

WRITINGS OF KEITH GREEN

by Keith Green

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Keith Green, compiled for study and devotional reading.

33 Chapters

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01.00. Follow The Right Gospel

Follow The Right Gospel From: "Cry In The Wilderness" - Chapter One By Keith Green

Keith Gordon Green (October 21, 1953 - July 28, 1982) was an American gospel singer, songwriter, and pianist originally from Sheepshead Bay, New York. Green is best known for his strong devotion to Christianity and his unwavering efforts to stir others to the same. Notable songs written by Green and/or his wife, Melody Green, include "I Don't Wanna Fall Away From You", "You Put This Love In My Heart", "Your Love Broke Through", and "Asleep In The Light", as well as the modern hymns "O Lord, You're Beautiful", "There Is A Redeemer", and "Create In Me A Clean Heart".

Green was killed on July 28, 1982, when a small airplane leased by Last Days Ministries crashed on takeoff from a private airport referred to in the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) crash report as Garden Valley Airport. Green had planned to give visiting friends an aerial view of the Last Days Ministries property. Two of Green's children, three year old Josiah, and two year old Bethany, were on board the plane, as was pilot Don Burmeister, and friends John and Dede Smalley and all six of their children. All passengers were killed in the crash. Crash investigators determined that the aircraft was nearly 450 lbs. (202 kg) overweight with 12 passengers and only 7 seats. On November 27, 2001, Keith Green was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame. He was honored with the ASCAP Crescendo Award at the 28th annual ASCAP Christian Music Awards presentation dinner on April 3, 2006. Melody was present to receive the award.

Personal note: I never met Keith Green nor was I able to attend any of his concerts. I was introduced to him by subscribing to the Last Days Newsletter and reading his columns which led to my listening to his music. One of his albums, Songs For A Shepherd, was offered 'for sale' at bookstores and through the newsletter for whatever you wanted to donate. Needless to say, bookstores didn't care for this policy. At a concert in Tulsa, Keith called the students and faculty (and other attendees) 'snakes and vipers.' Keith did what he felt God told him to regardless of what others thought of him. The news of his death shocked and stunned me. Besides my admiration for his Christian principles and go-for-God-at-all-costs attitude, I felt an additional kinship since he and I were born in the same year and married in the same year(silly reasons, I know).

I look forward to talking with him.

NOTE: The section divisions are there for easier reading.

01.01. Section 1

Jesus said, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you...as it is written, This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me...teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." (Mark 7:6-7)

Yet [God] has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach - if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister (Colossians 1:22-23). The Apostle Paul warns us about other gospels that may entice us away from the true gospel. Paul is very blunt about this in his letter to the Galatians:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6-7, emphasis added). Are you following the true gospel - the one Jesus preached? The one Paul and the other apostles preached? How do you know? What are the consequences if you are not following the right gospel? The word gospel means "good news." Even in Paul's day, other preachers had different types of "good news" for their listeners. Some preached that salvation could be obtained through eating the right foods. Others said you had to join the Jewish religion or practice strict personal disciplines in order to be saved. There was the Gnostic gospel, which was a type of early mysticism, and the reformed Jewish gospel and all kinds of other gospels. There were even other so-called "messiahs" around at the time of Christ.

Things haven't changed much, have they?

Most born-again Christians can see through heretical teachings. Some of those teachings are so far off the wall it's hard to believe anyone could take them seriously. But other false teachings are much more subtle and difficult to spot - especially when they infiltrate the true gospel. The teachers of these other gospels try to convince us that things are not as black and white as Paul makes them out to be. They tell us that there is a little room to accommodate the flesh - to expect wealth and good health. Or that the way pointed out in the Bible is just an ideal - goals we're meant to aim at but not expected to hit. All these ideas are designed to appeal to our flesh, and Satan uses them to lull us until we're ineffective. But the gospel that Paul preached involved making tough choices and taking hard stands. It was about putting your life on the line. Paul himself lived through all these challenges. After his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus, he became a wanted man, hunted down by the same Pharisees who had been his friends and colleagues. Why? Because he spoke against their "gospels" - which were no gospels at all. They were just vain attempts to offer God religious practices He wasn't really interested in. What God wants is all of us - heart, soul, mind and body.

So, Paul was imprisoned for his beliefs. He suffered torture and beatings. And from this vantage point he urged both Timothy and the Galatians to be wary of a gospel that's more comfortable. A

gospel that allows you to withhold your heart from God and offer him a few trinkets. Through the things he endured in his life, Paul showed that he had the credentials to speak and teach with authority about the true gospel.

What was the true gospel for which Paul gave up everything? Here's what he told Timothy:

[God's grace] has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher. For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you (2 Timothy 1:10-14).

I want to warn you about this: There are a lot of "other gospels." Most of them appeal to our flesh. They avoid challenge and sacrifice. But they are not the true gospel that leads us to salvation. One mark of the true gospel is that it demands sacrifice from us. Sacrifice of having control of our lives, moment by moment. It challenges everything we do. But as we learn to embrace the gospel - and to realize that this world is not our final home - and when we live it out in our lives, God will use us to call the world to himself.

If anyone exemplified a changed life, it was Rees Howells, a famous preacher and a leader in the great Welsh Revival in the early 1900s. He went on to be used by God to bring revival to England, Ireland and Africa. Howells insisted that his effectiveness for Christ came from one incident when he was twenty-seven years old - he had a life-changing encounter with the Holy Spirit. This is how Norman Grubb describes it in Howells' biography: The meeting with the Holy Ghost was just as real to [Howells] as his [conversion to Christianity] three years before. "I saw Him as a person apart from flesh and blood and He said to me, As the Savior had a body, so I dwell in the cleansed temple of the believer. I am God and I come to ask you to give your body to Me, that I may work through you. I need a body for My temple. But it must belong to Me without reserve for two persons with different wills can never live in the same body. Will you give Me yours?

You must go out. I shall not mix Myself with yourself.' I saw the honor He gave me in offering to indwell me but there were many things very dear to me and I knew He wouldn't keep even one of them. The change He would make was very clear. It meant every bit of my fallen nature was to go to the cross and He would bring His own life and His own nature into me. It was unconditional surrender." [Norman Grubb, Rees Howells, Intercessor (Fort Washington, Penn.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1967) 38-40.] The story continues with God giving Howells an ultimatum: Would he obey or not? He had to give God his reply the following week. For the next few days Howells wept continually. He couldn't eat or sleep and he lost seven pounds. This was the hardest decision he would ever have to make - to hand over his life like a blank check to God. Was he willing to let go of all his dreams, all his possessions, and let the Holy Spirit take full control? This is what happened when he reached his decision:

"Nothing was more real to me than the process I went through for that whole week... The Holy Spirit went on dealing with me exposing the root of my nature which was self and you can only get out of a thing what is in its root. Sin was canceled and it wasn't sin He was dealing with; it was self

- that thing which came from the Fall. He was not going to take any superficial surrender. He put His finger on each part of my self-life, and I have to decide in cold-blood. He could never take a thing away until I gave my consent." [Norman Grubb, Rees Howells, *Intercessor* (Fort Washington, Penn.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1967) 38-40.]

Like the Apostle Paul, Howells found God does not want us to play games. There comes a time when the Holy Spirit puts His finger on areas in our life and asks us to hand over control of them to Him. In order to receive the resurrection life and the power that goes along with it, we must be willing to let go of everything we hold close. Sometimes our flesh screams as we do this. Other times it devises subtle ways of getting us off-track. Instead of kicking and screaming, our flesh quietly tries to distract us with side issues - anything to keep us from giving everything to God. Suddenly, small matters of theology become major issues as we focus on anything but what the Holy Spirit wants to deal with. Have you ever noticed how easily small children can be distracted? Give children candy, and you can walk off with all their toys. For awhile, they'll be so happy with the candy they won't even notice.

Believers can be like that too. Paul continually reminded the Christians of his day to stay on-track. If they did not stay focused on Christ, the Way, other preachers would come along to lead them astray with their fleshly gospels. Some people focused on getting rich quick, like Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-25). Others sought to turn the gospel into a purely mystical experience. And still others wanted to bog down the whole message in Jewish laws and customs. After about two months, if these young Christians hadn't received a letter from Paul, they would begin to listen to these other gospels. They wanted to see if other interpretations of the Christian life were easier to follow. Though they were hungry for spiritual truth, their flesh kept tempting them to believe many things that weren't the gospel of the kingdom.

01.02. Section 2

Today Jesus Christ is being dispatched as the Figurehead of a Religion, a mere example. He is that, but He is infinitely more; He is salvation itself, He is the Gospel of God.

- Oswald Chambers [Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest.]

* * *

I once heard a prophecy that the city of Chicago was going to be leveled by an earthquake on a particular day. I thought, I'll believe it when I see it. A couple of young Christians I worked with got excited. "What time will it hit?" one of them asked me. He was so trusting. Another one said, "I have an uncle in Chicago. I'm going to call him and tell him to get out before it's too late." I can understand their concern, because there was a time when I would have been swayed by the gospel of sensationalism. I used to look for big signs to occur too. As a result I was easily led astray. I believed things that were not doctrinally sound.

Here's the point: Each one of us must take responsibility before God to keep our eyes on the gospel. We can't allow anything or anyone to distract or mislead us.

Paul gave us some strong warnings about this:

Even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ (Galatians 1:8-10, emphasis added).

How can we know for sure that we're following the true gospel? Paul laid out for Timothy the hallmarks of the person who has embraced the true gospel. We need to see if these things are part of our lives.

Here's the first:

It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him (2 Timothy 2:11). The heart of the gospel is that we must die with Christ in order to live with Him. But what exactly does it mean to die with Christ? To begin, it means that we are to be dead to our rights. And that means signing over to God our desires, our dreams, our hurts. All that we are or will be.

What do you think Paul meant when he said, "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3)? He wasn't talking about a theory, or a nice metaphor. He meant that at the point of real salvation we are nailed to the cross with Jesus. We go down to the grave. And a new life - God's life - is born in us.

What we're talking about, at the deepest level, is an exchange of our will. I give my will over to God, and begin to pursue His will for me. A lot of people get stuck on certain behaviors - old

habits, for instance. They want to clean up their flesh without becoming pure in heart first. You become pure in heart by wanting what God wants. It's easy to give up your wrongs - but much harder to give up your rights. Have you ever heard of a dead person calling a lawyer from the grave to sue someone for violating his rights? The dead have no rights.

What about me, as a Christian? I have no rights. I have no right to run a ministry. I have no right to own a car. But in Christ, I do have a right to inherit all of God's promises in the Bible - if I can prove to myself, to the world and to Jesus that I am dead. Here's a promise our flesh might not like to claim: "If we died with Him, we will be raised with Him." The "if" is a crucial part. People who follow the wrong gospel want to make the "ifs" invisible. They like to think there are no conditions in the Bible. True, God's love is not conditional - but there is a condition on experiencing the true life of Christ. It is giving over my will. That means I have stopped manipulating God's Word for my own gain. Have you died with Christ? Or are you trying to live with Him at the same time you're doing everything to accommodate your own fleshly desires?

Like Rees Howells, God requires each of us to make a choice. You cannot have your life and the life of Christ residing in you at the same time. The Holy Spirit doesn't want the flesh for a roommate. The problem for most of us is that we want a spiritual crown, yet we want to avoid the cross that must come first. But as Paul says:

If we endure, we shall also reign with Him (2 Timothy 2:12, emphasis added). When people read this they think, Yes! I'm going to reign with Christ. They ignore the "if." They think God is going to endure for them. So they sit back and act as if God will do all the work. The problem is, Paul turned the spotlight on us: We are to endure. How do we do it? We endure by casting everything - hopes and cares alike - upon Him. That's our work of faith: to identify every fleshly goal or care that draws us away from God, and cast it all over to Him. Dying to it. Faith is not just a hope - faith is a deed. It's active, not passive. Faith is God and me in partnership. First, His will replaces mine, then His power enables me to do all that He says.

"If we endure...", Paul says. And we endure by entering into the will of God. It's when we do His will that God blesses us. We can't be blessed in a place where His will does not reign.

If we're going to endure - to choose the high road of faith - then we have to be prepared for some attacks. We might as well know this from the start. Be prepared. Count the cost. So we don't get weary and give up.

First, we'll have to endure assaults on our soul by the devil. Peter says, Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world (1 Peter 5:8-9).

Satan is the most powerful being in the universe, apart from God. He's like a lion on the prowl, looking for unsuspecting Christians to chew up. He's inflamed with pride, jealousy, greed and with the power God has allowed him to keep. Our conflict is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world. And to fight them, we need spiritual weapons - truth, salvation and prayer (Ephesians 6:10-20). When we choose God's will, we're guaranteed the power of the Holy Spirit in order to endure the assaults of the devil.

Second, we must endure false teachings, holding on to the truth even when it is not popular. In Hebrews we read,

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings (Hebrews 13:8-9). When Melody and I were new Christians, all sorts of people came to our Bible studies. I'll never forget one guy in particular. He was a new believer, but he came with every spiritual book imaginable - including a Bible, a concordance and an "Aquarian Gospel of Jesus Christ." I'd begin a Bible study, and he'd take over, reading from all these other spiritual books. He spent hours telling us that eating meat was of the devil. He went on and on about weird doctrines.

I lost touch with him for a long time, and then I saw him at a convention. He told me he'd just come back from Israel where he chanted on the streets. As I listened to his experiences I thought, Here's a brand-new believer who never got off the ground! He couldn't discern false teaching and he wouldn't listen to anyone who might help him. He was completely derailed. All kinds of seeds of darkness had been sown in him and he had no way to fend them off. In the end times we're going to experience false teachings that are doctrines of demons, and smooth-sounding teachings that are really antichrist. There will be people close to becoming Christians, but who nevertheless are deceived. Do we have a safeguard? Yes, by listening only to teachers in whose lives we can see the fruit of the Spirit - those who do what they preach...

Finally, we know we're following the right gospel if we learn to endure and overcome the lusts of the flesh - and by that, I mean, we're learning to live free from all the things that seek to bind us to this world. John warned us against "the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). And Paul warned us to flee from immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18), and to pursue righteousness (2 Timothy 2:22). A lot of Christians know how to flee - they get out of the world - but they don't know how to pursue righteousness - that is, they don't know how to get the world out of them.

Paul told us to "set our affections on things above" (Colossians 3:2). Not only are we supposed to be turning away from something, we're supposed to be turning ourselves - heart, soul, body and mind - toward something. Toward the "prize of the high calling" to be like Jesus in this world (Php 3:14). What is that high calling? Like Paul, I want to be a true disciple - one who has set his affections on the wonderful things that are above. That means letting go of all that this world offers by way of security and honor and pleasure. And that's how we'll know if we are following the true gospel. The true gospel challenges us at every turn. It unsettles us. It requires things of us that hurt. Our flesh will squirm. The devil will attack us in our weakest areas. Other Christians will offer us less radical ways to follow Christ. But in the end, we'll be transformed from the inside out. We'll be clean. We'll be shining lights. And then everything we say will be light and grace to people lost in this dark wilderness in which we live. Then we'll know by the fruit of the Spirit in our lives that we are His disciples.

02.00. The Catholic Chronicles

The Catholic Chronicles by

Keith Green

Keith Gordon Green (October 21, 1953 - July 28, 1982) was an American gospel singer, songwriter, and pianist originally from Sheepshead Bay, New York. Green is best known for his strong devotion to Christianity and his unwavering efforts to stir others to the same. Notable songs written by Green and/or his wife, Melody Green, include "I Don't Wanna Fall Away From You", "You Put This Love In My Heart", "Your Love Broke Through", and "Asleep In The Light", as well as the modern hymns "O Lord, You're Beautiful", "There Is A Redeemer", and "Create In Me A Clean Heart".

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02.01. Introduction

While stationed in Germany (it was West Germany at that time), I was introduced to Keith Green by subscribing to The Last Days Newsletter and reading his columns which led to my listening to his music.

Inside The Last Days Newsletter was always an article on some pertinent topic. I first read Leonard Ravenhill through one of these columns, and was also introduced to Winkie Pratney here. Some months Keith was the one who wrote the column.

One month I was interested when I opened and started reading Keith's column for that month titled The Catholic Chronicles Part One, since my wife and I were Roman Catholic. By the time I finished reading, I was upset and so was my wife. By the end of Part Four, my life had changed. I could no longer view the world in the same manner I had once looked at it. My wife was a little slower in seeing the difference since she was raised in a Catholic family (I converted from 'nothing' so we could get married), but she eventually was the one who decided we could not stay Catholic's any longer.

If you are reading this and are Catholic, please read it with an open mind and remember, no matter what the local priest may have taught you (this was my wife's sticking point, she wasn't taught 'strict' doctrine), the points that Keith talks about are from official church documents and he quotes his sources throughout (I can supply additional ones if needed, sources that have been added since Keith's death). The Wisdom of the Lord be with you as you read.

02.02. Part 1. The Holy Eucharist

Part 1. The Holy Eucharist - "Eating the Flesh of Deity" ??

One might wonder why, in a scriptural look at the doctrines of the Catholic Church, I would choose this subject - The Roman Interpretation of the Lord's Supper (more commonly known as "Communion") for the first of the "Catholic Chronicles." Most Protestants (1) would expect me to deal with what they might consider the more obvious departures from biblical foundation - such as the worship of and prayers to the Virgin Mary, the infallibility of the pope, purgatory and prayers for the dead, or the history of the torture and burning of accused "heretics" and such like that. But for this first article I believe that we should get right to the root, before we begin exploring the branches of Roman doctrine and practice. And any Catholic who has even a small knowledge of his church knows that the central focus of each gathering (known as the "Mass") is the Holy Eucharist. The word "Eucharist" is a Greek word that means "thanksgiving." In the gospel accounts of the Last Supper, Jesus is described as "giving thanks" before breaking the bread (Luke 22:19), and so this word became a proper name for the Lord's Supper in the early Catholic Church. Today, it is more commonly associated with the elements in communion, especially the host or "wafer," although the ceremony itself is still called "The Holy Eucharist."

Now, you might be wondering why I'm taking so much time and effort to explain something as harmless as the ceremony known around the world as communion. If you've probably taken part in a communion service. So why make all this fuss about bread and wine? Why? Because that's where the similarity between evangelical communion services and the Roman Catholic Mass ends - at the bread and the wine!

Transubstantiation That 18-letter word above is a complete theological statement . . . and the name of a doctrine, out of which springs the most astounding set of beliefs and practices that has ever been taught in the name of religion. Very, very few people know what the Catholic Church actually believes and teaches concerning this subject, and I am convinced that even fewer Catholics realize themselves what they are taking part in. From earliest childhood, "This is the body of Christ" is all they've ever heard when the priest gingerly placed the wafer on their tongue. And as they grew up, it was such a natural and normal part of religious life, that their minds never even questioned the fact that Jesus Christ, Himself, was actually in their mouth!

It might be hard for you to believe, but that's exactly, literally, what "transubstantiation" means. The Roman Catholic Church teaches their flocks that the bread and the wine used in the Mass actually, physically, turn into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ after the priest blesses them during the liturgy (ceremony). Although this in itself might shock you, it is really only the beginning. For the implications and practical conclusions of this doctrine are absolutely mind-boggling.

Exclusive Authority For example, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that since their priests are the only ones who have the authority from God (2) to pronounce the blessing which changes the elements of communion into the actual body and blood of Jesus, that they are the only church

where Jesus "physically resides" even now! Let me quote a letter written to one of the girls in our ministry from a devoted Catholic:

"To explain the Catholic Church would take volumes, but basically the Catholic Church was founded by Jesus Christ when He was here on earth. It is the ONLY church founded by Jesus. The greatest asset of our church is that we have Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist - He is really here, body, soul and divinity. He is God and in His omnipotence can do anything He wishes, and He decided to remain with us until the end of the world in the form of the host in Holy Communion."

If you think this is just the isolated opinion of someone on the fringe of the church, or that the Catholic Church as a whole does not really believe or teach this, I beg you to read on. For not only is this the official teaching of Rome, but according to irreversible church decree (called dogma), anyone who does not hold to this belief, in the most explicit detail, is accursed and damned forever! The Council of Trent When Europe was electrified by the eloquent preaching of the sixteenth century reformation, the Roman Catholic hierarchy gathered together her theologians who worked for three decades on the preparation of a statement of faith concerning the doctrine of transubstantiation. This document remains, to this day, the standard of Catholic doctrine. As the Second Vatican Council commenced in 1963, Pope John XXIII declared, "I do accept entirely all that has been decided and declared at the Council of Trent." What did the Council of Trent decide and declare? Some of the first sections are as follows:

CANON I - "If anyone shall deny that the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore entire Christ, are truly, really, and substantially contained in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist; and shall say that He is only in it as a sign, or in a figure - let him be accursed!"

CANON II - "If anyone shall say that the substance of the bread and wine remains in the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist, together with the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ - let him be accursed!"

CANON VI - "If anyone shall say that Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is not to be adored in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, even with the open worship of Latria, and therefore not to be venerated with any peculiar festal celebrity, not to be solemnly carried about in processions according to the praiseworthy and universal rites and customs of the Holy Church, and that He is not to be publicly set before the people to be adored, and that His adorers are idolaters, - let him be accursed!" The Worship Of The Host

"Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image (4) ... Thou shall not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them" The Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-5) "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23) In Canon VI, a rite of worship called "Latria" was spoken of. This is not just an "ancient custom," it is thoroughly practiced today in many Masses. After the bread has been supposedly "changed" into the Christ by the priest, it is placed in a holder called a monstrance. And before this monstrance the Catholic must bow and worship (this act is called genuflecting) the little wafer as God! Sometimes they have processions where they solemnly march, as the congregation bows and offers praise and worship - to this piece of bread! The Roman teaching that Jesus Christ is physically present in each morsel of bread creates many other doctrinal and practical problems. For instance, when the service is over,

what happens to all those leftover wafers that have been "changed into Christ?" Do they change back into bread again when the priest goes home? I'm afraid not. For according to Canon IV of the Council of Trent, they stay flesh! And don't think that 400 year-old decree is just some dusty old manuscript in a museum case somewhere - it still is completely adhered to and passionately practiced. As an example, here is a passage from an official Catholic home instruction book, copyrighted 1978:

"Jesus Christ does not cease to exist under the appearances of bread and wine after the Mass is over. Furthermore, some hosts are usually kept in all Catholic churches. In these hosts, Jesus is physically and truly present, as long as the appearances of bread remain. Catholics therefore have the praiseworthy practice of 'making visits' to our Lord present in their churches to offer Him their thanks, their adoration, to ask for help and forgiveness: in a word, to make Him the center around which they live their daily lives." That is an incredible interpretation of how to make Jesus the center of your daily life! When Did This Teaching Begin? The teaching of transubstantiation does not date back to the Last Supper as most Catholics suppose. It was a controversial topic for many centuries before officially becoming an article of faith (which means that it is essential to salvation according to Rome). The idea of a physical presence was vaguely held by some, such as Ambrose, but it was not until 831 A.D. that Paschasius Radbertus, a Benedictine Monk, published a treatise openly advocating the doctrine. Even then, for almost another four centuries, theological was waged over this teaching by bishops and people alike, until at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 AD, it was officially defined and canonized as a dogma (a teaching or doctrine that can never be reversed or repealed. It is equal in authority to the Bible.) by Pope Innocent III.

Church historians tell us that when this doctrine first began to be taught, the priests took great care that no crumb should fall - lest the body of Jesus be hurt, or even eaten by a mouse or a dog! There were quite serious discussions as to what should be done if a person were to vomit after receiving the sacrament. At the Council of Constance, it was argued that if a communicant spilled some of the blood on his beard, both beard and the man should be destroyed by burning!

How Rome Views the Bible

Before we proceed to look at what the Bible has to say on this subject, it is important to understand the official Catholic view of the Scriptures. According to unquestionable decree, they hold that "Church tradition has equal authority with the Bible." This is not just a theological view, but it was made an article of faith by the same Council of Trent in 1546! And again, this view is completely held by the Church today:

"The teachings of the Church will always be in keeping with the teachings of the Scripture ... and it is through the teaching of the Church that we understand more fully truths of sacred Scripture. To the Catholic Church belongs the final word in the understanding and meaning of the Holy Spirit in the words of the Bible." And explaining the premise used in interpreting the Bible:" "...usually, the meaning of the Scriptures is sought out by those who are specially trained for this purpose. And in their conclusions, they know that no explanation of the Scriptures which contradicts the truths constantly taught by the infallible Church can be true." (10)

Anyone can see how such a mode of interpretation can be dangerously used to manipulate Scripture to mean absolutely anything at all! Who has not observed this of the various cults? The

Moonies, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses all back up their false teachings with "new revelations" and "inspired interpretations" of the Scriptures - each claiming that the Holy Spirit revealed these new truths to their founders. One opens themselves to all kinds of deception when they judge the Bible by what their church or pastor teaches, instead of judging what their church or pastor teaches by the Bible!

Catholic Proof-Texts Explained With this in mind, we will briefly discuss the two main passages of Scripture that the Roman Church uses while trying to show that Jesus Himself taught transubstantiation.

John 6:54-55 : "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink."

Catholics are taught here, that Jesus is explaining how He is literally offering them His flesh and blood, so that they may have eternal life by physically eating Him. With just a little study of the whole passage (John 6:27-71), it is clear that Jesus was not talking about physical, but spiritual food and drink.

Food is eaten to satisfy hunger. And in John 6:35 Jesus says, "He who cometh to Me shall never hunger." Now, Jesus is not promising eternal relief from physical hunger pains. He is, of course, speaking of the spiritual hunger in man for righteousness and salvation, And He promises to those who will "come to Him" that He will satisfy their hunger for these things forever - therefore, to come to Him is to "eat"! (See also Matthew 5:6, Matthew 11:28; John 4:31-34)

We drink also to satisfy thirst, and again in verse 35 Jesus tells us, "He that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Therefore, to believe on Him is to "drink"! (See also John 4:13-14) No one can say that Jesus was here establishing the eating and drinking of His literal flesh and blood to give eternal life, for in verse 63 He says, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Thus Jesus makes clear what we should be eating and drinking to have eternal life! Matthew 26:26 and Matthew 26:28 : "This is My body ... this is My blood." (See also Matthew 4:4)

Catholics base their whole religious system on their interpretation of these two verses. They adamantly teach that right here, Jesus is pronouncing the first priestly blessing that mysteriously changes the bread and wine into His body and blood. The absolute folly of such a conclusion is proved by this one observation: He was literally still there before, during, and after they had partaken of the bread and the cup! He was not changed into some liquid and bread - His flesh was still on His bones, and His blood still in His veins. He had not vanished away to reappear in the form of a piece of bread or a cup of wine!

Let's look closer at His words. No one can deny that here we have figurative language. Jesus did not say TOUTO GIGNETAI ("this has become" or "is turned into"), but TOUTO ESTI ("this is," i.e., "signifies," "represents" or "stands for"). (11) It is obvious that Jesus' meaning was not literal but symbolic! And He wasn't the first in the Bible to claim figuratively that a glass of liquid was really "blood."

One time, David's friends heard him express a strong desire for water from the well of Bethlehem. In spite of extreme danger, these men broke through the enemy lines of the Philistines and

brought the water to him. When David found out that these men had risked their lives in this way, he refused to drink the water, exclaiming, "Is not this the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives?" (2 Samuel 23:17)

Throughout the gospels we find similar metaphorical language: Jesus referring to Himself as "the Door," "the Vine," "the Light," "the Root," "the Rock," "the Bright and Morning Star," as well as "the Bread." The passage is written with such common language that it is plain to any observant reader that the Lord's Supper was intended primarily as a memorial and in no sense a literal sacrifice. "Do this in remembrance of Me." (Luke 22:19) True Pagan Origins Where did this teaching and practice really come from? Like many of the beliefs and rites of Romanism, transubstantiation was first practiced by pagan religions. The noted historian Durant said that belief in transubstantiation as practiced by the priests of the Roman Catholic system is "one of the oldest ceremonies of primitive religion." (12) The syncretism and mysticism of the Middle East were great factors in influencing the West, particularly Italy. (13) In Egypt, priests would consecrate most cakes which were supposed to become the flesh of Osiris. (14) The idea of transubstantiation was also characteristic of the religion of Mithra whose sacraments of cakes and haoma drink closely parallel Catholic Eucharist rites. (15) The idea of eating the flesh of deity was most popular among the people of Mexico and Central America long before they ever heard of Christ; and when Spanish missionaries first landed in those countries, "their surprise was heightened, when they witnessed a religious rite which reminded them of communion ... an image made of flour ... and after consecration by priests, was distributed among the people who ate it ... declaring it was the flesh of deity..." (16) So Why Do They Teach It?

Before concluding our first chronicle, the question needs to be asked, "Why does the Roman Catholic Church need to have such a doctrine - why do they think that Jesus wants them to physically eat Him?" That is what truly puzzled me as I read astounded through the catechism and doctrinal instruction books. But the answer to that question is a sad one. As I said before, the implications and practical conclusions of the teaching of transubstantiation are substantially worse than the doctrine itself - and like a great web spun by an industrious spider, Rome's teachings spiral out from this central hub like the spokes of a wheel. In Catholic Chronicle II we will look intently at the next direct result of transubstantiation in official Catholic systematic theology: "The Sacrifice of the Mass."

Footnotes:

- Today, Protestants are considered to be members of any church or church-group outside the Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox churches.
- Passed down through "Apostolic Succession" from Peter the apostle-the supposed "first pope."
- The "wafer."
- NASB reads, "You shall not make for yourself an idol."
- This act is called "genuflecting."
- "The Spirit of Jesus" Catholic Home Study Instruction Course. Book #3, p.92.

- A "Dogma" is a teaching or doctrine that can never be reversed or repealed. It is equal in authority to the Bible.
- The Other Side of Rome, p.21.
- By the end of the eleventh century, lest someone should spill God's blood, some in the church began to hold back the cup from the people, and finally in 1415, the Council of Constance officially denied the cup to laymen. Although today, by decree of the Vatican, churches may now offer the cup optionally to communicants.
- "The Spirit of Jesus," pp. 94-95.
- If I held up a picture of my son and said, "This is my son," I am certainly not saying that the actual picture is literally my son.
- The Story of Civilization, p.741.
- Roman Society From Nero to Marcus Aurelius, by Dill.
- An ancient Egyptian god of the lower world and judge of the dead - Encyclopedia of Religions, Vol. 2, p.76.
- Ibid.
- Prescott's Mexico, Vol. 3.

02.03. Part 2. The Sacrifice of the Mass

Part 2. The Sacrifice of the Mass - What Does it Mean? In Chronicle I, we thoroughly examined the doctrine of transubstantiation - its history, practice, and real meaning. But we have waited for this second article to answer the question: WHY? Why must there be present in the Mass the literal body and blood of Jesus? What purpose does it serve? The answer is found in the startling words: "The sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice of the cross, for there is the same priest, the same victim, and the same offering." (1) And in the words of Pope Pius IV....

"I profess likewise that in the Mass there is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory (2) sacrifice for the living and the dead." (From the fifth article of the creed of Pope Pius IV.) That is the incredible truth! The Roman Catholic Church believes and teaches that in every Mass, in every church, throughout the world (estimated at up to 200,000 Masses a day) that Jesus Christ is being offered up again, physically, as a sacrifice for sin (benefiting not only those alive, but the dead (3) as well!) Every Roman Mass is a re-creation of Jesus' death for the sins of the world. NOT A SYMBOLIC RE-CREATION - but a literal, actual offering of the flesh and blood of the Lord to make daily atonement for all the sins that have been daily committed since Jesus was crucified almost 2,000 years ago. (4)

That's why the bread and wine must become physically Jesus' body and blood, so that they can be once again offered for sin: "The Holy Eucharist is the perpetual continuation of this act of sacrifice and surrender of our Lord. When the Lord's Supper is celebrated, Christ again presents Himself in His act of total surrender to the Father in death." (5)

"He offers Himself continually to the Father, in the same eternal act of offering that began on the cross and will NEVER CEASE." (6) "The Mass is identical to Calvary - it is a sacrifice for sin - it must be perpetuated to take away sin." (7) The catechism of the Council of Trent required all pastors to explain that not only did the elements of the Mass contain flesh, bones and nerves as a part of Christ, "But also a WHOLE CHRIST." (8) Thus it is referred to as "the sacrifice of the Mass" and as "a RENEWAL of the sacrifice of the cross." (9) The Council Of Trent On "The Sacrifice Of The Mass" As we shared in Chronicle I, the Council of Trent was called to clarify and standardize Catholic doctrine in response to the challenges of the Reformation. The canons on this subject (passed in Session XXII. Cap II.) are as follows:

"If anyone shall say, that in the Mass there is not offered to God a true and proper sacrifice, or that what is offered is nothing else than Christ given to be eaten, let him be anathema." (10)

"If anyone shall say that in these words, 'This do in remembrance of Me,' Christ did not make the apostles priests, or did not ordain that they themselves and other priests should offer His body and blood, let him be anathema."

"If anyone shall say that the sacrifice of the Mass is only of praise and thanksgiving, or a bare commemoration of the sacrifice performed on the cross, but not propitiatory; or that it is of benefit only to the person who takes it, and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead fro sins,

punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities, let him be accursed."

"If anyone shall say that a blasphemy is ascribed to the most holy sacrifice of Christ performed on the cross by the sacrifice of the Mass - let him be accursed." But Is This The Belief Of Rome Today?

If any be in doubt as to the modern Roman position, we shall quote the recent (1963-1965) Second Vatican Council:

"At the Last Supper ... our Savior instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice of His body and blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross..." p. 154, THE DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II, Walter M. Abbott, S.J. The catechism books teach that the reason the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of Calvary is because the victim in each case was Jesus Christ. (11) In fact, they refer to the bread of the Eucharist as the "host," which is the Latin word HOSTIA which literally means "VICTIM." (12) But Why "The Sacrifice" Of The Mass?

We will now quote the church's own contemporary literature to fully answer this question (taken from the book, THIS IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, published by the Catholic Information Service, Knights of Columbus, Imprimatur: (13) Most Reverend John F. Whealon, Archbishop of Hartford:

"Sacrifice is the very essence of religion. And it is only through sacrifice that union with the Creator can be perfectly acquired. It was through sacrifice that Christ Himself was able to achieve this for man. IT IS ONLY THROUGH THE PERPETUATION OF THAT SACRIFICE THAT THIS UNION MAY BE MAINTAINED.

"What makes the Mass the most exalted of all sacrifices is the nature of the victim, Christ Himself. For the Mass is the continuation of Christ's sacrifice which He offered through His life and Christ was not only the priest of this sacrifice (of the Cross), He was also the victim, the very object itself of this sacrifice. The Mass is thus the same as the sacrifice of the cross. No matter how many times it is offered, nor in how many places at one time, it is the same sacrifice of Christ. Christ is forever offering Himself in the Mass." (14) But Jesus Said "It Is Finished!"

Every true believer loves the sound of these words: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). For it is the wonderful exclamation that the Lord's suffering was finally over - He had fulfilled His mission! Jesus had lived a Life of Sorrow, bearing the burden of a world gone mad. He had been rejected by everyone, even His closest friends. He had lived a perfect life before men and God, and His reward on earth was to be laughed at, spat upon, beaten beyond recognition, and finally nailed to a cross. But He had submitted willingly, because it was the will of His Father to offer Him as the satisfaction of the penalty for all the sin in the world - past, present and future! But here, in the words of a Roman Catholic priest, is the "true meaning" of the words "it is finished!" "These words do not declare that His sacrifice was finished, but that He had finished His former, normal, earthly life and was now fixed in the state of a victim ... He then began His everlasting career as the perpetual sacrifice of the new law." (15) Hence, according to Rome, Jesus must be forever "perpetually" dying for sin. Have you ever wondered why in every Catholic Church they still have Jesus up on the cross? Every crucifix with Jesus portrayed as nailed to it, tells the whole Catholic story - Jesus is still dying for the sins of the world! But that's a lie! We need only look to the Scriptures to see the truth.

Back To The Book The epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the "once for all" sacrifice of Christ on the cross, not a daily sacrifice on altars. The Bible repeatedly affirms in the clearest and most positive terms that Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was complete in that one offering. And that it was never to be repeated is set forth explicitly in Hebrews, Hebrews 7:1-28, Hebrews 9:1-28 and Hebrews 10:1-39 :

"Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: For this He did once, when He offered up Himself" (Hebrews 7:27). "...by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12). "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself .. so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:25-28). "...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for the sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God ... for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10-14).

Notice that throughout these verses occurs the statement "once for all" which shows how perfect, complete and final Jesus' sacrifice was! His work on the cross constituted one historic event which need never be repeated and which in fact cannot be repeated. As Paul say, "Christ, being raised from the dead dieth no more" (Romans 6:9). Any pretense of a continuous offering for sin is worse than vain, it is blasphemy and true fulfillment of the Scripture, "Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." (Hebrews 6:6).

Jesus - The Only Priest

Jesus not only became the perfect sacrifice for sin, but after being accepted by God as having totally fulfilled the requirements of the old covenant, He became "the mediator of a better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6). That means that Jesus is the high priest of every true believer! "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 2:5). The Bible teaches that the priesthood of Jesus Christ is unique: "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 7:17) "...because He abides forever (He) holds His priesthood permanently" This means that it cannot be transferred to another! (Hebrews 7:17, Hebrews 7:24). But Roman Catholicism teaches that the apostles were ordained by Jesus Himself (at the Last Supper) to perpetuate the coming sacrifice He would make on the cross. And that this ordination has been handed down through the centuries to the current generation of priests. Therefore, Rome teaches that her priests actually operate and discharge the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and that they are called "other Christs" (alter Christus). (16) This explains the great adulation and honor heaped upon the Roman priest. The French Catholic Saint J.M.B. Vianney said that "Where there is no priest there is no sacrifice, and where there is no sacrifice there is no religion ... without the priest the death and passion of our Lord would be of no avail to us... see the power of the priest! By one word from his lips, he changes a piece of bread into a God! A greater feat than the creation of a world." He also said, "If I were to meet a priest and an angel, I would salute the priest before saluting the angel. The angel is a friend of God, but the priest holds the place of God. Next to God Himself, the priest is everything!" What humiliation for Jesus Christ, the One who has been

given a name "above all other names!" But Isn't Rome Changing?

Today, many are expressing hope that Rome is turning toward scriptural Christianity. They point to the many reforms of Vatican II (17) and also to the ever-widening charismatic renewal. True, these things appear to be a positive sign of change, and many are thrilled by them, but most fail to realize that these changes are only superficial. For Rome could never reject the sacrifice of the Mass - just streamline it enough to keep the truth of its meaning hidden. Pope John XXIII made it clear that His Church is bound "to all the teachings of the Church in its entirety and preciseness, as it still shines forth in the act of the Council of Trent and First Vatican Council..." (18)

It is clear that the whole of Roman teaching and belief is founded on this premise of the continual sacrifice of Christ for sin: Again, Catholic writings declare:

"It should be easy to see why the Mass holds such an important place in the Church's life. The Mass is the very essence of the Church. Within it the Church's life, and the Church's very existence is centered. If there were no Mass, there could be no Catholic Church. The Mass is our act of worship, an act which we know to be really worthy of God, because it is the sacrifice of God's own Son.

"What the sacrifices of the old law were unable to accomplish - the Mass performs: Perfect atonement is made for sin.

"The souls of men yet unborn, together with those now living and those who have come into existence since Christ's sacrifice, all have need of the salvation which Christ has won for us. It is through the Mass as well as through the other sacraments that the effects of Christ's salvation are applied to the souls of men." (19)

It is made thoroughly clear that Rome will forever put its faith in the Mass for the eternal forgiveness of sins. To remove this belief from her system of theology, would be like knocking our the pillars of a great edifice - the whole building would come tumbling down!

Paul's Extreme Warning As I sat stunned, reading all the "Let them be accursed" threats of the Council of Trent, I could not help but think how their curses would only fall back on their own heads - for the words of our brother Paul call out across the centuries:

"But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed!" (Galatians 1:8). Not only does Paul warn that an authentic angel from heaven should not be heeded while preaching "different doctrine," but he gives the ultimate warning - "...even though we!" Paul strictly warned the Galatians, not even to listen to him - the chief apostle and master of true doctrine - if he should reverse himself on any of the fundamental teachings of the gospel. How much more then, should we reject the appalling traditions and practices of a system that is not only unbiblical, but is actually steeped in mysticism, bordering dangerously on the occult!

Conclusion As far as I can see from the Bible, a person is only in danger of being grouped with "false brethren" by tampering with three very basic issues of biblical truth. (20) Who Jesus is - Son of God, God the Son, Creator of the universe.

What He came to do - to die once for all, for the sins of mankind, then raise from the dead as the eternal high priest of all true believers.

How a person directly benefits from Christ's death for sin - he is accounted as righteous through a total faith and rest in the finished work of Christ, and becomes the possessor of God's free gift - eternal life (salvation). The Roman Catholic Church has been considered a true Christian faith, mainly because it is generally known that their theology is quite orthodox on point #1. But as we have pointed out in these two chronicles, they are perilously shaky on the atonement - Christ's substitutionary death for sinners - #2. But if there is any doubt left at all, as to whether or not the Roman Church is authentically and biblically Christian, there is a complete and thorough study of the Roman view on how one obtains salvation in our third installment of The Catholic Chronicles - "Salvation According To Rome."

Footnotes: The Roman Catholic Sacrifice of the Mass, by Bartholomew F. Brewer, Ph.D.

Propitiatory - conciliatory, to soothe the anger of, to win or regain the goodwill of, to appease, placate or make friendly, to reconcile - Webster's New World Dictionary and Harper's Bible Dictionary.

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). The Catholic Home Instruction Book #3, p.90. the Spirit of Jesus pp.89-90, Imprimatur: John Joseph Cardinal Carberry, Archbishop of St.Louis.

Sons of God in Christ Book 4, p.117. For Them Also, pp.289-299.

Encyclopedia of Religions, Vol.2, p.77.

"A Catholic Word List" p.45.

Anathema - The strongest denunciations of a person that can be made in the ancient Greek (the original language of the New Testament). Literal meaning: "devoted to death." A thing or person accursed or damned - Webster's New World Dictionary and Harper's Bible Dictionary.

"The New Baltimore Catechism" #3, Question 931.

Webster's New World Dictionary.

Imprimatur - Sanction or approval. Specifically, permission to print or publish a book or article containing nothing contrary to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church - Webster's New World Dictionary. pp.20-24 The Sacrifice of Christ by Richard W.Grace. In Latin. i.e., Such as Masses performed in the common language rather than exclusively in Latin, the relaxation of taboos such as eating meat on Friday, etc. The Documents of Vatican II, Abbot, S.J. This Is The Catholic Church pp.24-25.

These are greatly condensed for this example.

02.04. Part 3. Salvation -- According to Rome

Part 3. Salvation -- According to Rome.

"...the free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord!"- Romans 6:23

How blessed it is to know Jesus! His love, His mercy, His righteousness, His forgiveness! He has promised to "cast all our sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19) and to separate us from our sins "as far as the east is from the west!" (Psalms 103:12). This is the good news! (That's the literal meaning of the word "gospel" - good news!) That is what the true church of our God has the privilege of proclaiming ..."liberty to the captives!!" (Luke 4:18). The reason I begin this article on the Roman Catholic view of salvation with such rejoicing in my Savior, is because I have just finished reading a mountain of official (Roman) church literature on the subject, and I can honestly say, I have never had such joy in my heart of hearts about the finished work of Christ. As I scoured each page and read of penance, confession, venial and mortal sins, indulgences, purgatory, etc., I then had the infinite pleasure of searching the Scriptures to see what they had to say on these fundamental Catholic doctrines.

Oh what relief my soul found in the Scriptures! What holy joy! What clarity of light I saw, as the simple brilliance of God's mercy shown into my mind. If there is anything more beautiful than God's love and patience with man, it has never been revealed to mortals!

All this to say that I am bogged down with the information I have accumulated, and I will probably have to cover it all in this, Chronicle III, briefly touching on each subject, while always coming back to the main question: "According to Rome, how can a man or woman be saved from the consequences of his sinful nature and actions, and how can they gain assurance that they are in a right standing before God?" The Catholic Teaching On Sin

Before we can understand what Catholics are taught about salvation, we must first see what they are taught they need to be saved from. In Matthew 1:1-25, the angel of the Lord speaks to Joseph in a dream about his betrothed, Mary, saying "she will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Today, many evangelicals toss around the term "saved" without much thought. "When did you get saved?" someone might ask. It's almost like a title, or a badge that a person wears to prove that he's become part of the club - the "saved" club. Others are under the impression that when a person talks of being "saved", they are talking about being saved from many different things - sickness, death, the devil, hell, etc. But when the angel of the Lord used that precious word to prophesy that Jesus would fulfill all the predictions of the prophets, he made very clear what Jesus was coming to save His people from --- their sins! In official Roman Catholic theology, this too is the main thing that people are taught they need to be saved from - their sins. But the only thing that Catholic and evangelical teachings have in common on the subject of sin is the spelling! For when a Catholic talks about his "sins", you must find out first if he is talking about "mortal" sins, or "venial" sins. And then you must ask him "how do you get rid of them?" The answer given will likely

confound a non-Catholic. For words like "faith", "repentance", even "Jesus" will usually be missing in the answer. Instead, a whole new list of other words will have to be learned, defined, and understood before the evangelical can fully grasp how a Catholic is taught his sins (and the penalty due them) can be canceled out.

Mortal and Venial Sins The first of these unfamiliar words are the names of the two groups Rome has separated all sins into. Now if you're a Catholic, you might be wondering why I'm making such a big deal - for the dividing of sins into two distinct categories (each with their own set of consequences and remedies) has been part of Catholic doctrine for a long, long time.

According to Rome's definition, mortal sin is described as "any great offense against the law of God" and is so named because "it is deadly, killing the soul and subjecting it to eternal punishment." Venial (1) sins, on the other hand, are "small and pardonable offenses against God, and our neighbor." Unlike mortal sins, venial sins are not thought to damn a soul to hell, but with the committing of each venial sin, a person increase his need for a longer stay in the purifying fires of a place called "purgatory." (Look that word up in your Bible dictionary - you'll find it right next to "venial"!)

Now, there is no agreement among the priests as to which sins are mortal and which are venial, but they all proceed on the assumption that such a distinction does exist. The method of classification is purely arbitrary. What is venial according to one may be mortal according to another.

According to Rome, the pope is infallible in matters of faith and doctrine. He should then be able to settle this important matter by accurately cataloging those sins which are mortal as distinguished from those which are venial. However, there are some definites in the "mortal" category: blatantly breaking one of the ten commandments, practically all sexual offenses (whether in word, thought or deed) and a long list of transgressions which have changed throughout the centuries. For instance, until Vatican II it was a mortal sin to attend a Protestant church, to own or read a Protestant Bible, or to eat meat on Friday! Oh, and it's still a mortal sin to "miss Mass on Sunday morning (2) without a good excuse" (which means that considerably more than half of the claimed Roman Catholic membership throughout the world is constantly in mortal sin!) Venial sins include things like thinking bad thoughts, having wrong motives, losing your temper, etc. - things that do not necessarily "lead into actual sin" but still, nevertheless, are sins that need to be eradicated in some way.

What Does the Bible Say? The Bible makes no distinction between mortal and venial sins. There is in fact, no such thing as a venial sin. ALL SIN IS MORTAL! It is true that some sin are worse than others, but it is also true that all sins if not forgiven bring death to the soul. The Bible simply says: "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). And Ezekial says: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

James says that "whosoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all" (James 2:10). He meant, not that the person who commits one sin is guilty of all other kinds of sin, but that even one sin unatoned for, shuts a person completely out of heaven and subjects him to punishment, just as surely as one misstep by the mountain climber plunges him to destruction in the canyon below.

We know how quick human nature is to grasp at any excuse for sin. Rome seems to be saying "these sins are really bad! But those? Well ... you can get away with a few of them and not really suffer too much." Speaking of "getting away" with something, let's get right down to how Rome teaches you can "get rid of" your sins.

Confession The Catholic system starts to get real complicated when we begin to look at the ways one can erase both their mortal and venial sins. "Two kinds of punishment are due to mortal sin: eternal (in hell forever), and temporal (in purgatory). Eternal punishment is canceled by either baptism (3) or confession to a priest." (4) The Baltimore Catechism defines confession as follows: "Confession is the telling of our sins to an authorized priest for the purpose of attaining forgiveness." The important words here are "authorized priest." And to be genuine, a confession must be heard, judged, and followed by obedience to the authorized priest as he assigns a penance, such as good works, prayers, fastings, abstinence from certain pleasures, et. A penance may be defined as "a punishment undergone in token of repentance for sin, as assigned by the priest" - usually a very light penalty. The New York Catechism says, "I must tell my sins to the priest so that he will give me absolution. (5) A person who knowingly keeps back a mortal sin in confession commits a dreadful sacrilege, and he must repeat his confession." The Priest's Role

Canon law 888 says: "The priest has to remember that in hearing confession he is a judge." And the book, Instructions for Non-Catholics (6) says: "A priest does not have to ask God to forgive your sins. The priest himself has the power to do so in Christ's name. Your sins are forgiven by the priest the same as if you knelt before Jesus Christ and told them to Christ Himself." (7) The priest forgives the guilt of mortal sins which save the penitent from going to hell, but he cannot remit the penalty due for those sins, and so the penitent must atone for them by performance of good works which he prescribes. The penitent may be, and usually is, interrogated by the priest so that he or she may make a full and proper confession. Stress is placed on the fact that any sin not confessed is not forgiven, any mortal sin not confessed in detail is not forgiven, and that the omission of even one sin (mortal) may invalidate the whole confession. Every loyal Roman Catholic is required under pain of mortal sin to go to confession at least once a year, although monthly confession is said to be more satisfactory. But even after a penitent has received pardon, a large, but unknown amount of punishment remains to be suffered in purgatory." (8) The doctrine of purgatory rests on the assumption that, while God forgives sin, His justice nevertheless demands that the sinner must suffer the full punishment due to him for his sin before he will be allowed to enter heaven.

Technically, venial sins need not be confessed since they are comparatively light and can be canceled by good works, prayers, extreme unction. (9) etc., but the terms are quite elastic and permit considerable leeway on the part of the priest. It is generally advised that it is safer to confess supposed venial sins also since the priest alone is able to judge accurately which are mortal and which are venial. The Baltimore Catechism says: "When we have committed no mortal sins since our last confession, we should confess our venial sins or some sin told in a previous confession for which we are again sorry, in order that the priest may give us absolution. (10) What chance has a poor sinner against such a system as that? As an example, a minister friend of mine who was brought up in the Catholic Church, tells the story of how his older brother went to confession every single week and confessed the same sin to the same priest and was given the same penance in order to receive absolution. This went on week after week, year after year. One day, while on a trip from home, he decided that he would not break his pattern of

going to weekly confession, so he went to another Catholic Church in the city he was visiting. He went into the confession box and confessed the same sin to a different priest. He began with "forgive me Father for I have sinned," and then began confessing the sin once again, but this time he was shocked when the priest said: "But my son, that's not a sin!" My friend's brother got up, and hurried out the door, and from that day on he has never stepped foot in any church again.

Historical Development

We search in vain in the Bible for any word supporting the doctrine of "auricular confession." (11) It is equally impossible to find any authorization or general practice of it during the first 1000 years of the Christian era. Not a word is found in the writings of the early church fathers about confessing sins to a priest or to anyone except God alone. Auricular confession is not mentioned once in the writings of Augustine, Origen, Nestorius, Tertullian, Jerome, Chrysostem, or Athanasius - all of these and many others apparently lived and died without ever thinking of going to confession. No one other than God was thought to be worthy to hear confessions or to grant forgiveness.

Confession was first introduced into the church on a voluntary basis in the fifth century by the authority of Leo the Great. But it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 under Pope Innocent III that private auricular confession was made compulsory and all Roman Catholic people were required to confess and to seek absolution from a priest at least once a year. If they did not obey this command, they were pronounced guilty of mortal sin and damned for eternity to hell. (12) Can A Priest Forgive Sins? The Scriptures teach that "only God can forgive sins" (Mark 2:7). "The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Matthew 9:6). Dr. Zachello tells of his experience as a priest in the confessional before leaving the Roman Church, in these words: "Where my doubts were really troubling me was inside the confessional box. People coming to me, kneeling down in front of me, confessing their sins to me. And I, with the sign of the cross, was promising that I had the power to forgive their sins. I, a sinner, a man, was taking God's place. It was God's laws they were breaking, not mine. To God, therefore, they must make confession; and to God alone they must pray for forgiveness." (13) In fact, the only word in the Bible about confessing sins to anyone other than God, is found in James: "Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). It is obvious that the Lord meant what He says in Revelation, chapter 1, that "He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (James 5:6), and Peter calls the church "a chosen race, a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). Believe it or not, the only mention of New Testament believers being priests is used in a context where all true believers are included, not just a select few. That is why James could say that we should confess our sins "to one another".

Catholics love to quote the verse in John 20:23 to prove that priests do have the power to "forgive and retain" sins. "If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained." The powers of forgiving and retaining sins, were given to the apostles as proclaimers of the Word of God, not as priests. As we have just pointed out, there are no Christian "priests" in New Testament teaching and doctrine. Pastors, yes. Deacons, yes. Apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, yes. Priests, no!

Jesus was telling His followers that by preaching the gospel, they were being given the power to declare that a person's sins were forgiven them by God! And if an individual, or group did not receive them and the forgiveness they offered in the name of Jesus, then they were instructed to

"shake the dust off their feet" as a protest against them, and warn them that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorra in the day of judgment than for them (Matthew 10:14-15). In other words, if a person rejected the apostles' preaching of the gospel, they had the right to tell that person that his sins were not forgiven, because they had rejected God's only provision for atonement of sins. "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me" (Luke 10:16). This power to forgive and retain sins, contrary to Rome's teaching, belongs to everyone who preaches the true gospel of salvation.

Penance In the Roman system, penance is one of the seven sacraments. (14) The Baltimore Catechism defines penance as "the sacrament by which sins committed after baptism are forgiven through the absolution of the priest." (15) Another catechism published in New York says, "the priest gives penance to help me to make up for the temporal punishment does not always make full satisfaction for my sins. I should therefore do other acts of penance ... and try to gain indulgences." And in Instructions for Non- Catholics, we read: "After confession some temporal punishment due to sin generally remains. You should therefore perform other acts of penance also so that you may make up for these punishments, and avoid a long stay in purgatory." (16) Penance as a System of Works

Here indeed is salvation by works. For penance, as the catechism says, involves confession on one's sins to a priest and the doing of good works as the only way by which sins committed after baptism can be forgiven. The Church of Rome thus demands acts of penance before She grants forgiveness, inferring that the sacrifice of Christ was not sufficient to atone fully for sin and that it must be supplemented to some extent by these good works. But what God demands is not acts of penance but repentance, which means turning from sin.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). The easy way in which the Church of Rome deals with sin is seen in this doctrine of penance. The penitent receives pardon on comparatively easy terms. He is assigned some task to perform, usually not too hard, sometimes merely the recital of a given number of "Hail Mary's." the result is that he has no qualms about resuming his evil course. It shocked Martin Luther when he read the Greek New Testament edited by Erasmus, that Jesus did not say "do penance" as had been translated by the Roman Church, but "repent."

Penance versus Repentance

Penance is a wholly different thing from gospel repentance. Penance is an outward act. Repentance is of the heart. Penance is imposed by a Roman priest. Repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit. What God desires in the sinner is not a punishment of oneself for sins, but a change of heart, a real forsaking of sin, shown by a new life of obedience to God's commands. In short, penance is a counterfeit repentance. It is the work of man on his body; true repentance is the work of God in the soul. The Divine Word commands, "Rend your heart and not your garments" (Joel 2:13). Penance is "rending the garments" - an outward form without inward reality.

While Romanism does teach that Christ died for our sins, it also teaches that His sacrifice alone was not sufficient, and that our sufferings must be added to make it effective. In accordance with this, many have tried to earn salvation by fastings, rituals, flagellations and good works of various

kinds. But those who attempt such a course always find that it is impossible to do enough to earn salvation.

Dr. C.D. Cole says, "Romanism is a complicated system of salvation by works. It offers salvation on the installment plan, then sees to it that the poor sinner is always behind in his payments, so that when he dies there is a large unpaid balance, and he must continue payments by sufferings in purgatory, or until the debt is paid by the prayers, alms, and sufferings of his living relatives and friends. The whole system and plan calls for merit and money from the cradle to the grave and even beyond. Surely the wisdom that drew such a plan of salvation is not from above." (17) *The Biblical Teaching on Good Works*

Good works, of course, are pleasing to God and they have an important and necessary place in the life of the Christian. They naturally follow if one has true faith, and they are performed out of love and gratitude to God for the great salvation that He has bestowed. Good works, in other words, are not the cause and basis of salvation, but rather the fruits and proof of salvation - "Not by works done in righteousness which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us through the washing of regeneration and the renewing the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). The born-again Christian produces good works as naturally as the grapevine produces grapes. They are a part of his very nature. He performs them not to get saved, but because he is saved.

Salvation by Grace

Grace, just because it is grace, is not given on the basis of proceeding merits. By no stretch of the imagination can a man's good works in this life be considered a just equivalent for the blessings of eternal life. But all men because of pride, naturally feel that they should earn their salvation, and a system which makes some provision in that regard readily appeals to them. But Paul lays the ax to such reasoning then he says: "If a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law" (Galatians 3:21). Time and again the Scriptures repeat that salvation is of grace, as if anticipating the difficulty that men would have in accepting the fact that they would not be able to earn it. The Council of Trent, in its opposition to the reformer's doctrine of justification by faith, and in defense of its doctrine of penance, declared: "Whosoever shall affirm that men are justified solely by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ ... let him be accursed". (18) And the Catholic Almanac says, "Penance is necessary for salvation ... and was instituted by Christ for the forgiveness of sins". (19) The modern church teachings completely concur: "Many things are necessary for salvation. All these things work together - faith, baptism, the Eucharist, the doing of good works, and others as well. Redemption is one thing, salvation is quite another. There is nothing lacking on Christ's part; there is much to be done on ours." (20) Also, in a booklet published in 1967, under the subheading, "We Must Atonement Too", it says that "even though the satisfaction of Christ was complete and universal, nevertheless all adult Christians are obliged to imitate their suffering Master and make personal satisfaction for their sins by good works. (21) But the apostle Paul in his masterpiece on justification by faith says, "Having now been justified by His blood we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him" (22) (Romans 5:9).

"And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him as righteousness. Now to the one who works, the reward is not reckoned as grace, but as debt. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Romans 4:3-5).

What a significant coincidence it is that this doctrine of justification by faith is given such prominence in the epistle to the Romans, since Rome later became the seat of the papacy! It seems to be written there as if intended as a strong and permanent protest against the errors of the Roman Church.

Assurance of Salvation The first consequence of the doctrine of penance (as well as the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences) is that the Roman Catholic, though baptized and confirmed, can never have that assurance of his salvation and that sense of spiritual security which is such a blessing to the true Christian. In proportion as he is spiritually sensitive, the person who holds to a works religion knows that he has not suffered as much as his sins deserve, and that he can never do as much as he should in order to be worthy of salvation. A dying Roman Catholic, after he has done all that he can do and after the last rites have been given to him, is told that he still must go to purgatory. There he will suffer unknown torture, with no assurance as to how long it will continue, but with the assurance that if his relatives pray for his soul, and pay with sufficient generosity to have candles lit and have special Masses said for him, that his sufferings will be shortened somewhat.

Oh what a contrast with all of that, is the death of the true believer who has the assurance that he goes straight to heaven into the immediate presence of Christ! (Php 1:23). What a marvelous blessing is the true faith of the Christian, both in life and especially at the time of death! The Council of Trent even pronounced a curse upon anyone who presumed to say that he had assurance of salvation, or the whole punishment for sin is forgiven along with that sin. (23) Such assurance is pronounced a delusion and a result of sinful pride. Rome keeps her subjects in constant fear and insecurity. Even at death, after extreme unction has been administered and after thousands of rosary prayers have been said "for the repose of the soul", the priest still cannot give assurance of salvation. The person is never "good enough" but must serve in purgatory prison to be purified of venial sins before he can be admitted to the celestial city. No one can be truly happy or truly at peace. And particularly in spiritual matters, a state of doubt and uncertainty continues for one's whole life, and right into the grave. But God wants us to be saved, and according to the Bible the Holy Spirit can give us the assurance that we have salvation when we have a true, intimate relationship with the Son of God (1 John 5:9-12). But in Romanism, one must work hard for it and must pay dearly for it, and after he has done all the priest has prescribed, he still cannot know whether he has it or not. And through it all, there stands the anathema of the Council of Trent against all who affirm the certainty of their salvation. Hence, there cannot truly be found anywhere a Roman Catholic, consistent to what his church teaches, who enjoys the true assurance of eternal life.

Conclusion

It is obvious by even this brief glimpse into the doctrines of mortal and venial sins, confession, penance, and purgatory, the Roman Catholic Church has constructed one of the most unbiblical doctrinal systems that has ever been considered "Christian". The fear, anguish, and religious bondage that such a system of "reward and punishment" creates, has tormented millions of lives for centuries, and continues to prey on those who are ignorant of the biblical way of salvation. The Roman Church is an Empire with its own ruler, its own laws, and its own subjects. It calls the members of other faiths "separated brethren" (24) and has as its goal the eventual bringing

together of everyone under its flag.

I know that many will not be convinced or moved by this article to make such a conclusion. They are impressed by what they've heard about recent stirrings among the Catholics in the "Charismatic renewal". Many evangelicals (especially charismatics) have been thrilled by the reports of Catholics speaking in tongues, dancing in the Spirit, having nights of joy and praise, even attending "charismatic Masses".

Mouths that used to speak out boldly against the Church of Rome have been quieted by the times. It no longer is in vogue to speak out against such error (25). Now Protestants unwittingly believe that "our differences are not so great".

I've never completely understood why God led me to write these articles. But it becomes more clear with each day of study and each page of research that the truth of Scripture must be defended for the glory of our Lord Jesus and for those who desperately need to be set free.

02.05. Part 4. What did "Vatican II" Really Change?

Part 4. What did "Vatican II" Really Change? The Roman Catholic Church is very proud of two distinct things: 1) that it has never changed, and 2) that it has changed very much! I realize that number 2 seems to contradict number 1, but anyone who has studied church history even briefly, will be able to grasp what I'm trying to say.

First, Rome is very emphatic about making clear these unalterable facts:

A. That she is the original and only church founded by Jesus Christ upon the earth. That her head, the pope, has the authority handed down from the "first pope," Simon Peter, through "apostolic succession," (1) to sit in the place of Jesus as the undisputed leader of all true Christians on earth. That her traditions and interpretations of scripture are the only basis for forming the rules and guidelines that Christians everywhere should live by. And that her dogmas and doctrines, although they can be clarified, enlarged, or restated for the sake of changing times, can never, ever be abolished, contradicted, or altered. They are quite literally, "Canon Law." On the other hand, modern Roman Catholics are immensely pleased with the reforms and evolution they have seen in their Church, especially since the cataclysmic "Second Vatican Council" (more commonly know as "Vatican II"). They point to how much has been done to open the way for "all Christians everywhere to finally come together!" This, of course, does seem very exciting, especially since Rome has been largely on the defensive since the Reformation. Starting with the Council of Trent in 1546, there have been one papal decree after another, which have made it completely impossible (even forbidden) for Catholics to have any "fellowship" with Protestants.

Ah, but "time heals all wounds" [we] say, and like everything else, the giant chasm between Protestant and catholic now seems with the passing of centuries, to appear like just a "little misunderstanding." And Vatican II, which included such sweeping reforms as allowing Mass to be said in the common local language, and no longer forbidding Catholics to read a Protestant Bible, or attend a Protestant church service, seemed to make the differences between Rome and the rest of the fragmented Christian world look very petty. As you probably might guess, I do not believe this to be the case. In fact, in my research and studies I have only found the opposite to be true, Yes indeed, the Catholic Church is changing! It has probably never changed so much in all its history as during the past generation, but it has not changed one, single, solitary doctrine! Each and every point of dogma that has alarmed evangelical theologians for the past 400 years remains the same, exactly as written, and in full force! But because of all the changed garments, all the reformed liturgies and ceremonies, and the resulting freedom of worship, Catholics everywhere (as well as many Protestants) have mistakenly believed that something substantial has really changed! But this is not a surprise, it has happened before many times in history. When you change the key, the instruments, or the rhythm of a song, almost everyone will believe you have a new song. Only those who listen carefully to the lyrics, or who know their music well, will realize that yes, the style is different, but the song is the same! The whole thing seems so sad to me, when I realize how very few there are among Catholics (and Protestants) who really know what

Roman Catholicism teaches. It is truly shocking! And what's even more alarming, is the potential for the devil to pull the wool over people's eyes because of their ignorance.

I have received many letters from Catholics in response to the first three Chronicles, which have basically said this: "The Catholic Church has really changed! why not use the current beliefs and teachings that are a result of Vatican II?" Believe me, in each of my articles, I was doing just that! I would be a fool to be refuting doctrines and teaching that are no longer being used. But because Catholic worship is based so much on ritual, ceremony, and symbolic outward forms, the average Catholic believes with all his heart that when he sees these surface things altered, that his church has really changed! You have only to look at the documents of Vatican II to see that this is not the case. The Need for Vatican II In the early 1960's, the Vatican knew that there was a need to give the Church a face-lift. Many of its policies seemed out of place, and most of its forms of worship were stiff and outdated. There was a feeling among the bishops that the Church needed to evolve with the times, and there was also a growing to reunite with Rome, that she was going to have to give herself a more pleasant and appealing appearance. There was also criticism from her own ranks that her doctrines needed to be clarified and "re- stated" in a more simple and less dogmatic tone than previous councils had done.

Thus the Second Vatican Council was called by Pope John XXIII in 1962, and continued under Pope Paul VI until 1965 when it issued "The Documents of Vatican II," each on different aspects of church teaching and doctrine. The spirit and attitude of these documents were remarkably different from any the Roman Church had ever produced. They were full of scriptural references, and did not include any blatant "curses" on those who did not agree (as previous councils had done). They were revolutionary in freeing individual parish priests to conduct Masses in the way they best could reach the local culture and community. This, as well as changes in church administration and religious freedom were the main results of the Council. In the following years, there were other changes that proceeded out of Rome as a result of the new attitudes which were born from Vatican II. These included the removal of the strict requirement to refrain from eating meat on Fridays (and also the command to fast during Lent). Although these practices were still encouraged, they were now optional instead of mandatory. The whole Church seemed to be loosening up. And ecumenical leaders the world over were beginning to see the light at the end of the church-unity tunnel. But in the midst of all this, a few ardent Christians still stubbornly pointed out that although the procedure and the language of the Mass might have changed, the meaning of it still remained very much the same. And though the outward forms and words used by Rome had been altered much, the things she taught and believed had only been confirmed and repeated in the soft and soothing tone of the Vatican II documents. The Charismatic Movement And then came the "charismatic renewal" seemingly out of nowhere! With the Pope's blessing, Catholics were taking part in charismatic Masses, speaking in tongues, prophesying, singing and shouting side by side with Evangelical Protestants! Everyone was so excited - they thought, "Now we've got the devil licked! Why, doctrine wasn't important anymore, that was for seminary students and old, stuffy theologians!" but as the excitement started to quiet down a little, the Protestants noticed that a few of their Catholic brothers and sisters were still praying to Mary, and were even offering prayers for their dead relatives in the prayer meetings.

It soon became apparent that unity was not going to be as easy as it had seemed at first. Protestants began to make inquiries, and they started bothering their Catholic friends too much

with questions like, "Do you think the Pope is saved?" As you can see, the whole future of the ecumenical movement hinges on this all-important question: "Can a Roman Catholic be considered a genuine believer (according to the Bible), and still believe the things the Roman Church teaches?" The Things That Vatican II Did Not Change To help answer that question, we have prepared a list of teachings and practices that have been adopted and perpetuated by the Roman Catholic Church over the last 1600 years. It is important to note that not one of these were altered at all by the Second Vatican Council. A Scholar Looks at Vatican II

Dr. Loraine Boettner, noted Evangelical authority on Roman Catholic doctrine, takes an in-depth look at the documents of Vatican II in the preface to the fifth edition of his book Roman Catholicism. Dr. Boettner writes:

"The Second Vatican Council, which closed late in 1965, made changes in the liturgy, administrative practices, and in the matter of religious freedom. It repeated the claim that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true church, although it did recognize that other churches contain some elements of truth.

"But Pope John XXIII, who called the first session, and Pope Paul VI, who presided over the later sessions (as well as several prominent cardinal and theologians), took care to emphasize that no changes would be made in the doctrinal structure of the Church. However, Pope Paul did promulgate [declare] one new doctrine, which asserts that 'Mary is the Mother of the Church.' The primary purpose of the Council was to update the liturgy and administrative practices and so to make the Church more efficient and more acceptable to the 20th century world.

"The introduction of the 'New Mass,' for instance, brought about a change in language - Latin is no longer required, except in the prayer of consecration. But as Protestants, it is not important to us whether the Mass is said in Latin or English or Swahili - it is not the language of the Mass that we object to, it is its content and meaning. (See Chronicle II, 'The Sacrifice of the Mass').

"On previous occasions, Rome has changed her tactics when old methods became ineffective, but she has never changed her nature. In any religious organization, doctrine is the most basic and important part of its structure, since what people believe determines what they do. An official document, 'The Constitution on the Church' prepared by the Council and approved by the Pope, reaffirms basic Catholic doctrine precisely as it stood before the Council met. The doctrine of papal infallibility is restated. We are told that when 'by a definitive act he proclaims a doctrine of faith and morals ... his definitions, of themselves, and not by the consent of the Church, are justly called, irreformable' (Article 25). The pope has lost none of his powers. He remains the absolute ruler in the Roman Church. But if papal decrees past and present are 'irreformable', what hope is there for real reform in the Church of Rome?

Although many of these beliefs were practiced earlier than the dates given, they did not become binding on all Catholics until they were officially adopted by church councils and proclaimed by the Pope as dogmas of faith. All dates are approximate.

Presbyter (or elders) were first called priests by Lucian ... 2nd century.

Prayers for the dead ... AD 300. The VENERATION of angels and dead saints and the use of images ... 375. The Mass as a daily celebration was adopted ... 394. The beginning of the

exaltation of Mary, and the first use of the term "Mother of God" by the Council of Ephesus ... 431.

Priests began to dress different from the laity and to wear special clothes ... 500.

Extreme Unction ... 526. The doctrine of purgatory was first established by Gregory the Great ... 593.

Prayers began to be offered to Mary, dead saints, and angels ... 600. The first man was proclaimed "Pope" (Boniface III) ... 610.

Veneration of the cross, images, and relics authorized ... 788.

Holy water, mixed with a pinch of salt and blessed by a priest was authorized in ... 850.

Veneration of Saint Joseph ... 890.

College of cardinals begun ... 927.

Canonization of dead saints, first by Pope John XV ... 995. The Mass developed gradually as a sacrifice, attendance was made obligatory in ...11th century. The celibacy of the priesthood was decreed by Pope Hildebrand, Boniface VII ... 1079. The rosary, or prayer beads copied from Hindus and Mohammedans) was introduced by Peter the Hermit ... 1090. The Inquisition (2) of "Heretics" was instituted by the Council of Verona ... 1184, and was legalized and promoted by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. The sale of Indulgences ... 1190. The seven sacraments defined by Peter Lombard ... 12th century. The dogma of transubstantiation was decreed by Pope Innocent III ... 1215.

Confession of sins to the priest at least once a year was instituted by Pope Innocent III in the Lateran Council ... 1215. The adoration of the wafer (host) decreed by Pope Honorius III ... 1220. The scapular invented by Simon Stock of England ... 1251. The doctrine of purgatory proclaimed a dogma by the Council of Florence ... 1439.

Tradition is declared of equal authority with the Bible by the Council Trent ... 1546. The Apocryphal Books were added to the Bible by the Council of Trent ... 1545. The Immaculate Conception of Mary was proclaimed by Pope Pius IX in 1854.

Pope Pius IX condemns all scientific discoveries not approved by the Roman Church ... 1864.

Infallibility of the pope in matters of faith and morals proclaimed by the First Vatican Council ... 1870.

Pius XI condemned the public schools ... 1930.

Pius XI reaffirmed the doctrine that Mary is "The Mother of God" ... 1931. The dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII ... 1950.

Mary proclaimed the Mother of the Church by Pope Paul VI ... 1965.

"The document on the Church repeats in substance the teaching of the Council of Trent that 'priests and bishops are the representatives of God on earth ... justly, therefore, they are called not only angels, but gods, holding as they do the place of authority of God on earth.' (Catechism of Trent).

"In fact, no more sweeping claims were made by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), nor by the First Vatican Council (1870), than are made in these documents from Vatican II. Despite all the claims to the contrary, the Council has firmly maintained the doctrine of the primacy of Peter (3) and of papal succession. In his book, *Ecclesiam Suam*, Pope Paul expressed his distress because of what some of the 'separated brethren' (4) say about the pope as the stumbling block in the way of church unity. He said, 'Do not some of them say that if it were not for the primacy of the pope, the reunion of the separated churches with Catholic Church would be easy? We beg the separated brethren to consider the inconsistency of this position, not only in that, without the pope, the Catholic Church would no longer be Catholic, but also because without the supreme decisive pastoral office of Peter, the unity of the Church of Christ would utterly collapse.

"We must say that at this point we agree with the Pope, at least to this extent, that if the Roman Catholic Church were reformed according to scripture, it would have to be abandoned. But the gross errors concerning salvation still remain. Moreover, the Council did nothing toward removing the more than 100 anathemas or curses pronounced by the Council of Trent on the Protestant churches and beliefs. If there is to be any true unity, surely this would seem the logical place to start."

Conclusion We could not find a more fitting conclusion than Dr. Boettner's:

"The 'Constitution on the Church' makes it abundantly clear that Rome has no intention of revising any of her basic doctrine, but only of updating her methods and techniques for more efficient administration and to present a more attractive appearance. This is designed to make it easier for the Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, and Protestant churches to return to her fold. There is no indication that she has any intentions of entering into genuine give-and-take church unity negotiations. Her purpose is not union, but ABSORPTION. Church union with Rome is strictly a one-way street. The age-old danger that Protestantism has faced from the Roman Church has not diminished; in fact, it may well have increased. For through this less-offensive posture and this superficial ecumenicism, Rome is much better situated to carry out her program of eliminating opposition and moving into a position of world dominance. AN INFALLIBLE CHURCH SIMPLY CANNOT REPENT."

Footnotes The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Jesus Christ ordained the 12 apostles to the priesthood at the Last Supper, and to their successors, the Roman priesthood, Jesus promised and guaranteed His continual presence in their teaching and governing until the end of time.

Inquisition - the act of inquiring into a matter; an investigation - American Heritage Dictionary. Lucius III decreed that bishops should take action against heretics. A characteristic of this decree was that a suspect, once convicted of being a heretic, was to be handed over to the secular arm for punishment. Before the Inquisition ran its course, historians estimate that 5 to 15 million people lost their lives through torture and execution (From: *A History of Christianity in the World* by Clyde L. Manschreck). The doctrine that Christ has given Peter the key role of lawful authority... that Peter would be His chief ambassador, His authentic vicar (pope) and this power continues to be extended to Peter's successors through the ages - the popes. The term used by Vatican II to describe the members of other non-Catholic Christian faiths.

03.00. The Selling of Jesus

The Selling of Jesus by

Keith Green

Keith Gordon Green (October 21, 1953 - July 28, 1982) was an American gospel singer, songwriter, and pianist originally from Sheepshead Bay, New York. Green is best known for his strong devotion to Christianity and his unwavering efforts to stir others to the same. Notable songs written by Green and/or his wife, Melody Green, include "I Don't Wanna Fall Away From You", "You Put This Love In My Heart", "Your Love Broke Through", and "Asleep In The Light", as well as the modern hymns "O Lord, You're Beautiful", "There Is A Redeemer", and "Create In Me A Clean Heart".

Green was killed on July 28, 1982, when a small airplane leased by Last Days Ministries crashed on takeoff from a private airport referred to in the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) crash report as Garden Valley Airport. Green had planned to give visiting friends an aerial view of the Last Days Ministries property. Two of Green's children, three year old Josiah, and two year old Bethany, were on board the plane, as was pilot Don Burmeister, and friends John and Dede Smalley and all six of their children. All passengers were killed in the crash. Crash investigators determined that the aircraft was nearly 450 lbs. (202 kg) overweight with 12 passengers and only 7 seats. On November 27, 2001, Keith Green was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame. He was honored with the ASCAP Crescendo Award at the 28th annual ASCAP Christian Music Awards presentation dinner on April 3, 2006. Melody was present to receive the award.

Personal note: I never met Keith Green nor was I able to attend any of his concerts. I was introduced to him by subscribing to the Last Days Newsletter and reading his columns which led to my listening to his music. One of his albums, Songs For A Shepherd, was offered 'for sale' at bookstores and through the newsletter for whatever you wanted to donate. Needless to say, bookstores didn't care for this policy. At a concert in Tulsa, Keith called the students and faculty (and other attendees) 'snakes and vipers.' Keith did what he felt God told him to regardless of what others thought of him. The news of his death shocked and stunned me. Besides my admiration for his Christian principles and go-for-God-at-all-costs attitude, I felt an additional kinship since he and I were born in the same year and married in the same year(silly reasons, I know).

I look forward to talking with him.

03.01. The Selling of Jesus

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." ---- Isaiah 55:1

"He found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." ----- John 2:14-17

"What is my reward then? [Verily] that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all [men], yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more." ----- 1 Corinthians 9:18-19

WE WERE ON OUR WAY TO THE festival sight. The brother driving Melody and I there was warm and friendly. He asked me how I felt about doing these festivals. I told him that I had mixed feelings. The most positive reason for doing them, I told him, was that I could reach more people in just one night than I could in a week of regular concerts.

I then explained my two biggest negatives to him. One was the high admission charged to get in and share the fellowship, music and teaching. The second was all that stuff they had for sale in the concession tents. 'Oh," he said, "you mean Jesus Junk."

I couldn't believe my ears! There couldn't be two more opposite words in the English language than "Jesus" and "junk!" But there they were, casually being linked together without even a second thought. I had to laugh. I guess I couldn't blame him. It seemed the most appropriate label for some of the merchandise I had seen. Everyday items like clocks, coasters, drinking mugs, and billfolds, sometimes selling for even twice their usual value just because some enterprising Christian (or even, God forbid, non-Christian) stamped a dove or a fish on them.

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD At one Jesus festival last year there was over \$98,000.00 worth of these goods sold in just a few days! The festivals are not the only market place for items such as these. The local Christian bookstore has also become quite a showcase for what I call "fish-and-dove" products. That's not the worst of it !! Many secular companies and corporations are seeing a golden opportunity to "cash in on religion." We recently received in the mail a whole catalog full of what was called "Christian bric-a-brac." It was called, "A Christian Family Catalog." It was crammed from cover to cover with every imaginable trinket, plaque, statue, or other "ya-just-gotta-have" artifact that they could sell with a religious flavor. There were many questionable items for sale, but one especially caught our eye: "The Kitchen Witch!" (Reproduced here directly from the catalog.) As you can see, the potential profits to be made are luring many into the field of Christian-oriented products, who would normally have no interest in the gospel at all.

GOSPEL MUSIC In the United States, Christian albums recently went up to about \$8.00 apiece. In Canada, the price is between \$9.00 and \$10.00. I recently received a letter from a brother who complained, 'They're pricing the gospel out of the reach of the poor!' Is it possible this is true? The Bible warns, "Do not be bound together with unbelievers" (2 Corinthians 6:14). Yet secular companies like MCA, Warner Brothers and others, are moving in quickly to start gospel labels.

It baffles me how so many Christian speakers, bands, and singers can charge so much for their appearances (while Jesus and Paul charged nothing at all!) The ticket prices for concerts are a nail in Jesus' hand. Most unbelievers wouldn't pay to hear about Jesus (because they know in their hearts they shouldn't have to). We've got to make our voices known! The gospel is free!!!
CAN SO MANY BE WRONG ??

You might ask, "How can that many people be so wrong??" Are you suggesting that all those people have evil motives and everyone is just in it for the money?" Of course not! I want to say here and now that a good many of the people I have met in the industry, both artists and retailers, have been real brothers and sisters, concerned with serving God with all their hearts in the way they feel He has shown them. However, that still doesn't negate the scriptural command to, "Give freely as you have received" (Matthew 10:8). I believe the whole concept of selling for profit, things containing the gift of God's truth and love, is dead wrong and certainly not what He desires His children to do. NO BIBLICAL FOUNDATION As I study the Word of God, I have a hard time finding any biblical foundation for selling a Bible, or a record of songs or praises to God. Can you imagine how you would feel if you called your pastor telling him your mother was sick, and when you asked him to come over and pray for her, he said he could only come if you gave him \$25! You wouldn't think much of a man like that, and yet every day there are music ministers, Christian teachers, and authors who are given much applause and great respect, even though they charge (and some very dearly) for their gift of ministry. In fact, that same pastor who gives of himself freely, praying and visiting the sick, is usually regarded as a "nobody" compared to one of those well-known ones.

CHRISTIAN PLUMBERS

Some have argued, "What's the difference between a Christian plumber charging for his services, and a singer or speaker charging for theirs?" They say, 'Don't you think the apostle Paul charged for his tents?' It must be realized that there's a difference between a man's vocation or skill and his ministry gift. In fact, Paul made tents for a living so that he wouldn't have to charge for the Gospel (Acts 20:33-35). After all, tents are tents and ministry is ministry !!

"HOW LONG, OH LORD ??"

Before I was a Christian (around the age of 10 or 11), one of the funny things my friends used to write on the bathroom walls was, "Jesus saves green stamps." We all used to laugh, not knowing how much we had dishonored our Creator, and had ridiculed His salvation work. Earlier this year, I was browsing in a very large Christian store, and came to the pottery and ceramic section. There on the shelf was a handmade piggy bank. On the side was engraved the words, "Jesus saves". My heart broke. I could hear the echoes of, "..... those who had been slain because of the Word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, Oh Lord, holy and true, wilt thou refrain from judging

and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?' " (Revelation 6:9-10)

I read in a recent Christian magazine about some new products soon to be on the market. One was a Christian doggie sweater --- The other was Christian ashtrays! How do you think the Lord feels, after giving His life for the sins of the world, to be reduced to something that helps sell merchandise? I'm certain He would make a whip and cleanse the Church of such garbage if He were on the earth today. However, a more permanent remedy is planned --- It is called Judgment Day !!

04.00. What's Wrong With The Gospel?

What's Wrong With The Gospel? by

Keith Green

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NOTE: The section divisions are there for easier reading.

04.01. Introduction

I know that the title of this article will possibly raise some worried eyebrows. At first glance, some might say to themselves, "Oh no, Keith has gone too far this time!" But let me quickly put those possible reactions to rest. To the question, "What's wrong with the Gospel?" I can easily answer, "Absolutely nothing!" That is, of course, if you're talking about the Gospel of the Bible - the very message that Jesus preached - what the apostles Peter, Paul, John, and the others devoted their very lives (and deaths) to. (Php 1:20-21)

No, there's nothing at all wrong with this message from heaven. But what about the stuff that's being preached today? Is it truly "gospel-preaching"? Are the evangelists that preach in churches and arenas, on radio and television - are they preaching what Jesus called the Gospel?(Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 3:16-18) And what about the mountains of modern "gospel literature"? You know, the tracts, pamphlets, comic books, newspapers, etc. Do they really contain the same message - the whole message - about the salvation that Jesus offered? How are we answering the awesome question that people are still asking the Church, as they asked on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?"(Luke 3:10; Luke 3:12; Luke 3:14; Acts 2:37; Acts 16:30)

04.02. Is Our Gospel The Gospel?

I believe with all my heart that Jesus would be ashamed of most of the "gospel" messages and sermons that are being preached today, mainly because they lack almost every major point He Himself preached on. (Mark 8:38; Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:8) How dare we try to change the Gospel. We remove most of its vital parts, and replace them with artificial limbs of our own. (Galatians 1:6-7)

Isn't Jesus the master evangelist? Shouldn't we judge our evangelism by His example?(Ephesians 5:1, 1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6) Was His message anything like what we're hearing today? It is my intention to try to briefly cover in Section 1 each of the major parts of the Gospel that have been "surgically" removed in most of today's preaching. And in Section 2, we will go over each of the "new additions" that have become a very part of our modern gospel. The Removed Parts Of The Gospel The Blood of Jesus. It's a fact that the very word blood scares people. It's also a fact that the blood of Christ scares the devil, because it is the only cleansing agent for a sin-sick soul.(Matthew 26:28; Acts 20:28; Romans 3:25, Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 2:13; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 9:22; Hebrews 10:19; Hebrews 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5; Revelation 5:9; Revelation 12:11; Revelation 19:13) Can you imagine what the preaching and writings of Paul would have been like, if he had been as squeamish in proclaiming the magnificent power and beauty of the blood of Jesus as our generation of preachers are? What we have now is a bloodless gospel!

Today, people are afraid to think and preachers are afraid to make them. The whole concept of Jesus being the Passover Lamb of the Old Testament(Exodus 12:23-24; Isaiah 53:7; Luke 22:15; John 1:29; John 1:36; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:6; Revelation 5:12; Revelation 7:14; Revelation 22:1; Revelation 22:3) has been lost - "It takes too much time and thought to explain," you will hear some say. (Hebrews 5:11-14) "We need to simplify the Gospel so that we can reach the masses." Oh, what logic! Remove the blood from the preaching of the Gospel, and you remove the power to conquer the devil for the souls of men!

04.03. The Cross of Jesus

Paul said, "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2) Nowadays it's "Jesus Christ and what He can do for you!" You cannot have more exact opposites than the Bible's Christ-centered Gospel,(Matthew 10:38; Luke 14:27; 1 Corinthians 1:17-18; Galatians 6:14; Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 1:20; 1 Peter 2:24) and our modern, cross-less, me-centered gospel.

Today, if anyone preaches self-denial as a condition of discipleship, you can hear the comments afterwards: "old-fashioned," "harsh," "legalistic." I dare say that our Lord would have as much trouble finding acceptance among our preachers as He had among the religious leaders of His own day.

Here's what A.W. Tozer says about the cross...

"The cross is the most revolutionary thing ever to appear among men. The cross of Roman times knew no compromise, it never made concessions. It won all its arguments by killing its opponent and silencing him for good. It spared not Christ, but slew Him the same as the rest. He was alive when they hung Him on that cross, and completely dead when they took Him off of it. That was the cross the first time it appeared in Christian history.

"With perfect knowledge of all this, Christ said, 'If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself take up his cross and follow Me.' So the cross not only brought Christ's life to an end, it also ends the first life, the old life of every one of His true followers...this and nothing less is true Christianity. We must do something about the cross, and there's only one of two things we can do - flee it or die upon it!"

04.04. The Terrors of Hell and Guilt of Sinners

We often hear people say, "I'm tired of hell-fire and brimstone preaching!" "Well," I often reply, "when was the last time you heard any?" It is true, very few people preach on hell anymore - it is no longer in vogue. We shouldn't scare the poor sinners, no, that wouldn't do. They're just unfortunate, misguided souls, right? Wrong! The Bible clearly shows that they are rebels who have robbed and dishonored the living God, infinitely offending Him.(John 8:44; Acts 13:9-11; Acts 1:1-26 Cor 6:9; Galatians 4:16 : Ephesians 2:1-3; James 4:4; 2 Peter 2:12-19) They have no right to look at themselves in any other light. But we, smart as we are, have decided to help God along. He doesn't understand our generation as well as we do. The things Jesus emphasized in His preaching were all right for the Jews, but our generation needs a more gentle, loving tone. "Tell 'em about heaven!" We talk about heaven, about the "rewards of being born-again," but we completely neglect the other side of the "two-edged sword." (Hebrews 4:12) What right do we have to remove things from the Gospel that Jesus Himself gave great place to in His own preaching?(Matthew 5:22; Matthew 8:12; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 13:41-42; Matthew 13:49-50; Matthew 22:11-14; Matthew 23:13; Matthew 23:33; Matthew 24:48-51; Matthew 25:30; Matthew 25:46; Luke 13:26-28)

04.05. The Law of God Preached to Convict of Sin

Pages could be written on this subject, but there is room for only one brief example. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, he asked a very direct question: "Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Can you imagine what our preachers would answer him today? "Just admit you're a sinner, accept Jesus as your Personal Savior, go to church, pay your tithes, try to be good, and you're in!" But what was Jesus' answer? "You know the commandments... if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matthew 19:17; Mark 10:19) The commandments?? Why they went out with Cecil B. DeMille! Isn't this the "age of grace"?

Well, the truth is Jesus wasn't preaching the commandments to him as the way of salvation, He was using the commandments to specifically convict him of his particular sin - greed. That rich boy loved the bucks, and Jesus knew just how to flush him out of the bushes - preach the Law! And that's exactly what the Law is for- "For through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20), that's what Paul said. The Law must be preached - not as the way of salvation, but as a searchlight put on the sinner's heart, so he can see how utterly rotten he is, compared to the way God requires him to be. (Galatians 3:24) But today again, we are wiser than God. Our preaching isn't filled with "dos and don'ts." No, we don't want to scare the "liberated generation" away. Why, if we said that fornication was wrong, or drugs, or abortion, or any other specific sin, people would feel all condemned and then how could they get saved? But that's just it, Jesus preached the Law to the rich young ruler so that, after feeling condemned about his greed, he could turn and obey Jesus and find true treasure in heaven. "Go and sell all you possess and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me." (Mark 10:21) Unless people are truly convicted of sin, if they do not fully see that they are totally condemned by the requirements of God's Law, then it is virtually impossible to show them the need for a savior. Why, what would they need to be saved from? Fun? That is why our modern gospel must dwell on "all the good things God'll do for you if you'd just accept Him!" We can't convince a sinner that he needs a savior by just getting him to admit that, "Well, generally, yes, I am a sinner." He must see how the Law of God totally condemns him as a sinner,(Romans 2:12; Romans 2:20; Romans 3:20-21; Romans 4:15; Romans 5:13; Romans 5:20; Romans 10:4; 1 Corinthians 15:56; Galatians 2:16; Galatians 2:19; Galatians 3:10-11; James 29:11) and then the beauty of the Gospel, the glory of the cross, the marvelous power of Christ's blood will be able to penetrate his anxious, waiting mind and heart. Only by the preaching of the Law can a man fully desire to be saved from his sin. For, "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law." (Romans 7:7)

04.06. Fear of God, Judgement Seat of Christ

Instead of the awesome majesty of Jehovah, today the Lord is presented as a sort of "ice cream man-Santa Claus." And the Church is the "candy store" where you can get "every goodie your heart desires." Jesus Himself is portrayed as "a sweetie pie," so good, so loving, so forgiving, and so gentle, that you can almost hear the preacher whisper, "Aw, He wouldn't hurt a fly..." But what happened to "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31) or "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10)? (See also Deuteronomy 5:29, Deuteronomy 10:12; Joshua 24:14; 2 Kings 17:39; Psalms 2:11; Psalms 15:4; Psalms 19:9; Psalms 25:14; Psalms 31:19; Psalms 33:18; Psalms 34:7; Psalms 34:9; Psalms 34:11; Psalms 52:6; Psalms 60:4; Psalms 67:7; Psalms 72:5; Psalms 85:9; Psalms 86:11; Psalms 103:11; Psalms 103:13; Psalms 103:17; Psalms 111:5; Psalms 112:1; Psalms 147:11; Proverbs 8:13; Proverbs 10:27; Proverbs 13:13; Proverbs 14:26-27; Proverbs 15:16; Proverbs 16:6; Proverbs 19:23; Proverbs 23:17; Proverbs 28:14; Proverbs 31:30; Isaiah 8:13; Jeremiah 32:39-40 Malachi 3:16; Malachi 4:2; Matthew 10:28; Luke 1:50; Acts 10:35; Acts 13:26; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:21; Php 2:12; Hebrews 12:29; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 14:7) The wise, new editors of modern preaching rhetoric have conveniently wiped out every reference to the Almighty's severity while emphasizing only His kindness. This they do, ignoring the balanced, biblical view of Paul, "Behold then the kindness and severity of God." (Romans 11:22)

04.07. Repentance as Necessary for Forgiveness

It has always amazed me how the Church could have evolved to such a state as it is in now, with such clear, direct teaching from the Lord Jesus as to what is necessary to be right with God. Please read the first five verses of the 13th chapter of Luke. Here, Jesus is told the news about some Galileans who were executed by the Romans. He then says, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:1-5) Using another example, He then repeats the same exact sentence.

I cannot conceive of conversion without repentance. The teachings of Jesus and the apostles are full of commands to "repent and be saved!"(Psalms 7:12; Isaiah 30:15; Ezekiel 18:32; Matthew 3:2; Mark 1:5; Mark 6:7; Mark 6:12; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 8:22; Acts 17:30; Acts 26:19-20; Revelation 2:5; Revelation 2:16; Revelation 3:3; Revelation 3:19) Repentance is not just "being sorry" - that is only conviction. Repentance is not merely a change of heart and a change of mind, it is a change of action! God requires that if we are sincerely convinced that sin is wrong, then we will turn from it to God, and commit ourselves to not take part in sinful deeds any longer. God blesses such decisions and commitments with abundant grace. And it is by that grace that we can fulfill the desires of the Spirit within us. But because there is so little real conviction of sin brought about by the preaching of our modern gospel, we cannot truly require repentance anymore. If we did, no one would "come forward" at all. For repentance is easy to him who sees how ugly and horrible sin is, but repentance is impossible where the Law does not convince the sinner of his wicked heart, compelling him to turn from his sin into the arms of a waiting, compassionate God. You see, all these removed parts of the Gospel are connected. In God's wisdom, every aspect of the appointed way of salvation is irreplaceable.

It is true that without God loving us first, we could not be saved. He made the first move, He always does. But He will not do what He requires of the sinner himself to do - and that is to repent!

04.08. God's Sorrow and Broken Heart Over Sin

The picture of God as presented today by evangelists is that of an optimist - a positive-thinking good ole boy who lives in heaven, high above the trouble on earth, where everything is rosy, "and the skies are not cloudy all day." Why, how could anything bother the living God? He isn't really troubled by all the mess down here, He has everything under control! But again, the Bible paints a different picture of our King. Just look at Jesus weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), or the pleadings of God with the nation of Israel through the prophets Isaiah or Ezekiel.(Isaiah 1:18; Isaiah 54:7; Exe 18:23; Ezekiel 18:32; Ezekiel 33:11; Hosea 11:8) This God, the one in the Bible, is continually striving with men through His Spirit. It says in Proverbs, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good." (Proverbs 15:3) That means that God saw every rape committed today, He saw every murder, every person that starved to death, every pornographic film and book, every abused and battered child. How can anyone believe that He sees this and does not grieve? Of course God can grieve. Doesn't the Bible implore us not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God"? (Ephesians 4:30)

You see, God is the most hurt and dishonored being in the universe. He could stop all this mess, all the perversion and crime and corruption any time He wishes, but He doesn't! Why? Because He waits for the souls of men and women. "Regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation," Peter said. (2 Peter 3:15) But the Church, which doesn't have one millionth of the compassion that God has, has turned around and created a god in its own image and likeness. A carefree, cheerful, above-it-all God. And then the Church has conveniently removed from the "gospel" it presents all reference to the pain and sorrow in God's heart. The Church doesn't want a God who's grieved with sin, because then this God would be grieved with them... (and He is!)(Psalms 78:40-41; Mark 3:5)

04.09. The Necessity of Holiness to Please God

Hebrews says without holiness "no one shall see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14) It is true that Jesus commands us to be perfect. (Matthew 5:48) It is also true that you most likely have never met a perfect person, nor do you probably ever expect to be perfect yourself. Nevertheless, we still have those uncomfortable words of the Lord, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"!

Now, because of our dilemma in finding ourselves to be such numskulls, and seeing the demands of Jesus, we have invented some pretty interesting and caraaazzeey doctrines. Some Christians have said, "Well, when God looks at us, He doesn't really see us anymore, He sees Jesus instead. And when there's ever sin in our hearts, if God should happen to look at the wrong moment, He'll see a smiling face of Jesus there, instead of seeing our sin. So God sees me as holy - even though I'm not! But...I really am...er, well, you know what I mean!" (I don't happen to believe that God is that easily fooled, not even by Christians.)

Another stranger-than-truth doctrine is that blessed refuge of backsliders called "the carnal Christian." In this example of pretzel-logic, we are led to believe that any "believer" who isn't really "walking with the Lord" at the present time, and is indulging in the things of the world and the lusts of the flesh, can still be considered a "Christian," but not a Christian of the 1st class, no, a Christian of the 2nd class... a "carnal Christian." Here we have a case of the "believer" who doesn't believe. Oh, he still "believes" that God is God, and that there is a heaven and hell, and so on (but don't forget, the devil believes all these things too!- James 2:19). He knows all the right things to say to convince granny, the pastor, and his Christian friends that he's still hanging in there. He even sort of believes it himself. Seems he's got everybody fooled - everybody that is, except God! The Bible is clear that "If we say we' have fellowship with Him, and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. " (1 John 1:6)(Here are only a few of the many Scriptures that say this over and over again, in the clearest possible terms: Psalms 5:4; Psalms 5:6; Matthew 7:22; John 3:20-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 John 2:4; 1 John 2:9-11; 1 John 3:10; 1 John 4:20)

Today, possibly the greatest insult to the Gospel has been the almost total neglect of the preaching of holiness for the Christian. Jesus doesn't want to make believe that we're holy, He wants to impart His holiness to us by the Holy Spirit. But because people are not being driven to the cross, convicted by His Law to repentance and real rebirth, then we have to spend hours in our seminaries trying to find suitable, complicated ways to explain away the obvious meanings of Scripture. To all this you might be saying, "But what about all those people getting saved by the efforts of good men and ministries out there? They're not preaching the way you say they should, and they still have converts!" Well, the immediate answer to that question is, "The people are not getting saved because of their messages, they're getting saved in spite of them." But unfortunately, many of the people who make "decisions for Christ" through large evangelistic crusades, do not even attend church regularly in the years that follow. (And as you probably well know, "attending church regularly" does not guarantee that one is a true believer.) But let's take a closer look at what kind of "converts" today's gospel usually produces.

04.10. What's Specifically Wrong With Modern Gospel?

It's Me-Centered Instead of Christ-Centered. First and foremost, it is the gospel that appeals to the selfish. Instead of honoring God, it places the sinner at the center of God's love and plan. But the Bible places Jesus at the center of God's plan, not the sinner.

One of the most well-known phrases of modern evangelism is "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life!" But the sober, biblical truth that needs to be presented to the sinner's mind is "You have made yourself an enemy of God, and in your present state of rebellion there is absolutely no hope for you." In fact, God's "plan" for the sinner at this point in his life is to separate him from His presence forever, in hell. However unpopular or unlovely that may sound, it is the only truth and reality about anyone who is an enemy of God through sin. The whole line of reasoning in our modern gospel continues on and on in this mistaken way. "Sin has separated you from God, 'and His wonderful plan for your life.' Jesus came and died on the cross, so that you may experience 'His wonderful plan for your life.' You must accept Jesus now, so that you will not miss out on 'His wonderful plan for your life!'" You, you, you, you!!! It's all for YOU! I'm not sorry to say this, but Jesus did it all in obedience, for His Father's glory. (Php 2:8-12) Of course, it infinitely benefits those who love, serve, and honor Him, but that was a secondary consideration, not the primary one. (Please read Ezekiel 36:22-32.) If people come to Jesus mainly to get a blessing, or only to get forgiveness, they will ultimately be disappointed. But if they come to give Him their lives in honor and worship, then they will truly have forgiveness and joy - more than they could ever imagine! (1 Corinthians 2:9)

It's Shallow, Cheap, and Offered as a "Bargain." Our gospel reduces the good news to a "come and get it while you can" sale. We make every effort to take all the bones out - everything that might offend someone, might make them hesitate or put off their decision. Jesus didn't do this. He never lowered the requirements for anyone. One had to be completely sincere, totally humbled, having counted the cost, willing to leave everything, family and property, "count all things loss" so that they might "gain Christ." (Php 3:7-8) When that same rich young ruler "went away sad, for he had many possessions" (Matthew 19:22), Jesus didn't go running after him shouting, "Hey, wait a minute! Let's talk this thing over, it isn't as bad as it might sound. Maybe I was a little too harsh!"

Maybe we're so eager to "see the converts," to publish "how many got saved at our last concert" in the bulletins to our supporters, that we'll do anything to rush someone into a "decision" before he's had a chance to really make one. The problem is, if you have to rush him into it, he probably will change his mind later anyway. For as a friend of mine says, "If somebody can talk them into it, somebody can talk them out of it!" (1 Corinthians 1:17)

Salvation is Shown as a Barter or Trade, Instead of the Result of Obedience by Faith. We offer forgiveness of sin like Monty Hall on "Let's Make a Deal." I've even heard, "You give Jesus your sin, and He'll give you salvation in return!" No one in the Bible ever thought so low of the grace of God to talk about the gift of eternal life like it was for trade. It is a gift! You can't earn it, or buy it, or give anything in return for it. How it must offend the Holy Spirit to hear people talk of His Jesus so.

(Acts 8:18-23)

It Produces Selfish, "Blessed," and Feelings-Oriented "Converts." Anyone who is made to believe he becomes a Christian under such preaching will seldom bring forth the true fruits of a real convert. He will remain just as selfish as he always was, only now his selfishness will take on a religious form. If he wants something for himself, he will say he "has a burden" for something, or he will say, "It is the desire of my heart," or some other religious-sounding phrase like that. He will pray selfishly, desiring blessings for himself, and even if he does pray for others, it usually will be for selfish reasons. After all, when he "accepted the Lord," he was told how much Jesus wanted to bless him and how much God had stored up for his account, and how the Bible was like "a checkbook full of promises, just waiting to be cashed!"

Such a person always seeks to "feel" good about himself, his own church, his own pastor, etc. His whole world is built on feeling blessed. He was never shown how he was created to bless God... God was not created to bless him. (Psalms 149:4; Php 2:13) As you can see, the "converts" described above are not like those pictured in the book of Acts, when the Church was new and the fire was hot. Take a look at Acts 2:41-47 and Acts 4:31-35, and you will see the tender spirit of love, and the mighty spirit of power that prevailed among the brethren in those early days. I believe that one of the great reasons that "everyone kept feeling a sense of awe" (Acts 2:43), was because "they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to prayer." (Acts 2:42) I believe that Peter and the others made every effort to convey the whole message of the Gospel when they preached and taught, and that is why the Spirit of God could anoint and bless the new converts so powerfully- God always anoints the truth! (Isaiah 55:11)

04.11. Section 2: "The Added Parts", Introduction

In each generation there have been various ways and means used to secure the attention of sinners so that they may be shown the truth and then led into a saving knowledge and true relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a fact that man is a creature of habit. He loves form, doesn't like things to change "too quickly," and he clings to tradition. Unfortunately (for man), God is no such person. Though something has never been tried before, God simply does not care. His only concern is that it is the wisest and most direct way of accomplishing His desire. This of course, threw the children of Israel into many a panic. "What's God doing now?" If there was a big sea in the way, no problem, He just split it. If there wasn't any water, snap! A drinking fountain from a rock. Food running low? Presto! It'll rain bread in the morning. And Jesus had the same way of dealing with things. When His disciples were far from shore, it didn't matter, Jesus just strolled over the waves. Problem with the weather? "Shut up wind!" And so it went . (Exodus 14:21-22; Exodus 16:4; Exodus 17:6; Matthew 14:25; Mark 4:39)

Now as you can see in the Bible, God had a lot of problems with man and his traditions. Just take a look at the Jews - how they loved their temple, their sacrifices, their Sabbath - too bad they didn't care much for their God. And Jesus ran up against the whole stubborn lot of them. "Did you see that? Why, He healed on the Sabbath!" (Luke 13:14) At every turn, Jesus tried to show them the truth, using the wisest reasoning and the best examples, but they kept getting hung up on His methods - touching lepers, raising the dead, hanging out with sinners, whipping moneychangers - it scared them to death!(Matthew 8:2-3; Matthew 9:11; John 2:15; John 11:43-44) Their religion was basically peaceful, very solemn and quiet. But Jesus... why Jesus had the whole town in an uproar at least once a week! You can see why He bothered them; He disturbed their nice little religion... with the truth! (John 8:44-45)

It is obvious that God anoints men and women who are completely yielded to His Spirit. He also anoints methods and tools that we use - meetings, tracts, books, music, witnessing, preaching, etc. - when they are also fully submitted to Him in faithfulness. But there is a great danger when man (or even God) designs a tool to be used for God's glory, and then as time passes, people's attention starts to be fixed on the tool itself, rather than on the glory of God (which it was originally designed to promote).(See 2 Kings 18:4 - Because it had become an idol, King Hezekiah had to destroy the same bronze serpent that Moses had made in Numbers 21:8, which was used to stop the plague of death among the Israelites. This is the same bronze serpent referred to by Jesus in reference to Himself, in John 13:14 !) The following is a list of just some of the tools, methods, and concepts that I believe have become so much a part of presenting the modern gospel, that they have become just about inseparable from it. In fact, they are to such an extent considered necessary, that if many of them are left out of an evangelistic meeting, Christians can hardly believe that anyone can be saved there.

04.12. Inventions of Man Now Part of Gospel

The Term and Concept of "Personal Savior." I find it very disturbing when something unnecessary is added to the Gospel. The use of the term "Personal Savior" isn't very harmful in itself, but it shows a kind of mind - set that is willing to "invent" terms, and then allow these terms to be preached as if they were actually found in the Bible. But why must we do this? Why must we add needless, almost meaningless things to the Gospel? It is because we've taken so much out that we have to replace it with "spiritual double talk."

That's right, double talk! Would you ever introduce your sister like this: "This is Sheila, my personal sister"?! Or would you point to your navel and say, "This is my personal bellybutton"? Ridiculous! But nevertheless, people solemnly speak of Christ as their personal Savior, as if they've got Him right there in their shirt pocket - and as if when He returns, He will not have two, but three titles written across His thigh: King of kings, Lord of lords, and PERSONAL SAVIOR! (See Revelation 19:16.) This is only one example of how a non-biblical term can be elevated to reverence by the Church, as if to say, "Well even if it isn't in the Bible - it should be!"

04.13. The Altar Call

Imagine if you can, Jesus having people bow their heads after hearing the Sermon on the Mount, and then very slowly and softly (while Bartholomew plays "How Great Thou Art" on the accordion) saying to the crowd, "While your heads are bowed and your eyes are closed, if you really want to be My disciple tonight, if you really want to show My Father and I that you truly mean to follow this sermon I have given, then I want you to slip your hand up slowly, so that I may see it. There now... yes... yes... I see that hand ... and that one ... and the one way back by the fig tree ... yes! Now, please, while Bart plays another chorus, I'd like you to start moving down through the center of the crowd ... yes, those who raised their hand. I want to know if you really mean business. I'd like to lead you in a prayer ...

I realize that there are some who will see such an illustration as sacrilegious. And that's just the point. They think that making fun of the "altar call" is making fun of God. But it isn't. Traditions die hard, because they take so long to form. Once I received a very intense letter from the pastor of a church who had sponsored me in a city-wide concert in his area. He was upset that I had "let several hundred souls go ungathered" because I had not given an altar call. He said, "It seems you have no burden for souls." (Nothing could be further from the truth.) But because I had not given the recognized "official invitation," this pastor could see no value in my presentation of the Gospel. Or as Tony Salerno, (director of "The Agape Force"), once remarked, "If you don't give an altar call, they think you have committed the 'unpardonable sin!'"

04.14. The Gradual Altering of "The Altar Call"

Believe it or not, the altar call was invented only about 150 years ago. It was first used by the American evangelist, Charles Finney, as a means of separating out those who wanted to talk further about the subject of salvation. Finney called the front pew "the anxious seat" (for those who were "anxious" about the state of their souls) or "the mourner's bench." Finney never "led them in a prayer," but he and a few others would spend a great deal of time praying with and giving specific instruction to each, one by one, until finally, everyone was sent home to pray and continue seeking God until "they had broken through and expressed hope in Christ," as Finney would say. The early Salvation Army, going a bit further on Finney's innovation, developed what they called "the penitent form" or "the mercy seat." After a rousing time of singing and preaching, they would invite any sinner present who wanted to confess his sins to God and repent, to come to the front, and they would be prayed for individually. I have met a few older Christians who used to attend some of these early meetings, and they said that sometimes people would stay there all night, and on a few occasions, even a few days, weeping and confessing their sins with broken hearts. There were always some who would stay right there to instruct them further, encouraging them to make a clean sweep of sin from their lives. This is what the early "altar call" was like. But gradually, it began to become a fixed part of every meeting, and like all other traditions, it began to lose its original spirit. The "coming forward" part started to be more important than the "sorrow, confession, repentance, and instruction" parts. Eventually, anyone who would "come down the aisle" was excitedly proclaimed "a new believer in Christ!" No matter how they felt, they still were told, "Your sins are forgiven, brother! Rejoice in Christ!" How many a miserable, defeated, and confused person has come away from a meeting like this? (Jeremiah 6:14)

04.15. The Sinners Prayer

Can you also try and imagine this scene where Jesus is leading some new "disciples" in the "sinner's prayer"?

"Wow! There are so many that came forward for salvation tonight!" (The multitude applauds.) "Now, it is very simple. You just repeat this little prayer after Me, and then you're a Christian! Now it doesn't really matter whether you fully understand the prayer . . . it works just the same. Now ready? Repeat after Me... 'Dear Jesus... Come into my heart...'and so on ... As you can see, when we try to picture Jesus Himself using our modern methods of evangelism, it seems completely foolish. I think this is a very good test for any method. "Could I see Jesus doing this?" or "Could I see Jesus preaching or teaching this?" Since the Bible tells us, "Walk in the manner that He walked" (1 John 2:6), we should always try to compare our actions and message to the Master's.

It is obvious that there is no "set" sinner's prayer. There are many variations, with different lengths, different wordings, different endings, etc., but the contents are usually the same. The prayer usually includes phrases like, "Dear Jesus," "Come into my heart," "I admit I have sinned" (at least the better ones contain this last statement - there are some who do not even like to mention sin in their "sinner's prayer"), "Fill me with Your Spirit," "In Jesus' name. Amen." Extremely harmless . . . nothing wrong with a prayer like that, right? Wrong! It isn't the wording that's important, it's the state of heart of the one saying it.

I believe that a true "sinner's prayer" will gush out of anyone who is truly seeking God and is tired of being enslaved to sin. (Matthew 5:6) The very act of "leading someone in a prayer" is utterly ridiculous. You will find nothing even remotely like it in the Bible, or among the writings and biographies of those in Church history. It completely savors of crowd and peer pressure tactics, and (please forgive me) brainwashing techniques. I do not believe that Jesus wants to have His disciples "repeat after Me," I believe He wants them to follow after Him!(Matthew 4:19; Matthew 8:22; Matthew 9:9; Matthew 16:24; Matthew 19:21; Luke 9:59; John 12:26; John 21:19; John 21:22 : 1 Peter 2:21; Revelation 14:4)

04.16. Premature Birth

As with the altar call, the practice of having someone repeat a prayer with the minister probably originated from the best of intentions. And no doubt, there are those who have "followed through," continuing to pray and walk with God, entering into the path of righteousness through God's infinite grace. But also, like the altar call, the so-called "sinner's prayer" is one of those tools that make it alarmingly easy for someone to consider himself a Christian, when he has absolutely no understanding of what "counting the cost" (Luke 14:28) really means. The greatest reason I believe that God can be grieved with the current use of such tools as the "altar call" and "sinner's prayer" is because they can take away the conviction of the Holy Spirit prematurely, before the Spirit has time to work repentance leading to salvation. With an emotional splash that usually doesn't last more than a few weeks, we believe we're leading people into the Kingdom, when really we're leading many to hell - by interfering with what the Spirit of God is trying to do in a person's life. Do you hear? Do you understand that this constitutes "spiritual abortion"? Can't you see the eternal consequences of jumping the gun, trying to bring to birth a baby that isn't ready?

We are so afraid that we'll see a "big one that got away," that we'd rather rush someone into a shallow decision, and get the personal gratification of seeing him "go down the aisle," than take the time to fully explain things to him, even if it takes long hours and nights of travailing prayer for his soul. We just don't "have the time" to do things God's way anymore. (In contrast to this, look at the amount of time and effort Jesus took to explain salvation to one mere Samaritan woman - John 4:3:42) But God would rather see one true convert than an ocean full of "decisions." Oh, can't you see what a mess we're in? What we've done to the Gospel? And when those "converts" no longer want to fellowship with us, when they want to go back to their old friends and their old way of life, we have the nerve to call it "backsliding," when we stood in the very way of them ever "front-sliding" toward the cross! Oh, it breaks my heart to think of that awesome day when God will judge those who have "stumbled one of these little ones." (Mark 9:42)

04.17. Other Man-Made Methods

Quick and Easy "1-2-3 Steps-To-Salvation" Booklets. I certainly cannot fault the intentions nor the integrity of the men and organizations responsible for these little tools. One of the best known of these booklets has been printed in over 30 languages, and has over 100 million copies in circulation. With that in view, it is even more urgent for me to say that unless these or any other "gospel" booklets contain the same message that our Lord preached (and commanded His disciples to spread "to every kindred and nation"), then they are worse than "inadequate tools," they are wicked! For the Bible says in Proverbs, "Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the unfaithful messenger to him who sends him." (Proverbs 10:26) Paul said that if we are really Christians, then we are "ambassadors of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:20) - we are God's sole representatives in this foreign land called "the world." With that analogy in mind, consider what a president would think of an ambassador to a foreign country, say Russia, who is told to deliver an extremely urgent message that will involve the peace of the whole world. And that ambassador (even with the best intentions) gives only a small part of the message, in such a way as to make a very different impression - in fact, the exact opposite impression - than what the president wanted to make. What do you think that president will do to the ambassador when he finds out the damage done?

Booklets like these usually mention a "sort-of" repentance like, "you must turn from your sins, to Jesus." But they rarely explain what "turning" really means. This is also true of such other vital terms such as "Lord" - they usually refer to Jesus as "Lord," but again, they seldom define "lordship" - and people go their merry way, believing they have the full right to continue running their own lives as long as they call Jesus "Lord." (See Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46)

I don't care how many letters I get saying how much good has been done by such and such a ministry, or how many have been "saved" through such and such a booklet. Jesus said, "You will know them by their fruits " (Matthew 7:16) and in another place He said that "Your fruit should remain" (John 15:16), which means it should last! I believe we shall see in that great day, when God spreads out the lives of men in judgment, how many were truly converted by the efforts of these ministries, and how many were turned aside from the path of righteousness - being led to believe the pleasant half-truths contained in these shallow and false epistles that have been printed to the ends of the earth by people with "the best intentions, and the highest integrity." (Matthew 23:15)

04.18. The "Poor Jesus" Syndrome

This is the form of preaching that misuses the Scripture in Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock . . ." How many evangelists have used that Scripture to paint a pathetic picture of Jesus standing outside a door, waiting, knocking, knocking, waiting, for the sinner to open up and let Jesus in? Sometimes these preachers go on and on, until it starts to sound like, "Aw, poor Jesus is out there in the cold, shivering, waiting for someone to let Him in. Won't you go ahead and let poor Jesus into your heart?"

What a line of reasoning. First of all, this statement by the Lord in Revelation is not to the unsaved, it's to the Church in Laodicea (see Revelation 3:14). The picture is truly pathetic. Jesus is standing outside of His own church, knocking for them to let Him in! (Sound familiar?) And if there's any doubt left as to who He's talking to, look at Revelation 3:22, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches."

Second of all, the truth of the matter for sinners is the exact opposite. Jesus is not outside of their world, knocking to come in - they are outside of His Kingdom! And they can knock all night like the five foolish virgins (Matthew 25:11), but Jesus will never let them in unless they meet the requirements: a humble and contrite heart, and a complete disgust for sin. Then, and only then, will God deliver them from their slavery to sin - and transfer them by His grace to the Kingdom of His lovingkindness. God will never repent for someone - He will take every step possible to make the sinner see the folly of his ways, but the final move is up to the individual himself. Each person must make the final surrender, the desperate gasp of "I am a fool to run my own life! Lord, show me the way to your door, and I'll knock and knock, and beg forgiveness ...I'll do anything, anything, ANYTHING YOU SAY!" Then, and only then, will God save a sinner.(Psalms 34:18; Psalms 51:17; Isaiah 66:22; Luke 18:14; James 4:10)

04.19. Bumper Stickers, and "Christian" Slogans

It pains me to see the beautiful truths of Scripture being plastered about like beer advertisements. Many think it is wise to "get the word out" in this way but, believe that we are really just inoculating the world with bits and pieces of truth - giving them their "gospel shots." (And we're making it hard for them to "catch" the real thing!) People become numb to the truth when we splash our gaudy sayings in their eyes at every opportunity. Do you really think this is "opening them up to the Gospel"? Or is it really just another way for us to get smiles, waves, and approval from others in the "born-again club" out in the supermarket parking lot, who blow their horns with glee when they see your "Honk if you love Jesus!" bumper sticker?

What about those "other sayings"? You know, the quasi-biblical ones, like "Please be patient, God isn't finished with me yet," which can really be a horrible replacement for "I'm sorry." (And besides, it puts the blame on the wrong person - "The reason I'm such a creep is because God isn't finished with me yet.") And if you really want to play "Stretch the Bible" there is that other fabulous excuse that absolutely ends all quests or expectations for holiness: "Christians aren't perfect... just forgiven!" Ah, how convenient. You might just as well say, "Christians aren't moral, just forgiven!" or what about "Christians aren't nice, just forgiven!" How about the ultimate? "Christians aren't saved . . . just forgiven!" (That might be a little too deep.) What we're saying by this glorious piece of prose is, "Madam, you cannot trust your teenage daughter with my Christian son, you'd better keep your eye on him . . . he's not safe . . . he's just forgiven!"

Maybe I've gone a little too far to make a point, but I think the world is completely sick to its stomach with our sayings and "witnessing tools." It's time for us to be expressing the truth with our lives, and then the whole truth of God with our lips!

04.20. "The Follow-Up Program"

There is one last great mistake being committed in the name of evangelism. It is rightly called "follow-up." I say "rightly called" because it is following up the same miserable and incomplete gospel with a miserable, incomplete, and false replacement for what the Bible calls "discipleship." Our "follow-up" usually consists of a "packet of literature," which almost always includes a complete list of all church services and functions. This "packet" also may include many "essential" items like a complete Bible study on "tithing." Also enclosed is usually at least one tithe envelope. (It's amazing that this is one "principle" that nearly every new believer learns right away!) In my studies of the life of Jesus, it has amazed me that He never had "a follow-up program." It was usually His habit to let people "follow Him up." He never had to go door to door, looking for that fellow who He healed last week, wanting to share another parable or two. He always seemed to have the attitude of, "If they want life, then they'll have to come and follow Me."

Can't you see what fools we are? We preach a man-made, plastic gospel. We get people to come forward to "the altar" by bringing psychological pressures that have nothing to do with God. We "lead them" in a prayer that they are not yet convinced they need to say. And then to top it all off, we give them "counseling," telling them it is a sin to doubt that they're really saved!

04.21. Conclusion

And now we come to the end of this "Bible study." Yes, that's just what it has turned out to be. I hope you will take the time to look up each of the Scriptures given, and see for yourself what God has said in His Word about all these things. I realize that these articles will step on many toes, and some might even be deeply offended, but that is not my intention at all. My only prayer is that through this little effort, many will begin to take up the cross and preach the good news of our salvation with the same power and anointing that Jesus promised and gave to the early Church, and that when we ministers stand before Him on that great day, we will be able to say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith . . . I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ" (2 Timothy 4:7; Romans 15:19), so that we may hear those sweet words from our King's lips, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21)

Beloved family, the world around us is going to hell. Not because of communism, not because of television, not because of drugs, or sex, or alcohol, or the devil himself. It is because of the Church! We are to blame! We alone have the commission, the power, and the truth of God at our constant disposal to deliver sinner after sinner from eternal death. And even though some are willing to go... into the streets, the prisons, foreign lands, or even next door, they are taking a watered-down, distorted version of God's message which He has not promised to anoint. That is why we are failing. And unless we admit that we are failing, then I'm afraid there is no hope for us or the world around us. We have the choice between causing eternal tragedy for our whole generation, or bringing our beloved God a whole family full of "good and faithful servants."

Please pray over all of this. God is waiting to meet you in the closet. (Matthew 6:6) The following list is a list of books for further in-depth study on evangelism and the content of the Gospel:

Today's Gospel by Walter Chantry - The Banner Of Truth Trust
Finney On Revival by Charles G. Finney - Fleming H. Revell Co.

Gems from Tozer by A. W. Tozer - Christian Publications, Inc.
That Incredible Christian by A. W. Tozer - Christian Publications, Inc.

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

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