituted an unbeliever by Paul. I had to admit it was true: a person believing the Trinity was not apprehending truth. It seemed on the surface to be a minor thing, a mere flaw of apprehension. Except that apprehension, or lack of it, was the very problem. That's when it dawned on me: "Satan *keeps* unbelievers from believing *by* confusing them concerning truth. In this way, he keeps millions from the truths vital to salvation."



I explained some of these things recently to a mature brother. I told him how the doctrine of free will (which makes self the captain of salvation) keeps one from relying

on Jesus Christ. The brother said, “Yes, well, the people who believe in free will are just ignorant.” I immediately agreed with him! What the brother did not grasp was the deadliness of ignorance. The people are *just* ignorant? AIDS is *just* a virus. Satan inspires ignorance to keep the masses from truth. The brother was thinking, “They’re just ignorant.” I was thinking, “Ignorance makes people unbelievers.”<sup>8</sup>

So I asked the brother my now-famous line: “Then why isn’t Mahmoud Ahmadinejad saved? *He’s* ignorant. Since mere ignorance, in your mind, does not keep anyone from eonian life, then everyone on the planet has eonian life. Right? Realization saves you, and ignorance saves you. That about covers everybody. Either you realize Paul’s evangel or you don’t. You’re giving eonian life to both those who realize Paul’s gospel, and to those who don’t. It’s for those who believe it, as well as for those who don’t believe it. In other words, it’s for believers as well as for unbelievers.”

If that’s the case, then everyone on the planet has eonian life. Well?

How would this brother answer Paul’s question of 2 Corinthians 6:14-15—“What communion has light with darkness? ... What part has a believer with an unbeliever?” Staying with his belief, the brother would have to answer: “Much in every manner!”

### Ignorance kills

This sent me in search of a passage showing that ignorance keeps people from eonian life. I found the passage in Romans 10:1-3.

Paul, speaking of the Jews, writes:

Indeed, brethren, the delight of my heart and my petition to God for their sake is for salvation. For I am testifying to them that they have a zeal of God, but *not in accord with recognition*. For they, being *ignorant* of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, were not subjected to the righteousness of God.

I felt this was important. Paul was admitting that the Jews weren’t saved—“My petition to God for their sake is for salvation.” What was the problem? Was it zealotry for God? No. The Jews were very zealous for God. The problem lay in the lack of recognition, or knowledge of God. The kernel of the problem lay here: *they were ignorant of the righteousness of God*. How could Paul know this? Simple. The Jews were seeking to establish their own righteousness. This made sense to me. In my mind then, a cause-and-effect occurred: seeking one’s own righteousness = ignorance of the righteousness of God = not saved.

But then I thought, “Wait. This is the Circumcision evangel. Maybe it’s different in Paul’s gospel. Perhaps with Paul’s gospel, you can still be ignorant and be saved.”

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<sup>8</sup>Did the pre-Damascus Saul have eonian life? No. Relatively speaking, Paul’s eonian expectation came when he realized the grace of God on the road to Damascus. Concerning his career of blasphemy and sin, Paul said, “I do it being ignorant, in unbelief” (1 Timothy 1:13). Thus, Paul himself couples ignorance with unbelief.

But can you? That's when I asked myself: "Is Mahmoud Ahmadinejad saved?" I knew he wasn't. Why wasn't he? He was ignorant of the righteousness of God. Hmm. Just like the Jews. Was this Ahmadinejad's own fault? No. Was it the fault of the Jews? No. The simple fact was that neither Mahmoud Ahmadinejad nor these self-righteous Jews were called by God to appreciate His righteousness; therefore neither were called by God to eonian life.

Then it became clear: "There is no basic difference between Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is far from God and ignorant of God's righteousness, and the Jews, who are near to God and ignorant of God's righteousness. The common denominator is: ignorance of God's righteousness. Isn't this what Paul has in mind in Romans 3:9 when he concludes both Jew and Greek to be under sin? So the answer to both Jew and Greek (the answer to becoming a believer and having eonian life) boils down to believing Paul's gospel, which has very much to do with the righteousness of God, for in Paul's gospel, "a righteousness of God is manifest, yet a righteousness of God through Jesus Christ's faith" (Romans 3:21). This is "for all" (verse 22), yet it is only "on all who are believing" (verse 22). Believing what? Believing a righteousness of God manifest through Jesus Christ's (not our) faith.

This helped me see that Paul's gospel had this in common with the gospel of the Circumcision: it had to do with an apprehension of the righteousness of God. As for ignorance, it is a tool of the Adversary wrought on the anvil of false teaching, designed to keep people from apprehending the righteousness of God. To say that "ignorance is nothing" becomes the height of ignorance. Besides, does not the following verse apply to all believers?

This, then, I am saying and attesting in the Lord: By no means are you still to be walking according as those of the nations also are walking, in the vanity of their mind, their comprehension being darkened, *being estranged from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them*, because of the callousness of their hearts, who, being past feeling, in greed give themselves up with wantonness to all uncleanness as a vocation.

—Ephesians 4:17-18

### **Mutual exclusivity**

Then I asked myself: Can one believe in one's own righteousness for salvation and in God's righteousness for salvation simultaneously? No. Such a thing is impossible. These are mutually exclusive concepts. Can one believe one is saved "through Jesus Christ's faith," and believe one is saved through one's own faith? Again, no. It is either/or. I then realized to what extent the doctrine of free will keeps people from truth. For free will, as already explained, demands a righteous decision from the human for salvation.

I returned to 1 Corinthians 15: 1-3. Paul said:

Now I am making known to you, brethren, the evangel which I bring to you, which also you accepted, in which also you stand, *through which also you are saved*, if you are retaining what I said in bringing the evangel to you, [unless] you believe feignedly.

So it was this evangel (which contained four vital elements) through which the Corinthians were

saved. Therefore, apart from believing and retaining the four elements, the Corinthians were not saved.

This returned me instantly to the false doctrines of the Trinity, free will, and eternal torment. Honestly, I had always wondered how the holding of these corresponded to believing Paul's evangel. Had Paul's evangel anything to do with the non-death and non-resurrection of Jesus? With the contribution of humanity for salvation? With the tormenting of most of humanity for eternity for failure to appropriate Christ's work? Not only were these things *not* part of Paul's gospel, they were diametrically opposed to it.

So next I thought, "How can someone believe the exact opposite of what Paul taught, and still be considered a believer of Paul's teachings?" And how can one who does not believe Paul's teachings, at the same time be saved *through* his teachings, since salvation *through* his teachings entailed "accepting" and "retaining" them?

This returned me to my senses. Because for ten years (during the '90s) I was told that these terrible teachings, which opposed everything right, were mere "doctrinal flaws" that would fall at the dais ("judgment seat") of Christ. In other words, the people who believed these outrageous lies were still saved, still members of the body of Christ, just merely ignorant of everything they needed to believe to be saved. I thought, "Then what keeps everyone in the world from being saved?" But I shut up. I shut up because Paul's was "a gospel of grace." And a gospel of grace, I was told, saved people no matter what they believed. It didn't make sense. It was a strange theory—ranking believers with unbelievers—especially when Paul asks, "What part has a believer with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:15).

Next, I asked myself, "If people who rely on Jesus Christ for salvation are saved for eonian life, then why are those who rely on themselves for salvation *also* saved for eonian life?" Distinctions in belief would become irrelevant if we gave everyone eonian life apart from belief. Such a concept, to me, made a mockery of the distinctions Paul continually emphasized between believers and unbelievers. This is what I wanted to ask publicly, but I didn't. I pondered it in my mind, but the question seemed too terrible to even talk about.

Because whoever would talk about such a thing would be saying, in effect: "Isn't it rather strange that believing the truth gets you the same end (eonian life) as *not* believing the truth? This puts believers on par with unbelievers." I didn't want to say it. Maybe someone else would. Saying it seemed so prideful and elitist. It sounded too much like a Christian who loathes to learn that all will be reconciled to God.

But it wasn't the same. It wasn't the same because the issue wasn't eternal life, but eonian life. I would not loathe everyone having eonian life. But obviously not everyone believes. Eonian life is a great thing, but in God's great scheme, the eons could fit onto the head of a pin. Embracing this realistic view of the eons restored my equilibrium. I then began to realize what was subliminally obvious all along, that *believing* Paul's message was in no way the same as *not* believing Paul's message (how obvious this seems to me now), and that disbelieving Paul's message (whether you are Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or the Christian down the street) made one an "unbeliever," and therefore disqualified for eonian life.

## Strange grace

I am not saying that eonian life has anything to do with the worthiness of the vessel graced with belief. Our “especially” salvation is still of God’s sovereign choice. But doesn’t the mere presence of the word “choice” preclude everyone from having eonian life? Choice. Can I help it that God chose to deliver me from religious doom and caused me to believe the elements of faith? Can I help it that I no longer believe the common lies concerning God? Is it *my* choice that most Christians believe the common lies, while I do not? How does this make me an elitist? How does it make me sectarian, as some have accused me of being? Is it *my* fault God separates people? *I* didn’t call Israel. *I* didn’t make the cross a stumbling block. *I* didn’t lock up all humanity in unbelief. *I* didn’t invent the term “remnant.” Were Joshua and Caleb elitists? *They* are not the ones who decided that they and they alone would emerge from the wilderness as the only two Israelites out of thousands to have faith. Were Joshua and Caleb sectarian?

Faith is a gift in any administration.

So I stopped feeling guilty about holding to the truth.

Those who are not given this faith are still saved for eternity—they just don’t have eonian life.

Of course the objection from those to whom I proposed my “heretical” idea, was: “Paul’s is a gospel of grace.” As this argument was pressed, I began to think more about it. I realized what a warped idea we have had of grace. As I said at the beginning, we have made grace a slosh bucket that eliminates lines of belief and obliterates distinctions between what is right and wrong about God. If this is an administration of grace, and if grace is the slosh bucket we’ve made it, then why doesn’t everyone have eonian life? Because you have to believe certain things about Christ to have eonian life. This may be distasteful to some of my readers. But it’s the truth. Does this eliminate grace? Of course not.



The law of Moses was never called a snare.

Because no one found righteousness under law, we assume that everyone finds it under grace. This is illogical. We have made the mistake of assuming that grace equals numbers. But grace has nothing to do with numbers. In fact, the more gracious God’s message is (I have found this to be true), the fewer people embrace it. The law of Moses was never called a snare or a stumbling block. That’s because it was easy to grasp and appropriate. God said, “You do this for Me, and I’ll do this for you.” God said, “You *don’t* do this for Me, and I *won’t* do this for you.”

It was utterly simple. No one stumbled at it. It was not a snare.

But Paul calls the message of the cross “a snare.” The message of the cross *is* a stumbling block. Why? Because the message is so gracious that few can stomach it. People want to earn their salvation. And so grace actually repels the human—especially the religious human—from believing.

So when we think of Paul’s message as an evangel of grace, we need to realize that grace is the *nature* of the message. It is a *grac-ious* message. It has nothing to do with numbers, but with a new attitude of God. It does not mean that millions will embrace it. The reality is, fewer will embrace it than would embrace the do’s and don’ts of Mosaic law. People don’t like God’s new attitude.

What a paradox, then. Here we have a message of grace, and hardly anyone is embracing it.

But it is true: there are very few members of the body of Christ. God imparts to only a few people the realization of His work. Look around you. You have to be blind, self-deceived, or pathologically wishful to imagine that the “Christians” around you realize Paul’s gospel of grace. Most of them believe free will, the Trinity, and eternal torment, instead. Those who believe free will, the Trinity, and eternal torment *cannot*, at the same time, realize the grace of God, in truth. Rather, they strive to establish their own righteousness, while believing lies.

“But, Martin. They’re just ignorant. They’re only confused.”

Stop saying “just” and “only.” Ignorance is deadly, and it’s Satan’s greatest weapon. People are “estranged from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them” (Ephesians 4:18).<sup>9</sup>

### **Emotions don’t matter**

Once I discarded my *emotional* opinion of grace (which said: “Look, these people are so nice, sincere, and hardworking, why don’t we just save them and give them a cookie?”), to a mature understanding of grace (that grace was the *nature* of the message and, as such, did not guarantee acceptance of the message), and once I discarded my emotional understanding of the eons (which said: “Oh, my God! They’re going to miss the eons!”) to a mature understanding of the eons (the eons are but a small part of God’s operations) then I could look more accurately at those who were really believing Paul’s message (few) and those who were not (many).

(Those who disagreed with me at the Willard conference countered my position with emotional arguments, not Scriptural ones. This message, for whatever reason, riled many souls. This report is my attempt to transfer these antagonists from an unScriptural, hasty, and emotional consideration of these points to a Scriptural, thoughtful, and spiritual one.)

Again, nothing I have said keeps grace from Paul’s message. None of this proves God any less gracious. Paul’s message is the most gracious news God has ever sent earthward. The proof? So few humans accept it.

As I mentioned, Romans 10:1-3 taught me that ignorance of God’s righteousness was deadly. It was deadly in that it kept people dead for the eons. What did I learn except that salvation had to do with knowledge and realization of God’s righteousness? This made sense. But it still bothered me that Romans 10:1-3 was describing the Circumcision gospel. Were things different in Paul’s gospel, or did Paul’s gospel *also* concern knowledge and realization?

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<sup>9</sup> “Estranged” is a very strong word. It does not merely describe a believer who is missing a few of the puzzle pieces, but a person who has no knowledge of God, let alone accepts the evangel of Christ (in other words, an unbeliever). Look up for yourself the two other times this word appears in Scripture: Ephesians 2:12 and Colossians 1:21. Estrangement from the life of God is not an eternal condition for anyone. All of us were once estranged from the life of God. Those who are called out of it in this eon will come to a knowledge of the truth in this eon. Those who will be called out later will come to a knowledge then. But my point is: This condition is caused, relatively speaking, by ignorance.

### Spiritual conception

Then I read Colossians, chapter one. What a day that was. I had read it before, of course, but it never hit me: Colossians 1:3-8. As far as believing goes, here is where the sperm meets the egg. I had often wondered when it happened. Have you? “When does belief take place? When, relatively speaking, are we ‘saved?’” I thought it would be nice to no longer guess at it.

A man I had talked with on the phone said, “I don’t exactly know when I was saved.” At the same time he implied this was something we should leave undiscovered. I believe he balked at finding “spiritual conception” in the Scriptures. He feared we would use such a verse to classify our fellow men and women. He feared that, finding such a verse, we would see who were believers and who were not. I wondered what would be so bad about that, especially in light of Paul’s injunction: “Do not become diversely yoked with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14). How could one avoid that if one couldn’t tell a saint from an ain’t?

I thought I knew when I was saved. (I remind you here that I am speaking relatively. I know I was saved at the cross. I am speaking of that time when I realized my salvation.) I thought I was saved the day in 1979 when I fell to my knees and began seeking out God. I no longer believe that was the time. I don’t think I realized my salvation then. I don’t believe I realized my salvation until I understood Christ’s sufficiency. I realized my salvation on the day I realized: Christ’s work was complete.

This is where Colossians 1:3-8 enters the scene. Here’s where the sperm meets the egg. I have italicized the critical parts:

We are thanking the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, always praying concerning you, on hearing of your *faith in Christ Jesus* and the love which you have for all the saints, because of the expectation reserved for you in the heavens, *which you hear before in the word of truth of the evangel*, which, being present with you, according as in the entire world also, is bearing fruit and growing, according as it is among you also, *from the day on which you heard and realized the grace of God in truth*, according as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow slave, who is a faithful dispenser of Christ for us, who makes evident also to us your love in spirit.

Relatively speaking, we are saved from the moment we hear and realize the grace of God in truth.

Note the three parts: **1)** hear, **2)** realize the grace of God, **3)** in truth.

Those who are chosen before the disruption of the world for membership into Christ’s body, *will* hear the truth. This accords with Romans 10:14—“How, then, should they be believing One of Whom they do not hear?”

People who are chosen before the disruption of the world *will* realize the grace of God. I do not speak of false grace here, that is, of the falsely advertised grace such as I quoted earlier from the pamphlet and the newspaper article. No. I speak here, and Paul speaks, of the grace of God *in truth*.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup>It is only beginning in verse 9 of Colossians, chapter 1, that Paul speaks of coming into maturity. He says, “Therefore

Those who are chosen before the disruption of the world *will* realize the grace of God in truth. This eliminates one who believes in free will. Certainly. Free will is not the truth. It is a lie. I am not willing to say that the truth is the same as a lie, that a believer is the same as an unbeliever, or that grace is the same as works. Free will is not only *not* the truth, but it offers divine service to the creature rather than to the Creator (Romans 1:25).

This passage in Colossians corresponds with 1 Corinthians 15:1-3. The elements of Paul's message (the death of Christ, the death of Christ for our sins, the entombment of Christ, the resurrection of Christ) are those *elements* "which also you accepted, in which also you stand, through which also you are saved." The opposite of "accepted" is "rejected"; the opposite of "in which you stand" is "in which you do not stand"; and the opposite of "through which you are saved" is "apart from which you are not saved."

People who do not apprehend Paul's gospel are not saved into the body of Christ.

Nothing seems simpler to me now.

### **The saints blindsided**

As I began sharing my thoughts, especially after my talk at the Willard conference, confusion among the saints became apparent. It came in the form of emotional protests. One woman wrote:

You must not give your conclusions as to people not being saved if they believe in the Trinity and free will. Your conclusions are so upsetting to the believers. Your conclusions are unwarranted and untrue. We are saved by believing the evangel that Christ died for our sins, etc., and any error we might have is not going to keep us from being saved if we believe the evangel that Christ died for our sins, was entombed, and roused the third day. God chooses us, that's certain.

Yes, God chooses us, that's certain. And those who are chosen will believe the truth. But this woman exemplifies Satan's ability to keep even mature saints from appreciating the seriousness of demonic teachings.

This woman agrees with me that we are saved "by believing the evangel that Christ died for our sins." She contends that "any error we might have is not going to keep us from being saved if we believe

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we also, from the day on which we hear, do not cease praying for you and requesting that you may be *filled full with the realization of His will*, in *all wisdom and spiritual understanding* ... and *growing in the realization of God*, being endued with *all power* ... for *all endurance*." These are matters above and beyond the realization required for salvation. The "hearing and realizing the grace of God" in verse 6 is hearing and realizing the basic elements of faith, as described in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3. Having established that the Colossians had come at least this far (this was evidence of their having eonian life), the apostle wishes them to be "filled full" with the realization of His will. He wants them to come into "*all wisdom and spiritual understanding*." He wants them to be "*growing in the realization of God*." To those who would say: "Martin, you are requiring a person to have everything figured out before they are saved," I would protest, "That's not true." But one certainly must come to a *basic* realization of the grace of God in truth, in order to be saved. This being filled full, this *growing*, belongs to maturity. I would certainly *never* say that one needs "all power," "all endurance" and "a *full* realization of His will," to be saved.

the evangel that Christ died for our sins.” By using “if,” she admits that salvation for eonian life does depend on believing certain things, apart from the believing of which there is no eonian salvation.

The problem is that she includes “the Trinity” and “free will” as part of the “any error we might have” that will not keep us from believing in the death of Christ for our sins. But as I have already written, the Trinity does keep one from believing in the death of Christ, and free will does keep one from believing Christ died for our sins. It is a credit to the brilliance of our Adversary that even mature saints negate as inconsequential the very teachings that keep people from believing the most consequential elements of Paul’s gospel.

Another intelligent saint falls into a similar trap. This man makes the vogue mistake of admitting that the gospel contains “certain things” one must believe, then later denies that knowledge of anything in particular (the despised word is “doctrine”) has anything whatsoever to do with believing, or, worse yet, to allow belief in the opposite thing to count as belief in the thing itself.

Why is it that only in theology can two opposite things both be true? In the regular world, a person who signs for a loan is responsible for the loan. In the weird world of theology, we make people who believe that they save themselves from sin (“human responsibility for salvation,” i.e., the false doctrine of free will) *also* believe, simultaneously, that Jesus Christ saved them. I can only suggest that such is the result when we attempt, unnaturally, to save millions of people whom God has *not* chosen for eonian salvation.

Eventually, people making arguments against a necessary doctrine will admit that a person must have a “faith in something” to be a believer. Then they say that a person must believe “Christ died for his/her sins,” while turning cartwheels to keep the dreaded word “doctrine” out of their equation for salvation. But they cannot avoid doctrine.

No one can. No one ought to. Doctrine is as much a part of salvation as hydrogen is to water. In other words, we are not saved by having technical knowledge of *all* that Christ has done, but we *are* saved by our knowledge of just this one, itty-bitty, teensy-weensy simple truth: namely, “Christ died for me.”

But what is “Christ died for me”—but doctrine? Of course it’s doctrine. That Christ died for me is doctrine. That He died and rose from the dead is doctrine. That Christ took my sins to the grave is doctrine. The dictionary defines doctrine as “a collection of teachings.” The Greek-English Keyword Concordance defines teaching as “knowledge imparted.” In 1 Timothy 1:10-11, Paul calls the very evangel with which he was entrusted by Christ, “sound teaching,” i.e., sound knowledge imparted, that is, sound doctrine. I am persuaded that the problem is not doctrine, but rather bad doctrine.

I have stated again and again that God chooses us first, and *then He* imparts knowledge to us. A lack of knowledge doesn’t keep one from being saved; if you haven’t been chosen for eonian life, then you won’t grasp the basic teaching of Christ’s death for sin.

A popular *misunderstanding* of my teaching is that I insist one needs to know “everything there is to know” about Paul’s evangel; the “full-orbed” revelation. No. What I teach is that, because of Satan’s lies and deceptions, millions of people do not even believe the “one little thing” (that Christ actually *died*, and that He died *for our sins*).

### What happened to the snare of the cross?

What many people fail to realize is that their reduction of the evangel to “the simple truth” works against their argument, not for it. Why? Because the simpler they make the thing that one must believe, the more they make the cross a stumbling block to belief.

THE SIMPLER PEOPLE MAKE THE THING THAT ONE MUST BELIEVE, THE MORE THEY MAKE THE CROSS A STUMBLING BLOCK TO BELIEF.

In 1 Corinthians 1:23, Paul calls the cross “a snare.” The snare of the cross is the *simplicity* of the message that Christ has already accomplished all. As I mentioned before, this message repels humanity (especially religious humanity): It does not attract it. Everyone who has contributed to this argument of “What is a Believer?” has forgotten this one thing: *The cross is a snare*. Anyone who thinks that “the simple evangel” is a red carpet for millions to believe, is severely deceived. The opposite is the truth. The simplicity of the evangel is the very thing that keeps millions *from* believing it. What a key element this is to the subject of “What is a Believer?” It has been overlooked.

When did we forget that Satan’s genius lies in complicating that which is simple? When did we forget that Satan’s main defense against more believers is lies and deceptions? When exactly did we learn to call “inconsequential” the very teachings of demons that have substituted complicated philosophies for the simple truths of Paul’s gospel, keeping millions from arriving at genuine belief? Perhaps you have not realized what intelligent kinds of people could be tricked into calling Satan’s greatest masterpieces of deception, such as human free will, “mere flaws of doctrine.”

### Do “godly saints” believe Jesus Christ is still dead?

The apostle Paul says that the saints are to shun those who have a form of devoutness, yet are denying its power (2 Timothy 3:5). Concerning those who “swerve as to truth” and “subvert the faith,” whose irreverent teachings amount to so much “profane prattling,” Paul recommends: “stand aloof” (2 Timothy 2:16-18). What partnership has a believer with an unbeliever? Paul asks. What partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? What communion has light with darkness? (Or, we may ask, what communion has knowledge with ignorance?)

Paul’s answer is clearly: *None!* (2 Corinthians 6:14-16). “Wherefore, come out of their midst and be severed, the Lord is saying” (2 Corinthians 6:17). We need to guard ourselves, not only against immorality of the flesh, but also of the spirit. Truly, “we should be cleansing ourselves from every pollution of flesh *and* spirit, completing holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul deals with some among the Corinthians who were saying there was no resurrection from the dead:

Now if Christ is being heralded that He has been roused from among the dead, how are *some* among you saying that there is no resurrection of the dead? Now if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been roused. Now if Christ has not been roused, for naught,

consequently, is our heralding, and for naught is your faith.

—1 Corinthians 15:12-14

A.E. Knoch, translator of the Concordant Version and a man I very much respect, oftentimes went too far in including obvious unbelievers in “the family of faith.” He did this in the name of attempted graciousness, although later admitting he had been far too generous (overplaying the benefit of the doubt) with those the apostle Paul would clearly have shunned. Knoch claimed that doctrine should never sever communion, but evidence of his taking this to extremes is found in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:1. In *Concordant Commentary of the New Testament*, Knoch writes:

There is a notable contrast between the methods with which the apostle deals with fundamental doctrinal error and moral evil. The wicked man (1 Corinthians 5:5) is delivered to Satan, but those who denied the resurrection are not put away. In these days the contrary course is pursued. Doctrinal differences, not nearly so vital as the denial of the resurrection, are made the ground for disfellowshipping godly saints, while moral evil is often condoned and overlooked. Differences in doctrine do not demand a severance of fellowship, or Paul would have so dealt with the Corinthians who denied the one doctrine which, because it involves all others, has the right to be called “fundamental.”

Did Paul think these few Corinthians actually believed what they *said* they believed? No. Paul doesn’t take them seriously. See how he says, “For naught is your *faith*.” Paul recognizes that they have faith. Faith in Whom? Obviously, faith in a resurrected Christ. Paul’s assumption was that some of these Corinthians were simply not thinking clearly, not realizing to what a terrible conclusion their confession led. I can imagine Paul accosting one of the Corinthians in the following manner:

PAUL: Excuse me, but, aren’t you one of those who say there is no resurrection of the dead?

GUSTAVIUS: Yes.

PAUL: But you are also a believer, are you not?

GUSTAVIUS: Of course.

PAUL: And you believe in Jesus Christ?

GUSTAVIUS: Certainly.

PAUL: I’m really glad to hear that, Gustav. But listen. If there’s no resurrection from the dead—think about this, now—then neither has Christ been roused.

GUSTAVIUS: Oh ... wow.

PAUL: And if Christ has not been roused, then your faith is invalid. I assume your faith includes the belief that Jesus rose from the dead ...

GUSTAVIUS: Of course it does. But, wow, I never thought that if there was no resurrection from the dead, then not even Jesus would be roused. But you’re right. Why didn’t I ever think of that? I never

thought that *Christ* wouldn't be roused. But you're right, Paul. If there's no resurrection from the dead, then not even Jesus was roused. And I *know* that *Jesus* was roused. Thanks for bringing this to my attention. I guess I believe in the resurrection of the dead after all.

PAUL: I suspected you did.

I don't think any of my readers would imagine that, were there someone in Corinth who was willing to follow Paul's argument and *still* insist there was no resurrection of the dead, that Paul would count him as a brother, a fellow saint, a member of the body of Christ:

PAUL: ... So now you see, Hermes, where your belief leads. If you believe there is no resurrection from the dead, then neither has Christ been roused.

HERMES: I see where my belief leads, all right. And I *don't* believe Jesus was roused.

PAUL: Say that again?

HERMES: You heard right. I don't believe Jesus was roused. I believe Jesus Christ is dead.

PAUL: You believe Jesus Christ is *dead*?

HERMES: That's what I said, Paul. He died, and He's still dead. He never will rise from the dead, either. I hope this won't be affecting my membership in the body of Christ.

PAUL: Oh, well, ... of course not. You just have what we call "a little doctrinal flaw," that's all. It's no big deal, I guess. You're still a fellow saint. Don't worry about it. It's just one of those nagging little doctrinal flaws.

How ridiculous to suppose that one who denies the resurrection of Christ can be counted among believers, when believers are those who, defined by Paul, "assent to," "stand in," and "are saved through" the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Paul swiftly dealt with those few Corinthians who hadn't thought through the consequences of disbelieving the resurrection. Even so, Paul still didn't let the matter drop. He considered it such a serious error that he later wrote to Timothy about it. [Note that the apostle Paul called out false teachers by name. —ed.]

In 2 Timothy 2:16-18, Paul warns his son in the faith:

Yet from profane prattlings stand aloof, for they will be progressing to more irreverence, and their word will spread as gangrene, of whom are Hymeneus and Philetus, who swerve as to truth, saying that the resurrection has already occurred, and are subverting the faith of some.

Paul classified the doctrine of a premature resurrection of the saints as "profane prattling," from which Timothy was to "stand aloof." Those who promoted the doctrine were, to Paul, "irreverent." This departure from truth was serious enough for Paul to compare it to "gangrene," and was dangerous enough to "subvert the faith of some." *Acknowledging this, how fantastic to suppose that*

*Paul would refuse to deal with a doctrine hundreds of times worse than a premature resurrection of the saints, namely the doctrine which asserts: "JESUS CHRIST IS DEAD!"*

A.E. Knoch later modified his position, writing in Volume 43 of *Unsearchable Riches* magazine:

Perilous is the present period in which we are living, for these are the last days (2 Timothy 3:1). God has graciously granted us special instructions for this era, written by our apostle Paul in *his* last days (2 Timothy 4:6-7). We are called upon to suffer evil. The saints will turn away from Paul, and will not tolerate sound teaching. This, of course, is true of apostate, unbelieving Christendom, but it is not written of *them*, but of the saints, those who turned [to] Paul before they turned [away] from him.

So impressed was I with God's grace in this administration that I tried to have fellowship with my calumniators and adversaries, hoping thus to win them and help them. I did not realize this was not God's way in grace. I should have seen that, since *He had foretold* their conduct so long ago, it is the fulfillment of His intention and will glorify His grace in the future, rather than mine at present. I disobeyed His charge to [shun] them (2 Timothy 3:6), not seeing that this is His way of being gracious to them, and will fulfill His purpose for them.

Others, who wish to exemplify grace in these last days, are similarly inclined. These I would counsel to consider Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus. In these dark days, when most of the saints harbor much traditional discordant teaching, it is difficult to have fellowship only with those who are fully agreed as to doctrine. And, indeed, that is not required, except in severe cases, which undermine the faith. But *we* can confine our *contacts* to those not guilty of the moral lapse which characterize the last days (2 Timothy 3:1-5). These we should *shun*. Moreover, we should shun such conduct *ourselves*.

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Dear Readers, How blind are you willing to be?

At what point does common sense finally outweigh your tippy-toe zeal to avoid offense? If I see a person on the street wearing a JESUS IS DEAD! T-shirt, might I not conclude that the man has no bend for the truth and is certainly no member of the body of Christ?

Paul *tells* us what earmarks the members of Christ's body in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15. He tells us what earmarks them in Colossians, chapter 1. He tells us what earmarks them in Romans, chapter 3. Just open your Bible anywhere in Paul's letters and you will soon encounter some basic, foundational, and vital tenet of faith common to all members of the body of Christ.

*Members of Christ's body will hold these basic, foundational, and vital teachings. Non-members will not hold them. It's really quite simple, and works like this:*

1. Members of Christ's body accept that Jesus died for their sins (1 Corinthians 15:3).
2. A woman who claims to be a believer does not accept that Jesus died for her sins.
3. This woman is not a member of Christ's body.

1. Members of Christ's body accept that Jesus rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:4).
2. A man does not believe that Jesus rose from the dead.
3. This man is not a member of Christ's body.

1. Members of Christ's body realize the grace of God in truth (Colossians 1:6).
2. A friend of yours does not realize the grace of God in truth.
3. This friend is not a member of Christ's body.

1. Members of Christ's body realize the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ's faith (Romans 3:21).
2. Your mother does not realize the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ's faith.
3. Your mother is not a member of Christ's body.

When Paul was on Mars' Hill in Athens, the Lord did not call upon him to determine who were believers and who were not. No need for that; it became apparent:

Now, on hearing of the resurrection of the dead, these, indeed jeered, yet those say, "We will hear you concerning this again also." Thus Paul came out of their midst. Yet some men, being joined to them, believe, among whom were Dionysius, the Areopagite, also, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

—Acts 17:32-34

From this, Paul would have concluded **1)** the jeerers definitely don't believe my message, **2)** the procrastinators might believe it, but probably don't, **3)** Dionysus and Damaris do believe it, because they told me so.

And then there was the time in Iconium when the Jews threw rocks at Paul after he spoke the truth concerning Jesus.

"I wonder if they are believers," said Paul, fending off a rock.

"I don't know," said Barnabas. "God has not called upon us to—*ouch!*—to determine such a thing. It could be that—*owww!*—that they are receiving our message, and that these rocks—*hey!*—are their strange and unique way of telling us that. *Uummp!*"

"Sure. Throwing rocks at people they like merely reflects one of their—*gunggh!*—doctrinal flaws. We should give them the benefit of the doubt and—*I'm bleeding!*—continue to fellowship with them."

"Yes. That would be the spiritual thing to do. Besides, the Lord knows who are—*Owww!*—His."

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There are many who—though they walk among those who profess the name of Christ, and though they profess the name of Christ themselves (thereby seeming to be believers)—are *not* believers.

Why are they not believers? Because they neither recognize nor accept vital and indispensable elements of Paul's gospel. What are they recognizing and accepting instead? The teachings of demons. These pseudo-believers do not have eonian life as members of Christ's body.

This is much easier to say than: "These people will not be snatched away to meet the Lord in air," which is much easier to say than: "They shall incur the justice of eonian extermination from the face of the Lord," which is how the indelicate apostle Paul puts it in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10. The fact remains: Those who deny Paul's evangel and thus believe the teachings of demons will *not* be snatched away to meet the Lord in the air.

Don't allow your emotions to deceive you.  
Truth is truth.  
Spread the word.

May God bless you with wisdom and knowledge.

Grace and peace,

*Martin Zender*  
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