

I NEVER KNEW YOU

by Michael Patrick Bowen

Bowen's sobering examination of Christ's words 'I never knew you' from Matthew 7:23, warning against false profession and self-deception in the Christian life and calling readers to genuine, saving faith.

17 Chapters

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0.3. Scripture Preface

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

(Matthew 7:21-23) And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

(Revelation 20:11-15)

01. Introduction: The Agony of Not Being Sure

Introduction The Agony Of Not Being Sure

The misery of believing in a false gospel is really a misery like no other; in fact, it is pure agony. Our media is filled with sharp, well-meaning individuals who, without realizing, teach biblically flawed plans of salvation that are not even found in the bible. The ubiquity with which these accursed messages are currently flooding this world is unlike any other time in our history for one crucial reason: our enemy's time grows short and he desires to keep as many people as possible from understanding the simplicity of Christ's free gift of salvation. These flawed plans purport that sinners can reach heaven through their own merits, or by combinations of faith in Christ plus their own works and deeds. The purpose of this story is twofold: firstly, it is to help you to know beyond any doubt whatsoever the truth of what Christ says about the gift of salvation; secondly, it is to help arm you with the knowledge necessary for you to be able to detect what is perhaps the greatest weapon against mankind in the arsenal of our adversary: to con people into living the Christian lifestyle without ever being born again. With the aforementioned precepts firmly in mind, let us look at one man's story. A man who was led by his college professors to believe there was no God at all reached out to Him one day in complete desperation. This man began praying to God in hopes that He would help him. He both listened to and watched today's most popular Christian evangelists, trusting every word they spoke. Realizing his need to be born again, he followed the directives of these well-known pastors. The poor man asked Jesus into his heart, tried his best to turn from his sins, and he then crowned Christ as the Lord of his life. The man literally changed overnight. In the beginning, everything was perfect; in fact, it was all much more than he expected it to be. This man was getting prayers answered and he was getting returns on his tithes. This man began buying bibles for his friends, telling them about Christ, attending church, tithing, and even sending money to the pastors who had instructed him, but despite the visible changes in this man, he was not truly born again. Since the devil also has the power to do miracles, this man's faith had unknowingly been intercepted by an all-too-common counterfeit version of the gospel.

Shortly afterward, he began doubting his salvation. He asked Christ to come into his heart again. The next three years witnessed this miserable man asking Christ into his heart literally thousands of times yet still he never had biblical assurance of his salvation.

What exactly happened to this man? God reached out to him with the true gospel in its superlative simplicity. He was saved eternally the instant that he trusted on Christ alone to save him. I know this because I am, in fact, that same man to whom I have been referring. Christ's promise of eternal life is to everyone who believes His gospel message. He saves you forever the very instant you trust in Him.

Here is the gospel: God says that we are sinners and that no amount of good works or behavioral changes on our part could ever make us holy enough to enter heaven. God sent His Son to pay for all of our sins. Jesus paid for our crimes by dying on the cross for us all. His dead body was buried in a grave. On the third day, Jesus arose from the dead. The instant you believe this, He knows it

and He saves you. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life"(John 6:47). The free gift is based solely upon your trust in what Jesus did for you and has nothing at all to do with what you do for Him. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

02. Chapter 1: The Greats Have it Wrong

Chapter 1 The Greats Have It Wrong

First of all, thank you very, very much for expressing interest in this book! Some of you are going to learn many things about the bible that you may not have known, while for others, this book will serve as a much needed refresher of pertinent facts that may have been forgotten over the course of time. In any case, I welcome you with a sense of joyful anticipation about the wonderful truths from the bible that are about to unfold for you with every turn of a page. Whatever you do, please do not judge a chapter by its name; each chapter contains more than the title conveys. Please do not skip chapters, either, for they interweave amongst one another and, to a degree, complement each other in a way that is advantageous toward your learning. I will repeat many of the same verses from chapter to chapter in an effort to solidify deep within your mind many of the things that Christ says in the bible. My style of instruction involves some minor redundancy because in order for true learning to take place, whether the learning environment is visual, auditory or kinesthetic, the reinforcement is in the repetition of the objective study matter. In essence, the more you are exposed to Christ's truths, the more apt you are to remember them. The primary purpose of this book is four-fold: 1) to educate you about salvation, i.e., going to heaven, using the King James Version (KJV) of the bible, 2) to show you examples of what the bible says are false plans of salvation, 3) to compare and to contrast the salvation statements of several of today's top pastors and bible teachers with the salvation statements that are found in the bible, and 4) to allow you to make up your own mind as to whom you will choose to believe when it comes to where you will spend eternity. With these goals firmly in mind, let us now shift gears into some relevant initial material for you to digest, much like an appetizer before the main course.

So, who am I and how did all of this come about? On the night of November 14th, 2006, my mother approached me with the challenge of writing a book about what Christ said about salvation and revealing the false messages being taught by the "great preachers of our time." She said, "Mike, you need to let people know the 'real deal' about what Christ said about eternal life and how to get it." Immediately, something within me "clicked." I developed a tremendous burden to tell Christ's plan of salvation so that no one would be deceived. The dream of this book was born out of that burden.

Well, I think it would serve our purposes better if I start at the beginning. My name is Michael Bowen, I was born in Atlanta, Georgia, at South Fulton Hospital on May 8th, 1969, at 8:43am. I grew up in a loving family and we attended church every Sunday. South Atlanta was (and still is) a dangerous place. As such, my parents sent me to a well-known Christian academy in order to protect me from the influence of a degenerating society, yet they were completely unaware of the psychological and spiritual damage that the staff was having upon a large portion of the student body. A lot of good kids were harmed mentally, emotionally and spiritually at this school. The salvation that they taught was a form of works-based salvation that goes against the plan of salvation that Christ taught us in the bible. Their salvation was based solely upon behavioral

changes. Never once did I hear that Jesus died for my sins, was buried and rose from the dead and if I trusted Him alone as my savior I would go to heaven. Instead, we were told that if we listened to any popular music or told lies that it only proved that we were not saved and that we had to turn our backs on those sins and live right if we ever expected to get to heaven one day. It was a stifling, serious, psychologically oppressive, overly legalistic and thoroughly intimidating atmosphere in which most of us were “hammered over the head with a bible” and were in a heightened state of anxiety over the threat of being “spiritually probed” by our stern-eyed, inflexible teachers. I never learned math or algebra because I was too busy rehearsing what I might say if one of the staff decided to launch some form of psychological attack upon me. I believe I developed some irritating learning disabilities in that environment which I attempted to overcompensate for later in life by earning four college degrees.

Nevertheless, a hatred of the bible and anything or anyone associated with religion began to grow within me which later came to full fruition at the age of 21 while taking a philosophy class at a college in Dallas, Texas. This philosophy instructor debated the existence of God one day, and as he spoke, I could not believe my ears. Never before had I heard someone suggest that God did not exist. I, as well as many others, expressed anger toward this man, but for me, it was too late. Satan had planted his seeds in my mind using the tool of Greek philosophy. Before the semester was out I had become a full-fledged atheist. The day I became an atheist is one I will never forget. There was a terrible thunderstorm that day in Grand Prairie, Texas. I was so distraught, so overwhelmed with the idea that all of the pain I had endured at the Christian academy was all because the staff had believed in a non-existent “God,” as well as the pain of being rejected by the lady whom I thought I was to marry, I just began to fall apart on the inside. I mean, after all, God had never answered any of my prayers, I had lifelong friends who betrayed me, I didn’t seem to be going anywhere in my life, I couldn’t stand church and I detested the faith I had been reared in. Basically, everything seemed to be a crisis. So, I gave up. Then one day, after a series of arguments with a person who shall remain nameless, I went outside and stood under the Texas sky during a heavy downpour, rain soaking me completely wet, and lightening crashing all around. I began cursing God. It was on that day, during a thunderstorm in Texas, that I became a bitter, unhappy atheist. So, for the benefit of anyone reading this book who may have found themselves in similar circumstances where they may have walked away from God in total disgust, I just want you to know that I understand what you have been through, or perhaps what you’re going through at this very moment; I know what it means to hate God. I have openly cursed Him in my pain and in my ignorance. That was the year 1991. Let us skip by a major portion of my life and just fast-forward to the year 2001. I was hired straight into management within an international corporation. It was during this time that I lost a great deal of my naturally exuberant personality due to the sheer weight of the responsibilities that my job required of me, and because I was hired directly onto the managing team, I was without a clue of how the business operated. I struggled to learn each procedure. I didn’t know beans about computers. I had no idea how to help the regular workers who numbered into the hundreds out there in “cubical land.” Each day that I worked in that environment, a little piece of me died. My co-workers helped me very little. When I messed something up, it not only made me look bad in front of my peers, it made my boss look bad, too, and it made me feel terrible both as a human being and as an employee. After several months of this agony, a person was hired onto our team who would change the course of my life in two profound ways. Gil was his name, and a very unique individual he was. On casual days, he would

wear “Jesus T-shirts.” Since I was an atheist, I thought he was a first-class idiot for doing so, but because he was so full of laughter and because I felt at ease with him, I shrugged off the feelings of anger that “any mention of Christ” caused me. After a year of working at this corporation, our department got some bad news. We were being downsized. I was given the chance to do the same job in Tucson, Arizona, but I declined. Two weeks later I began taking computer programming classes over at the local college. In 2003, I earned my Associate in Applied Science degree in Computer Programming. That degree opened the door to my current job as an AS400 computer operator at our local hospital. One night, in late 2005, I found some articles written by Dr. Hank Lindstrom that freed me from so much of the bondage of counterfeit salvation. I then listened to Dr. Lindstrom’s sermon “How Permanent Is Your Salvation?” After hearing him preach Christ’s plan of salvation and after seeing in the bible for myself what Christ had said about it, I trusted Jesus alone, as my only hope of heaven.

There are some verses in the bible concerning salvation that simply cannot be dismissed or ignored... they simply will not go away. Neither the most stalwart arguments that can be forged against God’s plan of salvation nor the most brilliant minds of learned men and women who may engage in any sort of calculated opposition against the reality or the freeness of God’s gift of everlasting life through faith in Jesus Christ alone can win in a debate because all arguments against the free gift of salvation can be systematically dismantled and utterly destroyed using only a handful of verses. I will prove this very fact for you in every chapter of this book. My hope is that you will draw strength from this book, and to possibly understand the reasons for which I am now so driven to proclaim His truth about salvation. In a nutshell, I will tell you that it is because I have been both an atheist and a victim of today’s false plans of salvation. I am at eternal odds with the false, counterfeit messages of salvation-by-works that are taught from virtually every pulpit today, on every television channel, and on every Christian radio station; however, I am not at eternal odds with the individuals who preach these counterfeit messages. My heart literally goes out to all of them because they simply do not understand Christ’s plan of salvation. They have been lied to by a crafty enemy named Satan, whose sole aim is to take as many people with him to the lake of fire as he can possibly manage to steal away from God using a counterfeit plan of salvation that appears so real, so genuine, and so holy that few ever realize they have been deceived by it. Oh reader, so many of today’s professing Christians who think they are going to heaven when they die are not going to make it to heaven as they had assumed because they’ve been lied to by today’s error-filled gospel messages. Radical? Yes. But I am nonjudgmental toward the bearers of false messages; I am only judgmental toward the false plans of salvation they emphasize as being equal to the plan of Christ. There is only one plan of salvation in the bible; therefore, there cannot be two plans. The religious order of Jesus’ day hated Him, and they hated all who believed in Him. Why? Because Satan hates Him. And Satan hates us, too, both saved and unsaved alike. Satan hates people and wants them to share his punishment with him in the eternal lake of fire. Satan wants to drag as many people as possible with him into the lake of fire because he knows that God loves “people” more than anything else in the whole universe. What better way to do this than to gently deceive people into thinking they’re going to heaven by presenting them with a plan of salvation that sounds so right, looks so right, and feels so right, but each are as different from Christ’s only plan as the night is from the day, and no matter what plan it is, it will not save them, at all, unless they trust Jesus Christ as their only hope of heaven. Quite literally, the greats do have it wrong, but that is no fault of their own. My prayer is that many will see the truth of what Christ

says. Reader, you shall soon see that the best lies sound the most like the truth. Satan is to blame, not these good people you are about to meet in my book. Pay close attention to what each pastor or teacher says, and then compare it to what Jesus Christ says. You will then be more informed and better able to decide whether or not you will choose their plan of salvation or Christ's plan of salvation.

03. Chapter 2: The Plan Of Salvation According To Joel Osteen

Chapter 2 The Plan Of Salvation According To Joel Osteen

If you've ever had a bad day, or if you have lost hope, then listen to a message by Joel Osteen and I guarantee that you will be inspired by what he says. I have nothing but praise for this man, his positive messages of hope, and the tone of voice in which he delivers his thought-provoking words of comfort to those who really, really need a hand up in this dire world.

Joel Osteen is the pastor of Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, and his television shows can be seen most every day on a number of channels as well as on a number of Internet pages. Simply put, he is not hard to find. People really like him and seem to get a lot out of what he has to say. Me included. Osteen is perhaps the only real encourager out there, in my personal opinion, and your life can and will change if you listen to him. Before I was born again, I followed Mr. Osteen's teachings with great enthusiasm; in fact, I couldn't get enough of his teachings. From one show to the next, what he had to say made me feel so wonderful that I forgot all about the agony of not being sure of my eternal destiny. At the end of each show, Osteen would tell his audience that everyone needed to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and he instructed everyone to repent of their sins and to make Jesus their Lord and savior. He still teaches the same message today at the end of every service.

Now, in my case, as a result of watching Osteen and because I was so hungry to know for sure where I would spend my eternity, I did exactly what he said to do at the end of every show, which is to repent of sin, to ask Jesus into my heart, and to make Him both my Lord and my savior. I made up my mind to stop sinning to the best of my ability and to make Christ my Lord at the end of every show I watched, but it never worked. I was never born again according to the way Osteen said we had to be born again, but I was happier as a result because my opinion of myself changed, I was empowered, I felt better about who I was as a person, yet, had I died while believing in Osteen's plan of salvation, I would never have made it to heaven, according to the bible.

What is the problem, here? Does the problem arise from a mere lack of understanding of what Mr. Osteen says to do? Or could it be that what Mr. Osteen is telling us to do is not even found in the bible, at all? And what shall we use in order to determine the answers to such questions? For the answers to these questions, let us look at the Greek translation of the English word "repent" as well as look at some key verses about salvation in the bible; however, before we do this, I have to say on the authority of the Word of God (not my opinion) and with a very disappointed feeling in having to say these things about someone who has meant so much to me in the past, I can say most strongly that Mr. Osteen unknowingly provides an unbiblical, counterfeit plan of salvation to both the members of his church and to his world-wide audience at the end of every presentation and that I honestly believe that no one has ever explained to him how to be saved, and that he, like so many others in the Christian business, simply copy each others' plans of salvation in order to sound similar so as not to be seen as "different" from the mainstream. For these reasons, I have

chosen to write a chapter about Joel Osteen in order to show you that no matter how wonderful a person is, or how well they speak, or even how much comfort and encouragement they give, if what they say about salvation does not match with what Christ Himself has said concerning salvation, then, according to the bible, there is no light in them and they are not of God (Isaiah 8:20). They are, without realizing it, “the blind who lead the blind” according to Jesus’ own words, and they always end up falling into the ditch; yet, in the most disappointing sense, these spiritually blind teachers and followers of a counterfeit plan of salvation are the ones who end up standing before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgement after a lifetime of honestly trying their best to get their lives together, of trying their best to do the right thing, and of trying to live for Christ the best way they knew how to do. Their reward is not an eternity in heaven with the Lord they sought so longingly to live for; rather, according to Jesus Himself, their eternity will be one of endless suffering, loss, and torment because they trusted in works, i.e., in turning away from their sins and bad habits and in living the Christian Lifestyle in addition to faith in Christ as their means to enter into heaven rather than placing their trust alone (apart from works) in Jesus Christ’s death, burial and resurrection from the grave, the way Christ said to do, as their only hope of escaping eternal damnation. Osteen is not the enemy, folks, but Osteen is being “used” by the enemy to lead all who believe in a “different gospel” into a Christless eternity, and it is my firm belief that neither Osteen nor his followers understand the destination to where self-effort and Lordship Salvation will eventually take them, eternally. So, with a heavy heart, yet with tremendous hope in the power of God to show everyone what Christ says about salvation, let us now reason together using the anchor of God’s Word in comparison to what Osteen has to say regarding salvation, and maybe these bible truths contained in this chapter will cut through the satanic deceptions of Lordship Salvation as well as the erroneous definition of repentance that is adhered to by so many pastors today, and, as a result, will help to open everyone’s eyes to Christ’s truths, which, in case I’ve not said it enough already, is my true aim.

Joel Osteen is very inspiring. I watched several of his sermons in order to give you an informed chapter about him. I will paraphrase for you what he says in most of his sermons. For example, Osteen argues that we should understand that we are children of God, that we are winners made in God’s image. In one Internet broadcast (title unknown) he used the example of a new-born colt to explain how problems cannot effect our royal standing with God. The new-born colt that has trouble standing up upon his weak legs is not seen as a champion horse yet, but because of his bloodline, he will become a champion one day. Osteen often inserts little jokes between serious statements, and he is genuinely funny when he does. In most every sermon he will say that we should never believe lies about our weaknesses, that we should never dwell upon the mistakes we have made in life, and that God sees everyone as a champion. Self-image, meaning how you see yourself along with how God sees you, is very important. Osteen gives so many real-world examples that relate very well with bible principles, and they are very pleasing to hear as he tells them in story-like fashion. Osteen says that we are all “masterpieces” in God’s eyes, that we are not “average” and that He did not make a mistake when He made you and me. He says that even though people might push us down and give us a hard time, it is God who ultimately determines our destinies, not our adversaries. Osteen, just like Zig Ziglar, says that nobody can make us feel inferior unless we give them permission to do so. In fact, overcoming feelings of inferiority and insecurity are major themes in just about every sermon given by Osteen. And let me ask you, reader, who in their right minds doesn’t want to hear these positive things? What Osteen says is

wonderful and virtually all of it is, in fact, true and can be found in the bible. Everything except his plan of salvation, that is, and we are going to take a look at it in this next section.

Salvation, according to Joel Osteen, consists of having a “relationship” with Jesus Christ. In order to have a relationship with Jesus Christ, Osteen says we must 1) repent of sins, 2) ask Jesus into our hearts, 3) ask Him to wash us clean, and 4) “make Him” our Lord and savior.

Now, according to the bible, this is not how to go to heaven. What this is, however, is a blueprint for discipleship. More accurately, what we really need is a “savior.” When you become born again through faith alone in Christ, you are automatically in a “relationship” with Jesus Christ the very instant you trust in what He did for you by His death, burial and resurrection from the dead. To say that we need a relationship with Christ is not an accurate statement. We need salvation in order to escape the wrath of God, not a “relationship.” Osteen preaches our need for a discipleship-based relationship with Christ. Salvation is vastly different from discipleship in that discipleship requires hard work whereas salvation requires only your trust in the promise of everlasting life that Christ extends to all of us by His grace. Quite literally, Jesus saves you the instant you trust in what He did for you. Salvation is not what you do for God. Salvation is what God did for you and nothing of yourself (works) enters into the contract (Ephesians 2:8-9). Imagine you are about to buy a home. As you are about to sign the contract, you cross out the price and you insert a lower price. Will the seller of the home honor that contract? No, of course not. You have violated the terms of the contract. In the same way, a pastor who crosses out the terms of God’s contract and adds different terms to His contract, that contract is void. It will not stand.

What is free and available to all by grace through faith is hijacked by the addition of human efforts. In no way can a person’s good works and deeds be added to the contract. God will not honor such a contract, and if you die under the terms of your own works-based contract, which essentially makes you the “savior” and not Christ, you will stand before Him at the Great White Throne Judgement.

One of the reasons why Osteen’s plan of salvation is not biblical is due to the misuse of the word “repent.” The New Testament was written predominantly in the Greek language. The definition of the word “repent” in the Greek language is different from how it is defined in the English language. When Christ told people to repent He was telling them to “change their minds” about what they were currently believing in (works of the law) to get them into heaven and to instead trust in Him alone to get them into heaven. The Greek word for repent is “metanoia” which means “a change of mind” and has nothing at all to do with turning from sins. To consciously turn from your sins involves a great amount of self-effort and resolve. It takes effort to put down that bottle of alcohol. It takes effort to quit smoking cigarettes. It takes effort to quit a drug habit. It takes great efforts to not get angry at someone who has wronged you, or to stop lusting, lying, cheating, or to keep the Ten Commandments, etc. That, dear reader, is “works-based salvation” and goes against what Christ teaches, despite how wholesome and good it sounds. The English word repent, according to just about any English dictionary, means to “turn from sin...” or to “feel regret” or to “feel sorrow.” So, why do so many pastors use the English definition of repent rather than using the Greek meaning? Specifically, why does Osteen define repent as turning from sins when it, in fact, means to change your mind? The man who led me to trust Christ alone as my savior, Dr. Hank Lindstrom, argues that the word “metanoia” should have been brought into the English language either as it is

currently spelled and pronounced or by using transliteration, such as the Greek word for baptize is “baptizo” and was transliterated into English by removing the “o” and adding an “e” in its place. Ultimately, Satan is to blame for the misuse of the word repent. While the translators of the bible in the year 1611 failed to accurately define the word repent, the bible is still the infallible and inspired Word of God; however, to know the correct meanings of certain words, one must refer to a concordance that translates certain Greek words into their accurate English equivalents. Although Satan is to blame ultimately for the misuse and continued propagation of this word, and although the translators of the bible bear some share of the blame, as well, the real problem today is a lack of discipline on each pastor's part. Pastors today have failed to do the necessary work of rightly dividing God's Word. To “rightly divide” the bible, a pastor must know the original intent and meaning of certain Greek words, and every difficult verse of scripture must be interpreted in light of an easier one. For example, many cults and even many mainstream Christian churches today claim that Acts 2:38 says we must repent of our sins and get water baptized in order to be saved, but when this verse is rightly divided using other, more clear verses, such as John 3:16 or John 6:40, and when the Greek word for repent is used correctly, we know that Peter was telling the audience who had just crucified Christ that in order for them to be born again they had to “change their minds” about exactly who they had just crucified, that He was, in fact, the Messiah, and that if they trusted in Him alone they would be baptized “in the Name” of Jesus Christ, which meant that they would be “brought into His family” and has nothing at all to do with being immersed into water. What many people, as well as many cults, fail to understand is that the bible speaks of 10 different baptisms. Specifically, the bible speaks of the baptism of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11), the baptism of death (Matthew 20:22), the diverse baptisms of the Old Testament (Hebrews 9:10), the baptism of believers (Acts 8:36-39), the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11), the baptism of Jesus Christ (Matthew 3:15-17), the baptism of fire (Matthew 3:11), the baptism of Moses (1 Corinthians 10:2), the baptism of pots and pans (Mark 7:4) and the baptism in the Name (Acts 2:38). It is easy to misinterpret Acts 2:38 as being a water baptism” verse just as easily as it is to wrongly define repent using the English definition rather than the Greek definition; however, the unique thing about the Greek language is that virtually every word in the language is different and therefore each word is defined a little differently from every other word, however similar they might appear to be.

Essentially, no two words can be defined in the same manner. In a later chapter of this book, I will be defining three variations of metanoia for you to consider, yet, in virtually every case that Christ used the word repent, He was telling lost people to “change their minds” from their works to His grace. Grace is the absolute opposite of works. The two are as different as night and day according to Romans 11:6, which says, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” While this is definitely a brain teaser of a verse, it is quite clear that if salvation is by grace, then it cannot be of works, otherwise the definitions of both grace and works would be false. You cannot have grace if you attempt to be saved by your works, otherwise, grace would not be grace. If you attempt to be saved by your works, you will stand before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgement and all of your works will never be enough to get you into heaven. Why? Because nothing you could ever do in your lifetime would ever make you “as righteous as” Christ. You see, we must all be “as righteous as” God in order to enter into heaven. It is a place where there is no sin. The only thing that can “wash away” our sins is the blood of Christ. If you will think back with

me to when God used Moses to issue the plagues against Pharaoh, everyone who applied the blood of a lamb upon their door posts were spared from having a “death angel” kill the firstborn of their children. When the death angel saw the “blood” he passed over their home; however, when the death angel saw a house that had no blood upon the door post, he killed the first-born child in that home. In a similar way, today, when Christ sees His blood covering the sins of a believer, there is no judgement. There is no condemnation or a future in the lake of fire for the one who has “applied the blood” of Christ to themselves. While figuratively speaking, we do not actually dip His blood onto a cloth and cover ourselves with it. Instead, His blood washes our sins away the instant that we trust Him as our savior. He shed His blood upon the cross almost 2,000 years ago. Moses was saved by believing in what Christ “would do” for him in the future. Today, we are saved by believing in what Christ “already did” for us on the cross 2,000 years ago. And according to the scriptures, His dead body was buried in a grave, and three days later He arose from that grave. He laid His life down for our sins and He took it back up again. He did this for you and for me so that, upon believing in Him as our savior, as our only hope of heaven, He saves us in that instant, forever and forever.

Now, when a pastor uses the English version of repent rather than Christ’s version of repent which is based upon the meaning of the Greek translation, a form of “works” enters into the equation that subsequently nullifies the free gift of salvation. God will not accept our “works” when it comes to salvation. God only accepts the sacrifice of His Son as the payment for our sins and as the “ticket” for entering into heaven. While we are born sinners, Christ was without sin. We cannot help our condition anymore than a cheetah can remove his spots. Our works, no matter how honest and genuine they are, are considered as “filthy rags” in God’s eyes according to Isaiah 64:6, which says, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

If you think that works will help you, or if you think that “anything of self” will aid you in getting into heaven, or if any combination of faith in Christ plus your good deeds will count in God’s eyes, I want you to look very closely at this particular verse: “And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39). The “him” this verse is referring to is none other than Jesus Christ. In both of the aforementioned verses, we are told outright by the Holy Spirit who wrote the bible using the ink and scrolls of people that, under no circumstances whatsoever can our good deeds and righteous works (discipleship) be used as a bargaining chip. What is so deceptive in most all of today’s ministries is the ubiquitous and egregiously wrong usage of three of the most straight-forward verses in the bible concerning salvation: John 3:16 and Ephesians 2:8-9. John 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Ephesians 2:8-9 states, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

While I have yet to see Osteen use either of these verses in his sermons, although I am sure that he has used them at various points throughout his career as a pastor, the point I am trying to make here is that every pastor who uses these verses and then, at the end of their message, says you must repent of your sins, i.e., quit sinning, in order to be saved, is actually changing God’s contract by “adding works” to the clear plan of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone that each of these verses allude to or state emphatically as the only means by which we are saved. They will state

with strong conviction that no amount of human works can enter in to salvation, then quote Ephesians 2:8-9 and John 3:16 to strengthen their arguments, yet, they turn right back around and make it “mandatory” that you must exert the self-efforts necessary to turn from your sins (works) in order to go to heaven. Essentially, they are telling you to drive west when, in fact, you have asked them how to go east. They present salvation as a free gift and, when it comes time to “sign the contract” they add unbiblical demands to it. Why won’t anyone stand up to them? Why are people so afraid to question a pastor’s teachings? Is it even biblical to question someone who teaches the bible? Should we question the teachings of today’s pastors even though they are held in such high esteem and are seemingly above reproach? Yes!

Christ told us to test them, to see whether or not they speak according to His Word. Christ said that many will come in His Name, agreeing that Jesus is the Messiah, yet, they will deceive many.

Jesus said this, “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many”(Matthew 24:4-5). Reader, you have to choose to believe the bible rather than in what men or women might tell you. Christ “cannot” lie, but men and women in today’s Christian businesses will lie to you for their own financial gain and sense of power; however, I do not believe Osteen is guilty of such things. I believe he is sincere in what he is doing. For example, Osteen asked his audience in one of the sermons I watched recently that if your heart stopped beating and if you were to die, where would you spend eternity, etc., and stated that he was not there to condemn anybody but that everybody needed a “relationship” with Jesus Christ. Osteen said that in order to have a relationship with Jesus Christ we must repent (turn) of our sins and essentially make Christ the “Lord of our lives.” In this particular sermon Osteen asked members of his audience to stand up and to make their decision public as he led them in his version of the salvation prayer, implying that if they did not stand up in his service that Christ would be ashamed of them before His Father, yet, as oblivious as he and his followers are, this “act” of standing up and making a public decision is yet another “good work” that cancels out God’s grace in terms of salvation because it is yet one more instance of “something of self” that both Acts 13:39 and Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly state as being wrong. When you look at John 3:16, the very words of Christ to Nicodemus who asked Him how he could be born again, notice where Christ said “whosoever believeth in Him...” and ask yourself why would Christ leave out “and repent of your sins” or “make it public” or any other combination of good works you can imagine. Did Christ lie to Nicodemus? Is Christ lying to us, today, through this verse? Of course not. When Christ said to someone that he or she had to “believe” in Him, He was always referring to the fact that He was the one who would pay for the sins of the world through His death on the cross, that He would be buried for three days, and that He would rise from the dead. The Greek word for “believe” is “pisteuo” which means “to trust.” When we “trust” that Christ paid for our sins by His death, burial and resurrection from the dead, He saves us. How? Because He knows all of our thoughts. He knows every single thing you are thinking at this very moment. He even knows the content of your dreams as you sleep. He knows every star and planet in the universe by name. He knows every process of every molecule and atom in His creation. He knows every single thing about “every single thing.” God knows the “instant” that you trust in His Son, Jesus Christ, to save you, and when you do, He saves you. He “knows” whether or not you have trusted Jesus as your savior.

Notice how I use “God” and “Christ” interchangeably. The reason I do this is because Jesus said that He and the Father are “one” and that if you have seen Him you have also seen the Father. That throws a lot of people off. What I tell people to do is to think of God as they would think of an egg. An egg has three basic parts, essentially. An egg has 1) a shell, 2) a white, and 3) a yolk. Although it has three basic parts, it is still “one egg.” Similarly, we have 1) God the Father, 2) God the Son of Solomon 3:1-11) God the Holy Spirit. While they are three unique personalities, God is still “one God.” When Jesus Christ took on human flesh, He was literally “God in a body.” Christ “is” God. That is why He was able to say to the disciple(s) that if they had seen Him (Christ) that they had also seen the “Father.” They are not three different “gods.” God is “one God” who chooses to express Himself through three distinct “persons” who perform different duties. For instance, the Holy Spirit convicts people of their need for salvation, and Christ makes intercession for us to the Father. Therefore, I use both God and Christ interchangeably when I speak of salvation because both are the same. Christ was, and is, literally God in a human body, according to the bible. The egg example is a good way to remember the fact that God is “one” God and not three individual “gods” comprising some joint force.

Nevertheless, when Osteen says we must make Christ both our “Lord” and our “savior,” we are being told that works of “discipleship” are necessary in order to go to heaven. You see, Christ is your “Lord” when you choose to serve Him. As far as salvation is concerned, Christ said that He must be your “savior,” not your “Lord.” Christ calls people to salvation, but He does not call everyone to be a disciple. He leaves that choice up to you, but make no mistake, once you become His, you cannot live as you please.

Salvation is free, but He will interfere in your life if you live disobediently. Still, He never demands that you become a disciple, but if you live in gross sin, He will step in and correct you. What is so sad about today’s brand of Christianity is that most every pastor you can name will make discipleship a necessary part of salvation, yet, to do so is not scriptural. It voids the salvation contract that God wants to make with you.

You see, you can be a “disciple” and never be “saved.” For example, look at Judas, the one who betrayed Christ. Judas was a “follower” of Christ. In every sense of the word, Judas was a disciple. Judas followed Christ as “his Lord.” Yet, Judas never believed on Christ as his “savior.” Judas is not in heaven today despite the fact that he followed Christ, was a disciple of Christ, lived with the other apostles and did virtually everything that Christ told him to do. My point, in terms of Osteen’s plan of salvation, is that you can quit sinning and follow Christ as your Lord for the rest of your life but still end up in the eternal lake of fire because you wrongly assumed that what Osteen told you concerning salvation was the truth. What Osteen says about salvation is far from the truth; in fact, it is the direct opposite of truth. On the other hand, you can be a believer and not do a single thing for Christ as long as you live and still go to heaven. Take Abraham and Lot, for example. Abraham lived for God and he was blessed. Lot chose to live for himself and he died in misery and in failure. Both men were born again. Both men are in heaven, today. Abraham amassed great reward, while Lot received nothing because he chose to live his life apart from God.

“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Again and again, Christ makes the condition for a person’s salvation dependent upon belief (trust) alone in Himself. Nowhere in the bible does Christ say that making

Him “your Lord” or quitting sins and bad habits is ever necessary to attain the free gift of everlasting life, yet, pastors such as Osteen and all of the rest make works — the very same works that Christ Himself condemns outright — a necessary part of salvation. Truly, I do not believe Osteen understands that his plan of salvation is different from the plan of salvation that God offers through faith alone in His Son, Jesus.

If Joel Osteen understood the simplicity of salvation that is found in Christ alone, and then taught Christ’s way of salvation instead of man’s way, we would see an explosion of salvation the likes of which the world has never seen! But will satanic blindness of scriptures or perhaps pride keep a pastor from being saved and then admitting to the world that he was wrong about salvation all along? Maybe. Or would the world embrace such a pastor and then believe on Christ alone? I tell you the truth, if any unbelieving pastor gets born again the way Jesus said to do, that pastor would be favored by God in so many wonderful ways that it would defy description; however, Satan is not about to allow that to happen. Although his power is limited, Satan will cause a pastor to be so concerned with his image and standing in society that even if an unbelieving pastor got born again, he may never admit this to his audience for fear that he would lose his credibility, his salary, his position, and maybe even his wife.

Osteen is so wonderful, in every way, and when I’m not feeling well or if I need some encouragement, I must admit that I enjoy tuning in to his show on occasion because the fact is that he is virtually the only positive in a world of religiously dead negatives out there today, and although what he says about salvation is totally wrong according to Christ, he is still an invigorating fellow to watch. If Osteen would simply trust Christ alone as his savior, and fully trust on what Christ did for him through His death and resurrection from the grave, Christ would save him. And from his already successful platform, he could literally change the world by giving it the pure plan of salvation that actually saves people instead of having them trust in both Jesus partially and in discipleship partially, essentially making them followers of a counterfeit gospel who will never reach heaven. I am praying for Osteen. I am praying to this end, for the glory of God and for the eternal well-being of everyone who comes in contact with Osteen whether it is by television, radio, book or meeting. Osteen is so gifted, such a joy to watch, but my heart goes out to him and to everyone who simply cannot see that salvation is by trust alone in what Jesus Christ the savior did for us by His death and subsequent resurrection from the dead.

What will salvation according to Joel Osteen get you? Jesus says this is what it will get you:

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”(Matthew 7:21-23). But it doesn’t have to be this way! Look what Jesus says to us, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47). Christ is very, very clear about his trust-alone requirement. Christ cannot lie. He will never hide truth from you and He will never deceive you. Christ says “no works.” But Osteen says “works.” I will leave the choice as to which of these two plans of salvation you will place your faith in up to you, friend. My job is to point you to Jesus. The rest is up to Him. He seeks and He saves those who are lost. Had He not sought me, I would never have been delivered from my unbelief. I was not looking for

Christ. Instead, He came looking for me, but when He did, Satan gave me a counterfeit version of the gospel that caused me never to be born again. God allowed this to happen, I feel, so that He could use me to help you know the difference between real salvation and false salvation. He will save you, too, just as He saved me the instant I believed that He died for me and rose from the grave as the full payment for my sins, without any behavioral changes or promises to serve Him. Those discipleship aspects of the “relationship” with Christ come “after” we are born again. Never does the bible say or imply that we must follow Him in obedience and live our lives for Him in order to be saved. Those who say that we must follow Him and commit our lives to Him as a condition of being saved are reading the bible incorrectly and they are skipping past the parts of the bible that state clearly that we are born again only by trusting in Jesus alone. Even though I sin, daily, and so do you, when we trust Christ alone as our savior we are seen positionally as sons and daughters of Christ. Osteen says we are all children of God, but this is not true. Yes, God is our creator, but we are only His children if we trust Jesus as our savior. When saved, we are seen by Him as sinless even though we still sin. The Holy Spirit helps us to overcome sins in our lives, but we will never be fully sin-free in this life because we inhabit sinful bodies that were born with sinful natures. Although believers have God’s new nature in them, we still possess that old, sinful nature that we received at birth. Because we are what we are — sinners — we cannot “change” what we are by any amount of good works we can do. That’s precisely why we need a “savior.” We cannot, cannot, cannot save ourselves. We are helpless. Christ knew this, and He died for us and rose again from the grave to secure a place for you and for me in heaven if we trust Him. You see, Christ credited me with His righteousness and I, just like all believers, am seen by God as His own. Once Christ credits your account with His righteousness, He no longer sees you as a dead sinner bound for the lake of fire. He sees you as His child, and from His grip nothing can ever remove you. He keeps you saved — not your works or discipleship. In sum, you will either choose to believe what Osteen says about salvation, or you will choose to believe what Christ has said about salvation. While it is my great hope that you will choose what Christ says over what men say, as with every chapter about salvation in this book, the choice is up to you; however, if you fail to choose the one-and-only plan that the bible talks about, this is what you can expect to happen to you:

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”(Revelation 20:11-15).

04. Chapter 3: The Greats Have it Wrong

Chapter 3 The Plan Of Salvation According To Charles Stanley

At the time this chapter was written, In Touch Ministries had (and may still have) an Internet page called the “God Quiz.” Using the information on the God Quiz, let us examine Charles Stanley’s viewpoints on what the bible has to say about salvation.

Dr. Stanley starts by asking the question of how well each of us really knows God. He then tells readers of his page that God loves them, that God wishes to have a personal relationship with them, and that our heavenly Father has a special plan for everyone’s lives. Stanley then supports his assertion of God having a special plan for everyone by providing a scripture from the New Living Translation version of the Bible — Jeremiah 29:11 — which states, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the LORD, ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’” Again, Stanley puts great emphasis on letting readers know that God wants a relationship with each of us.

Next on the agenda is where Stanley informs his readers about the barrier of sin that stands between God and mankind. Stanley refers to a slightly reworded New Living Translation version of the Bible when he states Romans 3:23 as his proof text concerning the fact that we are all sinners. “For all [that means us!] have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard.” Stanley also refers to Romans 6:23, which is a key verse in any witnessing attempt; however, he does not write this verse out for readers to see. Rather, he tells readers that the punishment for sin is death in hell, and that no matter how hard we try, we cannot save ourselves or earn our way into heaven. I want you, the reader, to lock on to this assertion that Stanley just made in that last statement (although I am paraphrasing it): “...that no matter how hard we try, we cannot save ourselves or earn our way into heaven...” By keeping this statement firmly in your mind as you progress onward in this chapter, I will explain how the plan of salvation according to Charles Stanley is different from the plan of salvation that Jesus taught. I will say this in his favor — Stanley is correct in telling us that no matter how hard we try, we cannot save ourselves or earn our way into heaven; however, as you will soon see, Stanley’s plan of salvation goes through a process of metamorphosis. In Stanley’s version, salvation goes from being something we cannot earn or merit to being something that we, in fact, must earn by both following Christ in discipleship and by adhering to Christ’s Lordship over our lives. Essentially, he tells you “one thing” up front, and in the end, he changes the terms of God’s plan to reflect “another thing” altogether by combining human works with God’s grace in a way that is so subtle that few people ever come to the realization that they have, in fact, violated Christ’s plan of salvation by the inclusion of their own self efforts. Christ will flat-out refuse to take into consideration any self efforts on our part when it comes to a person’s salvation. Essentially, it is the equivalent of me showing up at your birthday party with a gift. I give you the gift and you receive it with joy and thankfulness. Then I hold out my hand and tell you, “That will be \$25.00, please.”

Commercial advertisements used to take advantage of a form of deception known as bait and switch.

Now banned by law, the bait and switch tactic involved the advertisement of a certain item that sounded very reasonable and good; however, when you arrived at the place of business to buy your item, you were informed that the item in question was either not in stock or was no longer available.

Instead, the seller would try to convince you to buy another item. This method of operation was, at its core, a calculated plan of deception intended to bilk more money out of the customer. In a similar fashion, although I don't believe he realizes he is doing so, Stanley offers you the free gift of salvation through faith alone in Christ, but later makes the surrender of your life to Christ (becoming a disciple) an essential element in your salvation. To make this ever more clearer for you to understand, let us assume that you want to buy a new Ford Mustang car that a dealer has been advertising during every commercial break on television as being overstocked in number and that he must sell them all immediately or he will go out of business. You are in love with this brand new car with the V6 engine, sunroof, and other opulent amenities that you have been seeking, you have saved your money, and now you are ready to take the plunge and indulge yourself with this luxurious new sports car. When you arrive at the dealership, you are told that there are no Ford Mustangs fitting the description of the commercial you watched on television only an hour before you arrived to buy one. The seller then directs your attention to a brand new Ford Mustang Boss GT with a V-8 engine that costs far more than the car you had originally set your sights upon. Disappointed beyond your ability to cope, the seller launches a carefully rehearsed speech in an attempt to persuade you into buying the more expensive car because you deserve the best. Little do you know, that morning the owner of the dealership had all of the less expensive Ford Mustangs removed from the lot. You do not realize that you have been lied to deliberately by the dealership in order for them to con you out of your money by getting you to buy the more expensive option. Fed up with the hassle of it all, and convinced you are deserving of a much pricier model, you sign the contract and drive off in your new dream machine. Later, as you realize you cannot afford the insurance payments, as well as the other hidden fees, then you must pay for upkeep and maintenance such as new brakes, new tires, oil changes, etc., and you begin to struggle to make other household payments as a result of so much money going for your new car, you start to become disheartened with your decision and you regret the decision you made to purchase that wonderful machine that held so much promise because now, as you drive by that car lot, it is filled with those V-6 options that you had originally wanted all along. You realize, eventually, that you were lied to, and an awful feeling of being conned into something you didn't want in the first place begins to take control of your thoughts, but you are still bound by the contract you signed, you cannot get out of it, and in disgust you resign yourself to a mentality of victimhood. The dealer won, he got your money, and you lost because of your ignorance over the deceitful bait and switch tactic employed by a dishonest salesman. Please, reader, keep this new Ford Mustang scenario in your mind as you proceed onward in your reading, not just in this chapter, but in every subsequent chapter, as well. In the middle of the God Quiz, Stanley says that God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins and that three days later He came back to life from the dead. Stanley inserts a link to the verse Romans 5:8, but it is not written out for the reader to see.

Stanley then provides the verse John 14:6, which says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me." After the insertion of this verse, Stanley says specifically that in order to both reach God and to go to heaven upon your death, you must accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

Now, because of the potential for copyright violations, I will paraphrase the gospel according to Charles Stanley which is available for all to see on the In Touch Website under the heading of "Are You Sure Of Your Salvation?" Stanley's plan of salvation goes like this: If you want to accept Jesus as your savior then you must pray and admit the fact to God that you are a sinner, that you must believe that Jesus died to pay for your sins on the cross, that He came back to life, and then you must obligate yourself to His rule by transferring control of your own life over to the control of Jesus.

Stanley then goes on to say that everyone who has prayed this prayer has just now begun a new relationship with God and that you will "definitely" go to heaven. Lastly, he asks that if you have just made the "decision to follow Jesus Christ" to please let his organization know about it. This is all particularly painful for me. For the record, there is perhaps no other pastor whom I have loved more than Dr. Charles Stanley. I followed his teachings diligently. I recorded all of his sermons on my VCR for several years, never missing one. I purchased virtually every tape and compact disc of his that talked about how to be saved. I gave over 10 percent of my income to In Touch Ministries without fail. Thousands and thousands of my dollars went to support his ministry. After my entire department at the corporation I worked for was laid off due to downsizing, I would still take money out of savings and give toward Stanley's work because I believed so much in him and in what he taught; however, the purpose of this chapter is not to question the integrity of this wonderful man or his ministry, or to judge him personally. The purpose of this chapter is to compare Charles Stanley's plan of salvation to the plan of salvation that Christ gives to us in the bible. You, the reader, must decide whether or not Charles Stanley is right and Jesus Christ is wrong, or if Jesus Christ is right and Charles Stanley is wrong because, although extremely similar, their individual messages do not match. Both cannot be the true gospel; therefore, we can logically conclude that one of them is wrong, for according to the bible, there is only "one gospel."

Keith Vitali is the most amazing karate expert I have ever seen. He is known worldwide for his lightening speed and his incredible enthusiasm for American karate. He was inducted into the Black Belt Hall of Fame and is considered one of the best-ever martial artists in the world. When I was a child, I had the privilege of earning several belts under his instruction at a karate school owned by Joe Corley (another karate expert in his own right) located on the outskirts of Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Vitali would demonstrate for us how to execute proper defensive and offensive techniques. We, as a class, would sit awestruck as he showed us the many kicks, punches and blocks in his arsenal. To this day, I have never seen his equal, and although I took lessons from him 30 years ago, I can still recall with vivid clarity the perfection of his movements. Sparring, or pretend fighting, was necessary for us in order to learn how to use the techniques in real-world situations. At first, I was terrified of having to spar with an opponent, but Mr. Vitali's constant encouragement and praise of each of us began to extinguish my fears of having to face one of my classmates in mock combat. Eventually, I took to sparring the way a duck takes to water after my first victory over a much larger opponent. It was during class one evening that Mr. Vitali paired me up with a much larger student. This fellow had a height advantage over me of at least two feet and

weighed at least 50 pounds heavier than me. Mr. Vitali stayed to my left and watched us both with a careful eye. He told me to look for an opening in my opponent's defenses and to not be afraid of sticking a properly executed sidekick into that opening.

Because he was there with me, and because I trusted him completely, I lost my fear and began focusing upon what he told me to do. As my opponent lunged toward me he, without realizing, opened his defensive posture just a bit in order to throw a left jab at me. In a flash, I let loose a right-legged sidekick that slipped in between his forearms and landed squarely on his ribs before his jab even reached me halfway. My opponent grimaced in pain and gave me a very confused look. Mr. Vitali stepped in immediately and praised me in a manner that I will never forget because of what he had just seen me do. As a result of following his instructions, I was victorious. Mr. Vitali has said on numerous occasions that a properly executed technique has all the power and speed necessary when it comes to fighting, that, essentially, the technique itself will do the work for you and that you don't have to strain in order to achieve more power and speed. Now, how does this scenario of my karate instructor and me tie in with the plans of salvation according to both Charles Stanley and Jesus Christ?

Simply put, there is a right way and a wrong way of doing things. When you do the right thing, you win. When you do the wrong thing, you lose. Salvation is as black-and-white as the night is from the day. A false gospel is the direct opposite of the true gospel. Because I trusted Jesus Christ as my savior the way He said to do, I am a winner because I have believed upon what He said we must believe in order to be an eternal winner; conversely, when you trust another gospel, such as Charles Stanley's gospel, you have not done what Christ said to do. You have, instead, done what Charles Stanley told you to do. When you trust man's plan of salvation, you have not trusted in Christ's plan; therefore, you are an eternal loser. When Charles Stanley says that in order to be saved you must give control of your life over to Christ in order to be saved, he is giving you an "extra step" that is not found in the bible. Stanley is requiring something of you that Christ never spoke about when it comes to salvation. What Stanley is requiring of a lost person is that they become a disciple in addition to faith in Christ in order to go to heaven. This is a "works-based" plan of salvation that will not save a lost person from God's wrath, and therefore it is a false gospel according to the bible. While I love Charles Stanley and will always speak well of him, the plan of salvation that he teaches is not the same one that Christ teaches us in the bible. I would like to give you some choice verses for you to consider. One of my favorites is 1 Thessalonians 4:14. Examine carefully, if you will: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

While the Holy Spirit is explaining to us through the writing of Paul the reality of the rapture in this particular chapter of 1Thessalonians, specifically how those saved persons who have died and whose bodies are presently in graves (yet their spirits are with God right now) will be resurrected first when He descends from heaven and into the clouds to receive both the dead and the living into His care, I want you to focus solely upon the salvific aspect of this magnificent verse. Within this verse, the gospel message is presented with complete clarity. Look carefully at where it says "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again..." because, in a nutshell, that is the true gospel that saves a lost soul from eternal damnation. By implication we, as bible scholars, realize the unstated significance of the fact that He died "for our sins" when this verse says "Jesus died..." Christ, with His own blood, paid for our sins by His death. He was buried in a grave. Three days

later He rose from the dead. This verse is telling us in no uncertain terms “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again...” we will be “bodily resurrected” and shall live in heaven with Him for eternity whether we are dead or alive at the time of the rapture. Now, because we currently inhabit sinful, mortal bodies that will not last forever, Christ is going to give both dead and living believers “new bodies” at the rapture that will last eternally in perfect health. Despite this glorious fact of receiving new bodies that will never age or become ill, the true glory of 1 Thessalonians 4:14 is its reference to the clear, unpolluted gospel of Jesus Christ that saves a lost person through simple faith in the fact that Christ paid for our sins by His death and resurrection and that death itself is nothing more than a doorway to His presence.

Most everyone reading this book has seen the verse John 3:16 before; however, I will explain this verse for those who have never seen it before. Once, I witnessed to a man who belongs to one of the many Christ cult churches. I asked him if he knew the verse John 3:16, and what he quoted to me was a different version of the verse that added works to Christ's plan of salvation. When I heard him tell me that Christ said to believe and to exercise faith in doing good deeds, performing various works of righteousness and in being a disciple in order to avoid being destroyed, I almost fell on the floor in disbelief over how badly mangled that verse had become in his church. As a result of this, I always make it a point now to carefully present the verse from the only bible that we can trust — The King James Version of the bible. John 3:16 is as follows: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Examine the words of Christ very carefully: “...that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” The additional step that Charles Stanley includes in his plan of salvation, where he talks of giving control of your life over to Christ, is not found in this verse. This verse is so straight forward in terms of the gift of everlasting life being given to the one who believes in Christ alone that to misunderstand its simplicity can only be attributed to the deliberate obscurement of demonic powers. The demonic forces at work that have twisted the meaning of this verse to read in other ways that render it useless in terms of salvation is the equivalent of one who multiplies two times two and says it equals 59. It is the equivalent of asking for directions to New York City and receiving instead directions for Dallas, Texas. When any pastor or teacher adds discipleship or works of righteousness to Christ's plan of salvation, then their version is corrupt and will not save a lost person from God's wrath. The person believing in a false gospel will stand before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgement and he or she will have no grace, no mercy, and no hope — forever. So, reader, let me ask you point blank: Did Christ say to believe in Him (His death, burial and resurrection from the dead) plus join the church? Did He say believe and be water baptized? Did He say believe and make Me the Lord of your life? Did He say believe and preach in My Name? Did He say believe and do works of healing? Did He say believe and do many wonderful works? Did He say believe and tithe? Did He say believe and surrender your life and will over to Him? Did He say believe and feel extremely sorry for your sins? Did He say believe and forsake your sins? Did He, friend? No. The only requirement Christ makes of a lost person to go to heaven is to believe in Him, which, in the context of the third chapter of John, means that we trust His death, burial and resurrection from the dead as our only hope of reaching heaven. Christ alone paid the price for our sins. He neither needs nor requires our efforts to help obtain our salvation. Look closely at Hebrews 1:3, “Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his

person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:" This verse proves that Christ "by himself" paid for our total sin debt. In light of these arguments, one may ask what God's will is for us in terms of being born again. Jesus told Nicodemus in John chapter three that he had to be "born again" in order to go to heaven. But, in addition to 1 Thessalonians 4:14 and John 3:16, is there a succinct verse that shows us God's will concerning how we are to be saved? Yes! Look at John 6:40 in which Christ Himself is speaking: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." By "seeth the Son" Christ means that we are to recognize Him as the Messiah, the one who would lay down His life, shed His blood, die and rise again from the dead to secure salvation for "anyone" who would believe in Him. Again, we see from Christ Himself that the only requirement for a lost person to enter heaven is for him or her to believe on Christ alone for the gift of everlasting life; however, Charles Stanley adds an aspect of "human efforts" or "something of self" via the inclusion of discipleship in his plan of salvation when he says we must trust Christ as "Savior" and as "Lord" and "give control of our lives" to Christ.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." That is Ephesians 2:8-9. Do you see where it says "Not of works" in this verse? Do you see where it says "not of yourselves" right after it states most clearly that you are saved by grace through faith? How then could any pastor or teacher add discipleship to Christ's plan of salvation when Christ Himself does not? The bible is clear that Jesus Christ alone is the "savior." How then can a pastor or teacher also demand that we make Christ the "Lord of our life" in addition to faith in His death, burial and resurrection from the dead? Did Christ tell anyone to make Him their "Lord" in order to be saved? No, He did not. Nor did He ever imply such a thing in terms of salvation. What is so scary about adding works, discipleship or "Lordship" to Christ's plan of salvation is that every pastor and teacher ignores Christ's stern warning about what will happen to those who have placed their faith in "Lordship/Discipleship salvation." According to Christ, this is the fate of those so deceived:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

You may read this sad passage for yourself in Matthew 7:21-23.

Christ is showing us that many acknowledge His "Lordship" when you read "Lord, Lord," in this passage. They recognize Christ "as Lord," but they have not done "the will of the Father" that has been clearly established in the verse John 6:40, which is for us to trust in His Son for everlasting life rather than in our faith plus discipleship. Christ tells of the major areas of service these lost people have performed in His name. In today's terms, they have preached, witnessed, handed out pamphlets, etc. in His name. They have healed sicknesses, diseases, and have even exorcised demons out of people in His name. They have done all manner of inexhaustible good works and extraordinary deeds of goodness and righteousness in His name, but because they did not trust in His death, burial and resurrection from the dead, i.e., "the will of the Father" according to John

6:40, He says to them, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

You can invite Christ into your heart and life, you can make Him the Lord of your life, your will, your bank account, etc. You can preach, teach and hand out tracts, etc. You can perform a plethora of amazing and wonderful works of righteousness, etc. You can pray, join the church, read your bible, etc., yet still end up in the lake of fire for all eternity despite it all if you fail to do the will of the Father, which is to trust Jesus Christ alone for your salvation by trusting totally and completely in the fact that He paid for every sin you would ever commit in your lifetime (past, present, future) by His death and subsequent resurrection from the grave three days later. God's gift to you for placing your trust in His Son is the free gift of everlasting life in heaven.

"...He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son (1 John 5:10-11). When we attempt to be saved by placing partial faith in Christ and partial faith in our works, we are essentially calling God the Father a liar. God will not accept our works in any shape, manner or form in terms of salvation. Acts 13:39 states that, "And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." If you choose a different plan of salvation than the one that Jesus Christ offers, you will be cast into the lake of fire:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"(Revelation 20:11-15). In sum, no combination of good works plus faith in Christ can save a lost person from the lake of fire. No matter how sincere you are before God, partial faith in Christ and partial faith in the Christian Lifestyle will not save you. Only faith alone (apart from your good works) in the finished work of Jesus Christ will save you.

Either Charles Stanley is right and Jesus Christ is wrong, or Charles Stanley is wrong and Jesus Christ is right. Whom do you choose to believe, this day?

05. Chapter 4: The Plan Of Salvation According To Pat Robertson

Chapter 4 The Plan Of Salvation According To Pat Robertson

Before I cross swords with Pat Robertson on doctrinal issues in this chapter, I would first like to provide you with the necessary background concerning his world-wide ministry, most of which can be seen for yourself on the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) Website. CBN's programming reaches approximately 200 countries via cable and satellite connections and operates a 24-hour telephone prayer line. Their popular show, The 700 Club, has been shown on television uninterrupted since 1966.

I used to watch the show every day and I loved it. They talk about everything from the news, to food, to current events, to fashion, to health, and it is done with a mixture of professional decorum and genuine warmth and laughter. The folks at CBN are really wonderful people who provide a good service in terms of information and entertainment, but when it comes to the issue of a person's salvation, there are some points that I would like to raise in an effort to get you to both compare and to contrast for yourself the differences between what Christ has to say and what Pat Robertson has to say. The purpose of this chapter is just that — to provide you with both the gospel according to Christ and the gospel according to Pat Robertson; afterward, you can make up your own mind as to whom you will believe when it comes to your eternal destiny. At this point, let us now go to the CBN Website and click on "Do You Know Jesus?" and analyze Pat Robertson's stance on salvation.

Upon reaching the home page of the CBN Website, the predominant item of choice for your consideration is this gold-colored phrase that asks "Do You Know Jesus?" When this phrase is clicked (at the time this chapter was written) with your mouse you are taken to a page entitled "Spiritual Life" and are presented with a set of four spiritual concepts. I will list them in their correct order. My job, in this case, is to present an initially fair and unbiased look at the original source of information that Pat Robertson presents to the public-at-large and then compare and contrast it with what Jesus Christ says. Again, this is salvation according to Pat Robertson and it is located on the CBN Website for public consumption; however, because of potential copyright issues I will paraphrase what they say.

Under the first heading you will see an assertion that says God loves you and that He wants you to get to know Him and that He wants to bless you (Romans 5:1, John 3:16, John 10:10). It then asks the question of why it seems like so many people are angry or hurting if, after all, God meant for us to have a really blessed life with much peace. The reader then moves to step two. Within this category a statement is made about how God did not make us to be like robots without the freedom of choice, that He gave us free will, that He made us in His own image, that He wants our lives to be filled with much joy, but that we all disobey God because we are willfully sinful and that the gap between us and God can never be bridged by our own efforts. In solemn resolve, step two ends by telling the reader that there is only one way to reach God.

Step three explains the remedy and asserts boldly that Jesus is the only answer to our problems, that He died for us and came back from the dead and that we must make a choice. That leads us to the fourth and last step in the sequence, in which Pat Robertson says we must give ourselves to Christ by trusting Him to forgive us and that we must obey Him for the rest of our lives in order to know Him and to find that peace that everyone is looking for in life. This fourth category ends with this three-step process on how Pat Robertson says we are supposed to give our lives to Christ: first, he says we admit that we are sinners and that we need God's forgiveness; second, we must believe Jesus died on the cross and that He came back to life; third, he says we must confess through prayer that Jesus is the only way to God and that we must promise to live the rest of our lives for Him.

Now, at the bottom of the screen, you are given the choice of whether or not you would like to give your life to Christ right now. When you click upon "yes" you will be taken to a page that presents you with a prayer that mentions all four of those aforementioned steps. When you watch the 700 Club show on television, Pat Robertson, or his son, Gordon, or co-host Terry Meeuwsen will, without fail, present their version of salvation during each episode. The first thing you will notice is a genuine sense of care in their voices and in their facial expressions. Without any doubt at all, it is a pleasure to see the warmth and honesty of their countenances and to hear what they have to say. When I was unsure of my salvation I would be so comforted as they told me of God's love and of how much He desires to have a relationship with me that I hardly ever missed a show. I did exactly what they told me to do, too. I asked Jesus into my heart, I asked Him to forgive me, and I truly did my best to live for Him through what I thought was the power of the Holy Spirit; however, as warm and as caring as these people are, and as heart touching as their plan of salvation truly sounds, it is not the gospel of the bible and I was never born again as a result. In fact, nobody has ever been born again by believing in the plan of salvation presented by the 700 Club because their gospel is different from the gospel presented by Christ in the bible. Since both cannot be the gospel, one of them is wrong and falls under the curse that is mentioned in the book of Galatians. Specifically, I would like to draw your attention first to Galatians 1:6-8, which states, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." What the Holy Spirit is saying through Paul in these verses is that false plans of salvation are crafty and that they lead people away from the true plan of salvation that can save them once and for all. We learn that these other gospels actually pervert or pollute the true gospel of Jesus Christ. We are told that any person with whom we cross paths or even an angel from heaven who teaches any other form of salvation than that which Paul and the other apostles taught is, in fact, giving us an accursed message that cannot save a lost person from death and eternal separation from God. But how do we know what plan of salvation Paul taught to us? Let us look at what Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer who asked how he might be saved in Acts 16:30-32 : "...Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." What we see here is the command to "believe" on the Messiah, Jesus Christ, alone for the gift of salvation. These men of God did not tell the jailer to believe and forsake his sins, or to believe and crown Christ as the Lord of his life or to follow Jesus in discipleship. Believing on Christ always implies that He is the Messiah who was promised to the

world by God all throughout the Old Testament as the one who would die for our sins, be buried in a grave, and walk out of that grave alive after three days. Never does this act of belief in the savior require any behavioral changes on our part or promises to follow Him for the rest of our lives in order to receive His gift of everlasting life in heaven. When you hear a bible teacher tell you that you must promise to follow Christ for the rest of your life, remember the words of Christ immediately from John 3:18 : “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Jesus is telling us clearly that anyone who believes on Him alone for their salvation is not condemned (will never be eternally damned), but those who do not believe Him, which includes both those who reject Him outright as well as those who place partial faith in Him and partial faith in living the Christian Lifestyle to get them into heaven, these people are “condemned already” according to Christ because they have not believed in Him. Did you notice how Christ said “the name of the only begotten Son of God” in this verse? This wording explains the authority given to Christ by the Father; in fact, all power and authority have been given to Christ by the Father. In old black-and-white movies from the past, even in old cartoons we watched as kids a long time ago, when the police were chasing a criminal, it was common to hear, “Stop! In the name of the law!” The criminal being chased by the police knew exactly what that meant because the “name” of the “law” carries the full weight and authority of the law. The name and the object of that name are one in the same. Maybe that is why Christ said if you have seen Me you have seen the Father? Look at John 14:8-9 : “Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?” A surefire way to success in the Christian business is to present a false plan of salvation that sounds like the real thing. Satan will then bless the ministry financially so that masses of people will buy into the lie that he, the father of lies himself, has been propagating ever since he brainwashed Cain with murderous jealousy toward Abel over God’s denial of his harvested offering and His acceptance of his brother’s animal offering. It does not matter how successful a false ministry may become over time because that success is not a measure of God’s blessings upon that ministry. For instance, let us examine Jesus’ temptation while fasting at the beginning of His ministry. Satan tempted Christ to show off His power by throwing Himself from a high place knowing all along that He would not sustain injuries from that fall. Satan also tried to make Christ turn stones into bread. And Satan also offered to give Christ ruling power over earthly kingdoms. You see, Satan had the power to give Christ all the kingdoms and wealth of the world if He would just bow down and worship him. In a similar manner, Satan has the power to bless financially all the ministries that promote false plans of salvation for the sole purpose of making people think they are saved by living the Christian Lifestyle without ever actually being born again in the first place. It is a most cruel form of deception from which few are ever rescued, no matter how many times they hear the true plan of salvation after they have been indoctrinated by this satanic deception; likewise, those who trust in CBN’s plan of salvation, rather than in Christ’s plan of salvation, are at a tremendous disadvantage and are apt never to pay attention to what the Lord Himself says about being born again because they have been convinced by satanic deception, i.e., the “genuine warmth and compassion of the voices and the faces to which they are drawn” that, in reality, only draws them away from Christ’s simple, solitary requirement of “belief in Him alone,” and toward the false path of instructing them to commit their lives to Christ in discipleship “in addition to” partial faith in what

Jesus did for them at the cross, despite the fact that Robertson contradicts himself with his own words initially when he says outright that our own efforts do not count toward this gift of salvation; yet, because he employs a bait-and-switch technique that first says “no works” and then subtly “adds works” later in his four-step process, thereby canceling Christ’s grace with the corruption of human works, Robertson’s gospel is not the true gospel of the bible. It is a counterfeit gospel; it will never save those who place their trust in it.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”(Revelation 20:11-15). That is the sad reality of adding human works to God’s grace, yet, of course, you are free to choose this day whom you will believe.

06. Chapter 5: The Plan Of Salvation According To Rick Warren

Chapter 5 The Plan Of Salvation According To Rick Warren

When you want real sugar in your coffee, you do not want sugar substitutes because they simply won't suffice. You want the real thing. Natural cane sugar is the choice of sweetener for most people who drink coffee. Too much sugar is a bad thing, of course, but those artificial, chemical-based sweeteners such as Aspartame, in particular, can literally wreak havoc upon your health and worsen existing health conditions. Similarly, it is common knowledge among bible scholars that Satan and his legions of demons are able to perform tremendous, albeit limited, miracles and wonders in order to deceive people from ever knowing the truth about salvation. Essentially, Satan provides "sugar substitutes" whereas God only provides the "real thing." Let us consider the account of when Moses appeared before Pharaoh. While these passages from the bible are a bit lengthy, I want you to read them carefully, for they will greatly enhance your understanding of the wonders Satan is capable of performing through the use of human beings as well as to show you outright that Satan is, in fact, limited in his power and in the miracles that he can perform through men or women who are unknowingly in his service. While this section is a bit scripturally intense, it will help you to understand the larger picture of what is happening today in the Christian business by drawing a parallel from the past via these scriptures:

We will begin with Exodus 7:8-13, which says, "And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said." When Aaron threw down his stick and it turned into a snake, it was God who performed that miracle. But when those other men threw down their sticks, it was the power of the devil that changed those sticks into snakes. But look what happened! The bad ones got eaten by the good one!

I want to continue in this chapter of Exodus. Exodus 7:20-24 says, "And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt. And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also. And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river."

While not as impressive as the first example, we see that demonic powers are also capable of polluting God's creations, such as rivers. But as I will show you later in this chapter, demonic forces are also responsible for polluting the most wonderful thing of all: the plan of salvation. In Exodus 8:16-19, we see how limited satanic power is when the magicians try to create something from the dust of the ground. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt. And the magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not: so there were lice upon man, and upon beast. Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said." No man can turn a river of water into a river of blood, and no man can turn a stick into a snake. These magicians understood that they were accomplishing their deeds by channeling "other powers" to do it for them; however, because they said "This is the finger of God..." it is my sincere belief that these magicians ended up getting saved by God's grace through faith in the Messiah who would one day come to pay for the sins of the world, that is, if any of the Israelites bothered to tell these magicians the gospel message of the Messiah who was to come. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

These two magicians, known as Jannes and Jambres, whom you have just read about in the book of Exodus, are the same magicians whom Paul mentions thousands of years later in 2 Timothy 3:1-8, which says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith." The miracles that have been done by "other powers" through popular Christian author and personality Rick Warren include the creation of a substitute gospel message as well as the imprisonment of entire churches around the world that have been chained by the ideologies contained within his book, "The Purpose Driven Life." Warren is a good, moral man who possesses many admirable qualities and in no way is this chapter meant to put him in a negative light; rather, I am calling attention to the "abilities" that Satan and his demons have in polluting the gospel message of Christ the same way those demons polluted the water through Jannes and Jambres in that passage from Exodus that you read a moment ago. Warren, like all of the other pastors and teachers I mention in this book, is an unknowing player in the constant struggle of what Paul describes as, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). Warren is not the problem. The powers behind Warren are the problem. Personally, I like Rick Warren, but I am at eternal odds with his plan of salvation because it does not match the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ.

If you will visit his Saddleback Church Website, and click upon the link entitled “Begin A Relationship With Jesus,” you will be taken to a page with three different videos (at the time this chapter was written). Choose the video entitled “What Does It Mean To Follow Christ?” In this lengthy video, Warren talks about disappointments in life and that knowing your purpose in life and having a relationship with Jesus are the keys to happiness. Most everything he says is “real world” and virtually no fault can be found in his masterful delivery of popular psychology mixed with secular humanism and semi-biblical principles. It’s all very warm and it will make you feel wonderful about God and about yourself. Warren provides you with exactly what you want to hear. The plan of salvation according to Rick Warren’s video will be paraphrased to avoid potential copyright infringement.

Rick Warren says that Jesus died for you. Jesus came to give you a better life here and now and in the future. All you need to get into heaven is to realize that you can’t earn your way into heaven, that heaven is a perfect place and no sin can enter it. Warren says you have to be perfect to get into heaven. He says that Jesus died for us, that He lived a perfect life as an example for us to follow, to show us how to live our lives, essentially. Warren says that we must believe Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life just like He said He was. Warren says that you have to believe in Jesus and you have to receive Jesus (believe and receive). To do this, Warren says you must admit to Jesus that you need Him, that you must admit your mistakes to Him, and that you must tell Him that you want to turn from your way of life and live a brand new life. Warren says that repent means “a change of mind” from your way of living to the way Jesus wants you to live. Warren says you must determine to follow Christ. Warren says you must pray and invite Jesus into your heart. In his sample prayer, he tells you to admit to God that you don’t understand it all, but that you realize something is missing from your life, that you want a better life, that you want a relationship with Christ. Warren says to tell Jesus that, as best you know how to do, that you open your life to Him. Warren says to ask Jesus to forgive you, to come into your life, to have Jesus make Himself real to you, and to give you a purpose in life. Warren says that if you meant this with all of your heart, that angels are now rejoicing over the fact that you have just accepted Christ in to your life. Warren then tells you to join a church, that you need help to grow, and that you need to make your decision to follow Jesus public. That is the paraphrased version of the plan of salvation according to Rick Warren. Now, in a previous video that Warren had on the Internet, he said that in order to remain in a relationship with Christ, you have to keep striving to live according to biblical principles. Warren, in fact, states this very thing in his best-selling book “The Purpose Driven Life,” yet, he neglects to mention this aspect in clear terms during this particular video. As children, most of us were told the tale of the Pied Piper, a story about a man who played a type of flute who led little children away from the care of their families and ended up drowning in the river.

Like the Pied Piper, Warren plays an irresistible tune that no one can ignore. Once people hear what he has to say, they are hooked. Warren digs down into the cores of our individual beings, down into our deepest desires of wanting to forget our pasts, our mistakes and failures, of wanting to make our present lives the best that they can be, and by telling us that if we invite Christ into our hearts and give ourselves to Him that we will go to heaven; however, like the fictional Pied Piper, Warren leads every mesmerized believer of this false gospel to a place of drowning, but not in a river of water; instead, it is the eternal lake of fire, according to the bible.

Jesus Christ offers a very different plan of salvation. Jesus said that the will of the Father was for everyone to recognize Christ as the Messiah and to believe on Him alone for the gift of everlasting life. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:40). To make it ever more succinct, Jesus then said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). The gospel message is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When we believe that Jesus died for us and came back to life three days later, He knows it — He knows all of your thoughts — and He knows the very instant that you believe His gospel message. The instant you believe His message, Jesus saves you. Time and time again we see in the bible that when people heard this message, they "believed." When they believed, they were saved that very same instant. They did not pray prayers of salvation asking Jesus into their hearts. They did not commit their lives to the Lordship of Christ. They did not determine to follow Him all the days of their lives in obedience to His Lordship or to the practice of discipleship. They simply believed on Christ alone as their savior.

It doesn't matter how successful a ministry is, or how beautiful and satisfying their particular plan of salvation may be. If what they say about salvation does not match with what Christ said about salvation, their plan is counterfeit and falls under the label of an "accursed message." Galatians 1:8-9 says, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

If you were to have asked Paul how to be saved, he would have told you the same thing he told the Philippian jailer in Acts 16:31 : "...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..." And if you were to ask Jesus Christ how to be saved, He would tell you the same thing that He told Nicodemus in John 3:16 : "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Jesus said "believe." Believe means to "trust." The object of this trust is His gospel message. Reader, please understand that you must be "as righteous as" Christ is righteous, that you must be cleansed of your sins in order to enter heaven, that you must "change your mind" about Christ and trust in Him alone to save you. It's not about committing your life to Him. It's not about doing anything for Him. It's about what He did for you by His death and subsequent resurrection from the dead. Christ alone paid for your sins, and the instant you believe His plan of salvation, He saves you, forever and forever. It is your choice. If you believe Jesus Christ ALONE as your savior, you will be saved. If you choose to believe a counterfeit version of the gospel message that includes any works or behavioral changes on your part, you will stand before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgement and this will be your fate:

Revelation 20:11-15 : "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever

was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

07. Chapter 6: The Plan Of Salvation According To John Hagee

Chapter 6 The Plan Of Salvation According To John Hagee

John Hagee is the pastor of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas. His mission in the ministry is to “aggressively fulfill” the Great Commission by making disciples out of all people, to bring the lost to Christ, and to support fellow believers. John Hagee’s television show can be seen all over the world. His show is on most every day on the TBN station, as well as on other stations. He has written many books. Hagee is an all-around good guy who believes in what he is doing for Christ and for others.

Hagee is a good, sincere man who preaches his sermons with both a force and a conviction rarely seen in other pastors, today. In fact, one of his trademarks is to shout loudly phrases such as, “Give Him praise and glory...” at specified intervals during his sermons. He is thoroughly entertaining, very intelligent, and a master of the art of public speaking.

Hagee’s ministry operates a well-built Internet site. You may visit his John Hagee Ministries Website and read about him, his ministry, and about everything his ministry accomplishes. To learn of John Hagee’s plan of salvation, you will have to watch the salvation video that is posted on his ministry’s Internet page. Simply go to his site and click upon the link entitled “Salvation” and you will be taken to his video presentation. When you arrive, you must click on the middle of the viewing screen where it shows “Click to play.”

I will paraphrase for you the plan of salvation according to John Hagee, rather than provide it to you word-for-word so as to avoid any legal copyright issues. The plan of salvation according to John Hagee is as follows (paraphrased):

John Hagee says that we are all sinners. He quotes Romans 3:23, which says, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” Hagee then says that we all need Christ’s blood to cleanse us from our sins. Hagee says that our good works cannot save us. He says that God loves us, and he then quotes Romans 5:8, which says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Hagee then says that Jesus is God’s gift to us. He then quotes Romans 6:23, which says, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Hagee says repeatedly that salvation is a gift from God and that we cannot earn this gift by our works.

Hagee then quotes Ephesians 2:8-9, which states, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” In his explanation of Ephesians 2:8-9, Hagee says repeatedly that salvation is “not of ourselves.” He repeatedly says that salvation is by “grace” though “faith” and that it has nothing to do with “us.” He says that good deeds, such as giving to the poor, cannot count toward our salvation. Hagee then talks about repentance.

Hagee defines repentance as turning from your sins. Hagee says that turning from your sins is a “required action” on our part if we want to be saved. Then Hagee quotes Romans 10:9, which says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Hagee says, in light of this verse, that we have to confess Jesus as our Lord with our mouths, verbally, and that we also have to confess our sins. Hagee then teaches that we have to ask Christ to come into our hearts. His prayer of salvation instructs us to admit to God that we are sinners, to ask God to forgive us, to ask Christ to come into our hearts, and to be the Lord of our lives. Hagee says that we must tell God that we will obey Him and that we will follow Him all the days of our lives. In sum, that is the plan of salvation according to John Hagee.

Old television shows are the best, and when you get right down to it, I’m sure you’ll agree that they just don’t make television shows like they used to. As for me, I absolutely love the television show known as “Green Acres.” The show is based upon a lawyer who becomes tired of his job and of life in the big city. He, along with his reluctant wife, move to “Hooterville” where they buy an old ramshackled house on several acres of farmland. Mr. Douglas’ neighbors are truly unique personalities who always end up giving him tremendous amounts of grief. What is so funny about the show is the utter frustration that his wife and neighbors cause him. There is a form of constant “communication breakdown” that occurs in all of his dealings with the townsfolk of Hooterville, which is actually very entertaining and worthwhile to watch as a whole because we realize the show is only make believe. It is not real; therefore, it is funny in its own, crazy way; however, if the problems that Mr. Douglas had to deal with during each episode of this show were true, it would be a different story altogether. It would be a sad and terrible show to watch and would provide no entertainment at all. When it comes to a person’s eternal life, we cannot afford any “communication breakdowns.” A good way to view a presentation of a false plan of salvation would be to equate the preacher of a false gospel to that of a lawyer who is guilty of malpractice. When a lawyer is found guilty of gross negligence in his or her duty, resulting in egregious error, they are often found guilty of malpractice and, as a result, are not allowed to practice law anymore. They become an object of scorn and they become disbarred. This also occurs to physicians who are grossly negligent or incompetent in the practice of medicine. But for a pastor to be guilty of “malpractice” is much more serious. When a pastor or a bible teacher promotes a false plan of salvation, the results are eternal and not merely temporal. At this point, I would like to share with you the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ. Since Christ wrote the bible using the inks and scrolls of people, I would like to share various verses with you on what Christ says about salvation — some quote Christ directly, while others do not; however, they are the words of Christ, nevertheless.

Jesus told Nicodemus point blank that he had to “believe” on Him alone in John chapter 3. Jesus said to Nicodemus (and to us all) in John 3:16 that, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” The only “requirement” Jesus mentioned in this verse is “believeth,” which in the original Greek manuscript means to “trust.” Jesus told Nicodemus that in order to be born again he had to “trust” that Jesus was the Messiah, that He would die for the sins of the world, and that He would rise from the dead. By implication, Christ always meant that He would die, be buried, and rise from the dead when He spoke of “believing in Him.” Nicodemus asked Christ how he might go back into his

mother's womb, and Jesus had to correct him by telling him that being born again involved being reborn spiritually.

Christ did not tell Nicodemus (or you and me) that he had to stop sinning or that he had to follow Him for the rest of his life in obedient discipleship "in order to" be born again. Christ said simply to "believe in Him," and again, by default, He always means that 1) He is the Messiah, 2) He would die for our sins, 3) He would come back to life three days later. Nicodemus believed Christ. Nicodemus became born again the instant he believed Christ; however, Nicodemus never became a disciple of Christ. Judas, on the other hand, was a disciple of Christ, yet Judas never trusted Christ as his savior.

Nicodemus is in heaven as we speak, but Judas is in hell, awaiting his sentence at the future Great White Throne Judgement, where he will be sentenced by Christ Himself to the eternal lake of fire. In Thessalonians 4:14, we see Christ's plan of salvation with complete clarity: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Pay close attention to that first phrase. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again..." is the plan of salvation according to Christ. The second phrase deals with the dead-in-Christ whose bodies will rise out of their graves at the rapture. While this chapter of Thessalonians deals primarily with the future event of the rapture, we are given the plan of salvation according to Christ in its most superlative simplicity. This is exactly what Jesus was telling Nicodemus (and us) in John chapter 3.

According to Ephesians 2:8-9, God is telling us (through Paul) that, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." This means that salvation is a free gift given by God to all who place their trust in His Son ALONE, apart from works, and by "works" God is, in fact, referring to "anything of self" such as "turning from sins" and "following Him in obedience for the rest of our lives." Those are aspects of discipleship. To be a disciple, one must "first" be born again. Any plan that mixes "grace" with "discipleship" is a false plan of salvation, according to Christ. While those are right and honorable things to do, they do not count toward salvation, rather, they come "after" salvation if you "choose" to be His disciple. While Hagee quotes Ephesians 2:8-9 in his salvation video and vehemently agrees with this verse, Hagee then contradicts himself and this very same passage of scripture because of an academic mistake. Hagee misdefines the word repentance. Instead of using the original Greek translation for repent, Hagee uses the English definition for repent, which is different from the intention God conveys in His bible. The English definition includes turning from sin, feeling sorry for sin, and quitting the activities or behaviors that lead to sin; conversely, the Greek definition for repent is to have a "change of mind." The Greek word for repent is metanoia. "Meta" means "change" and "noia" means "mind." Join them together and you have "a change of mind." When Christ told people to repent, He was always referring to the Greek meaning of "a change of mind" and never to the English definition. The Greek word for "turn from sin or to feel sorry for sin" is "metamelomai" and it is never equivalent to "metanoia." Christ always spoke of "metanoia" when He said "repent." In context, Christ was always telling people to "change their minds" from what they were currently trusting in to get them to heaven and to instead trust only on Him to get them to heaven.

Hagee tells us that salvation is a “free gift” that cannot be earned, but he then turns right back around and makes quitting bad habits as well as obedience to Christ’s Lordship an “essential part” of salvation. To give you an accurate equivalent of what Hagee is saying here, imagine if you were to ask him for directions on how to get to San Francisco, California. You want to go to San Francisco with all of your heart, and you ask John Hagee for the directions that will take you there. But instead, he gives you directions on how to get to Tampa, Florida. If you take him at his word, you will not arrive in San Francisco; instead, you will end up in Tampa. If you take him at his word, but then look at the directions and then question him about your final destination, he will say emphatically that he has, in fact, given you accurate directions to San Francisco. If you press him on the subject, he will read various portions of a road atlas to you, but even though you may have doubts about arriving in San Francisco, you assume he knows what he is talking about and you trust him, anyway; however, days later you find yourself in Tampa rather than in San Francisco, despite all the signs you saw along the way that never pointed to San Francisco. You saw the “Tampa signs” and you knew you were going in the wrong direction, but you so wanted to believe he told you the truth, so you didn’t follow that small, soft voice inside of you that said, “This is wrong!” You chose to trust him rather than in what you knew to be “right.”

Friends, when you are “on the road” of a false plan of salvation, you will see “God’s signs” all over the place if you are able to understand only a handful of the verses I have shared with you in this chapter.

If you are on a road that leads you in the opposite direction of where you know you want to go, pay attention to the signs. In terms of salvation, God says it is “not of works.” Hagee also uses the same scriptures that I do and he claims salvation is “not of works.” But reader, “turning from sins” and “obeying Christ as the Lord of your life” IS WORKS. It takes effort. And since Ephesians 2:8-9 says that salvation is “not of yourselves,” how then could John Hagee turn right back around and imply that salvation IS of yourselves while simultaneously saying over and over that it is “not” of yourselves.

Something is wrong! Something is very, very wrong! Either Hagee is right and Christ is wrong, or Hagee is wrong and Christ is right!

Isn’t it sad how so many intelligent and learned men and women cannot rightly define repentance. What they say about repentance flies in the face of the very scriptures they point out to us. If you say that salvation is a free gift and that we cannot earn it, and then turn right around and imply that it will cost you, that you have to change your behaviors, submit yourself to following Christ in obedience to His Lordship “in order to” be saved and make it to heaven, then that is nothing more than “double-speak.”

It is literally the same thing as asking for directions to San Francisco but receiving directions to Tampa, instead. Trusting in “turning from sins” and “making Christ the Lord of your life” in addition to faith in His death and resurrection from the dead sounds completely wonderful and holy, but it is not the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ. It is just a “counterfeit” of the original.

Yes, Hagee is a good man. I admire Hagee in a lot of ways, especially his support of Israel. But Hagee presents us with a plan of salvation that differs from the one Christ Himself presents in His bible. Friend, if you choose any plan of salvation other than the one Christ offers, you will stand

before Him at the Great White Throne Judgement. You will acknowledge that Jesus is the Lord, and you may even tell Him about all of the wonderful works you did in your lifetime for Him. Jesus gives us an idea of what standing before Him at the Great White Throne Judgement will be like:

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”(Matthew 7:21-23).

Reader, if you remember only one thing from this chapter, I want you to remember what the will of God the Father is concerning how to be saved. Jesus said, “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). Jesus is saying that if we recognize Him as the Messiah, that if we trust in Him alone (death, burial, resurrection) that we will be saved. Nowhere does the bible say that we must repent of sin. The phrase “repent of sin” doesn’t even occur in the bible, nor does it ever imply that we must “turn from sin” in order to be saved.

If you place your trust in any plan of salvation other than the one Christ gives to us in His bible, you will not go to heaven. Jesus said you wouldn’t. Instead, you will be cast into the eternal lake of fire. Look at what God says about it:

Revelation 20:11-15 : “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

08. Chapter 7: Intermission

Chapter 7

Intermission

Who can make a tree? Who can make an eye? Who can make a brain? Who can fill an endless expanse of space with stars and planets? Have you ever stopped and thought about God as “creator?” The next time you look out the window, look at one of the trees you see. Did that tree just happen to spring into existence through spontaneous generation, apart from a “creator?” The next time you walk by a mirror, look at one of your eyes. Look closely at how those colors are coordinated, how they appear as the intricate brush strokes of a master painter. See how the pupil expands and contracts as you move to and from the mirror. And what about the human brain? You can close your eyes and see thoughts and memories the same way as if you were watching a television screen. Who can create something like this? And what about those wonderful stars and planets that fill our night skies? A couple of years ago I became fascinated with astronomy and bought some very large binoculars in order to view the vast number of stars that can be seen in our night sky. What initially led me to become fascinated with astronomy was the fact that while it was still dark each morning on my way home from my night shift job I would see these big “diamonds” above the horizon and they began to pique my interest. These brilliant diamond-like dots turned out to be planets. In certain months of the year, you can see Jupiter, Saturn and Venus easily because they are the most brilliant. When magnified twenty times the power of the naked eye, one may see the different colored bands upon the surface of Jupiter. One may also see the rings of Saturn. Venus is a treat also because it appears to go through different phases of shading just like our moon goes through at different times of the month. Wanting to see even more of these objects in the universe that God created, I bought a large, fancy, motorized telescope that held the promise of showing me these wonderful objects more closely than I had ever dreamed, yet, as many of you have found out the hard way, we cannot fall for every sales pitch that comes our way. I spent hundreds of dollars on this new motorized telescope. It was a very pleasurable process of acquisition because I had a great time shopping for it on the Internet and the anticipation of its arrival filled me with unbridled enthusiasm as I tracked the package via UPS. When it arrived in its heavy, massive box, I quickly unpacked the contents and assembled this massive structure. I read the directions, loaded the motor with batteries, polished the lenses and waited anxiously for the sun to set. I plotted the coordinates, pressed the button, and the gears of its motor whirled with a pleasing sound that absolutely thrilled me to no end. But after this massive telescope made three full rotations, the batteries were completely drained and the apparatus would not move at all. I leaned the hulking tube upward and peered through the lens to get a glimpse at the gas cloud which can be found in Orion’s belt, yet, it appeared no differently than it did using my twenty-power binoculars. In fact, my binoculars showed astronomical bodies far better than this particular telescope was able to do. I kept the telescope for several more days trying to convince myself that it was worth all of the fuss, but soon I came to my senses, shipped it back and received a quick refund of the total cost. The point of this unfortunate scenario is to teach

you that worldly goods do not satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts. They may thrill our senses for a few moments, but then the thrill goes away. Solomon, the richest and wisest man who ever lived, said something very profound that still echoes in my mind when I am tempted to chase the empty promises of merchandise.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 says, “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.” What he is saying is that if someone loves silver, that person will never be satisfied with enough of it. No matter how much he or she has it will never be enough. Many years ago, when Rockefeller was asked how many millions it would take to make him happy, he replied that it was always “one more.” He was rich beyond dreams, yet, he always wanted “one more” million. I wonder if Rockefeller ever came to the same realization to which Solomon arrived when he said that everything in this life (apart from God) was vanity, or as we would translate that word today, emptiness.

So, in light of what we all know firsthand to be true of worldly possessions, that virtually all of us have bought something we just knew would radically change our lives for the better but came to find out that it did not make us happy or satisfy our deepest longings, why then do the health, wealth and prosperity preachers of today's brand of Christianity try to get us to focus on these fleeting things rather than upon the gift of everlasting life? In addition to falsely teaching us that God wants to give us a lot of wealth in this life, most of them also present a polluted form of salvation that cannot save a lost person from the wrath to come. While it is true that God blessed believing Jews primarily with wealth in the Old Testament, His focus toward Gentile believers in the New Testament and beyond is that we be content with food and clothing. Money and wealth are perhaps the most dangerous things that God can entrust to us today because if we have enough of it, we simply won't need Him or rely upon Him as much as we would, otherwise. So, Christ's focus in this dispensation of grace is that we come to a saving knowledge of Him. When we have done so, He promises that He will take care of our basic necessities (Matthew 6:33).

How I ever fell into believing there was no God at all is still a mystery to me. When I was 13-years-old, I met the most beautiful girl at church named Debbie. She was the mayor's granddaughter. I really liked this pretty girl with long, dark hair. To make a long story short, we ended up dating each other on and off for the next eight years. The last year we dated we became serious. She would tell me over and over that she wanted to marry me, but in the end, she left me for another fellow. I went through a serious depression afterward, and when I had come through, I became determined to never again be hurt so deeply by a woman. The famous musician Chuck Berry used to say, “Don't let the same dog bite you twice.” With that logic in my mind, I simply quit dating altogether. I think that losing Debbie played a major role later on in my becoming a complete atheist. After being convinced by my college professors in classes such as philosophy, biology, etc., that there was no “God” at all, I then gave myself over to the worship of science. I buried myself in studies, in hobbies, in friendships that never lasted, and in the various low-paying jobs that I held over virtually the next two decades. Let me tell you something about atheism — it is a complete lie. I was a fool of the grandest sort. Let me lay it on the line, so to speak: people who are not partial toward either wanting or needing God in their lives, who neither choose to give deliberate consideration toward their own existence nor to that of a supreme being, who become self-absorbed by scientific methods of thinking and of solving things, who are self-contained in their own ways, who walk according to their own wisdom or to the wisdom of great but secular

minds, and who delight in being glorified by humankind are, I dare say, deteriorating inwardly at a rate of speed commensurate with the level of their ignorance until, most inevitably, they spiral downward and eventually implode under the gravity of their own emptiness. In a nutshell, that explains atheism. It wasn't until I was in my early 30's that I believed God was real. It wasn't until I was in my mid 30's that I got saved. It wasn't until I was in my late 30's that I began dating again, and I will touch upon my dating life a bit later in this chapter because it ties in rather well with the overall theme of this book.

Let me just confide something in you, if you will allow me. This work I have produced causes me a great deal of sadness; after all, I am a human being, and since I became born again in Christ through faith in His death and subsequent resurrection from the dead, i.e., the "gospel message," I have been given a love for people-in-general that I did not possess before I came to Christ. In a sense, for me to appear iconoclastic to you, the reader, by seemingly tearing down pastors and ministries that do a great deal of good in many areas, makes me feel awful because it goes against my new nature; however, what these ministries are telling people to believe is false in terms of salvation, i.e., how to go to heaven, and I have a God-given duty to try to set the record straight. It's not "me" who wants to do this, rather, it's the "Holy Spirit" through me that wants to help you see Christ's truths. Because Christ took up residence within me the very moment I trusted Him as my savior, I cannot sit by and allow so many false plans of salvation to keep bombarding people's minds without saying something about it. I cannot sit by and allow it to go on without trying to help "somebody." I tell you the truth — if God helps only one person in the world to get born again after reading this book, then the lifetime of experiences that I have lived which, by His design, have brought me the necessary insight and education to be able to write this book at this particular time and place of my life, including the production costs, it will have all been well worth it.

But, then again, you might be asking yourself, "Who is this person, what are his qualifications, and why is he questioning the authority of such learned men and women?" To that I say, "I am a born-again Christian who sees anti-biblical teachings being passed off as infallible truths in so many of these ministries — teachings that, according to Christ Himself, will take a person to the eternal lake of fire, and I have to say something about it." In a nutshell, the reason for all of this is because I care. But above all, Christ cares. He just happened to pick me for this humble task, at this unique point in our history. I am nobody special. I am merely a tool that Christ was able to use for this particular purpose.

I am not an iconoclast. I take no pleasure in pointing out the biblical inconsistencies and errors in someone else's preaching, yet, due to the eternal consequences of such erroneous teachings, I am now standing up upon this global platform in order to announce certain biblical truths against which no offensive tactics, no matter how logical or intimidating they might be, will ever be able to fully twist, misinterpret or negate their God-given intent of clearly communicating Christ's promise of the free gift of everlasting life through childlike faith in what He alone (without our help) did for us by His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection from the dead.

Perhaps the most horrible thing about trusting in one of these unbiblical plans of salvation that I mention throughout in this book is the fact that when a person breathes out their last breath of life at the moment of their death, the next breath that they inhale occurs in a special holding place

called hell. The unimaginable grief and sadness that one must feel when he or she finds themselves in this place could never be described with mere words. I tell you the truth, this is the most basic and honest reason for which I am writing this book: I don't want people to go there. I don't want people to close their eyes forever in this life only to wake up the very next instant to the terror of realizing they didn't make heaven. This reality fuels me as I write this book and as I pray that God will use it to great effect in His desire for everyone to trust in His Son, Christ, for the free gift of everlasting life that He has made available to us (instantly) through childlike trust in Jesus' death, burial and resurrection from the dead as the only means of reaching heaven and avoiding eternal death and separation from Him in the lake of fire.

I would like to recount some incidents that tie this chapter to every chapter in this book in order to help you understand more fully the horror that lost people will face when they die, as well as the horror they will face when they are eventually sentenced at the Great White Throne Judgement. A couple of years ago I met a woman named Cristy and was immediately infatuated with her. Not long afterward, I fell head over heels in love with her. Her big eyes and pretty smile made me feel like a million dollars. Each time I saw her, I would give her some little gift, such as a candy bar or some sort of gadget. Giving her things was an expression of my love. She liked me a lot, too, and she always greeted me with a smile. For the longest time I could never fully tell the color of her eyes because each time we met her pupils would get so big that her eyes simply appeared as black as coal. As the months passed by, I would give her candy and say hi, but because we were both shy we would give each other notes rather than speak face-to-face for any length of time. My nerves and adrenaline, along with the thrill of new, budding love, would overwhelm me and I would just have to walk away from her. She loved receiving my gifts each time I saw her, and as a result, she paid me perhaps the greatest honor anyone has ever paid me by giving me a cross-stitched portrait of Christ that she stitched with her own hands. She literally spent months making that gift for me. The day I received this gift from her, I was convinced beyond any doubt that this was the woman whom God intended for me to marry. The very next day, I bought her an expensive pair of the very best diamond earrings I could find at the mall. I was in love with her, and so very, very thankful to God for bringing me such a beautiful, feminine, soft-spoken woman with deep red hair and skin the color of a glass of milk. But something happened. To this day, I'm not quite sure exactly what happened, but I have an idea as to why our relationship never worked out and I will explain that idea, shortly. Anyway, after I gave her those sparkling, virtually flawless diamonds, her smiles and her energy seemed to lessen, and so I gave her more and more gifts to put a smile on her face, but she eventually moved away and did not tell me where she was going. I was completely devastated. My soul, so to speak, was literally ripped from my body. I cried uncontrollably for months. It was, without question, a form of death that I went through. For a solid month I hardly ate a thing and lost over 20 pounds because I could not stomach any food. My throat and my chest and just about every other part of my body became sore because the crying gave way to deep heaving to the point where I could not catch my breath between sobs. Not long afterward my heart began skipping beats, and several times I felt my heart slam against my chest wall and it frightened me. Grief over losing Cristy was actually destroying my health, my mind, and my trust in the goodness of God. When I would walk through the stores and shoppes, I would see things that I used to buy for Cristy, and I would begin crying, sometimes uncontrollably, and would have to walk out of the store. This went on daily for months. I was literally dying over my loss of Cristy. A friend from my past, Missy, suggested that I join an Internet dating service. While I had

no interest at all in talking to or in dating anyone other than Cristy, I realized that, for my health, I could no longer live with this grief, so, I joined a very well-known Internet dating service as a free member because I simply couldn't afford their price. Within a couple of days of joining this dating service, Lora came into my life. I was still very sick over losing my Cristy, but I gave Lora a chance, anyway. We began e-mailing each other every day, and a very special friendship began to take root. She told me that she was a Christian and that she was also lonely and wanted God's best both in life and in marriage. Lora and I really clicked. We began talking over the phone every day, for hours and hours. I would get little text messages from her that really made my day and eased the pain of losing Cristy. Lora and I began confiding in each other our deepest desires. Her warm voice, honesty, and wonderful sense of Christian morals began to make me reel with delight to the point where I, quite literally, began to fall in love with her about a month after the dating service matched us up. Convinced that God had brought me my bride-to-be, I went back to the mall and bought the most brilliant pair of diamond earrings I could afford and then gave them to Lora on our first date. We met for coffee and I got lost in her deep blue eyes and quirky smile. We began holding hands and an hour later I gave her the diamonds. Lora was the first girlfriend I'd had in 18 years, and I was on top of the world with delight in the fact that God had brought me a beautiful woman with dark hair, a sweet spirit, and the longest fingers I'd ever seen. My love name for her was "Ladyfingers." Lora filled the great void in my life that occurred as a result of losing Cristy. Now, because my way of showing love is to give people things, I began lavishing upon Lora many, many gifts. I gave her so many things that, as I look back upon it now, I realize that I made her uncomfortable with my excessive gift giving. As our friendship grew with one another, so did love and closeness grow. I was truly in love with Lora, but the after effects of losing Cristy were still too fresh, too unresolved, too powerful to ignore, that I again began to fall into the depression caused by the loss of my first love — Cristy. I became very moody. I would write the darkest and most bleak things in my e-mails to Lora. I began doubting God's love for me again and I soon began to fall into a form of spiritual depression, also. Lora began to notice changes in me, too, and one day, out of nowhere, she called me and said that our relationship was over. My life began to spiral out of control again and I fell into the deepest sense of personal rejection and despair. Not only had I lost Cristy only five months before, but now I'd lost both Lora and my faith in God's good character, for surely if God loved me He would not allow these things to keep happening to me. I then became bitter, and the next day, in a calm, controlled burst of cold anger, I told Lora to send the diamond earrings back to me. Several days later, in complete denial of what had just occurred, I crawled back to Lora, begging her to reconsider. She never did. That was the last I ever heard from my Lora.

There is a very important purpose for which I'm sharing this extremely personal information with you.

First of all, God allowed this pain in my life for special reasons. These reasons are now very, very clear to me as for why He allowed the overwhelming grief and loss of my hopes, my dreams, and the future I could have had with either one of these two incredible women. God allowed me to have a double shot of the most painful grief I've ever experienced in my life so that I could, with an even greater sense of urgency and conviction, make crystal clear to you the results of what will happen if you place your trust in a false plan of salvation. This is why He allowed me to suffer:

You can live for Christ, you can love Christ, you can serve Him with all of your might, time, talent and wealth. You can pray to Him, read your bible, get water-baptized, join a church, witness to people, and do every wonderful work contained within the realm of Christianity, but if you fail to trust Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, He will “dump” you. He will dump you the same way Cristy dumped me after I gave her my best. Christ will “dump” you the same way Lora dumped me after I devoted my life to serving her. Christ will “dump” you like yesterday’s garbage when you stand before Him in your filthy rags (your works) without His grace that He made freely available to you through simple trust in what He did for you by His death, burial and resurrection from the grave. In every sense of the word, if you fail to trust Christ alone as your savior, He will “dump” you. And the most overwhelming hurt, rejection, and loss will engulf you. And, perhaps, you will remember reading this book. You will remember the “chance” that Christ gave you to get things squared away with Him, eternally, but you didn’t think any of this applied to you. As you stand before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgement and are sentenced by Him to the eternal lake of fire, He will not be able to help you in any way. Reader, if you reject Christ’s offer of eternal life, you will be “dumped.”

Revelation 20:11-15 : “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

You “will” be “dumped.”

09. Chapter 8: The Plan Of Salvation According To Beth Moore

Chapter 8 The Plan Of Salvation According To Beth Moore

Beth Moore is a successful bible teacher who founded Living Proof Ministries. You can learn a great deal about her life, her viewpoints, and her ministry by visiting her Living Proof Ministries Website.

Moore has been teaching for approximately 30 years. She is known world-wide for both the content of her messages and for her ability to engage an audience on a very deep, emotional level. Through her lectures, books, CD's, DVD's, and live-streamed video conferences to church audiences everywhere, she has helped many people to better understand themselves and the bible. Quite simply, Beth does a good service to everyone who encounters her within the framework of her Christian-oriented career. The purpose of this chapter is to present Beth Moore's plan of salvation along with Jesus Christ's plan of salvation so that you may be better informed about the differences between the two, thus allowing you to make a more qualified decision in terms of which plan you will decide to trust for your eternal destiny.

If you will visit Moore's Living Proof Ministries Website, move your mouse pointer to where it says "Looking For Peace With God?" If you have a modern computer capable of handling standard graphics, you will see Beth's plan of salvation pop up in a special window as you hold your mouse pointer over the aforementioned label. Now, because of potential copyright issues, I'm only going to paraphrase for you the plan of salvation according to Beth Moore. To see it for yourself, simply visit her site and you can read her salvation statement word-for-word. Without further pause, let us take a look at the plan of salvation according to Beth Moore.

Beth Moore's plan of salvation consists of four basic parts. Part one is an introduction of sorts that is meant to gain our attention about both our sinfulness and God's love. She says that we disobey God and that Jesus is the only solution to our sin problem. She says that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and that He did come back to life afterward, and that because He did this, that chasm between God and man has been bridged. She then says that we must personally invite Christ into our hearts. Then Moore presents a three-step approach to trusting Christ as savior. The first step instructs us to admit our needs for both peace and forgiveness. The second step instructs us that we must be "willing to turn" away from our sins, and to believe that Jesus died for us and that He rose from the dead. The third step instructs us to invite Jesus through a prayer to be our savior and to forgive us of our sins. What you have just read is the plan of salvation according to Beth Moore. By contrast, I would now like to tell you the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ says "believe" in Him, only. The original manuscripts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written in the Greek language. In Greek, "believe" is "pisteuo," which means to "trust." When Christ tells us to believe in Him, He is speaking of "trust." In every case that Christ says to "believe in Him" for salvation, He is referring to the fact that He is the Messiah who was promised to us by God as the one who would pay for the sins of the world, that He would be "lifted up" upon a cross where He would shed His blood and die to pay for the sins of the entire human race, that

His dead body would be buried in a grave for three days, and that on the third day He would come back to life; therefore, “trust” in who Christ is and in what He did for us by His death, burial and resurrection from the dead is the only biblical basis for a person becoming born again. Let me give you some scriptures that prove the legitimacy of Christ's free gift of everlasting life through faith alone in Him alone:

John 14:6 tell us, “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” According to this verse, which Moore presents on her mission statement page, Jesus is the only way to heaven, and this is true because Jesus Himself said this; however, when you couple faith in Christ plus turning from your sins in order to be saved, you will not be saved, according to Christ, because He says to the self-righteous Pharisees who were trusting in “turning from sins,” among other things, and not trusting in the Messiah alone for the gift of everlasting life, that they would “die in their sins” and not be saved. Look at what Jesus says to these “self saviors” in John 8:24, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” In Mark 1:15, Jesus said, “...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” That “repent” is translated as “change your mind” about Jesus being the Messiah, to trust upon Him alone, not upon the law of Moses or by any combination of faith plus good works. A very common mistake made by bible scholars today is to apply the English definition of repent, which is completely different from the Greek definition. The English definition means to turn from sins, to feel remorse or sorrow for sins, etc., whereas the Greek definition simply means to have a change of mind from one thing to a different thing. In context, Christ is saying to trust Him rather than to trust in self efforts or discipleship because these things, as wonderful as they are, will cancel out His grace according to Galatians 5:2, which states, “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” In context, Paul equates circumcision with “keeping the law” which erroneously caused people to assume they could earn their way into heaven by doing good works and avoiding sin.

You can trust Christ with all of your might and do your best to turn from you sins and still end up in the lake of fire. That is shocking! You can do your best to trust that Jesus died for you, that He rose from the dead, and try your best to live a good, holy life and “still” end up dying in your sins because you have not placed your trust “alone” (apart from turning from your sins) in what He did for you. The sad thing about adding “self efforts” such as turning from your sins to Christ's plan of “trust only” is that, while it sounds right, it sounds good, and it feels right, it is not the gospel message that Christ has so plainly given to us in His bible. Jesus said in John 3:16 that “whosoever believeth in Him” would be saved. He did not say “whosoever believeth” and turn from your sins. He did not say believe and be willing to turn from your sins. He did not say believe and follow Him in obedience “in order to” have everlasting life, nor did He ever imply such things when He spoke of salvation.

I use a sword in my line of work. Of course, I am speaking figuratively when I say that I use a sword in my line of work because I am referring to the King James Version of the bible when I refer to the word “sword.” I got the term “sword” from when we did “sword drills” in Sunday school. A sword drill was when the teacher would call out a verse or quote some portion of a verse to us and the first one who found the verse would stand up and read it. It was merely a way to make learning bible verses more fun at that young age. But in my Christian career today, I wield my sword with

boldness. The edge of my sword is very sharp. This bible (or sword) that I use can cut through every falsehood concerning man's way of salvation. Ironically, at the same time, this sword gives "life" to those who are spiritually dead, i.e., who have not yet trusted Christ alone as their only hope of entering heaven. I have an e-mail pal, Arashi, who runs his own ninjutsu school. I have learned many things from him, from how to properly throw martial arts stars to the concept of the "life-giving sword." According to Arashi, in ancient Japan, when an honest man used his sword in self-defense only, it was a weapon that struck fear into his enemies but also insured peace, safety, and harmony amongst his family, his land, his harvest, and his neighbors. The instrument of death literally became an instrument of life when wielded by the right hands. Similarly, those who are without Christ often view the bible as dreadful, loathsome, and without any redeeming qualities; however, when lost people are "cut" by this bible, such as by a "thrust" of John 3:16, which says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"... the enemies of God soon come to realize (through the ministry of the Holy Spirit Himself) that what they were initially afraid of was actually very good for them, after all. Once they are "cut" in their soul, the "sword" helps them to trust on Christ alone as their savior, and they have everlasting life as a result of being cut with the Sword of the Lord, i.e., the bible. You see, according to Christ, anyone who is not born of Him is the equivalent of an enemy toward Him. Also, those who are not born again at this very moment, are said to be on "death row," awaiting the "death sentence." Take a look: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

Christ separates the human race into two specific categories: 1) those who believe, and 2) those who believe not. If you have trusted Him alone as your savior, you will never stand before the Great White Throne Judgement, i.e., you will never have to answer for your crimes and you will never be sentenced to the lake of fire. On the other hand, if you have not trusted Jesus Christ alone as your savior, you are already condemned. You will face the horror of the Great White Throne Judgement. You will be sentenced by Christ to the eternal lake of fire.

While I appreciate what Beth Moore has done for so many people, and I am behind her all the way in continuing to help as many people as she possibly can through both bible and popular psychological concepts that provide real encouragement and healing in these desperate, uncertain times, Moore's plan of salvation will not save anyone because the addition of "turning from sins" to singular, simple faith in Christ is not the plan of salvation according to the bible. Look at this: "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). Here, God is speaking through Paul. Paul did not write the book of Acts, rather, God wrote Acts "through" Paul. God is literally telling us that we are made righteous through faith alone in what Christ did for us by His death and subsequent resurrection from the dead, and that deeds of the law, such as "turning from sins" will not justify us. Neither will any combination of partial faith in Christ coupled with partial faith in turning from your sins save you. By implication, "believing on Christ" always refers to the fact of what He did for us at Calvary. The gospel message is the same throughout all of scripture. Those in the Old Testament looked "forward" to what Christ would do for them, and everyone from the time of Christ's resurrection to this very day look "back ward" to what Christ accomplished for us by His finished work at Calvary. The gospel message of Jesus Christ, i.e., the "plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ," is

always the same and it never changes. This message is: 1) we cannot save ourselves, 2) Jesus died for our sins, 3) His dead body was buried, and 4) Jesus arose from the dead three days later. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:10-13).

Reader, of the two plans of salvation presented to you in this chapter, one of them has no power to save. You will either trust one plan or the other. One supplies the necessary grace that it takes to credit you with His righteousness, and the other one does not. It matters not which one appears to be more lovely; the only thing that matters is that one is genuine and the other one is counterfeit. My prayer for you is that God will help you see the difference between the two and that He will help you to choose the only one that He will honor. If you trust in any other plan of salvation that is offered to you by anyone other than Christ Himself, God says that you will be cast into the eternal lake of fire:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"(Revelation 20:11-15).

10. Chapter 9: The Plan Of Salvation According To James Dobson

Chapter 9 The Plan Of Salvation According To James Dobson

Dr. James Dobson is one of the most well-known figures in Christianity today. Dobson does a lot of good in many areas of Christian service, and the things he teaches can change your life for the better. Dobson is the founder of Focus on the Family, which is a non-profit organization whose aim is to help people of all ages by giving them sound, bible-based advice to aid in all of life's issues. Dobson is serious about being a disciple of Christ and about living according to Christian principles, which is something you don't see very much of, today. His radio programs can be heard in over 160 countries and are translated into 27 different languages. He is a licensed psychologist and a marriage, family and child counselor. Dobson has numerous honorary degrees and awards, and he is a best-selling author of many superlative books ranging on a number of different topics. He is an achiever, to say the least. He has done a lot of good for a lot of people, and I admire Dr. Dobson very much for his helpful insights and hard work toward the betterment of family dynamics. We were introduced to the teachings of Dr. Dobson during junior high at the Christian school I attended, and to this day I remember feeling comforted by his warm, caring voice. In sum, I cannot say enough good things about this incredible man. Reader, I want you to know something: it hurts me to have to do this, but the purpose of this chapter is to show you that the plan of salvation presented by Focus on the Family is different from the plan of salvation that is given to us by Christ Himself in the bible. I would rather not have to write this chapter because, I fear, that my work may be equated with the work of others whose aim is to merely throw stones of malicious, hateful libel at a man who is only trying to do his best. I can assure you that I am not in their league, and that I do not count myself among their number. Far be it from me to do such an unholy thing toward Dobson or any other leader who follows their convictions; after all, has Christ called true believers to employ tactics of self-absorbed, opinionated and slanderous hostility toward someone in order to get His message out? No, He would not. Although Christ wrecked the tables of the money changers, and even though He called numerous Pharisees a bunch of snakes on another occasion, He did so without sin and was, in fact, within His right to do so; however, the sole purpose of this chapter is to present to you both the plan of salvation according to Dr. James Dobson (and nothing more as far as he and his organization is concerned) and the plan of salvation given to us by Jesus Christ in the bible. In the end, you will have to choose which plan you will trust for the eternal salvation of your soul. In this chapter, I will provide for you some of the key verses that Dobson uses to support his stance and I will paraphrase for you his version of the plan of salvation. Please visit the Focus on the Family Website and look for an article entitled "Coming Home: An Invitation To Join God's Family" in order to read what they have to say word-for-word. Again, the following information has been paraphrased to avoid any potential copyright violations. At this time, I would now like to share with you the plan of salvation according to Dr. James Dobson himself vis-à-vis the plan that is outlined for us on the page entitled, "Coming Home: An Invitation To Join God's Family" which can be found on the Focus on the Family's Website. To begin with, Focus on the Family's salvation statement starts immediately under the

categorical “What Must I Do?” heading with the following three assertive bible verses:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Next, they tell you to trust Christ as both your Lord and as your savior in order to become a Christian. Although they say this step is simple enough for children to do, they also say that we cannot trust Christ on our own or by our own will, alone. They ask if you, the reader of their plan, are ready to make this “commitment” to Christ and that you should first carefully calculate the cost of serving Christ.

They say that you should acknowledge the fact that you are a sinner and that you are, at this time, separated from God because of the fact that you are a sinner. They use the following verse as proof:

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Next we read that no amount of good works can help us to earn our way into heaven, that we are all self-willed and stubborn, and that we need a savior. They state that Jesus is the only provision for our salvation, that we must believe He died for us, that He wants to be our Lord and Savior, and that He wants to both possess us and to rule us.

We are then instructed to “truly desire” Christ as our Lord and savior and to ask Him into our hearts, to turn from ourselves to God, to trust that He will forgive us, that He will make us the type of people He wants us to be, and that we “receive” Christ as an act of our wills through a prayer of faith. Here is a verse they use as a proof text:

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

We are told that God is looking at our attitudes in this process, and we are urged to consider very carefully the “demands” that God makes concerning our becoming Christians. Their prayer of salvation suggests that you should first agree with what God has said in the bible concerning the fact that you are seen by Him as a sinner, that you should acknowledge the fact that Christ died for you, that you should “count the cost” of following Christ, that you should “repent” and “turn away” from past sins and “open the door” of your life to receive Christ as your “Lord” and as your “savior.” The prayer finishes with a humble plea to Christ to have Him make you into the type of person that He wants you to be. That, reader, is the plan of salvation according to Dr. James Dobson. At this time, before I explain Christ’s plan of salvation in all of its superb clarity, I would like to share with you an amusing personal story that is inexorably linked to the greatest essential truth of all concerning salvation via the use of a very special bible verse. As I write within this chapter on this particular day, I wanted to share with you a unique experience that I had earlier this evening with my two rambunctious little nephews, Hunter and Zach. I actually played tennis for the first time in

many years. Do you like tennis? I'm not very graceful at this game, but tennis is a lot of fun, especially when I can successfully return a serve in my ungainly manner. Bjorn Borg I'm not! Still, the whole point of the game is to enjoy yourself and to get some much needed aerobic activity into our all-too-often sedentary lifestyles; however, as I missed numerous times those yellow spheres zipping passed me, I began to think of the definition of sin, which is "to miss the mark." One could literally say that each time I missed a ball that was lobbed to me, I "sinned." With this mental picture that I have created for you in which you see me out on a tennis court swinging a racket and trying my best to knock balls back across the net toward two very lively children, I would like for you to consider both the love that God holds for humankind as well as the seriousness of one sin when compared to His character by sharing a very special verse with you from the book of Romans. The gravity of this verse and its implications for all of us should be carefully considered, and at the same time we should believe it in the same manner that a little child trusts the words of his or her mommy or daddy; after all, what parent in the world would lie deliberately to their small, helpless, completely dependent offspring? I would dare say not a one who is of sound mind. Again, with the mental vignette of playing a poor game of tennis coupled with the unequaled love of a parent for his or her little child, I want you to let the sheer weight of this verse sink deeply into the core of your understanding.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." That verse is Romans 6:23, and it is of special importance that I present it to you along with those aforementioned mental pictures. Notice, if you will, the singularity of the word "sin" in Romans 6:23. Sin, which means to "miss the mark," refers to only one sin, not many sins. The word "wages" refers to payment. When you work each day in a place of business you earn payment in the form of money; likewise, as an unsaved person sins, he or she earns degrees of punishment that will one day be levied against them to determine the severity of the sentence they will receive at the Great White Throne Judgement. Although the only sin — the unpardonable sin — that will cause a person to be cast into the lake of fire is the sin of unbelief (of not trusting Christ alone as savior), the wages earned during a lifetime of sin will be factored into the final sentence to each unsaved individual who appears in His court despite the fact that Christ paid for all sins for all time by His death, burial and resurrection from the grave. As believers, our sins have been completely wiped away "for us" by what Christ Himself, with His own blood, did for us on the cross. It has nothing at all to do with what "we do for God" — it is all about what "He did for us." Quite literally, there is now "no condemnation" for those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their savior, but because we possess both the old nature of Adam and the new nature imparted to us (by grace through faith in Christ) by Christ, we still sin willfully or ignorantly by acts of commission or omission, respectively, yet our standing with God never changes because He sees us "as righteous as" His Son because of what He did for us. The opposite is true for the unsaved person. Like a sum of money in a bank account, the lost person's sins draw interest. The interest is compounded over his or her lifetime. According to the book of Revelation, when the "books" are opened and they are judged according to their misdeeds, a level of punishment will be assigned against each unsaved person by Christ the Judge. You see, each one of us will face Christ as either "Savior" or as "Judge." If you stand before Christ even with only "one sin" you will not go to heaven, according to Romans 6:23. Now, notice the part of the verse that says "but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Did you happen to notice the word "gift" in this verse? Must one earn a gift? Of course not. God gives each of us the gift of everlasting life with Him in

heaven when we place our faith (trust) in Christ because he paid for our sins by Himself (without our help). When you read “through Jesus Christ our Lord” in this verse, it is implying not only that Christ is deity, not only is He the promised Messiah who would pay for the sins of the world, but that the very remedy (the gift, the pardon) of our sin is found in Him alone. Take a solid look at this verse again.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). In the most elemental sense possible, God is telling us through this verse that we are all guilty of crimes that have earned us the death penalty, but that Christ paid the death penalty for us, and that when we believe He paid for our crimes by His death on the cross, we receive the free gift of everlasting life in heaven with Him. This, my friend, is one of many ways that God says we cannot earn heaven by our good works, behavioral changes, promises to change, willingness to change, or by our commitments to follow Christ as disciples. All of these things involve human efforts, yet, have we not already established the fact from this verse that a gift cannot be earned? How then could any church pastor or bible teacher lead us to believe that we must earn a gift? Do any of them really understand the gift of God according to Romans 6:23? Sadly, based upon the evidence they provide each time the issue of salvation is addressed, the answer is an emphatic no.

While Dobson mentions the verse John 3:16 in an earlier portion of his salvation statement, it seems as though he dismisses the true meaning of the verse by ignoring Christ’s “believe-only command” to Nicodemus when he asked Christ how he could be born again. As you well know, John 3:16 is as follows: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Does Christ tell Nicodemus to believe and become a disciple? No. Does Christ tell Nicodemus to believe and make Him his Lord? No. Does Christ tell Nicodemus to believe and determine with all of his might to keep the law of Moses? No. Does Christ imply or allude to the concept of doing any works or deeds of any kind, including discipleship, for Him in this verse? No. If those things were necessary, Christ would have told him so, and He would have told us so, as well.

You see, when anyone, no matter who they are, says you have to trust Christ the way they say that you have to do, then watch out. Ask yourself, “Does what they say match with Christ’s “believe-only command” that He gave to Nicodemus in John 3:16?” If it does not, reader, then you know based upon Christ’s authority that their plan is not His plan. When Christ told Nicodemus to believe on Him alone, He was referring to the fact that He was the promised Messiah that all of Israel had been looking for, that He would die for our sins, and that He would rise from the dead. Nicodemus believed this, and he was saved; however, Nicodemus, as far as we know, never became a disciple. This is of great importance for you to realize: Nicodemus believed in Christ alone and it was counted unto him for righteousness, i.e., he was saved by grace through faith in what Jesus would do for him by His death, burial and resurrection from the dead. On the other hand, Judas was a disciple, but Judas never believed on Christ alone for his salvation. What we have here is a bible-based refutation of the fact that one has to become a disciple or follower of Christ in order to be born again because Judas was a “disciple” who never trusted Jesus as his savior and Nicodemus believed on Christ alone and was born again, apart from all the good works he was doing as a Pharisee, even though he never became a disciple “in order to” be born again nor did he profess “with his mouth” before the Sanhedrin that he had trusted Christ as his savior.

Jesus saves a person the very instant they believe on Him alone for the gift of everlasting life. When you add anything such as good works, deeds, law keeping, or discipleship to what Christ alone has accomplished for “whosoever believeth in him” by His death and subsequent resurrection from the dead, then you are calling Christ a liar. If you do it “your way” and not His way, you will be among the number who stand before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgement, which Christ said would be like this:

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”(Matthew 7:21-23). In that passage, Jesus was telling us what He will say to all “Christ PLUS works” people at the Great White Throne Judgement. And what happens to these people whom Christ has just addressed? Look at this:

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15). The “will of the Father” is not for you to become a disciple or to do wonderful works in His name “in order to” be born again. On the contrary, you are saved the instant you trust Jesus as your “savior.” Jesus said in John 6:40 that the “will of the Father” concerning our salvation is trust His Son alone for the free gift of salvation. Look for yourself where Jesus says, “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day”(John 6:40).

Reader, of the two plans of salvation I have presented to you in this chapter, one of them is wrong.

One leads to everlasting life in heaven, the other leads to eternal death in the lake of fire. It is up to you to decide which one is correct and which one is incorrect. My prayers are with you as you decide between the two plans offered for your consideration in this chapter.

11. Chapter 10: The Plan Of Salvation According To Jimmy Swaggart

Chapter 10 The Plan Of Salvation According To Jimmy Swaggart

According to reputable public data, Jimmy Swaggart has been around for a long time. Swaggart began preaching all around the southern United States with various other itinerant preachers in the early 1950's. He is related to the famous musician Jerry Lee Lewis; in fact, Swaggart says that he gave up his intended musical career so that he could dedicate his life to the Lord's service. Swaggart enjoyed much financial success and celebrity status throughout his career, and his current television show can be seen most every morning on various television channels. In order to prepare for this chapter, I listened to several of his televised sermons and researched his Jimmy Swaggart Ministries Website. Swaggart is a good man, imbued with many admirable qualities. He has done a lot of good for a lot of people for a very long time. He plays piano very well, also. I remember seeing him on television when I was a little boy, and most everyone I ever heard speak of him did, in fact, speak about him with a great deal of reverence. When you click upon the "About Us" button, you will be able to read about his ministry. On this page, it says that his ministry has been "raised up by God" in order to reach the whole world. It says that his ministry is "called of God" to see that souls are saved, to heal the sick, to break the power of sinful bondage, and several more honorable things that are associated with Christian-type ideals. Swaggart then lists out the many wonderful things his ministry does in order to fulfill Christ's Great Commission.

Just pay a visit to the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries Website for more details concerning all of the things he does. The purpose of this chapter, though, is neither to praise the ministry of Jimmy Swaggart nor is it to throw stones at it, or at him; rather, it is to educate you, the reader, about the plan of salvation according to Jimmy Swaggart in comparison with the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ.

There are several fundamental differences between the two; however, I will focus only upon the most basic differences, which are 1) how a person is born again, and 2) whether or not a person who is truly born again can lose his or her salvation. I will explain to you what Jimmy Swaggart says, and then I will explain to you what Jesus Christ says. I will use scripture rather than denominational viewpoints. In the end, you will have to make up your mind as to which of these plans you will choose. When you visit the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries Website, you will find a link toward the bottom left-hand side of the page entitled "Salvation Help." When you click upon this button, you will be taken to a page entitled "The Priceless Corner." Now, because of potential copyright violations, I will paraphrase for you the plan of salvation according to Jimmy Swaggart in the following sections, but in order to read what he says word-for-word, you will have to visit his page. On this page that explains Swaggart's view of salvation, he claims to show "God's Plan of Salvation."

Swaggart states that if the one who is visiting his page is unsure of where they will go when they die, to please look at what God Himself says in His bible. In the first section, Swaggart makes clear the love of God for all people. He even quotes John 3:16, which states, "For God so loved

the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” In Swaggart’s second section of his salvation statement, he makes the reader aware of how sin has separated us from God. Swaggart effectively makes it clear that all people are sinners. He even quotes a couple of verses from the bible that establish this fact. I will quote one of them here for you: “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). In the third section we are told that Christ is, in fact, the only “remedy” for man’s sinful condition. Swaggart quotes two very good bible verses in his third section. The first verse says, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God...” (1 Peter 3:18). The second verse says, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). In Swaggart’s fourth section of his view of salvation, he tells the reader that he or she must “receive Christ” as his or her “personal Lord” and “savior.” Swaggart then mentions the discourse held between Christ and Nicodemus in the third chapter of John, saying that Christ told Nicodemus how he could not see the kingdom of God unless he became born again.

Swaggart then directs the reader to pray a special prayer. Swaggart’s salvation prayer, like so many other salvation prayers mentioned in this book, requires the one praying to 1) realize “you” are a sinner, 2) believe Jesus died for “you” on the cross, 3) open “your heart” to Jesus as both Lord and savior, 4) let Him take “full control” of your life, and 5) let Him make “you” everything that He wants you to be. Swaggart says that anyone who prays this prayer “in all sincerity” is now God’s child.

Now, if you will visit Swaggart’s Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section of his Jimmy Swaggart Ministries Website, then scroll all the way to the bottom of the page, you will see where he states that a truly born-again Christian can lose his or her salvation. Swaggart says that if a truly born-again Christian stops believing in Christ, or that if he or she deliberately turns their back upon their salvation, that they can lose their eternal salvation. Swaggart then affirms that salvation is free, but that the “just” shall live by “faith.” Swaggart again claims that salvation is “not of works” but he then claims that salvation is, in fact, “maintained” by a person’s good works and acts of righteousness. The aforementioned (paraphrased) materials you have just read constitute the plan of salvation according to Jimmy Swaggart. Before I explain Christ’s plan of salvation, I want to take you back a number of years to the “Christian” academy that I attended in order to explain some things to you.

I must admit something to you. When I was in fifth grade, attending a well-known, socially respected yet spiritually abusive pseudo-Christian academy, I struggled over how to be saved. In fact, I never got saved until the year 2005. Each staff member seemed to have his or her own version of how to be saved, yet, all of their plans had similar features, such as being told that I had to quit sinning, feel extremely sorry for my sins, whether it was chewing gum in class, or not wearing socks, or talking out of turn, and that I had to ask Jesus to come into my heart, that I had to make Jesus my Lord, that I had to announce my decision to follow Christ or my re-dedication to Christ in front of the whole school or it wouldn’t count, and that I had to obey my teachers and not look at a woman’s body or listen to the popular forms of music that were available at that time. I was told that “total obedience” to the Lord was “necessary” to be truly saved and that I had to prove my salvation to others by doing good works and deeds or I was not truly saved. The entire student body of the school, from kindergarten on up to high school, had these particular views of

salvation routinely hammered into them. Wednesday was “chapel day.” All grades from junior high on up would meet together in the main church to hear a speech by our principal, as well as to hear a coerced testimony of salvation from a student who was usually pressured into doing so against his or her will by either the principal himself or by one of the other teachers. The unique thing about the principal’s speech, though, was the fact that he most always based the content of his speech upon the “other-than-Christian” behaviors that his student body seemed to exhibit toward the staff and to other students throughout the rest of the week. For instance, if one of the teenagers lied to his or her teacher, the principal would give a lecture to us about how God punished liars. Or if a student cheated on a test, we would receive a lecture on how we would not go to heaven; yet, on top of that, because students always seemed to know (usually through gossip) who is in and out of trouble, we would see the principal give sharp looks of disapproval to the student sitting in the audience for whom the lecture was based upon. On several occasions, his lectures were focused on me, as were his stares. I began to develop an inner sense of rebellion toward the personal attacks against my character. I was a good kid. There was no rebellion in me prior to this. I never got into trouble, I never talked back to my teachers. I enjoyed being good.

What I believe happened was that the staff of this pseudo-Christian school took it upon themselves to “correct” all of us by pointing out our flaws and by trying to reshape us in the likeness of Christ, which, on the surface, sounds wonderful. I have no problems with this at all “when it works.” We need character education. We need to be taught right from wrong. There is nothing wrong with being “stripped” of bad character and having yourself “rebuilt” in the correct way through loving, genuine, and “private” Christian counseling. The problems with their methods, though, were that 1) we were never told how to be born again the way Christ said we had to be, and 2) the staff, especially the principal, abused their power in many ways. One of their most effective methods was that of psychological invalidation. By refuting our opinions, by making us feel insignificant, or by mocking what we might say in our defense after one of their psychological attacks, they made great use of psychological invalidation by rewording our answers to their questions and spitting them back at us, as well as by attempting to restructure the ways in which our minds worked by getting us to see ourselves as dirty, undeserving, and thoroughly disgusting in God eyes. It was classic mind control. It was “conditioning.” We were nothing more than Pavlov’s dogs. You “shame” a Marine recruit, yes; you “shame” a police-academy cadet, yes. After all, we need tough Marines and we need tough cops; however, you do not shame children. Children and young teens simply do not have the “tools” with which to defend themselves against spiritual terrorism. The staff of this school took great pleasure in singling out students and shaming them in front of others. The staff were very skilled in the psychological tactics they used to get inside of our minds, causing us to lose our developing and fragile identities. The staff of this fake Christian school took great delight in the power of their control over us. Many students rebelled, not against authority-in-general, but against the fact that the staff seemed to receive so much pleasure in “Christian-centered” abuse. Many had their identities replaced by the ones the staff wanted them to have. Many rebelled and were in constant trouble. Some were expelled. Others later became hooked on drugs. Many simply couldn’t handle any more of the staff’s criticalness toward them and left to go to other schools. But the worst part of all was that none of us were saved. We had been force fed false plans of salvation that always involved human efforts, which, according to Christ, cannot be added to His free gift. To make a long story short, unless Christ “builds it,” it cannot

stand, and I think He got tired of what was happening to the good kids at this school. I believe that, as a result of the poor teaching, the spiritual intimidation, and the false gospels that we were being taught, God Himself stepped in and put an end to it. The school ended up crumbling and went out of business. The reasons for which I'm giving you a little bit of background about the so-called "Christian" school that I attended for a number of years, although cathartic as these reasons may be, is to explain the fact that 1) I thought I was saved because I tried to quit sinning, I tried to be good, and I asked Christ into my heart the way I was taught to do, and 2) I thought I'd lost my salvation during fifth grade, but the truth of the matter is that because of their flawed plan I was never even saved to begin with, and neither were they, according to Isaiah 8:20, which says, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." When I read that Jimmy Swaggart says we can lose our salvation, a red flag went up in my spirit and then so many memories of the pseudo-Christian school that I attended came pouring out of my mind. Also, while preparing to write this chapter about Swaggart's plan of salvation, I learned that a school known as the Family Christian Academy is associated with the Swaggart family. I am not saying that the Family Christian Academy associated with Jimmy Swaggart is anything like the academy that I attended in my youth, but in light of Swaggart's salvation statement, I cannot help but pray hard for those kids because if they are being taught any other plan of salvation than the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ, then they are, in fact, being shaped and molded by erroneous doctrines. While my "Christian" academy experience was probably way out of the ordinary, my heart goes out to all of the kids around the world who might be in an environment where "abuse in the name of Christian-character development" might be taking place. No, I'm not saying that Swaggart's school is anything like the one I attended, but I worry about the impressionable young minds that are being influenced by plans of salvation other than the one Christ talks about, no matter what school it is. The differences between Swaggart's plan of salvation and the plan of salvation that Christ gives to us in His bible are crystal clear. At this time, by way of contrast, I would like to show you the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ. I would like to explain for you how Christ says that we are to be born again. In addition to Christ's plan of salvation, I would like to show you that, according to the bible, i.e., according to Christ Himself, you cannot lose your salvation once you have become His child. To begin with, I would first like to give you a few passages from the book of a modern-day giant of the Christian faith for you to consider so that you will not think I'm the only one who feels that "Lordship salvation" is an unbiblical plan of salvation. Dr. A. Ray Stanford is his name, and "Handbook Of Personal Evangelism" is his book. Because of Swaggart's stance on making Christ your "Lord" (not just your "savior") in order to be saved, I want you to read what this internationally respected author has to say about the subject of "Lordship salvation." What you are about to read from Dr. Stanford can be found in the bible. These are bible-based facts, not his opinions, and that is precisely why I respect him so much. These passages are a bit lengthy, but they are necessary to help explain facts that are clearly established in the Word of God. Please look closely at what Dr. Stanford is saying, below:

"REASONS FOR NOT TEACHING 'LORDSHIP SALVATION'"

It contradicts Scripture; therefore, it cannot be true. This one reason should settle the matter completely. If a doctrine is contrary to what God says, then it should be discarded immediately. See Romans 3:4; Titus 2:7; Galatians 4:16.

It causes confusion and frustration to the unbeliever because it leaves the impression that salvation is by works. Therefore, the lost person often puts off accepting Christ until he is 'ready' to turn his entire life over to the Lord. If the truth were presented to such a person, that salvation is free, but that after we are saved the Lord would work in our lives, perhaps he would trust Christ. Because of a 'grace plus works' message he might NEVER trust Christ (1 Corinthians 14:8-9).

This message CANNOT SAVE. If anyone gets saved during such a message, it will be because God has honored a portion of His Word IN SPITE of the unscriptural teaching brought into the message (Romans 4:5; Galatians 5:1-4; Romans 11:6; Isaiah 55:8-11; Romans 10:17).

This message is accursed of God. Any message, no matter how 'good' it may sound, is condemned by God unless it is His own salvation message. HIS message is the only one that saves. All others are of satanic or fleshly origin and curse men to hell. Therefore, God curses such a message (Acts 4:12; John 14:6; Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Galatians 3:1-3).

The person who preaches such a message is also accursed of God. Strong statement? Yes, but it is what God says. A man who preaches man's efforts have a part in salvation is leading people to hell, not heaven. Even if a man believes he is sincere, a wrong message still has the effects of the wrong message. Sincerity is no substitute for truth (Deuteronomy 27:18; Proverbs 17:15; Proverbs 19:5; Jeremiah 23:1).

It, in effect, makes God a liar and the Bible untrue. If salvation really does come to those who turn over their lives to Christ, then God has been wrong all the time, throughout the entire Bible, because salvation is taught from Genesis to Revelation to come only through faith (Titus 1:2-3; Romans 3:4).

It causes even Christian preachers to further the error by thinking it might have some merit and preaching it themselves. One well-known Christian returned to America from some meetings he held in a foreign country and made a statement like this: 'I really made it difficult for them to accept Christ over there. In America it's too easy to become a Christian, so I made it hard for them there. I told them accepting Christ meant turning from their sins, reading their Bibles, praying every day, giving up bad habits, and going to church regularly. And in spite of such a hard message hundreds made decisions for Christ.' WHAT A TRAGEDY! When people hear the true gospel after hearing this type of message, they are often unable to distinguish what is truth from what is error, and so many are left confused and unsaved.

The preaching of this error robs the one preaching it of reward. Paul said, 'What is our...crown? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?' The more we are able to win to Christ, the more souls will be in heaven, and so the more reward we will have. But those who preach a confused message hinder people from trusting Christ as their Saviour. Therefore, many souls are left unsaved, and so these preachers will not have the reward that they could have had (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 2 John 1:8; 1 John 2:28; 1 Corinthians 9:18) (Stanford, 91-93)."

Dr. Stanford goes on with many more points, but I will cease from using his materials at this point because I think you get the general idea. Dr. Stanford really gives us a lot to consider here, and I am very grateful to him for being so incredibly clear about exactly how false "Lordship salvation" really is and for allowing me to use portions of his book in order to help everyone else understand more fully the sheer folly of trusting in "Lordship salvation." It will not save you. You will not go to

heaven if you trust Christ “plus” determine to follow Him in obedience as your “Lord.” Why? Because that is not the “gospel.” Mind you, now, it sounds “wonderful.” It sounds “right.” It sounds fantastic and it sounds like the honorable thing to do. But it’s not “salvation.” It is “partial trust” in Christ and it is “partial trust” in your works. It is a false gospel, although it is “beautiful” nevertheless.

What does Jesus Christ say about salvation? Jesus says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). If you will remember, Swaggart uses this verse, too, in step number one of his plan of salvation. In the context of the third chapter of John, Nicodemus, who was a well-respected Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, came to Jesus one night to find out more about Him. Jesus knew what he was up to, and He said that he needed to be born again. This puzzled Nicodemus. You see, because he was a Pharisee, he thought he had to keep the “law” in order to go to heaven. Pharisees at that time were very zealous about keeping the laws of Moses. They were strict adherents to the Torah and the Talmud. When Nicodemus asked how he could enter his mother’s womb again to be born again, Jesus had to explain a very simple principle to this incredibly wise yet thoroughly oblivious man. Jesus used the incident of when the Israelites under Moses were being killed by deadly snakes. In order for them to be saved from the snakebites, God told Moses to make a bronze snake, put it on a pole, and then lift it up for everyone to see. If those snakebite victims would look upon this bronzed snake in “belief” that they would be healed, they would, in fact, be healed of their fatal, venomous bites. Christ then told Nicodemus that He would be “lifted up” (death by crucifixion) so that all who would look upon Him and “believe” in Him alone for the forgiveness of their sins and the promise of everlasting life, He would do so. He would save them from eternal death the moment they trusted in Him alone. In light of what you’ve just read, what do you think Christ is requiring of a lost person in order for them to go to heaven when they die? I will tell you: Christ said to “believe” in Him alone. Today, by default, when Christ says “believe” in Him, He is referring to the fact that He is the Messiah, that He died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He arose from the dead three days later, i.e., the “gospel message of Christ.” Did Christ say believe and make Me the Lord of your life? Did He say believe and quit sinning? Did He say believe and feel sorry for your sins? Did He say believe in Him and in His mother, Mary? Did He say believe and endure to the end or you will lose the gift of everlasting life? No. Christ said to believe in Him alone, and from the context of the chapter, we see that Christ was alluding to the fact that, as previously mentioned, He would die on a cross for our sins as required legally by a just and holy God: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). When a person was crucified by Roman soldiers, he was “lifted up” for the public-at-large to see. When people saw such a ghastly, painful thing, it served as a crime deterrent. Nobody wanted to end up having that done to them. Christ, who came to this world to die for our sins, fulfilled His duty of love by laying His life down for us through public crucifixion. Jesus paid for the sins of the world by His death on that cross. Just before He died, He said, “It is finished.” He had successfully paid for our sins. According to the scriptures, His dead body had to be buried in order to fulfill the scriptures. Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead in fulfillment of the scriptures. Christ told Nicodemus to place his trust in what He would “do”(future tense) for him, for He had not yet died. Today, Christ tells you and me to place our trust in what He “did” (past tense) for us, because He died and rose again over 2,000 years ago. What He did for us by His death, burial and resurrection from the dead is, when believed, what saves us from

“perishing” in the lake of fire. That, my friend, is salvation according to Jesus Christ’s own words. Don’t take my word for it, though. Use a King James Version of the bible and read these scripture references for yourself because I am trying to get you away from the habit of following “anything” that a man has to say on the matter and to trust only in the words of Christ Himself.

Now, because Christ said “everlasting life,” let me ask you a simple question. How long is “everlasting life?” Can “everlasting life” end? What if it could end? Would He have called it “everlasting life” if it could end at some point? At what point in time does “everlasting life” end? Go look out at the night sky next time it gets dark outside. Look as far and as deep into space as you can. How far can you see? If you think you have seen the point at which space ends, let me ask you, “What’s on the other side of the end of space?” When you consider empty space, and how there will (by default) always be “more space” behind the space you see, how then could “space” itself end? Now, if Jesus Christ said we would receive “everlasting life” if we trust in Him alone (apart from works or deeds of the law), at what point would everlasting life cease? Again, why would Christ say “everlasting life” if it could end? Did Jesus tell Nicodemus a big, fat lie? The truth of the matter is that once you are born “physically,” there is no way for you to become physically unborn, i.e., you cannot shrink back to microscopic size and reenter your mother’s womb; likewise, when you become born again “spiritually” through faith in Jesus Christ alone, you cannot become spiritually unborn, either. Being born physically is irreversible. Being born again spiritually is equally irreversible. For a man or a woman in a church pulpit to in any way insinuate that a person can lose his or her salvation once they have trusted Christ alone and are seen by Him as His own is, quite simply, to call God the Father a liar: “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:10-13). The “witness” mentioned in verse 10 is none other than the Holy Spirit Himself. Ever since the day of Pentecost, the instant that you trust Jesus Christ alone to save you, the Holy Spirit immediately takes up residence within you; therefore, one does not have to pray for the subsequent indwelling of the Holy Spirit after one is born again, the way so many pastors today erroneously teach. The rest of the passage states clearly that God gives eternal life (not temporary life) to those who trust in His Son, and to refute what God is so plainly telling us here in these scriptures about salvation-through-Christ-alone is the equivalent of calling Him a liar.

No, reader, you cannot lose your salvation the way Swaggart says you can. And the bible is also very clear that God is the one who keeps us saved. We do not maintain our born-again status by doing works of righteousness or by living the Christian Lifestyle. Look at what Romans 4:5 says, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” That “righteousness” is the exact same righteousness that Christ imputes to us at the moment we trust Him. From that moment onward, we are seen positionally by God as “as righteous as Christ” because at the moment of belief Christ swaps our unholiness for His righteousness. Swaggart, on the other hand, says we have to “maintain” our salvation by living the Christian Lifestyle, yet, in rebuke of such viewpoints, Jesus says, “And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up

again at the last day" (John 6:39). Jesus said He won't lose you; yet, Swaggart is telling us that how we live our lives between the time we are born again until the time we die is what determines whether or not we get into heaven. Swaggart says that if a truly born-again Christian doesn't want his or her salvation anymore, that they can turn their backs on God and they will go to hell as a result. But according to Christ's own words, that is impossible. If you could ever be lost after Jesus Christ said He would give you everlasting life the moment you trust Him as your savior, then Jesus lied to Nicodemus and He lied to all of humankind. But in absolute, concrete terms, can God really lie? Look at this: "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" (Titus 1:2). According to this verse from the Word of God, He cannot lie. Christ, who is God in a human body, cannot lie. How then, reader, can anyone, including Jimmy Swaggart, be so deceived as to believe God could lie to us and take back the free gift of salvation that He guarantees to all who place their trust in what He did for them by His death, burial and resurrection from the dead? I'll tell you how. They get lost in the scriptures and they misinterpret them. Satan, or one of his fallen angels, is usually present in order to confuse them, also. But the main reason people believe they can lose their salvation is because they cannot take what Christ says at face value. They simply refuse to believe what Christ said, and ultimately they are calling Him a liar.

Reader, there is only one plan of salvation, not two. One of them in this chapter is wrong. Can you guess which one it is? You'll have to make that choice, for I am simply presenting both plans for your consideration. Will you choose a man's plan or will you choose Christ's plan? It's up to you, but I have to warn you that if you choose the wrong plan of salvation, you will be cast into the lake of fire for all eternity:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"(Revelation 20:11-15).

12. Chapter 11: The Plan Of Salvation According To Ray Comfort And Kirk Cameron

Chapter 11 The Plan Of Salvation According To Ray Comfort And Kirk Cameron

According to the Way Of The Master Website, Ray Comfort is a best-selling author of many books and is a co-host of a bible-centered television program along with actor Kirk Cameron. He is a sought-after speaker who lectures in various venues across the country. Kirk Cameron is a well-known actor that most people in the US will recognize from his role on the hit show "Growing Pains." Kirk admits to being an atheist before his conversion to Christianity. Together, both Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron form a powerful team that asks many thought-provoking questions about the topic of God's holiness, mankind's sinfulness, and the wrath of God to come. Foremost to their credit is their ability to reason with people in such a way as to get them to admit by their own volition that they are, in fact, guilty of crimes before a holy God in a very compelling and effective manner. I applaud them wholeheartedly for their ability to get lost people to see their own sinfulness and to see their great need of a savior; however, the purpose of this chapter is to show you beyond any doubt that the plan of salvation they present to lost people is not found in the bible and cannot be substantiated or defended by any verse in the bible. I will accomplish this by first presenting to you a paraphrased version of the plan of salvation according to Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron and secondly by presenting to you what Jesus Christ says about salvation. Let us now examine some of the characteristics of their plan of salvation by clicking on the link entitled "Are you a GOOD person?" on their Way of the Master Website. When you click upon the "Are you a GOOD person" link on the Way of the Master homepage, you will be presented with a slide show about salvation. On the first slide the question of whether or not you are good enough to go to heaven is raised. To find out if you are good enough, you must click "continue" in order to go to the next slide. On slide two, we are asked if we have obeyed all of the Ten Commandments. On slide three, a commandment is given and you are to choose "guilty" if you have broken it or "innocent" if you have kept it. Then, the series of slides in the show ask whether or not you have broken or kept each one of the Ten Commandments. As a side note, let me just say that this technique is brilliant in terms of getting a lost person to see his or her sinfulness. Now, as the slide show moves on, we are told of God's holiness and that the place of eternal punishment for all liars, murderers and rapists is hell. On the last slide we are shown that God is rich in mercy and in compassion and that He does not want anyone to perish in hell. We are told that God wants to give us the free gift of everlasting life, that He has a free pardon for us all, that we cannot earn it, and that we do not deserve it. We are told that God commands us to repent and turn away from sin, to desire to have nothing to do with sin, and to surrender your life to the one who can save you. We are told that if we confess and forsake our sins (repent) and trust in Jesus to be our "Savior" and our "Lord" that God will forgive us and save us. We are then urged again to turn away from sin and to surrender our lives to Jesus Christ. The salvation prayer they suggest that we pray says to actually name all of your sins and then trust Christ as our "Lord" and "Savior," the implication always being that, if you do not follow what they say to do, you will not make it to heaven. That, reader, is the plan of

salvation according to Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron. In just a moment I will provide you with the plan of salvation according to Jesus, the Author of Salvation Himself, and you will see that the aforementioned plan offered to us by Ray Comfort and Kirk Cameron differs significantly from the plan of salvation that is offered to us by Christ Himself.

Before I do, I would like to share some relevant and interesting information with you.

After I trusted Christ as my only hope of reaching heaven, I wanted to tell the “world” exactly how easy it really was to be saved. I inadvertently ended up making a hobby out of hunting down and challenging Internet ministries that advertise a false gospel message on their Internet sites. As a result of this venture, I gained a lot of needed education in terms of witnessing to people during this time because I encountered every type of personality imaginable while doing so, but through it all, God granted me a fearlessness in terms of witnessing to people both over the Internet and face-to-face, as well, because the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ is the best news anybody will ever hear in their entire lifetime. Plus, it’s the only message that will actually save anyone. Knowing the truth of what Jesus Christ said regarding His gift of everlasting life will make you bold, too, so if you believe His message, be prepared because He just might end up using “you” to tell others of His free gift just like I am doing, today. Well, one day, I found a great page about salvation on the Internet. The fellow is born again, and the true plan of salvation is easily seen on his site. Thrilled by what I had found, I contacted the owner and we began a pen pal friendship. His Internet site is massive, with many links to different pages as well as other sites. I found one very interesting link about everlasting life, clicked on it, and was immediately taken to Ray Comfort’s “Living Waters” site. I couldn’t believe what had just happened. So, I wrote my new friend, who is born again, this very same note you are about to read:

“I need your prayers. I appreciate your statement of faith, too; but you have a link on your resource page that takes you to a man who promotes salvation by ‘works.’ How, how, how can you allow their link on your site when everything they say is in direct conflict with what Jesus Christ said concerning salvation? You must remove their link from your site, else, you are in conjunction with a counterfeit gospel that cannot save anyone — you are giving home to blasphemy — you are giving aid and comfort to the enemy — Living Waters’ salvation stance is directly opposite of Ephesians 2:8-9. Christ said in John 6:40 that the will of the Father is for everyone that recognizes the Son as the Messiah and believes on Him alone will have everlasting life — in John 6:47 Christ said, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life.’ Notice there are no works here. Ray and Kirk are calling God the Father a LIAR with their false gospel. You must remove it.” About a day later, my friend wrote me back in complete agreement. He put up a page on his site that condemned the false plan of salvation according to Ray Comfort. The plan of salvation according to Ray Comfort and his cohort Kirk Cameron defines repentance incorrectly. In the most elemental sense possible, their plan of salvation is based upon an academic flaw. Repent, as Christ meant it to be in terms of salvation, means to change your mind from trusting in what you can do for God to trusting only in what He can do for you. Neither of these gentlemen use the original Greek meaning of the word for repent which is metanoia. As defined in the Greek language, metanoia is “meta”(change) and “noia”(mind). Metanoia is simply a “change of mind.” That is all it means. Nothing else is added to it. If someone says it means a change of mind about bananas, they would be wrong. If a crafty pastor who claims salvation is by faith “plus” works and deeds of the law (under the clever guise of “committing your life to Christ”) says that metanoia

means a change of mind about sin, he would be wrong. Metanoia, by itself, simply means a “change of mind.” When Christ used the word “repent” He was always referring to “a change of mind.” In proper context, Christ used “a change of mind” to refer to what people were trusting in to get them to heaven. Jesus would tell people to “change their minds” from keeping all the established laws of righteousness to instead trust upon Him alone in terms of Him being the sin-bearer, that He would “solve” the problem of sin once and for all by His death and subsequent resurrection from the dead. You see, Christ took care of the sin problem. When we, in any way whatsoever, attempt to remedy the problem of sin by turning our backs on it, forsaking it, or promising God that we will quit certain things that we know bring Him grief, we are essentially telling Christ that our faith in His death and resurrection from the grave is “not enough” to save us. If there was any way at all we could save ourselves by our works and behavioral changes, Christ may not have had to die on that cross; however, we know that God says in Romans 6:23 that the “wages of sin is death.” That means one sin, such as a small lie, condemns us to the spiritual “death penalty.” And because the wages, or payment, for that small lie is death, the “only way” we could pay for it is to be cast into the eternal lake of fire. We “cannot” pay for a single sin by promising God we will change our behaviors, or by “turning from sins.” It will not erase the “death sentence” that God has passed upon sin. For us to be able to enter into God’s heaven, we must be “as righteous” as God is righteous. In no way can our works, deeds, discipleship or promises ever make us “as righteous as God.” That is precisely why we need a “savior” and that is precisely why Comfort and Cameron’s plan of salvation will not work — it is not the gospel message of the bible; therefore, it is counterfeit. But that is not to say that these are not good men, for they are good men. They are moral, they espouse many biblical doctrines correctly, and they are masters at getting people to see their sinful natures before a holy and righteous God; however, because of one academic flaw — the misinterpretation of the word repent — their plan of salvation does not match with the plan of salvation that Christ offers to us in the bible.

According to many verses in the bible, especially those warnings God gave to us through Paul in the book of Galatians, you should never listen to anyone’s message that runs counter to the message given to us by Christ, and you should never attend a church where the pastor tells the flock that they must add works of discipleship to faith in Christ’s “finished work” as the way to enter heaven. That’s exactly the reason why I no longer attend any of the local churches in my current hometown. The other churches here are either Catholic, who equate Mary as being equal to Jesus, or Jehovah’s Witnesses’ churches that deny the deity of Christ, as well as other non-believing apostate churches which have rewritten the bible to suit their needs for power and dominance. Please do not misunderstand me. These are “good people” and they would give you the shirts from off of their backs. They are all wonderful people, but they have been deceived by unbiblical plans of salvation, and unless they “change their minds” and trust Christ alone as their savior, they have no hope. Believer, it’s people like you and me who have to reach them.

Christ told His disciples that in the last days churches would not adhere to His doctrines, mainly that of salvation, which is by faith alone in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection from the grave, alone. He paid for our sins. We cannot pay for our sins. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23). When a pastor says that in order to be saved we must first repent of our sins and then ask Christ into our heart, I want to stand up and quote verses from Christ’s own words that refute such satanic-inspired flaws

because Christ never, never, never said to quit sinning or to ask Him into your heart. The bible says the OPPOSITE of what 95 percent of these pastors tell us, today. First of all, the bible never tells anyone to stop sinning in order to be saved, nor does it tell us to be willing to stop sinning in order to be saved. That is a LIE because God never said to stop sinning. The phrase “repent of sin” is not even in the Bible, nor is it ever implied when it comes to salvation through faith in Christ. These are clever lies of Satan designed to provide people with a heavenly way to go to the eternal lake of fire with him and his fallen angels.

Christ said we must be born again, and to be born again, according to Him, we must believe that He paid for “your sins” and for “my sins” when He died on the cross. On that cross, He paid for your sin, for my sin, for Hitler’s sins, for everybody’s sins. When we realize that we are hell-bound without Jesus, and when we realize that we are sinners who cannot enter heaven based upon any combination of faith in Christ “plus” how we live our lives, all we can do is simply believe that Jesus paid for all of our sins by His death and subsequent resurrection from the grave, and when we do, friend, He erases our sins and then credits us with His righteousness. That is salvation. It’s easy...it’s too easy...yet, that’s how God the Father designed salvation to be. To “not” believe that His Son is our savior is to call God the Father a LIAR, and that’s exactly what 95 percent of today’s pastors all over America are doing, daily. They are calling God a LIAR. It makes me sick, and that’s why I’m writing a book about today’s so-called “great” pastors who nobody else seems willing to stand up and challenge. For me to attend a church where I know the gospel message of Christ has been deliberately mangled so that it cannot save a lost person, or to present myself to a body of so-called believers and passively sit by while the pastor lies to his congregation, it would be tantamount to my giving an endorsement of his flawed doctrines.

I cannot sit in any of these churches in my current home town because none of them believe what God said about Jesus. No. It’s better to stay at home; in fact, our very first president, George Washington, said that it’s better to be alone than to be in bad company. In fact, the bible tells true believers to never give money to a false ministry and to never wish an unbeliever “Godspeed.” Now, since Jesus is, in fact, God the Son, He, with an authority equal to that of God the Father’s authority, says most strongly the following truth: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47). Reader, if quitting sinning and making Him the Lord of your life were a part of the equation He would have told us so, outright, but He did not. Salvation is “free” yet the church down the road, and the cults down the road, too, both in your town and in my town, all say that we must live the Christian Lifestyle PLUS have faith in Christ, or in Mary, or a combination of faith in Him or her PLUS all the good works we can do in order to get to heaven. It’s a LIE of Satan. Christ said that in the days before He raptures His body of true believers from this world, before the rise of the anti-Christ, that there would be many, many liars concerning salvation. Although Comfort and Cameron are good men who sincerely believe in what they are doing, they have been hooked in the jaws by a flawed definition of repentance by a lure like fish on the end of a master angler’s pole. They’ve bitten the counterfeit bait that appeared so real to their hungered souls, and as they are being reeled in by the father of lies himself, they are telling everyone else to bite into the bait that they themselves have eaten, yet, they still have not come to the realization that the lure they have bitten cannot nourish them, because it contains no life-giving power. Our government has invested millions of dollars into equipment capable of identifying counterfeit money. The problem with counterfeit currency is that it looks “so real” that nobody can tell the

difference. It takes special machines to be able to spot fake money, today, because crooks are becoming better and better with each passing day at being able to fool the government with counterfeit money.

Similarly, today's false plans of salvation are becoming more and more harder to detect. Today's false plans of salvation are very beautiful, they have great appeal to a lonely person's innermost needs, and they do satisfy to some degree one's deepest longings for a relationship with Jesus Christ. But because they differ from the plan of salvation that Christ provides, they are wrong, because there is only one gospel message according to the bible.

Reader, if you trust the plan of salvation offered to you by anyone other than Christ Himself, you will not make it to heaven. If you instead trust what Christ has said about salvation, He will save you eternally the same instant that you trust in Him alone. For those who place their trust in a counterfeit plan of salvation, such as the counterfeit plan I have presented to you in this chapter, you can expect to meet Christ as your "judge" rather than as your "savior" at the Great White Throne Judgement. Look at what Jesus has to say to all of those who placed only partial faith in Him and the rest of their faith in living the "Christian Lifestyle" as their means to gain entrance into heaven:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23). From there, all who have trusted in counterfeit forms of the gospel will be sent to the lake of fire.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:11-15). Who will you choose to believe, reader, when it comes to where you will spend your eternal destiny? Will you choose the words of men, or will you choose the words of Jesus Christ? This, of course, is up to you.

13. Chapter 12: The Plan Of Salvation According To Franklin Graham

Chapter 12 The Plan Of Salvation According To Franklin Graham

Popular conservative radio personality Rush Limbaugh has made many controversial comments about President Barack Obama, but when you listen clearly to his arguments against the policies of our new president, whether you like Rush Limbaugh or despise him, it makes no difference at all whether you agree or disagree with his stance anymore than it would be plausible to agree or to disagree with a hurricane looming off the coast gathering strength before it moves ashore. Certain policies are doomed to failure. The Constitution of the United States of America is the blueprint for success in terms of running our nation the same way the bible is the owner's manual for success as a Christian. In no way is this meant as a slam against President Obama. The bible instructs us to pray for those in authority over us, to pay our taxes, and to stay out of trouble. After all, God elects "kings" over the nations for His own purposes, whether we agree with them or not; the purpose of this line of argument is merely to convey a special message that I will attempt to use as a means of comparison between the content of what Franklin Graham (Billy Graham's son) says about salvation and the content of what Christ Himself says about salvation. Rush Limbaugh does not have a personal argument against President Obama anymore than I have a personal argument against Franklin Graham. When Rush Limbaugh stated that he hopes President Obama's policies fail, an attack upon Mr. Limbaugh's character quickly ensued in our media. Limbaugh's statements were misconstrued and he was vilified most reprehensibly by media spin doctors as a way to vent their frustrations against him and to throw dirt upon his character. Why? Because, for one, people do not want to know the truth, and two, some people enjoy tearing one another down so that they gain favor from others. I detest the egocentric and prideful aspects of today's forms of modern argument, especially in religious or political contexts, but to vilify a voice of truth is akin to how the Pharisees tried to silence the truths that Jesus taught. In virtually all of Jerusalem at that time, even among the most fervent spiritual law keepers, the lone voice of Christ spoke the truth about salvation and evil men sought to take His life as a result; likewise, Rush Limbaugh, though not infallible, is perhaps only one of a very few who speak the truth concerning the errant policies of our newly elected government, and as such, those who are opposed to the truth seek daily to silence, discredit, even to dishearten this "lovable little fuzz ball" through lies and half-truths. In the same impersonal way that Rush Limbaugh hopes President Barack Obama's liberal policies fail, I, too, in an impersonal and completely unbiased way hope that Franklin Graham's plan of salvation fails to influence the masses because what he says does not match with what the Author of Salvation, Jesus Christ, says. This is not an attack upon the person or the values of Franklin Graham. I actually like the man. He is really a wonderful person, he has done much good through the Samaritan's Purse, and I have benefited from his teachings, but when it comes to salvation, I can show you upon the authority of the Word of God that what he teaches in terms of salvation is not the same salvation that Christ teaches, and because of this fact alone, one should consider very carefully the differences between the two. I hope that my statements will disarm the critics of my work while at the same time show them the simplicity, the beauty, and the

freeness of salvation in Christ alone; however, there will be those who refuse to look at what Christ says, and there will even be those who derive a twisted sense of pleasure in calling both Christ and me a liar for what I am about to say regarding Franklin Graham's plan of salvation. So be it.

Franklin Graham is the son of perhaps the most well-known evangelist of all time, Billy Graham. According to the Franklin Graham Festivals Website, Franklin did not begin preaching until the age of 31. During his first-ever sermon, approximately 1,000 people were in attendance to hear what he had to say. At the end of the service, when he invited the audience to give their lives to Christ, not a single person stepped forward to make Christ the Lord of their lives; however, many came forward during his second-ever sermon in which, according to his Internet page, was an audience packed full of drunkards and prostitutes. Franklin's friend, evangelist John Wesley White, attributes the fact of so many people coming forward to that of a "miracle." Franklin now holds his festivals all over the world under the auspices of his father's organization, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA). At this time, I would like to draw your attention to the plan of salvation according to Franklin Graham.

If you will visit his Franklin Graham Festivals Website and click upon the "Peace With God" link, you will be taken straight to the salvation statement issued by Billy Graham at the BGEA Website. Franklin uses his father's plan of salvation rather than issuing a statement of his own. Essentially, Franklin is just a younger version of Billy, only Franklin does not deliver his sermons in the same forceful manner in which his father did when he was Franklin's age. Franklin delivers a much kinder, more inclusive call for people to come forward and surrender their lives over to the Lordship of Christ.

Because Franklin uses the exact same plan of salvation as his father, I will take you to the plan of salvation given by Billy Graham at his BGEA Website. Now, because of potential copyright issues, I will paraphrase for you what salvation is according to the Grahams'. First of all, we are told that God loves us and wants to give us an abundant life. Second, we are told that we are sinners. Third, we are told that Jesus died for us and that He is the only way to heaven. Fourth, we are told to turn from our sins and to receive Christ as both the Lord of our lives and as our savior, which, according to the Grahams' means that we are to trust that Christ paid for our sins by His death on the cross and that we are to follow the Lordship of Christ over our lives in strict obedience (for the rest of our lives) "in order to" get to heaven. In virtually every sermon you hear given by Franklin Graham, he makes surrender of one's life to Christ sound more appealing to us than a hot-fudge sundae could ever appeal to a child. What Franklin says about giving our lives to Christ is truly beautiful. At the end of his messages, I would follow him in prayer, trusting Jesus Christ and then giving Him rule over my life by determining to follow Him in obedience for the rest of my life so that I, too, could go to heaven when I die. When I thought I was saved as a result of trusting Christ the way both Billy and Franklin told me to do, from the years 2002 through 2005, I decided to make my decision "public" the way they said we all have to do in order to go to heaven. I literally became "high" on Jesus. I was so "on fire for Jesus" that I became a pamphleteer in order to get the "plan of salvation" out to everybody. I bought a paper cutter and began to make my own salvation pamphlets using the Grahams' salvation message as a blueprint.

I made so many pamphlets (or tracts) that I literally wore out the paper cutter and had to buy another.

I had the most fun making these pamphlets because I just knew I was doing the will of God by making them and giving them out to everyone. I would go to grocery stores and watch people with a careful eye. As customers would lean over to inspect a food item, I would drop a pamphlet into their grocery cart and quickly run away and watch their reactions as they discovered this “pamphlet from nowhere” in their baskets! I saw many people pick them up and start reading them. I would see some look around as if, “Where did this come from?” and I would get the biggest thrill out of giving them “a chance” at eternal life through my pamphlet based upon the teachings of the Grahams’. In 2005, in an attempt to find some specialized information about the gospel to present to my Mormon co-worker, I came across a great article about Mormonism that was written by a pastor who, up until that point, I had never heard of. This pastor’s name was Hank Lindstrom. I was so impressed by his article on Mormonism that I began to study other articles that he had written. The one that drew my attention the most was the article he wrote about “repentance.”

I was always afraid of the word repentance because I was never really sure if I had repented correctly or if I had, in fact, repented enough to be truly born again. To make a long story short, what I found in the bible (through Dr. Lindstrom’s article on repentance) changed my life forever. When I learned that the bible refers to “repent” as being “a change of mind” rather than meaning to “turn from your sins” or to “quit sinning altogether,” I was thoroughly awestruck and then immediately the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ in the bible became clear to me for the first time in my whole life. For three whole years I had been going about trying to establish my own righteousness before God through my own efforts, when in actuality Christ had, by His own righteousness, paid for all of my sins by His death, burial and resurrection from the dead 2,000 years earlier. When I learned the bible said I could have the free gift of everlasting life by believing solely upon what Christ had done for me by His death and subsequent resurrection from the dead, I believed His message immediately, hungrily, and to the exclusion of all the other counterfeit plans of salvation that I had been led to believe by today’s biggest hitters in Christianity. I was finally “free.” I was finally born again, and I knew it beyond any doubts at all.

God put an end to my pamphleteering of false gospels. Now, I preach His plan of salvation via my personal Internet page, by face-to-face discussions with people, by tract, by CD, by DVD, as well as through the use of e-mail. Today, I am now proclaiming Christ’s free gift via this book you are holding in your hands now which shall eventually go all around the world. The plan of salvation according to Franklin Graham is different from the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ. Let me explain His plan a little more fully for you. First of all, I would like to draw your attention to a very important statement that Jesus made: “And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many” (Matthew 24:4-5). Upon first glance of this passage, one may assume that Jesus was referring to some strange person who would rise up and claim to be Jesus Christ. There have been many instances in our history where people have done that, successfully. Charles Manson comes quickly to mind because he claimed to be Christ and his followers believed him. But when you look more deeply into this verse and what Christ was trying to convey, you will notice that He is saying many false preachers will agree with you about Jesus being “the Christ,” that He really is who He claims to be. In fact, all of the pastors and bible teachers I talk about in this book agree that Jesus is, in fact, “the Christ” of the bible. But directly after Jesus mentions that in the aforementioned passage, He says, “and shall deceive many.” What is the deception of which He is

speaking? Christ is telling us that many will claim to be Christians, that they will agree that Jesus is “the Messiah,” that He is deity, but that they would deceive everyone with a faith plus works message that cannot save anyone at all. What is so frustrating about this clever form of deception is the fact that people who have fallen for a faith plus works message do not even realize they are deceived by a doctrine that is not of Christ. It is a doctrine of man, not of God.

Nowhere does the bible state or imply that a person must turn from their sins and follow Christ in obedience “in order to” be saved. People can twist the bible to make it say virtually anything they want it to say, but when you see the words of Christ and understand what He says about salvation, no one can refute or debate what He says. For example, Jesus says “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47). Who can argue with that statement made by Christ Himself? Who can interpret this verse as anything other than eternal life being a gift from God made available to anyone the instant they “believe” on Christ as their savior? To say otherwise is to call Him a liar. To add man’s efforts, such as turning from sins, making a public profession, forsaking sins, giving tithes and money, joining a church, etc., or any other “thing of self” is to call Christ a liar; after all, according to the bible, heaven is a free gift that is given to the individual who places his or her faith in the finished work of Christ and has nothing to do whatsoever with what we do for God. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Reader, what we all must realize is that there are built-in consequences to 1) choosing man’s way of salvation, which always includes “something of self” and denies Christ His rightful place as the one and only savior of mankind, and 2) choosing Christ’s way of salvation, which always excludes all forms of human effort or merit and makes Christ the absolute savior of mankind. My best friend in the world is named Chris. I’ve known him since the age of four. One day, as I was walking around in his front yard, I saw a little baby robin that had fallen out of the nest a little too early. This robin was perhaps the sweetest little thing I had ever seen. I would have left him there to go his way, but Chris’ next door neighbor had several cats, and this little robin was so close to those cats that it would never have lived through the night. Those cats would have “played tennis” with this baby bird using their claws and then they would have eaten him. So, I gently picked this little bird up and took him home with me. I had two ducks as pets at that time, so, I gave this little fellow some mashed up duck food and built him a little place to live made out of pillows and towels. This robin was completely helpless. He had no feathers. He could not fly. He had no means of defending himself, and he was too weak to run away. Days later, after a nutrient-rich diet of duck food, he became stronger. I so loved this little bird. As his feathers began to grow, I would gently coax him into flapping his wings by holding him firmly in my hand and moving him up and down. After a few days of getting him ready for his first flight, I let him take some test flights onto a very soft pillow. He flew wonderfully! Later on, I would take him places with me; after all, we were friends! I began feeding him a diet of worms, too, because worms are a robin’s favorite food. This little fellow loved me, trusted me completely, and I took care of him. As he slept on our screened-in back porch each night, we began to notice a mother robin sitting on the ledge outside of the screen. One morning, my bird had flown up to the ledge, and we found both my bird and “his mother” sitting together, side-by-side, with only a thin screen separating the two from each other. The mother had found her baby, recognized him as her own, and remained faithful to him. Then it came time to introduce him to our tall pine trees in the back yard. My bird would fly way up into the

tallest branches of these trees. After a while, I would call to him, and he would come back to my hand. This went on for a few days. As his mother came around more and more frequently, my bird would meet with her. And one day, a day that had to come, my bird flew away with his rightful mother. I was devastated over my friend leaving me, but I knew it was for the best. A couple of weeks later, I saw my bird again, looking at me and whistling away like the happy bird he always was in my care. I knew exactly who he was because of the distinct markings on his feathered torso. The mother fed him some worms as I watched on with delight. It was a feeling of great accomplishment. I knew I had done the right thing in saving that helpless little fellow from those horrible cats who do nothing more than kill for sport and then go home to eat their store-bought cat food. To this day, although that was 30 years ago, I can still become emotional about my little bird when I think about him. I have a photo of him perched atop of my finger, smiling along with me (ha!) into the camera, and I plan to make this photo available to everyone on my new Website, one day.

It was a difficult task for me to write about my little bird in this portion of the chapter, but I see now, very clearly, why God allowed me the privilege of such an experience.

We all need love, we all want to love, and we all want to be loved. Although my bird was just one of God's creations, God loves birds, too. Oh, reader, how much, much more does He love you! You see, in a sense, I was this little bird's "savior." This bird was facing certain death. I picked him up, and in his innocence he trusted me. He did not put up a fuss, he did not try to wiggle out of my hands. This little bird trusted me. I do not mean to personify a bird or to ascribe human emotions to my little winged friend, but the parallel we can draw from this experience is in every case the same as the one we might draw between a lost person who faces absolute, certain spiritual death and the willingness of Christ to save them, without any questions, without any efforts on his or her part, and without any expectation of us making Him our Lord. Above all, Jesus wants to save you if you are lost. He does not demand that you become His disciple or to follow Him for the rest of your life "in order to" receive the free gift of everlasting life in heaven. His will for you is that you trust Him alone to save you, the same way my little bird "trusted" me to save him. God's will for you "after" you are saved is that you obey Him and live according to His will, but that does not always mean becoming His disciple, as we have been so wrongly taught all of our lives by good, well-meaning but thoroughly confused pastors who erroneously make discipleship a necessary aspect of salvation. One day, in an emotional state, Christ looked over the city of Jerusalem and said in Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" You see, they wanted to reach heaven "their way" rather than Christ's way, and He grieved over them, knowing that unless they trusted in Him alone, they would end up standing before Him at the Great White Throne Judgement, and afterward be cast into the eternal lake of fire.

Friend, anyone who thumbs their nose at Christ's way of salvation and instead puts their trust in a plan of salvation other than the one Christ said for us to trust, that person will stand before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgement where he or she will stand "in their own righteousness" which will not be enough to gain entrance into heaven. Isaiah 64:6 states that our best deeds, the absolute best that we can come up with in this lifetime, will be seen as "filthy rags" when compared to Christ's supreme sacrifice of His body on the cross. The lost person's partial faith in Christ and

partial faith in his or her works and discipleship will not be “enough” to get them into His eternal dwelling place.

I urge you, reader, to understand that Christ has but one way into His heaven, and that way is through trusting in Him alone as your only hope of heaven. To trust Christ as your only means of entering heaven you must first realize the penalty for sin, which is eternal death and separation from Him in the lake of fire. Once you realize you are under this eternal “death penalty,” you then trust that Christ paid for your sins by His death on the cross and that He arose from the grave three days later. Because Christ knows every single thought you are thinking at this very moment, He “knows” whether or not you have trusted in Him alone, or if you are only placing partial trust in Him and the rest of your trust in living the “Christian Lifestyle” as your hope of entering into His heaven. The latter won’t save you, but the former will save you. You either trust Christ alone or you trust partially in Christ plus your “filthy rags.” To do the latter, you will not make it to heaven; however, if you choose the former, you, at this very moment, have a home in heaven waiting for you! God immediately grants you the gift of everlasting life in heaven the very same instant that you trust Christ alone to save you. For those who still believe today’s counterfeit plans of salvation, those who are counting on their faith in Christ “plus” their discipleship to Christ to get them into heaven, Jesus says that they will experience the following horrors:

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”(Matthew 7:21-23).

These are persons who were trusting in their works alone, or in partial faith in Christ plus their good works, to get them into heaven. Look at the various areas of service in which they brag. They acknowledge Him as “Lord” and then they brag about preaching in His name, about healing in His name, and about the myriad of inexhaustible works of goodness they have done in His name; yet, because they did not trust in Him alone, the way He so clearly tells us to in His bible, He tells them to depart from Him because He sees their good works in His name as “sin.” As if that were not bad enough, this is the fate of everyone who appears at the Great White Throne Judgement, where they stand not in Christ’s righteousness, but in the filthy rags of their own inadequate righteousness. This is their fate:

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15).

Reader, this chapter presents to you two plans of salvation: 1) the plan of salvation according to Franklin Graham, and 2) the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ. Of these two plans, which one will you choose?

14. Chapter 13: The Plan Of Salvation According To Billy Graham

Chapter 13 The Plan Of Salvation According To Billy Graham

In the whole of modern Christendom, perhaps no other personality is more recognizable than that of Evangelist Billy Graham. For decades, Graham has delivered his message to millions of spiritually hungry people all over the world through radio, television, books, a popular ministry magazine, and by filling stadiums and arenas to maximum capacity. Graham is perhaps the best-known Christian personality of all time apart from Christ Himself. As such, perhaps no other personality has sought so fervently to persuade and to influence our views concerning salvation from God's wrath against sin.

Graham, with his intense gaze and authoritative voice, mesmerizes his audience with statements that strike at the very core of each attentive individual. His sermons, from decades ago, are still broadcast today on popular Christian networks across the world. His intensity of conviction, longevity within the evangelical arena, and the vast amounts of exposure he has been afforded have made him a true international icon in both monumental and unrivaled stature. It is, in part, because of Graham's stern stares into the camera lens and his ability to vociferate his opinions with such authority, that few in their right minds would ever question the validity of his biblical interpretations. Essentially, by his sheer force of persuasion and brilliantly delivered oratory, Graham's massive audiences are unknowingly held in a state of subconscious yet willful hypnotism to the point where they would believe anything he told them. The purpose for which I'm writing this chapter is to show you that the plan of salvation put forth by Billy Graham stands in stark contrast to the plan of salvation that Jesus Christ provides. I will use several bible verses in my argument and I will supplement Jesus' stance on salvation by borrowing a passage from the very generous Dr. A. Ray Stanford who gave me his permission to do so. With that being said let us now move on to the plan of salvation that is offered to us by Billy Graham via the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) Website. When you click upon the "How To Know Jesus" link at the BGEA site you will be taken through a four-step process on how to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Now, because we must assume that all online materials from organizations such as BGEA are copyrighted, I will paraphrase as accurately as I can what Billy Graham's plan of salvation says; however, you must visit his site in order to read it word-for-word. In step one, you are told that God loves you and that He wants you to have abundant life both now and forever, and a question is raised to get you to ponder deeply as to why most people do not have the abundance or peace that God "originally planned" for us to have in this life. In step two, we are told of our sinful condition and how our free will has led us away from God. He talks about how our sins have created a gap between us and God and that we cannot bridge that gap between us and God no matter how many good works we do. In step three, we are told that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave, that Christ bridged that gap between us and God by paying the penalty for our sins, and that God has provided us only one way to Him and that we must make a "choice." In step four, we are told that we must trust Jesus as our "Lord" and as our "Savior" by personal invitation. To do this, Billy Graham says that you must first admit you are a sinner, then be willing

to turn from your sins (the “English definition” of repent), then believe

Jesus died for you on the cross and rose from the dead, and lastly, through a prayer, invite Jesus to come in and to control your life through the Holy Spirit, i.e., the equivalent of making Him your “Lord and Savior.”

I, as well as every member of my family, including all of my relatives, have followed the teachings of Billy Graham. When I was a boy, my family would gather around the television set and we would watch Graham’s sermons. We were as quiet as we could possibly be as we listened to his preaching. We were, in every sense possible, as reverent and as respectful during his television sermons as we were in church every Sunday morning. I would be enthralled by Graham’s strength of voice, and toward the end of his sermons as hundreds of people would get out of their seats and walk down to meet him on the stadium floor, something just felt “right” about the whole thing even though I had no idea what he was talking about. I was very impressionable at that age, yet I did not discover the truth of God’s Word until almost three decades later.

One day, at the age of seven, after our pastor of our little church had preached his sermon and the choir sang “Just As I Am,” the very same song that is sung by Billy Graham’s choir at the end of every service, I got out of the pew and walked forward the same way my friend walked forward earlier only a week before. You see, my friend had recently walked down to the front the same way all of those folks did at the end of Graham’s sermons, and a few days later I saw my friend get “dunked in water.” I wanted to be just like my friend, and because I always saw so many people go forward at the end of Graham’s shows, I assumed that I should do the same thing, yet, I never knew what salvation was all about. The day that I went forward in my church, the pastor put his hand on my shoulder, and all the members of our church looked upon me with smiles and with the most joyful sense of approval that I knew deep in my heart that I’d done the right thing. Each of them came up and shook my hand at the end of the service. About a week later I was fitted for a baptismal robe, was told to walk up the stairs to the baptismal pool, and I waded into the cold water while looking outward at the approving audience seated in the pews of our church. The pastor then lifted his right hand, said some holy sounding words that I didn’t understand at all, and then he submerged my little body into the water and then raised me up out of it. I exited the pool of water, went into the back room, changed my clothes and then scampered quickly back to the pew upon which my family sat in order to listen to our pastor’s sermon. I remember feeling very happy about what I had just done, although I had no idea of what I’d just done. Still, it felt like the right thing to do and I was happy about the whole thing. Back then I always had to attend Sunday school, whether I wanted to or not. “Lost in Space” came on every Sunday morning and, as I look back upon this time now, I always wanted to stay home and watch it rather than having to go to Sunday school, but Sunday school was fun and we always got cookies and punch. The lady who led our lessons would always have us sing along with her the “In To My Heart” song that essentially was a way of asking Christ into our hearts even though none of us really understood what it meant, but deep down, it felt like the right and holy thing to do. The point I am trying to make here is that you can be water baptized and you can ask Christ to come into your heart and still not be born again. While Billy Graham does not baptize people in water during his massive, stadium-filled services, he does instruct everyone to ask Jesus to come into their hearts. In the next section I would like to give you some paraphrased examples of what Billy Graham says to his audiences in virtually every televised sermon he delivers.

Billy Graham, like a boxer, hits you with a series of combinations to the point where you are completely off balance as he instructs you in how to be saved. I want you to follow very carefully how he zigs and zags his way through his version of salvation. What he says about salvation on his television programs varies just a bit from what he says on his Internet page about salvation. What you are about to read may be difficult to follow, but if you will read it slowly, you will understand exactly why his plan of salvation is completely different from Christ's own plan of salvation. Again, please follow this carefully. In any given sermon you will see, he will first lay a foundation of understanding that he expects you to comprehend without question or doubt of any kind. In his televised sermons the basic foundation consists of four parts. Billy Graham says, first of all, that we are all sinners and he then provides bible verses that confirm the fact that God sees all of humankind as sinners. Secondly, using various scriptures to support his arguments, Billy always says that God loves us and that He sent Jesus to die for us even though we are lost sinners who do not deserve God's love. Thirdly, Billy says that we must repent of our sins and attempts to provide examples from the bible that suggest we are supposed to repent of our sins in order to be born again; however, his examples are weak and hold no truth at all because the bible "never" tells us to quit sinning in order to be saved; in fact, the phrase "repent of sin" does not even occur in the bible. Billy often refers to the Greek word for repent which is metanoia, which he erroneously defines as turning away from our sins, to feel sorry for our sins, that we should change our minds about sin and walk away from it altogether as a "requirement" for our being born again. Very often, as a way of telling us that we have to quit willfully and deliberately sinning in order to be born again, he will refer to where Jesus said in Luke 13:3 that we must repent or perish, yet in the original Greek manuscript, the word for repent means to change your mind and has nothing at all to do with turning from sins. Fourthly, he will say that we must come to Christ by faith in order to receive His "free gift" of everlasting life that we cannot earn by our works, or our service, or by anything that we "of ourselves" can do. Billy then usually tells his audience to say "yes" to Christ, to make a decision to follow Christ, to give their lives to Christ, and/or to commit themselves to Christ. Also at this point in his preaching, he will very often quote John 3:16 which states that salvation is by faith in Christ alone, which directly contradicts everything he has said up to that point. He will also give other verses, such as Titus 3:5 which states that "... not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saves us..." And this is why "salvation according to Billy Graham" becomes so complicated and so very confusing to the lost people who have come to Billy in order to learn how to be saved.

Billy says that we cannot earn our salvation no matter what we do, no matter how many good deeds we do, but immediately afterward he tells everyone that they must change their behavior, submit their inner wills to Christ, and to stop sinning. He gives verses that tell us to believe on Christ alone and that salvation is a free gift given to us the instant we believe, such as John 3:16 and Ephesians 2:8-9, yet he turns right around and says that we must make a 180-degree change in our direction, that it takes a lot of effort on our part to do these things, and that we should determine with all of our efforts to follow Christ. He then says that we don't have the power to follow Christ unless the Holy Spirit enables us to do so. Billy will then usually tell us again that we must commit our lives to Christ and that we must become practicing disciples of Jesus in order to be born again, but at the same time, he knocks everyone off balance when he turns right back around to tell his audience that salvation is free and that it is received by faith alone and that we cannot do a single thing to earn it. Then Billy demands again and again that we must quit sinning

in order to be saved, but directly afterward he rotates back and forth from “quit sinning” to “you can do nothing of yourself to earn it.” He says that salvation is free, but immediately afterward he says that we must carefully consider the costs of following Christ. “Costs” is the opposite of “free,” yet, nobody will dare to question Billy Graham about the validity of what he is saying because he is, in fact, so forceful in his tone of voice and in his facial expressions that I am convinced people are afraid of him. The glare alone from his stern stare that one can easily see in his eyes as they sweep across the masses of people in his audience is enough to keep people from ever questioning the validity of his teachings. Again and again, Billy says that salvation is not of yourselves, that it is a free gift, but then quickly does a u-turn and makes your salvation dependent upon quitting your sins and devoting your life to discipleship. Then, to make matters worse, Billy makes everlasting life in heaven dependent upon your walking down the aisle and making your decision to follow Christ “as your Lord” public. Billy says that Christ will not acknowledge you before His Father if you do not acknowledge Him before other people, which, in context, means that you will not go to heaven unless you tell other people that you have made a decision to follow Christ. Then Billy will usually tell his audience that salvation is, again, a free gift that cannot be earned no matter what we do. It is, by far, Graham’s terse persona that captivates and influences an audience rather than the Holy Spirit of God.

Hypothetically speaking, how would you feel if you were in a car with someone the likes of whom I am about to describe? Imagine you are trying to get somewhere that you’ve never been before and the person next to you says this:

“Okay, take a left, and then take a right, and then stop, back up, take another right. Wait. Take another left. My map is correct! Trust me! Stop. Go right again, then turn left. Can’t you go any faster? Okay, turn right here. Stop. Take a left, then take another left. Wait. Go back. Can’t you do anything right? Start over. Go right, then left, go sharply right now. Stop! Can’t you follow my directions? Back up and take another right. Wait, go left. Trust me, I know where I’m taking you!” That, reader, is the sad yet accurate equivalent of the plan of salvation according to Billy Graham. It will get you nowhere.

“There is an increasing number of ‘evangelicals’ today who are preaching that in order for a man to be saved he must not only receive Christ as his Savior, but also must make Him absolute Lord and Master of his life. This doctrine has been termed “Lordship salvation” and has absolutely no support from the Word of God. It is, in fact, another subtle way Satan has invented to get Bible-believing men to add works to salvation without, perhaps, their realizing it, and to do it in such a way that it sounds spiritual and good” (Stanford, 87-88).

We would all agree that quitting sins and bad habits is the right thing to do, and that following Christ and doing the things that He says to do is the right and honorable way to live in every case or situation we might find ourselves in, but quitting your sins and bad habits, as well as following Christ to the best of your ability, are not part of God’s simple plan of salvation. As good as the Christian Lifestyle is, no aspect of it is included in God’s salvation contract with humankind. Living the Christian Lifestyle and doing all of those wonderful deeds that we are supposed to do as born again Christians comes “after” we are saved, not before. In Ephesians 2:1, “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;...” we see that believers who were “quickened” or “made alive” through faith in Jesus Christ, were “dead in their sins” before the Holy Spirit

brought them to a saving knowledge of Christ. Quite literally, a dead person (one who is spiritually dead) cannot help themselves. They cannot turn from their sins because they don't have the power to do so. God gives people the power to walk according to His principles only "after" a person is born again. The person "must" be born again before he or she is able to consciously turn from sin. Yet, Billy Graham and the majority of pastors today make turning from sins an essential element in salvation when the bible states outright that those who are dead in their sins do not have the power or the desire to quit those sinful things that bring them joy. For example, a person who cannot stop drinking alcohol might hear Billy Graham say that he must stop his drinking in order to be saved, yet, because he cannot stop drinking, he gives up all hope of ever coming to Christ for salvation because he has been deceived into thinking that he must quit or at least be willing to quit something he is neither capable of nor wanting to do in the first place, and as he hears the Graham sermon draw to a close, he hears the choir sing a different message than the one Billy has just taught him. Billy says to quit sinning and to devote your life to Christ, but the choir sings, "Just as I am, I come, without one plea, but that thy blood was shed for me...Just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve, because thy promise I believe O Lamb of God, I come, I come..." Confused, the drunkard gives up and walks away feeling all the more defeated because he cannot live up to Billy Graham's standards, which, he is led to believe are God's own standards; however, if the unfortunate alcoholic was to hear the true plan of salvation according to Christ, he could receive instantly the gift of everlasting life the very same moment that he believes Jesus paid for his sins by His death on the cross, that He was buried, and that He walked out of the grave alive three days later. How can we know this is true? Because the bible says so. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Jesus said very plainly, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). And one of the most potent verses of all time that refutes Billy's turn-from-sin requirement is this one: "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:39). What the bible is telling us through these verses is that turning from sins cannot save us and that God does not require a lost person to turn from sins in order to be saved. So, we must ask ourselves this question: "Why does Billy Graham tell us that we must repent of our sins in order to be saved?" That is a question I have asked myself repeatedly ever since I realized he was wrong and that Christ was right. I cannot explain the reasons for which Billy feels this great need to ignore what Christ has said so clearly and to instead add works to God's grace. I believe Billy is not aware of what metanoia really means, yet, I am in no way insinuating that he is ignorant of the meaning, I just believe that Satan will not allow him to understand it because, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them"(2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

Simply put, the only logical conclusion to which I can arrive in an attempt to answer this question is that Satan has blinded him to the truth about salvation the way the aforementioned verse suggests. Also, Billy needs to be made aware of one major malapropism and the simple definition of it that he routinely stumbles over during his salvation invitations. Penitence is sorrow for sin, not repentance. I bring this up because Billy requires a lost person to feel extremely sorry for his or her sins, and the fact of the matter is that a lost sinner is most likely not sorry for their sins, rather, he or she enjoys them very much. When Billy tells a lost person that he or she should feel extremely

sorry for their sins, the person is left feeling confused. Consequently, because that person enjoys smoking, drinking, having sex outside of marriage, gambling, or whatever the case may be, they are not about to buy in to the philosophy of someone they automatically assume is saying “you are not as good as me... I am better than you are... listen to me because I have all the answers.” In my study of the Greek word for repent, which is metanoia, I have found another form of this word that may be causing Billy to misinterpret Jesus’ true intentions when He said “repent” in Luke 13:3. The word that I believe is being accidentally misconstrued with “metanoia” is the word “metamelomai,” which, in Greek, means “to regret or to feel sorry”; however, it needs to be emphasized that “metamelomai” is rarely ever used. The overwhelming majority of all forms of “repent” refer to the “change of mind” that Christ commands us to have. For instance, Mark 1:15 shows us, “And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.” This particular repent is, in fact, “metanoia,” which meant for those people to “change their minds” from what they were trusting in to get them to heaven (law of Moses) and to trust in the gospel (the “person” of Jesus Christ), instead. The “gospel” is, of course, the “good news” message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When you do a little digging and find the original Greek meanings behind the forms of repent you will see in the bible, the true spirit and intention of what God is trying to say to us begins to come so alive that the verses begin to leap off of the pages.

There is a passage consisting of three verses that uses all three variations of the Greek word for repent (a.k.a. metanoia). Look very closely at this wonderful passage that forever puts to rest the idea that one must quit sinning in order to be born again:

2 Corinthians 7:8-10 states, “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season.

Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”

Now, upon first glance, that passage will seem a bit wordy, a bit unclear, so what I would like to do for you at this time is to write this verse out again while putting the numbers one through three (1-2-3) next to every variation of “repent” so that you can understand the original intention of what God was saying to us in the original Greek manuscript that He wrote through Paul. Look at this revised verse, please:

Number one (1) is metanoia, which is defined as “a change of mind.” Number two (2) is metamelomai, which is defined as “to regret or to feel sorry. Number three (3) is ametamelōtos, which is defined as “irrevocable; cannot change your mind; permanent.”

2 Corinthians 7:8-10 reads like this: “For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent (1), though I did repent (2): for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance (1): for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance (1) to salvation not to be repented (3) of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.”

Because of the incredible importance of this passage, I will again attempt to make it as clear as humanly possible for you to understand by writing it all out again using the proper definitions of each variation of repent. Please follow this closely: The original intent of 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 is as follows: "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not (change my mind about the reasons that were necessary to make you feel bad), though I did (feel sorry for having to upset you): for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to (changing your mind from trusting in works to trusting in Christ alone): for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh (that change of mind from works to Christ) to salvation not to be (revoked; once saved, God cannot change His mind; He saves you forever) of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." This passage from 2 Corinthians proves that repentance in salvation means to have a change of mind from works or discipleship or any combination of faith in Christ plus the addition of our filthy works (Isaiah 64:6) to instead placing our total confidence in Christ to save us from the penalty of sin for which we are incapable of paying. Since "one lie" is enough to keep us out of heaven (Revelation 21:27), and since the payment for sin is death and separation from God for all eternity (Romans 6:23), we need a "savior" to save us. We are completely helpless without Christ. Only "Christ's righteousness" is seen by God the Father as worthy of paying for sin. When we trust Jesus Christ as our savior, simultaneously (in one act) He removes the guilt and punishment that would be rightfully ours because of our sins and He instead credits us with "His righteousness." Look at this: "For he (God) hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). When a lost person trusts Christ alone as his or her savior, a "swap" happens. Simultaneously, the death penalty is removed and everlasting life in heaven is given to the believer, immediately. That is why Christ says "hath" in the verse John 6:47. It means "has now," at this very moment. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). The instant you trust Christ alone for your eternal life in heaven, you have that "free gift" the split second you trust Christ as the one who died on the cross for all sins, was buried, but came back to life. When I finally understood that Jesus was telling me in His bible that I had to stop trusting in the Christian Lifestyle, just like Jesus' very own words that I mentioned to you a moment ago in Mark 1:15, and to trust only in what He alone did for me by His "finished work" at Calvary, I was freed from the lifelong ball-and-chain of indentured servitude that Billy Graham had shackled onto me from a very early age.

Something about Billy's teachings, as well as the teachings I received at that legalistic Christian school I attended as a youth that based their own teachings upon the books and sermons of Billy Graham, something about him just never quite squared away with my spirit. I thank God that I never could completely swallow Billy Graham's plan of salvation, but believe me, I tried. I tried with all of my heart and soul to trust in Billy's plan of salvation, but God kept me from being fully immersed into it.

Instead, after I came out of atheism, God "allowed" me to be deceived by false plans of salvation for only three years — just long enough to gain enough education about false gospels so that I could write this book that you are holding in your hands at this very moment. God chose me to write a chapter about Billy Graham for you, the reader, so that you may consider his version of salvation very carefully and to eventually make up your own mind as to whether you will ultimately

trust his plan or Christ's plan. Although there are many people who are much more qualified than I am to write about Billy Graham, I have yet to find one who will speak out against Graham's version of salvation via the medium of a book. Sure, Internet pages abound with criticisms about his plan of salvation, yet, most are uninformed and are rather mean spirited, also. In contrast, my aim is to present you with an unbiased chapter in which I seek to merely juxtapose side-by-side Graham's plan of salvation and Christ's plan of salvation. My great hope is that you now see the differences between the two. Above all, remember that there's only "one plan of salvation." Both are different, so, both cannot be true. One of them is false, yet, you have to decide which one is true and which one is false.

If you will focus totally upon the words of Christ rather than on the words of Billy Graham, you will never be confused about how to go to heaven. I did not enjoy writing this chapter, but I do enjoy Christ's truths. I tell people of His truth every chance I get; however, let me give you a word of warning: I urge you never to look to any man for the truth; in fact, don't even take my word for it, reader. Trust "only" in what Christ tells you about salvation, and you will never be sorry. Now, you have a choice to make concerning these two plans. It's either the plan of salvation according to Billy Graham or it's the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ Himself. If you are not saved, will you stop sinning, quit your bad habits, start feeling really sorry about all of those fun yet sinful things you do, and will you give control of your life over to a God you don't even know yet, and will you walk down the aisle in front of a congregation of people in a church you know nothing about and then tell those people you have decided to make Christ your Lord and that you will follow Him all the days of your life because He died for you and that's the least you can do for Him in return? Are you ready to do that now, friend? Or would you like to do what Jesus said to do. Jesus said that we could do nothing to pay for our sins. Jesus said that all of those great-sounding requirements that we hear pastors such as Billy Graham telling us to do won't help us. The Pharisees of Jesus' day were doing the same things then that Billy is telling you to do today, friend. Jesus called them vipers. Jesus also said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins"(John 8:24). Jesus said that the only way to heaven is through Him. Jesus has only one requirement for you: trust. That's it. When you realize you are a sinner, and then trust that Jesus alone fully paid for your sins by His death, burial and resurrection from the grave three days later, He knows the instant that you believe Him and He saves you. Period. After you are born again, you are then free to serve Him and be used by Him. He will not allow you to live as you please, though. He, like any father of sound mind, will chasten you, and correct you when you disobey. But He will never relegate you to a life of unwilling obedience to His Lordship. Once you have trusted Christ as your savior you will never lose your salvation. You can know beyond any doubt that you are His child the instant you trust Him to be your savior. 1 John 5:13 says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." We don't have to hope so or guess so, we can "know so" because God cannot lie. He said that if you trust in His Son to save you, which is the equivalent of trusting in that "good news" message of the gospel, which in its most elemental form Isaiah 1:1-31) We are sinners, 2) Jesus died for our sins, 3) His dead body was buried, 4) He arose from the dead three days later, He saves you. The problem with all of the modern counterfeit plans of salvation is that they add works and self efforts to what God freely gives. Our works, deeds, behavioral changes and promises to do better cancel out the grace of God. "Christ is become of no effect unto you,

whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Since there is no justification by the law, when we attempt to save ourselves by putting partial faith in obeying the law and partial faith in Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, we will have no grace (no salvation). It is extremely important that you realize the difference between what Billy Graham's plan of salvation will get you and what Jesus Christ's plan of salvation will get you. They are not the same plan of salvation. In sum, will you choose to believe Billy Graham, or will you choose to believe Jesus Christ? Go to his BGEA Website, read what his salvation statement says, listen to him on the radio, watch his television sermons. Inform yourself fully on what he teaches. Then contrast what he says with the things Jesus Christ says. In the end, compare everything you learn about Billy Graham's teachings to what God tells us in John 3:16, John 6:40, John 6:47, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, and Ephesians 2:8-9. They will not match. They will be very different, but, you must choose whom you will believe. If you choose what Christ says, you will have everlasting life in heaven; however, if you choose a plan that is different from Christ's plan of salvation, you will be cast into the everlasting lake of fire:

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"(Revelation 20:11-15).

15. Chapter 14: Conclusion

Chapter 14

Conclusion

I want you to look at this verse very carefully. Romans 10:9 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Did you notice anything peculiar about this verse? Romans 10:9 limits salvation to only those who can speak with their mouths. What about those who cannot speak, can they go to heaven also? Let us examine the learned opinion of Dr. A. Ray Stanford concerning this verse:

"This is the primary verse used to try to prove the teaching of 'Lordship salvation.' The King James translation reads, 'That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.' A more literal rendering of the part of this verse is, 'That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord...thou shalt be saved.' This is where the advocates of 'Lordship salvation' get their basis for the doctrine. However, notice several things about the context of this verse. First of all, Paul is writing primarily of unbelieving Israel. From a human standpoint, the Jews had a very real part in crucifying Christ; see Acts 2:22-23; Acts 2:36; Acts 4:10-12. Had they realized that Jesus was God Himself, they certainly would not have had a part in His death (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). Therefore, unbelieving Jews (and anyone else who wants to be saved) must own up to the fact that Jesus is the Lord — that He is God Himself — and all who call upon Him in this way are saved (Romans 10:9-10; Romans 10:13). The emphasis here is not upon making Jesus Lord of someone's life, but rather on recognizing His true identity — that He is God! (Stanford, 90)"

If you understand the meaning of this verse, you can see easily how it has been used of Satan to convince people to "serve Christ" as a knight would serve his king. This addition of "service" to the Lordship of Christ is just one of the ways that Satan cons people into "adding works" to the plan of salvation. Adding your service to His Lordship means adding "something of self" to Christ's plan of salvation which is based solely upon faith in His death, burial and resurrection from the grave. In essence, it is like standing upon a bathroom scale and having someone give you a gym barbell. It is an "addition" to the original. It is extra weight that will cause you to sink into the lake of fire after Christ passes sentence upon you at the Great White Throne Judgement.

I will never forget the displeasure upon my father's face and in his voice when I was around the age of four. We had just enjoyed a wonderful show at the Ringling Brother's Barnum & Bailey Circus. On our way out from the circus, we walked down a steep flight of stairs. We inched slowly down as my father held me tightly by the hand so that I would not fall. In front of us was a little girl about my age who, like myself, was being held by the hand by her father. She dropped a nickel. It landed on the ground, wobbled, and came to a quick standstill before her foot landed on the next step in front of her. That nickel looked as big and pretty as anything to me, and I quickly picked it

up. The little girl saw what had happened to her nickel, and I looked up at my father with the nickel in my hand and he nudged me to give that nickel back to that little girl, but I did not understand the fact that it was “her nickel” and not mine. My father gave a stern grunt of disapproval and at that moment I realized that I was wrong for not giving that nickel back to her. But we were moving with the crowd, shuffling along with the busy flow of people in a hurry to get home, and to this day I regret not giving that nickel back to that little girl. When you stand before Christ at the Great White Throne Judgement, you will remember all the chances you had in life to trust Jesus Christ alone. You will wish you could go back in time to trust Christ alone the way He said you must do, just as I wish that I could go back in time to return the nickel to that little girl that I essentially stole from her in my ignorance.

I want to reiterate my stance once again in an effort to make something very clear to you, the reader of this work: I take zero pleasure in pointing out the salvific flaws which constitute the most deeply held beliefs that each of these pastors espouse to their global audiences, neither do I take pleasure in tearing down that which has been built by the honest efforts of these good people, nor do I receive a twisted thrill as I cut them to the soul with a verse when I wield my King James Bible in a sincere attempt to have them focus solely upon faith in Christ’s death, burial and resurrection for their salvation. The enemy, in this case, is Satan; however, these pastors, with their false gospels that mistakenly commingle grace with human efforts in hopes of attaining that which is given by God freely through faith alone in the shed blood of the Messiah (apart from human efforts) are oblivious to the fact that they are being used by Satan to both damn eternally in the lake of fire that which God loves the most (humankind) and to greedily rob Him of the everlasting pleasure and fellowship that He desires for every human being to have with Him in heaven. If Satan could have his way, he would kill God and have all of humanity to worship him. Satan tried this once by leading one-third of the total number of created angels in a rebellion against God, yet all were struck down, instantly. To make up for his shortcomings, Satan has reverted to what can best be described as mafia tactics. Since he cannot harm God, he instead harms those whom God loves the most — human beings created in His image. If the mafia are unable to hurt you, they will instead hurt the people that you love the most. By doing so, they strike a painful blow to which there is no relief, no remedy, and no recourse. When a person who has placed his or her faith in a false gospel dies, there is no hope of that person ever entering into heaven. This grieves God, yet, He can do nothing for the lost person once their dead spirit has been separated from their lifeless body. With the passing of each person who has fallen for a counterfeit plan of salvation, God is robbed and Satan rejoices. Worst of all is the horror that all unsaved people must accept as their new reality when their souls consciously enter into a special holding place known as hell, where they will await judicial sentencing at the Great White Throne Judgement before being cast into the eternal lake of fire.

Let’s face some facts: we’ve all told lies, we’ve all sped through red lights while cops weren’t looking, etc., and because we do wrong things quite often, either knowingly or unknowingly, we are — at the core of our being — blackened by the dirt of our anger, selfishness, pride, etc., and by attitudes and feelings which are normal because they are a part of our daily lives. In short, we are sinners. We were born as sinners. Nobody had to teach us how to lie or how to steal toys from our classmates at Kindergarten. But the bible says that God loves us. You wouldn’t think that, though, judging by what you see in the world today, such as all of the cruelty we see in our world.

Despite that, God does love us. But we have a problem. Sin. All of those wrong things we have done carry a price. The price for all the wrong things we do is a spiritual death penalty of sorts. But because God loves us, He has made a “way out” for us, and this way out is through belief in His Son. Let me explain the Gospel: The Gospel is another term for “good news.” This good news is this — Jesus died on the cross (just like in the Mel Gibson movie a few years ago), He was buried in a grave, and He then arose from the dead three days later. That is the simple message of Christ’s plan of salvation. When we realize there is a price for the wrongs we have done, and then believe that Christ paid for all of those wrongs by His death, burial, and coming back to life, God saves us. Sadly, what you see and hear on television and on radio from today’s heaviest hitters in the Christian business is not real. Most everything you have ever seen or heard about church, about religion, and about Christ has all been done in the name of greed. Many in today’s Christian movement are nothing more than hypocritical snobs with a lust for cold, hard cash. They don’t care a thing about you, reader. But Christ does. He will erase your criminal records in His books the very instant you believe that He paid for your crimes by His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead. Christ said “Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47). Salvation has NOTHING to do with promising to stop smoking, drinking, cursing, extra-marital affairs, etc. Christ does not tell us to clean up our act before we take Him up on His free gift of heaven. He offers it to all of us just as we are at this moment. He does not demand that we change our way of living or give anything up in order to be saved. But reader, once you trust Jesus as your savior and become His child, He will not allow you to live as you please. He will correct you. Salvation is not a license to sin, but because of the eternal nature of the gift of salvation, you will never lose your salvation no matter what you do in this life. We see several instances in the bible where God cut short the lives of certain born-again people because they would not stop evil things.

Tell me, if you can, what’s wrong with this particular salvation statement: “Believe on Christ, turn from your sins, be sorry for your sins, and you will go to Heaven.” I will tell you what’s wrong with it — it is not biblical. It is not what Christ said to do. When we consciously “turn from our sins” as so many teachers and preachers tell us we have to do “in order to” be saved, that amount of “effort” on our part actually makes “us” the savior, not Christ. It is a subtle form of “works” that becomes added to what Christ alone has already done for us on the cross. Why is this so serious? Because works of any kind, no matter how sincere or genuinely good they may be, will cancel out the grace of God. If we trust Christ “plus” trying to live the “Christian Lifestyle” in order to get to heaven, we will not make it to heaven because we are not trusting in the plan of salvation that God the Father has set into place as the “only means” by which we can be saved. Salvation occurs immediately when a person trusts that Christ’s death, burial and resurrection from the grave “alone” is what erases their criminal records in His court, so to speak. You see, to go to heaven, one simply understands that God cannot allow any sin to enter heaven; the price for being a sinner is eternal death in the lake of fire; but Jesus died on the cross for our sins, He was buried in a grave, but He arose from the dead three days later. God says that belief (trust) in what Jesus did for us is what saves us from the lake of fire. It has NOTHING to do with trying to live the “Christian Lifestyle.” Instead, it has EVERYTHING to do with believing that Jesus paid for your sins-in-full by His death and subsequent resurrection from the grave. Sounds easy, doesn’t it? Yes, it does. And it is! He made it that way so that there wouldn’t be any confusion; however, all we seem to have today is confusion on the subject because wolves disguised as sheep have entered into our churches and

have polluted the plan of salvation according to Jesus Christ. They have completely adulterated the message of His free gift to the point that few will ever trust Him no matter how many times the true gospel is presented to them.

Let me just say one thing to all of the people who have doubted their salvation, who have never felt sure of where they would go when they die even though they say they know to your face, who have asked Christ into their hearts repeatedly, who have tried to change their behaviors, who have done everything their pastor has told them to do, and who have never had that inner sense of security that they know is missing in their lives: this book is for you! Read it again and again. You will know beyond any doubt what Christ requires of you. Simply put, we must trust Jesus Christ alone as our only hope of reaching heaven, because if we don't trust Him alone, we are not saved. Isaiah 64:6 says that all of our best works and deeds are like filthy rags in His sight, so, no amount of good deeds, law keeping, or any amount of Christian living and behavioral changes will count toward getting us into heaven; yet, innumerable masses of people continue to be deceived on a daily basis by thoroughly unscriptural and woeful counterfeit plans of salvation that have been inspired by Satan himself. It's all a form of spiritual warfare designed by Satan to both deny "you" the joy of living in heaven for eternity and to deny God of as many souls as possible from entering heaven. But where is God in all of this deception? Why does He allow it to continue? He is near. He is in the room with you now. He is reading your mind. He uses people like me who are not afraid to tell others the truth about what Jesus Christ Himself says concerning salvation in the bible. But, He gives you the choice of believing Him or of not believing Him. He lets you choose your eternal destiny. Please, trust Jesus Christ ALONE as your savior. Take Him at His word. He cannot lie. But reader, if you do not trust Jesus Christ alone as your savior, you will stand before Him in horror at the Great White Throne Judgement, where He will say, "I NEVER KNEW YOU."

15. Works Cited

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