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'To Whom Shall He Speak Knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine...?'

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TA Ministries is a non-denominational faith ministry, *teaching, informing and equipping* the church.

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Editors Comment

The speed with which ideals, values and moral standards are changing is breathtaking. Things that were once evil are now acceptable. Not more than a few decades ago homosexuality was a 'perversion', yet within a single decade counsellors in the US were told it was now an 'alternate lifestyle'.

The impact of *postmodern thinking* is that there are now no absolutes. This has changed the way the modern church views the Word of God.

Today we judge the Scriptures instead of the Scriptures judging us, (Heb.4:12). This is typified by the 'Jesus Seminars' held in the USA which have 'scholars' judging what are inspired words from God and what are not!

Subjectivism replaces objectivism. It is a crime to be dogmatic today! Many churches today purposely have little or no statement of faith so that one cannot ascertain where they stand on various doctrines. Church leaders say 'we don't want to teach you theology'. But if they do not teach the knowledge of God ('theology') then how do we know they are teaching the real Jesus? Similarly, many group Bible studies are now centred around the interpretations of individuals. All opinions seem as worthy as each other. Whatever happened to '*Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, RIGHTLY dividing the word of truth*', (2Tim.2:15)?

Integration systems abound. The world's beat is mixed with Christian lyrics and called 'Christian rock'. Biblical counselling is mixed with psychology - a pseudo scientific system invented by God haters and once considered diametrically opposed to the Bible. Yet it is now integrated as 'Christian psychology'. Subtly, psychological sanctification is taking the place of Biblical sanctification, as Christians turn more and more to humanistic systems of wisdom which God actually calls 'foolishness'! (1Cor.3:19) Hence, sin is no longer the Hell deserving evil within man, but rather a disease, a bad habit or an addiction that we probably got from someone else in our past who mistreated us. Worldly experts tell us that our problem is 'low self esteem'. This is despite the fact that societies are becoming increasingly selfish and we are loving ourselves to death. If there is such wisdom in these systems, then why is it that of all professions, psychiatrists have the highest rate of suicide in western countries?

Pragmatism has replaced what was the knowledge of good and evil. If a method appears to 'work' then it must be of God. We relieve people today of their sin problem by giving them self-satisfying, felt needs-orientated and ear-tickling lies, instead of pure milk and meat from God's word! And it is also now unloving to practise Church discipline no matter how much the elders desire to see the offending person restored to Biblical behaviour.

At the root of all these errors is this: we have lost a high view of the power of the Word of God as being *all sufficient* to produce change in peoples hearts. Studies in the US show that 90% of pastors have not read the Bible completely through; only 18% of born again Christians read the Bible every day; and 23% never read the Bible at all. How is the Holy Spirit supposed to change us if the 'meat' to make us grow is not being assimilated?

Why does the church pander to the gods of this age? Is it not because it lacks confidence in the Word of God as *all sufficient*? *But God still says the Bible is the standard for change; the Holy Spirit is the power for that change.*

Terry Arnold

Assurance of Salvation!

In many editions of this newsletter we have strongly challenged 'easy believism' and salvation methods that emphasise a 'decision'. Today these methods are producing countless false professions, tares, those who have 'believed in vain' or are reprobates, (1Cor.15:2; Tit.1:16). The parable of the sower (Matt.13) and Matthew 7 emphatically warn of this. It will be evidenced by lives that have simply not changed. The sad and frightening thing about all this is that these people as described above usually have no concern for their salvation and seem unaware of their condition.

However, in contrast to this at times I meet Christians who are greatly concerned about their salvation and who lack assurance that they are truly saved. Although this is a concern, I am strangely encouraged by this, considering the fact that these people usually are doing what Scriptures demand, that is, 'examining themselves to see if they are in the faith', (2Cor.13:5) and 'giving diligence to make their calling and election sure...', (2Pet.1:10). The fact that they are wrestling with assurance is often an encouraging sign of a heart that is seeking after God. Many of the great Christian leaders so wrestled with their salvation, particularly in the early stages of their walk with God.

This short article is to encourage those who would so struggle and for those who might counsel and teach such ones.

Assurance through faith:

Our assurance is based on our faith in God. '***Faith is the substance*** (confidence, assurance) ***of things hoped*** (expected), ***the evidence*** (conviction, proof) ***of things not seen***', (Heb.11:1). 'Faith' itself is the confidence or trust that builds assurance. The same word for faith ('*pístis*') is also translated '***assurance***', (Acts 17:31). It is by *faith* we are declared justified by God. From this comes peace and assurance because it is based on a *finished* work done by *Christ alone!* '***Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ***', (Rom.5:1). Thank God for the measure of faith He gives us. Our trust in Him will grow as we study His word and live according to it.

Assurance through objective reasoning - Justification:

I am often asked 'what do you recommend for those lacking assurance?' I speak here from personal experience - the one doctrine that gave me the most 'assurance' is the doctrine of Justification through the 'imputed righteousness' of God. Since studying the doctrine of imputation in depth I can personally vouch that I have never looked back with a lingering lack of assurance! There are several excellent books and papers on this topic* that will challenge the reader to understand why God accepts and keeps those who have truly trusted in Christ - because of 'imputed righteousness'. Only this declared righteousness guarantees a righteousness that God accepts because it is based on the *substitutionary work* of Christ. With an understanding of this justification comes a peace and assurance and an increased appreciation of the grace of God and the *finished work* of Christ.

Romans chapter 4 teaches that God credits (imputes) His righteousness to those who believe in Christ. This imputed righteousness is not because of any work done and not

because of anything within man. It is something outside of us. The Reformers sometimes called this righteousness an 'alien righteousness'. It is an objective positional righteousness, not shaped by any subjective forces, but by the love, will and the work of God.

Justification is given to the believer simply because of faith alone. Right standing with God is declared to the believer even though he is a sinner. This is done because of the work of Jesus Christ once for all on the cross of Calvary where Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice that would satisfy for all time the wrath of God upon the believer's sin. The penalty for that sin is paid forever. The two way transaction is this: Sin was credited to Christ; and God's righteousness was credited to the believer. The sinner is not *made* righteous but is *credited* with God's righteousness. It is a righteousness that is perfect because it is based on the perfect person (deity) and the perfect work (atonement) of Jesus Christ, *the only payment that God will accept*. The doctrines of justification, imputed righteousness and substitution are pivotal for every Christian to understand their security in salvation. Charles Spurgeon wrote: '*True justification by faith is the surface soil, but then imputed righteousness is the granite rock which lies underneath it...Let the fact that the Saviour is Jehovah strengthen your confidence. Be ye bold. Be ye very courageous. Face Heaven and earth and hell with the challenge of the Apostle: 'Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?' Look back upon your past sins, look upon your present infirmities, and all your future errors, and while you weep the tears of repentance, let no fear of damnation blanch your cheek. You stand before God today robed in your Saviour's garments with his spotless vestments on, holy as the Holy One. Not Adam when he walked in Eden's bowers was more accepted than you are - not more pleasing to the eye of the all judging, the sin hating God, than you are if clothed in Jesus righteousness than Adam had. He had a human righteousness; your garments are divine. He had a robe complete, it is true; but the earth had woven it. You have a garment as complete; Heaven has made it for you to wear. Go up and down in the strength of this great truth and boast exceedingly, and glory in your God. And let this be on the top and summit of your heart and soul. 'Jehovah the Lord our Righteousness'!*

Assurance through objective reasoning - Relationship:

There is the Father's assurance in the Relationship.

Our first step for assurance is to reason *objectively* from the facts of Scripture. By objective I mean that which would least be interfered with by emotion or feelings. There is nothing wrong with emotion and feelings in themselves, but if our understanding of assurance is based on feelings, then sooner or later we will stumble. Some Christians, when going through tough times, don't 'feel' saved. But with an understanding of the major doctrines of salvation including Justification and Sanctification, many will be better able to discern the truth from the counterfeit in feelings.

There are many Scriptures that *objectively* teach that God preserves us to the end; but the most telling are those that teach the *adoption* of us as 'sons' by God Himself. Much assurance can be objectively based on this adoption.

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‘Blessed be the God and Father...He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world...Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, ...He has made us accepted in the beloved’, (Eph.1:3-7). *Our security is in this Relationship!... ‘To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father’*, (Gal.4:5-7). It is because of this *relationship* that God has ‘sealed’ us with the Holy Spirit until *‘the purchased possession’* - our new bodies in heaven, (Eph.1:13,14).

We don’t earn the right to become children of God; *we are born into it*, (Jn.3:3-5)! This relationship of sonship through adoption is *objective truth*. This *relationship* cannot be lost considering it is based on God choosing us *‘before the foundation of the world’*! The *relationship* of adopted sons is *eternal*. Once a son, always a son. The Christian should derive much assurance from this fact!

The objective understanding of the relationship in adoption is something that must be believed factually from scripture. It is less likely to be interfered with by emotions and feelings. It is this backdrop of objective reasoning and understanding of the *security in the relationship* that should bolster a Christians confidence in salvation when the ‘feelings’ might speak otherwise!

Assurance in fellowship:

The relationship of an adopted son is legal and objective, but fellowship is more subjective. Unlike the relationship, it can be broken. The lack of assurance is often because Christians do not understand the difference between *relationship* and *fellowship*. Once the understanding of relationship has been settled *objectively*, then great comfort can be gained in the area of fellowship.

There is the Father’s comfort in the fellowship.

‘Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ’, (1Jn.1:3).

If we want to have deep or intimate fellowship with someone we would need to know them. Firstly, we can learn more about God by looking at His nature and character: The Father is *a Spirit* (Jn.4:24); He is *sovereign* (Eph.1:11); He *never changes* (Mal.3:7); He is *all-powerful* (Jer.10:12); He is *all knowing* (Heb.4:13); He is *everywhere at once* (Jer.23:23,24); He is *Holy* (Ex.15:11); and very importantly for fellowship, He is *personal*, for He is the ***‘Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort’***, (2Cor.1:3). The Father knows what we need before we even ask for it and we are much more precious than the birds which He controls and feeds, (Matt.6:8,26).

If we want to know more of the nature and character of the Father we also need to listen to Jesus and watch what He does, because Jesus does what the Father does! (Jn.5:19)

Access to this fellowship with the Father is given by the Spirit of the Father - the Holy Spirit, (Eph.2:18). As well, the Holy Spirit ‘bears witness’ with our human spirit that we are the children of God, (Rom.8:16).

But all this access is not handed to us without some surrender and effort on our part. If we do not pray and renew our minds to be ‘transformed (Rom.12:2), then we will lack fellowship and therefore the comfort in the security that we are truly saved. Many Christians expect to have more assurance and yet they do not obey God in prayer and Bible study. They do not obey when the Holy Spirit is teaching

them. How can we expect to be blessed with assurance when we do not obey the one that gives assurance?

Fellowship can be broken by sin or simply a lack of contact with the Father. It can also be broken by the Christian mixing with error or that which is false: ***‘Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty’***, (2Cor.6:17,18).

However, if we sin and cut fellowship ***‘we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous’***, (1Jn.2:1). ***‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’***, (1Jn.1:9). We cannot change the relationship - (that is established in eternity past); but we can increase *fellowship* with the Father!

Another security that we are saved (Justification) and being saved (Sanctification) and will be saved (Glorification) is in the fact that God ‘chastens us’ as sons, (Heb.12:5-11). Part of being adopted as a ‘son’ is the Potter shaping the clay to how He wants it. ***‘My son, despise not you the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked of him’***. The proof of His love and acceptance of us as sons is His ‘chastening’: ***‘For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you illegitimate children, and not sons’***. The reasoning for the chastening is that it brings forth fruit for God and glorifies Him: ***‘Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby’***.

A final question!

After examining ourselves to be sure we understand the gospel (2Cor.13:5) and that our calling and election is sure (2Pet.1:10), it is sometimes necessary for some to come down to the very basics of salvation. What is the ‘minimum requirement’ of salvation? It is to ‘believe’. But what do we need to understand to ‘believe’? At the heart of the Gospel is the doctrine of *substitution* - that Christ paid for my sins and God will clothe me with His righteousness when I turn to Him. *This substitute righteousness takes the focus off ‘US’*. The question is not if *we* are ‘good enough’ to get into Heaven; but rather - *did Jesus do enough to satisfy God for me!* We are in fact saved by works - the work of Jesus Christ! It is that perfect bloody sacrifice acceptable to the Father that we must rest in. *Our assurance ultimately is based on God accepting Christ and His work for us!*

The great Robert Haldane in his commentary on Romans wrote: ***‘To that righteousness is the eye of the believer ever to be directed; on that righteousness must he rest; on that righteousness must he live; on that righteousness must he die; in that righteousness must he appear before the judgement seat; in that righteousness must he stand forever in the presence of a righteous God’***.

Terry Arnold

* This ministry can supply articles; or we highly recommend the book *‘The God Who Justifies’* by James White (\$29.50).

Which Gospel?

Today there are many evangelism 'tracts' and 'plans' of salvation. I am convinced the content of many such Gospel messages is fast becoming 'another Gospel' and seducing people with 'another Jesus'. It's that serious.

The so called 'Plan of Salvation' in many tracts and books often begins with a statement to the effect that '*God Loves You*'. I argue that today this is possibly the worst way one could introduce Christ and Him crucified! It also completely contradicts the methods of the great Reformers, evangelists and church leaders of old. They started their Gospel presentation with the opposite idea - 'man is a sinner'!

It was the Puritans who invented evangelistic literature. Richard Baxter, Hugh Clark, John Cotton and many others were all great evangelists. Baxter's classic '*Call to the Unconverted*' or Alleine's '*Alarm to the Unconverted*' showed the evangelistic heart of the Puritans. Yet modern evangelism has increasingly moved away from what the Puritans established. The great evangelists in previous centuries maximised the *preparation* of a mind for an understanding of the Gospel - ie. sin and its consequences; the judgement of God; and thus the *reason* for the Gospel and the need to be saved.

The common way of presenting the Gospel today is 'God loves you'. But this is actually a misrepresentation of what scriptures say of the unsaved. The statement 'God loves you' is true of God's elect, His beloved and His church. But the Bible never says that God loves the sinner. The Scriptures tell us clearly that those in unsaved states, those who are not believing - that the wrath of God abides on them, (Jn.3:36; Rom.1:18; 2:8; 13:4). The Bible clearly says that unsaved people are '*children of wrath*', '*children of disobedience*', (Eph.2:3; 5:6; Col.3:6). The scriptures tell us that God '*hates all workers of iniquity*', (Ps.5:5) and God is '*angry with the wicked every day*', (Ps.7:11). Nowhere does the Bible say that God loves the unsaved, yet today this 'love gospel' is often the *first* message in tracts and salvation messages. The problem is that not only is it unscriptural but it thwarts the very reason why man needs to be saved - because of his *sin* nature!

The apostles and the great evangelists who forged revivals and saw God sweep millions into the Kingdom, did not pander to such *pragmatic methods* in an effort to secure souls. One author writes: '*The typical presentation today starts exactly opposite where Paul started. He wrote of 'the wrath of God...against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men'. But modern evangelism begins with 'God loves you and wants to make you happy'*'. (1)

The messages of salvation today often quote John 3:16 '*For God so loved the world...*' to show that God loves everyone. But the rest of the verse tells us that it is the believing ones or those who will believe that God gives eternal life to and who will not be judged with God's 'wrath'. This is the literal Greek for John 3:16: '*For so loved the God the world that the His son the unique [only begotten] He gave that all the believing ones in [on] Him no perish but have life eternal.*' The '*whosoever believes*' is literally translated '*all the believing ones*'! (2)

How could God 'love' those who He knows will end up in Hell? If this is 'love' than is it the same 'love' He has for His elect, 'the beloved' who end up in heaven? The

contradiction here is sadly not seen by many who begin the Gospel with 'God loves you'. Yet the scriptures do not lie. To begin a presentation with the statement 'God loves you' hides man's greatest need - to be saved from the wrath to come, (Matt.3:7; Lk.3:7; 1Thess.1:10). It arguably holds people back from seeing themselves as offending a holy and righteous God. Beginning a Gospel presentation with 'God loves you' may well also detract from the '*offense*' of the cross, (Gal.5:11-20).

The Gospel is not about God loving us in our unsaved state but that Christ died as a substitute for our sins and was buried and rose again, (1Cor.15:3,4). God is not at peace with the unsaved! They cannot approach God without having their sins atoned and that atonement calls for repentance from sin. The word 'atonement' literally means to bring two warring parties together. The atonement solves the *enmity* that God had with sinners.

The importance of the doctrine of sin in any 'plan' of salvation cannot be minimised. *Sin is an integral part of the Gospel*. 1Corinthians 15:3,4 spells out the Gospel clearly and it includes the reason why men need to be saved - SIN: '*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*'. The Gospel 'facts' are fivefold: the *death, burial and resurrection* of Christ as a *substitute* for our *sins*. The only part in the Gospel concerning 'us' is '*our sins*'. The rest of the Gospel is all about Christ and His work.

The great revivalist and Puritan evangelist, Jonathan Edwards, was one of the most successful evangelist in history. He taught that no man can or will come to Christ to be saved from sin until he knows what he needs saving *from*. The first step was knowledge, the second step conviction...then this leads to contrition. The Puritans urged ministers not to short circuit the *preparation process* but to plow up the ground of the heart by exposing sin and its consequences.

The many 'plans' of salvation put forth today also emphasise a 'decision' and often give the unsaved something to do: '*Pray this prayer...I do now receive and confess Him as my personal Saviour*'. Then...'*after making your decision to receive Christ...*' Yet, we are not saved by receiving Jesus as a personal Saviour nor by making a decision. Rather we receive Jesus as our saviour when we understand and believe the Gospel. I am not 'knitpicking' here. This concept of receiving Jesus as a 'personal saviour' by a 'decision' is actually not found anywhere in scripture. We are saved when we understand and believe the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and his substitutionary atonement on the cross.

The Gospel is not man giving his heart or his life to Jesus but that Christ gave His life in the place of sinners. The Gospel is not man receiving Christ into his heart, but that God received the Lord Jesus into heaven as the mediator of sinners. *The Gospel is not anything man can do but what Christ has done 2,000 years ago!*

We do not receive Jesus by our own energies or our own will, (Jn.1:13). '*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*'.

Urging people to 'receive Christ' by a 'decision' misleads people into thinking that by performing some ritual, they can be saved. The Bible says we can only be saved by the work of Jesus Christ imputed to us through faith. True faith does not come by anything we do, including any 'decision' or 'sinner prayer', but by God's gift of regeneration whereby the Spirit of God 'quickens' our dead spirit to life. **'And you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins'**, (Eph.2:1). We are saved when Jesus saving work is applied to us through regeneration and faith. **'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost'**, (Tit.3:5).

But some of these modern plans of salvation get worse: They often quote Revelation 3:20 where Jesus says: **'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me'**. But *who* was this speaking to? Was it to unsaved sinners? No! The words are specifically addressed to *Christians* and more specifically to a *church* at Laodicea that needed correction. This church would be no different to many churches today and if Christ came and spoke to such churches today why would we wrongly then use it and address it to the unsaved? Many who use this scripture do not look at the context - it is to *professing believers*! Well known ministries are using this passage to explain what is just not true. This is offensive to God because *it makes salvation a work of man* instead of a sovereign work of God. The Bible says **'there is none that seeks after God'**, (Rom.3:11). Even if it were true that God is waiting patiently for us to 'open the door' then it would contradict numerous scriptures that emphatically teach that in our unsaved states, we are unable to 'open the door' unless the Spirit does so: **'Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be'**, (Rom.8:7); **'No man can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day'**, (Jn.6:44).

Some of the modern plans of salvation are arguably a 'works' gospel and worse, a throw-back to the Pelagian and Arminian heresies of centuries ago - heresies which were fought against by most of the great church leaders and Reformers down the running centuries.

Why don't we just call people to believe in what Christ has *done*, rather than what we can *do*? Why don't we call them to *repent* and to *believe* in a finished work and plead with them to call upon the name of the Lord? (Rom.10:13) The real Gospel will expect and call for faith. The rest will be left to the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit and us discipling the person as co-workers with God. Do we trust the Holy Spirit to save, or do we have to add so much extra-biblical material to 'woo' people into a 'decision'?

Many Gospel plans and programmes are making the Gospel 'easy' to believe. The 'Alpha course', introduced in the nineties, watered down sin. If one reads many of the testimonies one will find that many have 'accepted Jesus' for the wrong reasons - that He might make their life better or fix some problem or addiction. But Jesus did not come to make our sordid lives better, but rather to 'crucify' them! (Gal.2:20; 5:24; Rom.6:6)

God requires us to deliver the Gospel to all. But how shall they *understand* it without *preparation of the heart*, (Matt.13:1-9; 18-23; Lk.8:5-15)? How shall they truly

'confess with the mouth' and 'believe in the heart' without being shown *the reason as to why they need the Gospel?* - that is, the depravity of the heart; the inability to keep and fulfil God's law; the sin nature and its consequences.

We are not required to dress up the Gospel or make it more 'appealing', for one cannot soften the cross! We are not 'PR officers' to bring goodwill between Christ and the world - to make Christ acceptable to businessmen, sportsmen or the Press. We are not mediators making the Gospel more palatable to man.

The power of the Gospel is in the message itself! It needs no outside influence to generate its power. Paul said: **'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. The just shall live by faith'**, (Rom.1:16,17). The word 'power' here is 'dunamis', referring to intrinsic power, *power of itself*. We get the words 'dynamite' and 'dynamo' from this word. The Gospel message generates power of itself and needs no outside help. This reasoning is further extended in verse 17: **'For therein is the righteousness of God revealed...'** The Gospel itself contains the revelation of the righteousness of God himself in the flesh through the message of the substitutionary death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Which Gospel will we set before the people? Will we begin with 'God loves you'; or 'man is a sinner'? Will we begin with explaining who God is and why He cannot tolerate sin; or will we speak of 'what a wonderful plan God has for our lives'? Will we be patient in the preparation of a soul and teach the law broken; or will we minimise sin by pandering to human ability? Will we destroy the 'offense' of the cross by not mentioning the wrath of God on the unsaved which was then placed on Jesus Christ? Will we turn the Gospel from what Christ has *done* to what man could *do*? Will we call for repentance and faith, or call for a 'decision'? Will we trust the sovereign Holy Spirit to bring the understanding of 'Christ crucified'; or will we tell them their 'decision' has made them a 'Christian'?

These are serious challenges we face today. Galatians chapter 1 presents this Gospel dilemma as deadly serious! There is **'another gospel'** which **'perverts the gospel of Christ'**, (Gal.1:6,7). The judgement on any other gospel is to be **'accursed'**, (Gal.1:8,9). Paul says **'For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ'**, (Gal.1:10).

The Gospel is one doctrine we must get right! It cannot be diluted or made appealing to the carnal needs of man. The cross is offensive to man in his sin. But it is the power of God contained in the message that leads man to repentance from sin and shows God's love for his soul.

Terry Arnold

(1) 'Ashamed of the Gospel' by John MacArthur, P.132,141

(2) The verse is not about 'anyone' but about 'the believing ones'. The Greek has 'the believing ones' with the definite article 'the' referring to a definite number, quantity or entity. The common misconception is that 'whosoever' is an indefinite phrase, but this is plainly refuted by the Greek definite article 'o' which is attached to 'believing ones'. (The definite article modifies a particular object - the object here is 'the believing ones'). Thus this is a definite group of people, not an indiscriminate or indefinite group.

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editors)

Terry, a Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) man brought up the subject of death...he told me death meant the grave 'sheol' in the OT. I also bought the book you recommended - 'The White Lie' by Walter Rea. When the SDA man saw me with the book he said the author was a crazy mixed up man completely deluded and that the SDA kicked him out so he wrote this book to bring them down. SDA's believe Ellen G. White to be a prophetess and nothing I say seems to convince them otherwise... (R.M., Qld.)

Editors reply: The Old Testament (OT) scriptures quoted by SDA's for 'soul sleep' (eg. Ecc.9:5) refers to the *body*, not the soul. It is erroneous to build a doctrine on such from the OT, especially in books such as Ecclesiastes and Job where *humans were giving wrong advice!* However, just ahead of Ecc.9:5 is this: 'Then shall the dust [the body] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it', (Ecc.12:7).

The error of 'soul sleep' comes from confusing the difference between 'hell' and 'grave' in the OT. The Hebrew word for hell is 'sheol' which corresponds to the Greek 'Hades' in the NT. (See Ps.16:10; Hos.13:14 quoted in the NT (Acts 2:27; Acts 13:35; 1Cor.15:55).

The problem occurs when, depending on the context, 'Sheol' is translated 'hell' (30 times), 'grave' (31 times) and 'pit' (3 times). The OT writers saw little more than a 'place of the dead'. However, another Hebrew word transliterated 'qever' is used only when referring to the grave or burying place. In Job 17 we have vs.1 referring to the body being in the 'grave' ('qever') but in vs.13 the reference to 'grave' is 'sheol' referring to the soul.

SDA fail to quote other OT scriptures which teach consciousness in hell ('sheol')! 'The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell ['sheol']', (Ezek.32:21); 'Hell ['sheol'] from beneath is moved for you to meet you at your coming: it stirs up the dead for you, even all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. All they shall speak and say unto you, Are you also become weak as we? are you become like unto us?', (Is.14:9,10; see also Ps.16:10).

The New Testament is remarkably clear *against* 'soul sleep'! In Matthew 17 Moses and Elijah are speaking in the presence of God; in Luke 16 a 'certain rich man' in Hades speaks and feels; in Luke 23:43 the penitent thief is promised 'this day' to be with Jesus. Paul says in 2Cor.5:6-8: '...knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord...We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' The tenses in vs.8 and the parallelism between vs.8 and vs.6 indicate that being present with the Lord occurs the moment one dies. Also Phil.1:21-23: 'For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better'. The English is obvious, but further proof is this: The Greek infinitives 'einai' ('be') and 'anulusai' ('depart') have *one* construction, one grammatical thought and connected by one definite article ('the') in the Greek - Paul's desire to 'depart' and to 'be' with Christ is the *same* and instant in time. If 'departure' here was not instantly being with Christ, another Greek construction

would have been used.

As to the book 'The White Lie' by Walter Rea - the SDA man obviously has not read it. Apart from the introduction, it is hundreds of pages with two columns - one for Ellen's writings and the other for the writings from which she stole. No comments are given, just the words of both writers! It is one of the most damning evidences I have seen. No one can read this book and not objectively see that Ellen G. White plagiarised large portions of her works from others and much of it word for word; yet she said this: 'I do not write one article expressing my own ideas. They are what God has opened to me in vision' (Testimonies No.31, P.63); 'It is God and not an erring mortal that has spoken' (Testimonies Vol.3 P.257).

As for Ellen G. White's prophecies, let the reader be the judge from her own pen: 'Now time is almost finished, and what we have been years learning, they will have to learn in a few months' (Early Writings P.57 - written over 150 years ago); 'In a view given June 27, 1850, my accompanying angel said, 'Time is almost finished....Said the angel, 'Get ready... I saw that the seven last plagues were soon to be poured out...' (Early Writings P.64); 'I was shown (in vision) the company present at the conference. Said the Angel...Some food for worms; some, subjects of the seven last plagues; some will be alive...at the coming of Jesus' (Written 1864: Spiritual Gifts Vol.4; Testimonies Vol.1 P.131-132).

Ellen White originally taught the 'Shut Door Doctrine' - that the door of mercy was shut in 1844 and all those who did not accept the Lord before that date would be lost: 'The Lord has shown me in vision that Jesus rose up and closed the door, and entered the Holy of Holies in 1844' ('A Word To the Little Flock' P.12); '...the time of their salvation is past' (22 August 1849: Present Truth, P.21); 'Not one ray of light comes to sinners since 1844, but all are left to the Devil' (Early Writings P.46,47); '...they cannot be benefited by the intercession of Jesus there...' (Spiritual Gifts Vol.1 P.171,172); '...our great High Priest enters the Holy of Holies...to engage in the last acts of his ministration in behalf of man, to perform the work of the Investigative Judgement and to make atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to its benefits'. (The Great Controversy P.480). Reader: Note the Gospel of works here. Jesus has already atoned for *all* sins on Calvary!

'The seal of God is His holy Sabbath' (Thoughts on Revelation, P.452); 'Not a soul living on earth when Jesus comes will be saved unless he is thus sealed by keeping that day ['Sabbath']' (Early Writings P.11); 'Anyone who shall transgress God's command to keep the seventh day will... receive the Mark of the Beast' (The Great Controversy P.449); 'The unmingled wrath of God is soon to be poured out upon all who continue to keep Sunday, the Popes Sabbath' (Written over 150 years ago: Replies to Elder Canright P.165).

In 1862 Ellen G. White falsely predicted England would declare war against America and would be defeated (Testimonies for The Church Vol.1 P.259). She also claimed to have seen Enoch on Jupiter or Saturn (Early Writings P.39-40)...and there are many more prophecies...

A false prophet is one who speaks in the name of the Lord and it does not come to pass, (Dt.18:20-22).

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editors)

Dear friend,...I read your book 'To Catholics Whom I Love'...In a loving way you showed the differences between the message in the Bible and what Catholics believe...your teaching material helps me to share with my Bible Study group...Here in Kenya we love Jesus Christ our saviour. In Him is forgiveness of our sins and redemption and full assurance of our salvation. Let the name of Jesus be glorified in all ages without end. May God bless your work.

Can you answer these questions: 1. What is the true church? 2. Which is the day of rest? 3. Please elaborate on 1Peter 3:19-20, noting verse 19.

M.O., Kenya

Editors reply: The true church is all those begotten from above (born again) who are called 'saints'.

The 'day of rest' is that one day in seven which each individual chooses (Rom.14:5,6). The Jews called this the Sabbath and it was a day of rest, a sign or seal of the Mosaic covenant given to Israel (Ex.16:29; 31:14; Ezek.20:12). The apostles, church fathers and Christians (from the first century onwards) kept Sunday as the 'first day' of the week, (see 'Diakrisis' July/Aug/2008).

The 'preaching' in 1Pet.3:19 refers to some kind of 'proclamation' - (the word 'preach' ('kerusso') is not always preaching the gospel). Some say the proclamation was made to fallen angels 'imprisoned' in 'Hell', (2Pet.2:4 - 'tartaroo' - not the Hell of 'Hades' or 'Gehenna', the lake of fire*). Other say it was to Old Testament souls in Hades where there was two compartments - the saved and unsaved. Whoever the group, Christ was 'proclaiming' truth about God, Himself and the kingdom.

[*There are three different Greek words translated 'Hell':

1. 'Gehenna' (12 times) - The word is derived from the Hebrew 'Valley of Hinnom', a place southwest of the gate of Jerusalem and associated with the evil of idolatrous and human sacrifices (which formerly included sacrificing children to the god Molech). 'Gehenna' was always conceived of as a place of physical and spiritual punishment. In the NT it is the *final Hell* after the judgement, commonly referred to as the 'Lake of fire', a place of unquenchable fire (Mk.9:45,48).

2. 'Hades' (10 times 'Hell', once 'grave') - literally 'not'/'to see'. It is now an intermediate place of darkness containing the spirits of the unsaved. 'Hades' is eventually cast into 'Gehenna' in the end, (Rev.20:14).

3. 'Tartaros' (translated 'Hell' 2Pet.2:4) - originally a Greek mythological place where demigods were punished. Peter used it as a dungeon where angels are kept bound. Some say it is linked with 'Hades']

Dear Terry, Thank you for 'Diakrisis' and the information on 'Women in Ministry'. Your editors comments and replies to questions and other topics covered help to keep us informed. I find the lack of discernment as well as the fear of God amongst Christians appalling...May God richly bless you and your ministry,

(D.D., Sydney)

Dear Terry, Thankyou for the articles in the last newsletter. I have made good use of them. But I must correct the letter by G.C. (Sydney), P.12 who said: 'To say that man has anything to do with the election and regeneration is a great insult to the creator of the universe'.

But what does God say?: 'But as many as received him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God', (Jn.1:12,13). God gave us a free will, so we can choose whom to follow...God knows who will follow him. If it was God who chooses, then all would be in heaven.

(J.T, W.A.)

Editors Comment: I understand you are singling out 'as many as received Him'. However, this needs to be considered with the rest of the verses - 12 and 13. You only quoted half of verse 12 and none of verse 13. The entire two verses are: 12 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'.

The 'receiving' is well explained in what follows - it is those who 'believed'. Also, 'free will' is absolutely ruled out in this verse because of what follows: 'Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. It is 'of God'. This passage unequivocally rules out 'free will'!

Yes, God knows who will follow him in His foreknowledge but it is also *He who chooses us*. There are numerous clear Scriptures on this. Here are just a few: 'According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world...Having predestinated us ...according to the good pleasure of his will', (Eph.1:4); '...there is none that seeks after God', (Rom.3:11); 'You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...', (Jn.15:16).

The statement 'If it was God who chooses, then all would be in heaven' is human assumed logic. Let's extend this 'logic': If man chooses his own salvation (the Pelagian and Arminian heresy of earlier centuries) then what do we do with the multitudes of people (eg. the Amazon Indians) who for centuries never heard of Christ or the Gospel? (You cannot be saved any other way!). Did they have the opportunity to hear and be saved? There are still some tribal people who die without ever hearing or knowing anything about Christ. Is God unfair? What if God saved no one - would He be unfair in giving mankind their just deserve? Read Romans 9 - God is the 'potter', we are the 'clay' (vs.21) and we have no right to question the 'logic' of God's election and predestination (vs.20) which both *are in scripture*. And it is foolish to attempt to reconcile the antimony of man's responsibility and God's divine election, something *the scriptures do not do*. God's ways are not our ways. I don't profess to understand the mystery of divine election and predestination, but my Bible tells me: God chose me; He chose me 'before the foundation of the world'; and I was not born again of any personal will (Jn.1:13). God forbid that I should add my logic to that. My understanding here is not any different to that of most of the great evangelists, revivalists and leaders down the running centuries.

Your Comments and Questions

(Views expressed here are not necessarily those of the editors)

Update: New Travelling Ministry for 2010

Several churches have contacted us to be included in the itinerary for 2010 (March-May). The next newsletter (Jan/Feb) will have more details of the expected routes through the various states of Australia; and then a full itinerary in the March/April newsletter. A list of sermons and seminars by Terry is available on request.

Dear Terry, Thank you for your faithfulness over the many years in distributing the 'Diakrisis' newsletter. My mother, now 89 years old, has been receiving them for many years and then passed them on to me. My husband and I have always enjoyed reading them and keeping up with what is going on in 'Christendom' as well as the encouraging news of people being helped through your ministry and being led from error. I was brought up in the Assemblies, the Gospel Hall, as they mainly used to be known. Unfortunately, today many of these and their by-products have headed down that same road, as have many denomination, into apostasy. The flood gates are opened now and I believe there is no stopping it, but we are living in momentous last days and there must be a 'falling away' first. It has been encouraging to read your recent newsletters...I am glad there is truth still around. When you can preach and not even use the Bible, you know something is terribly wrong. We have heard preachers say you don't have to preach repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ...surely this is another Jesus, another gospel and another spirit...I am nearly 60, I have seen the shift in many peoples thinking and teaching...

(J.D., SE Qld.)

Dear Terry, Thanks for the latest issue and the three articles which we enjoyed. We are happy to see you are faithful to the Lord and His word, whether men will hear or forebear. It is good to see you are clear on the whole counsel of God. Be encouraged and strengthened...May the Lord bless and keep you faithful to the end...

(C.Y. Nth Qld.)

Praise/Prayer Points

- Please pray for provision and for the completion of the ministry bus for Terry and Beth and the working out of all the itineraries for March-May 2010.

- Praise the Lord for the faithful voluntary helpers who help in the folding/posting of the newsletter and the distribution of the books and CD's, as well as administration while Terry & Beth are away.

Dear Terry, Thanks for your consistent writing, the challenges it contains and the honesty with which you write. One does not have to agree with everything written by any commentator but should respect those who remain consistent in their work. In that, you pass with flying colours. Thanks again for 'Diakrisis'...

...I have just received the latest copy of 'Diakrisis' and I was drawn to the letter/answer re: John Avanzini. I am surprised that this person is still able to operate and that after all the warnings about him people are still tricked by his methods. However, as you say, 'there is no shortage of gullible Christians'.

I came across Avanzini more about 15 years ago and whilst initially being taken in by some of his teaching at the seminar I attended, I was very soon back on track through a bit of basic follow-up on certain scriptures and their context. This is something I encourage our people to do consistently because as we know there are plenty of charlatans like this man who are ripping people off by using scripture out of context and/or supposed revelations given by God...Thanks for continuing to bring these things to the attention of your readers.

Whilst you and I may not agree on certain issues, I appreciate your willingness to consistently uphold the centrality of Scripture. You do give us AOG folk a bit of a 'bashing' at times which is your right to do if you believe there is something amiss. I must admit that although I bristle at some of what you write, there are many times you have given me much food for thought and I appreciate that.

I have been receiving 'Diakrisis' for a long time now...Keep up the good work of God that you are called to...and remember that even though we wear a particular label there are many of us who seek to uphold the centrality of Scripture and seek to always honour the Lord in our teaching, preaching and lifestyle.

(An AOG pastor, Vict.)

Dear Terry, we always look forward to receiving 'Diakrisis'. Many thanks. We find it difficult to find a church that has teaching from the Bible. The Gospel seems so watered down and there is an allowance for culture to change things. Accepting couples living together unmarried has also been an issue with me. How can these couples be truly born again and how can pastors allow this? Surely there is no grey area here? I would also like a copy of the 'Women in Ministry' article and the refutation, as offered in previous newsletters. Let us be true Bereans.

(E.B., Nth Qld)

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