

WRITINGS OF RAY COMFORT

by Ray Comfort

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

15 Chapters

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01.00. Hell's Best Kep Secret

Title Page Hell's Best Kep Secret by

Ray Comfort

01.000. Module Information

Module Information Hell's Best Kept Secret by Ray Comfort This message was first preached in August 1982. Hell's Best Kept Secret is non-copyrighted, duplication is encouraged. www.LivingWaters.com – Living Waters Publications, P.O. Box 1172, Bellflower, CA 90706 – Order line: 1-800-437-1893.

01.01. Hell's Best Kept Secret

Hell's Best Kept Secret In the late seventies, God very graciously opened an itinerant ministry to me. As I began to travel, I found that I had access to church growth records, and found to my horror that something like 80 to 90% of those making a decision for Christ were falling away from the faith. That is, modern evangelism with its methods is creating something like 80 to 90 of what we commonly call backsliders for every hundred decisions for Christ.

Let me make it more real for you. In 1991, in the first year of the decade of harvest, a major denomination in the U.S. was able to obtain 294,000 decisions for Christ. That is, in one year, this major denomination of 11,500 churches was able to obtain 294,000 decisions for Christ. Unfortunately, they could only find 14,000 in fellowship, which means they couldn't account for 280,000 of their decisions, and this is normal, modern evangelical results, and something I discovered way back in the late seventies; it greatly concerned me. I began to study the book of Romans intently and, specifically, the gospel proclamation of men like Spurgeon, Wesley, Moody, Finney, Whitfield, Luther, and others that God used down through the ages, and I found they used a principle which is almost entirely neglected by modern evangelical methods. I began teaching that principle; I was eventually invited to base our ministry in southern California, the city of Bellflower, specifically to bring this teaching to the church of the U.S. Things were quiet for the first three years, until I received a call from Bill Gothard, who had seen the teaching on video. He flew me to San Jose in northern California; I shared it with a thousand pastors. Then in 1992 he screened that video to 30,000 pastors. The same year David Wilkerson called from New York. He called from his car. (He had been listening to the teaching in his car and called me on his car phone.) Immediately, he flew me 3,000 miles from L.A. to New York to share the one-hour teaching with his church; he considered it to be that important. And recently I heard of a pastor who had listened to the audio tape 250 times. I'd be happy if you'd listen just once to this teaching which is called "Hell's Best Kept Secret." The Bible says in Psa 19:7, "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul." What is it that the Bible says is perfect and actually converts the soul? Why scripture makes it very clear: "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul." Now to illustrate the function of God's law, let's just look for a moment at civil law. Imagine if I said to you, "I've got some good news for you: someone has just paid a \$25,000 speeding fine on your behalf." You'd probably react by saying, "What are you talking about? That's not good news: it doesn't make sense. I don't have a \$25,000 speeding fine." My good news wouldn't be good news to you: it would seem foolishness. But more than that, it would be offensive to you, because I'm insinuating you've broken the law when you don't think you have. However, if I put it this way, it may make more sense: "On the way to this meeting, the law clocked you at going 55 miles an hour through an area set aside for a blind children's convention. There were ten clear warning signs stating that fifteen miles an hour was the maximum speed, but you went straight through at 55 miles an hour. What you did was extremely dangerous; there's a \$25,000 fine. The law was about to take its course, when someone you don't even know stepped in and paid the fine for you. You are very fortunate." Can you see that telling you precisely what you've done wrong first actually

makes the good news make sense. If I don't clearly bring instruction and understanding that you've violated the law, then the good news will seem foolishness; it will seem offensive. But once you understand that you've broken the law, then that good news will become good news indeed.

Now in the same way, if I approach an impenitent sinner and say, "Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins," it will be foolishness and offensive to him. Foolishness because it won't make sense. The Bible says that: "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1Co 1:18). And offensive because I'm insinuating he's a sinner when he doesn't think he is. As far as he's concerned, there are a lot of people far worse than him. But if I take the time to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, it may make more sense. If I take the time to open up the divine law, the ten commandments, and show the sinner precisely what he's done wrong, that he has offended God by violating His law, then when he becomes, as James says, "convinced of the law as a transgressor" (Jas 2:9), the good news of the fine being paid for will not be foolishness, it will not be offensive, it will be "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16).

Now, with those few thoughts in mind by way of introduction, let's now look at e Rom 3:19. We'll look at some of the functions of God's law for humanity. Rom 3:19 : "Now we know that whatsoever things the law says, it says to them who are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God." So one function of God's law is to stop the mouth. To stop sinners justifying themselves justification and leaves the whole world, not just the Jews, but the whole world guilty before God. Rom 3:20 : "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." So God's law tells us what sin is. 1Jn 3:4 says, "Sin is transgression of the law." Rom 7:7 : "What shall we say then?" says Paul. "Is the law sin? God forbid! No, I had not known sin but by the law." Paul says, "I didn't know what sin was until the law told me." In Gal 3:24, "Wherefore, the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." God's law acts as a schoolmaster to bring us to Jesus Christ that we might be justified through faith in His blood. The law doesn't help us; it just leaves us helpless. It doesn't justify us; it just leaves us guilty before the judgment bar of a holy God. And the tragedy of modern evangelism is because around the turn of the century when it forsook the law in its capacity to convert the soul, to drive sinners to Christ, modern evangelism had to, therefore, find another reason for sinners to respond to the gospel. And the issue that modern evangelism chose to attract sinners was the issue of "life enhancement". The gospel degenerated into "Jesus Christ will give you peace, joy, love, fulfillment, and lasting happiness." Now to illustrate the unscriptural nature of this very popular teaching, I'd like you to listen very carefully to this following anecdote, because the essence of what I'm saying pivots on this particular illustration; so please listen carefully.

Two men are seated in a plane. The first is given a parachute and told to put it on as it would improve his flight. He's a little skeptical at first because he can't see how wearing a parachute in a plane could possibly improve the flight. After a time he decides to experiment and see if the claim is true. As he puts it on he notices the weight of it upon his shoulders and he finds that he has difficulty in sitting upright. However, he consoles himself with the fact that he was told the parachute would improve the flight. So, he decides to give the thing a little time. As he waits he notices that some of the other passengers are laughing at him, because he's wearing a parachute in a plane. He begins to feel somewhat humiliated. As they begin to point and laugh at him and he can stand it no longer, he slinks in his seat, unstraps the parachute, and throws it to the floor.

Disillusionment and bitterness fill his heart, because, as far as he was concerned, he was told an outright lie. The second man is given a parachute, but listen to what he's told. He's told to put it on because at any moment he'd be jumping 25,000 feet out of the plane. He gratefully puts the parachute on; he doesn't notice the weight of it upon his shoulders, nor that he can't sit upright. His mind is consumed with the thought of what would happen to him if he jumped without that parachute.

Let's analyze the motive and the result of each passenger's experience. The first man's motive for putting the parachute on was solely to improve his flight. The result of his experience was that he was humiliated by the passengers; he was disillusioned and somewhat embittered against those who gave him the parachute. As far as he's concerned it'll be a long time before anyone gets one of those things on his back again. The second man put the parachute on solely to escape the jump to come, and because of his knowledge of what would happen to him without it, he has a deep-rooted joy and peace in his heart knowing that he's saved from sure death. This knowledge gives him the ability to withstand the mockery of the other passengers. His attitude towards those who gave him the parachute is one of heart-felt gratitude.

Now listen to what the modern gospel says. It says, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He'll give you love, joy, peace, fulfillment, and lasting happiness." In other words, "Jesus will improve your flight." So the sinner responds, and in an experimental fashion, puts on the Savior to see if the claims are true. And what does he get? The promised temptation, tribulation, and persecution. The other passengers mock him. So what does he do? He takes off the Lord Jesus Christ, he's offended for the word's sake (Mark 4:17), he's disillusioned and somewhat embittered, and quite rightly so. He was promised peace, joy, love, fulfillment, and lasting happiness, and all he got were trials and humiliation. His bitterness is directed toward those who gave him the so-called "good news". His latter end becomes worse than the first: another inoculated and bitter backslider.

Saints, instead of preaching that Jesus improves the flight, we should be warning the passengers they're going have to jump out of the plane. That it's "appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb 9:27). And when a sinner understands the horrific consequences of breaking God's law, then he will flee to the Savior solely to escape the wrath that's to come. And if we're true and faithful witnesses, that's what we'll be preaching. That there is wrath to come; that God "commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). Why? "Because He has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:31). You see, the issue isn't one of happiness, but one of righteousness. It doesn't matter how happy a sinner is, how much he's enjoying "the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb 11:25). Without the righteousness of Christ, he'll perish on the day of wrath. "Riches profit not on the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death" (Pro 11:4). Peace and joy are do so, sinners will respond with an impure motive lacking repentance.

Now, can you remember why the second passenger had joy and peace in his heart? It was because he knew that parachute was going to save him from sure death. And as a believer, I have, as Paul says, "joy and peace in believing" (Rom 15:13), because I know that the righteousness of Christ is going to deliver me from the wrath that's to come.

Now with that thought in mind, let's take a close look at an incident on board the plane. We have a brand new stewardess. She's carrying a tray of boiling hot coffee. It's her first day; she wants to

leave an impression on the passengers, and she certainly does. Because as she's walking down the aisle, she trips over someone's foot and slops that boiling hot coffee all over the lap of our second passenger. Now what's his reaction as that boiling liquid hits his tender flesh? Does he go, "Sssssffff! Man that hurt"? Mmm-hhh. He feels the pain. But then does he rip the parachute from his shoulders, throw it to the floor and say, "The stupid parachute!"? No. Why should he? He didn't put the parachute on for a better flight. He put it on to save him from the jump to come. If anything, the hot coffee incident causes him to cling tighter to the parachute and even look forward to the jump.

Now if you and I have put on the Lord Jesus Christ for the right motive, to flee from the wrath that's to come, when tribulation strikes, when the flight gets bumpy, we won't get angry at God; we won't lose our joy and peace. Why should we? We didn't come to Jesus for a happy lifestyle: we came to flee from the wrath that's to come. And if anything, tribulation drives the true believer closer to the Savior. And sadly we have literally multitudes of professing Christians who lose their joy and peace when the flight gets bumpy. Why? They're the product of a man-centered gospel. They came lacking repentance, without which you can't be saved.

I was in Australia recently ministering; Australia is a small island off the coast of New Zealand. And I preached sin, law, righteousness, holiness, judgment, repentance, and hell, and I wasn't exactly crushed by the amount of people wanting to "give their hearts to Jesus." In fact, the air went very tense. After the meeting, they said, "There's a young guy down in the back who wants to give his life to Christ." I went down the back and found a teenage lad who could not pray the sinner's prayer because he was weeping so profusely. Now, for me it was so refreshing, because for many years I suffered from the disease of "evangelical frustration". I so wanted sinners to respond to the gospel I unwittingly preached a man-centered message. The essence of which was this: "You'll never find true peace without Jesus Christ; you've a God-shaped vacuum in your heart that only God can fill." I'd preach Christ crucified; I'd preach repentance. A sinner would respond to the altar; I'd open an eye and say, "Oh no. This guy wants to give his heart to Jesus and there's an 80% chance he's going to backslide. And I am tired of creating backsliders. So I'd better make sure this guy really means it. He'd better be sincere!" So I'd approach the poor guy in a Gestapo spirit. I'd walk up and say, "Vhat do you vant?" He'd say, "I'm here to become a Christian." I'd say, "Do you mean it?" He'd say, "Yeah." I'd say, "Do you REALLY MEAN IT!?" He'd say, "Yeah, I reckon." "Okay, I'll pray with you, but you'd better mean it from your heart." He said, "Okay, okay." "Now you repeat this prayer sincerely after me and mean it from your heart sincerely and really mean it from your heart sincerely and make sure you mean it. 'Oh, God, I'm a sinner.'" He'd say, "Uh...oh, God, I'm a sinner." And I'd think, "Man, why isn't there a visible sign of contrition. There's no outward evidence the guy is inwardly sorry for his sins."

Now, if I could have seen his motive, I would have seen he was 100% sincere. He really did mean his decision with all his heart. He sincerely wanted to give this Jesus thing a go to see if he could get a buzz out of it. He had tried sex, drugs, materialism, alcohol. "Why not give this Christian bit a go and see if it's as good as all these Christians say it is: peace, joy, love, fulfillment, lasting happiness." He wasn't fleeing from the wrath that was to come, because I hadn't told him there was wrath to come. There was this glaring omission from my message. He wasn't broken in contrition, because the poor guy didn't know what sin was. Remember Rom 7:7? Paul said, "I had not known sin but by the law." How can a man repent if he doesn't know what sin is? Any so-called

“repentance” would be merely what I call “horizontal repentance”. He’s coming because he’s lied to men, he’s stolen from men. But when David sinned with Bathsheba and broke all ten of the ten commandments (when he coveted his neighbor’s wife, lived a lie, stole his neighbor’s wife, committed adultery, committed murder, dishonored his parents, and thus dishonored God), he didn’t say “I’ve sinned against man.” He said, “Against you, and you only, have I sinned, and done this evil in your sight” (Psa 51:4). When Joseph was tempted sexually, he said, “How can I do this thing and sin against God?” (Gen 39:9). The prodigal son said, “I’ve sinned against heaven” (Luk 15:21). Paul preached “repentance toward God” (Acts 20:21). And the Bible says, “Godly sorrow works repentance” (2Co 7:10). And when a man doesn’t understand that his sin is primarily vertical, he’ll merely come and exercise superficial, experimental, and horizontal repentance, and fall away when tribulation, temptation, and persecution come.

A.B. Earl said, “I have found by long experience that the severest threatenings of the law of God have a prominent place in leading men to Christ. They must see themselves lost before they will cry for mercy; they’ll not my word. But I would like to ask, how many of you were thinking of something else when I was reading that quote from A.B. Earl? Now, I want to admit something to you. I was thinking of something else when I was reading that quote from A.B. Earl: I was thinking, “Nobody’s listening to me; they’re thinking of something else.” So, to make a very important point, I’d like you to be really honest. If you were thinking of something else and you haven’t got a clue what A.B. Earl said, could you raise your hand up nice and high...up nice and high. It’s usually half to two-thirds and we’ve got that here tonight. Let’s try again....God bless you, Pastor, for your honesty.

A.B. Earl was a famous evangelist of the last century who had 150,000 converts to substantiate his claims. Satan doesn’t want you to get a grip of this, so listen very closely. A.B. Earl said, “I have found by long experience [that’s the true test] that the severest threatenings of the law of God have a prominent place in leading men to Christ. They must see themselves lost before they will cry for mercy; they’ll not escape danger until they see it.” You see, you try and save a man from drowning when the man doesn’t believe he’s drowning, he’ll not be too happy with you. You see him swimming out in the lake; you think, “I think he’s drowning. Yes, I believe he is.” You dive in, pull him to the shore, without telling him anything. He’s not going to be very happy with you. He won’t want to get saved until he sees that he’s in danger. They’ll not escape danger until they see it. You see, if you came to me and said, “Hey, Ray,” and I said, “Yeah.” You said, “This is a cure to Groaninzin’s disease; I sold my house to raise the money to get this cure. I’m giving it to you as a free gift.” I’d probably react something like this: “What? Cure to what? Groaninzin’s disease? You sold your house to raise the money to get this cure? You’re giving it to me as a free gift? Why, thanks a lot. Bye....That guy’s a nut.” I mean, that’s probably how I’d react if you sold your house to raise the money to get a cure for a disease I’d never heard of and your giving it to me as free gift, I’d think you’re rather strange. But instead, if you came to me and said, “Ray, you’ve got Groaninzin’s disease. I can see ten clear symptoms on your flesh. You’re going to be dead in two weeks.” And I became convinced I had the disease (the symptoms were so evident), and said, “Oh! What shall I do?” And then you said, “Don’t worry. This is a cure to Groaninzin’s disease. I sold my house to raise the money to get this cure. I’m giving it to you as a free gift.” I’m not going to despise your sacrifice; I’m going to appreciate it and I’m going to appropriate it. Why? Because I’ve seen the disease that I might appreciate the cure. And sadly, what’s happened in the U.S. and

the Western world as follow is that we have preached the cure without first convincing of the disease. We have preached a gospel of grace without first convincing men of the law, that they're transgressors; and, consequently, almost everyone I try and witness to in southern California or around the Bible belt has been born-again six or seven times. You say, "You need to give your life to Jesus Christ." "Uh, I did that when I was seven, eleven, seventeen, twenty-three, twenty-five, twenty-eight, thirty-two..." You know the guy's not a Christian. He's a fornicator. He's a blasphemer, but he thinks he's saved because he's been "born-again". What's happening? He's using the grace of our God for an occasion of the flesh. He doesn't esteem the sacrifice. For him it's not a bad thing to trample the blood of Christ underfoot (Heb 10:29). Why? Because he's never been convinced of the disease that he might appreciate the cure.

Biblical evangelism is always, without exception, law to the proud and grace to the humble. Never will you see Jesus giving the gospel, the good news, the cross, the grace of our God, to a proud, arrogant, self-righteous person. No, no. With the law he breaks the hard heart and with the gospel he heals the broken heart. Why? Because He always did those things that please the Father. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (Jas 4:6; 1Pe 5:5). "Everyone who is proud of heart," scripture says, "is an abomination to the Lord" (Pro 16:5).

Jesus told us whom the gospel is for. He said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives and the blind" (Luk 4:18). Now, they are spiritual statements. The poor in spirit (Mat 5:3). The broken hearted are the contrite ones (Isa 57:15). The captives are those of whom Satan has taken captive to do his will (2Ti 2:26); and the blind are those of whom the god of this world has blinded lest the light of the gospel should shine on them (2Co 4:4). Only the sick need a physician (Mark 2:17), and only those who are convinced of the disease will appreciate and appropriate a cure. So we're going to now very briefly look at examples of law to the proud and grace to the humble. Luk 10:24. And when I give you a reference from the pulpit I'll give it twice, because I know that men are present, and men need to be told things twice....Men need to be told things twice. This can be backed up biblically. When God speaks to men in the Bible he uses their name twice. "Abraham, Abraham...Saul, Saul...Moses, Moses...Samuel, Samuel..." Because men need to be told things twice. Women once. I don't know how many times I've sat in a pew, preacher said, "Ah, Luk 10:25." I turn to my wife and say, "What'd he say?" She says, "Luk 10:25." I say, "Thank you, dear."

HELP-MATE. That's why God created women, because men could not handle it on their own. The whole thing is: men lose things, women find things. "Where's the keys love?" "Hangin' here, Honey!" She says, "Here is here, Dear." Where would man be without women? Mm? Still in the Garden of Eden. Eve found the tree. Adam didn't really know what was going on. In fact, if you look at the creation of woman, to create woman the Bible says God put man into a deep sleep. And Scripture doesn't say he ever came out of it. In Luk 10:25 we see a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Jesus. This is not an attorney, but a professing expert on God's law. He stood up and he said to Jesus, "How can I get everlasting life?" Now, what did Jesus do? He gave him law. Why? Because he was proud, arrogant, self-righteous. Here we have a professing expert on God's law tempting the Son of God. And the spirit of his question was, "And what do you think we've got to do to get everlasting life?" So Jesus gave him law. He said, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" He says, "Ah, you should love the Lord your God with all your

heart, mind, soul, and strength; love your neighbor as yourself.” And Jesus said, “This do and you shall live.” And then the Scripture says, “But He, willing to justify Himself, said to Jesus, ‘Who’s my neighbor?’ ” The Living Bible brings out more clearly the effect of the law on the man. It said, “The man wanted to justify his lack of love for some kinds of people; so he asked, ‘Which neighbors?’ ” See, he didn’t mind Jews, but he didn’t like Samaritans. So Jesus then told him the story of what we call the “good Samaritan” who was not “good” at all. In loving his neighbor as much as he loved himself, he merely obeyed the basic requirements of God’s law. And the effect of the essence of the law, the spirituality of the law (of what the law demands in truth), was that that man’s mouth was stopped. See, he didn’t love his neighbor to that degree. The law was given to stop every mouth and leave the whole world guilty before God.

Similarly, in Luk 18:18, the rich, young ruler came to Jesus. He said, “How can I get everlasting life?” I mean, how would most of us react if someone came up and said, “How can I get everlasting life?” We’d say, “Oh...quickly say this prayer before you change your mind.” But what did Jesus do with His potential convert? He pointed Him to the law. He gave him five horizontal commandments, commandments to do with his fellow men. And when he said, “Ah, I’ve kept those from my youth,” Jesus said, “One thing you lack.” And he used the essence of the first of the ten commandments: “I am the Lord your God...You shall have no other Gods before me” (Exo 20:2-3). He showed this man that His god was His money, and “you cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat 6:24). Law to the proud.

Then we see grace being given to the humble in the case of Nicodemus (John 3). Nicodemus was a leader of the Jews. He was a teacher in Israel. Therefore, he was thoroughly versed in God’s law. He was humble of heart, because he came to Jesus and acknowledged the Deity of the Son of God. A leader in Israel? “We know that you’ve come from God for no man can do these miracles that you do unless God is with Him.” So Jesus gave the sincere seeker of truth, who had a humble heart and a knowledge of sin by the law, the good news of the fine being paid for and “For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son.” And it was not foolishness to Nicodemus but the “power of God to salvation.”

Similarly, in the case of Nathaniel (John 1:43-51). Nathaniel was an Israelite brought up under the law in deed, not just in word, in whom there was no guile; there was no deceit in his heart. Obviously the law was a schoolmaster to bring this godly Jew to Christ.

Similarly with the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47). They were devout Jews, godly Jews, who, therefore, ate, drank, and slept God’s law. Matthew Henry, the Bible commentator, said the reason they were gathered together on the day of Pentecost was to celebrate the giving of God’s law on Mt. Sinai. So when Peter stood up to preach to these godly Jews, he didn’t preach wrath. No, the law works wrath; they knew that. He didn’t preach righteousness or judgment. No, no. He just told them the good news of the fine being paid for, and they were pricked in their hearts and cried, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). The law was a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ that they might be justified through faith in His blood. And the hymn-writer said, “By God’s word at last my sin I learned; then I trembled at the law I’d spurned, till my guilty soul imploring turned to Calvary.” it was designed.” God’s law is good if it’s used lawfully for the purpose for which it was designed. Well, what was the law “designed” for? The following verse tells us: “The law was not made for a righteous man but for sinners.” It even lists the sinners:

homosexuals, fornicators. If you want to bring a homosexual to Christ, don't get into an argument with him over his perversion; he's ready for you with his boxing gloves on. No, no. Give him the ten commandments. The law was made for homosexuals. Show him that he is damned despite his perversion.

If you want to bring a Jew to Christ, lay the weight of the law upon him; let it prepare his heart for grace as happened on the day of Pentecost. If you want to bring a Moslem to Christ, give him the law of Moses; they accept Moses as a prophet. Well, give them the law of Moses and strip them of their self-righteousness and bring them to the foot of a blood-stained cross. I heard of a Moslem reading our book *Hell's Best Kept Secret*, and God soundly saved him purely through reading the book. Why? Because the law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul. Law called for her blood (Lev 20:10). She found herself in between a rock and a hard place. She had no avenue but to fling herself at the feet of the Son of God for mercy; and that is the function of God's law.

Paul spoke of being shut up under the law (Gal 3:23). It condemns. You say, "You can't condemn sinners." Saints, they're already condemned. John 3:18 : "He that believes not is condemned already." All the law does is show him himself in his true state.

Ladies, you might recognize this. Your table needs dusting in your living room. So you dust it clean; all the dust is gone. Then you draw back the curtains and let in the early morning sunlight. What do you see on the table? Dust. What do you see in the air? Dust. Did the light create the dust? No, the light merely exposed the dust. And when you and I take the time to draw back the curtains of the holy of holies and let the light of God's law shine upon the sinner's heart, all that happens, is that he sees himself in truth. "The commandment is a lamp and the law is light" (Pro 6:23). That's why Paul said, "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20). That's why he said, "By the commandment sin became exceedingly sinful" (Rom 7:13). In other words, the law showed him sin in its true light.

Now, normally at this stage of this teaching I go through the ten commandments one by one, but what I'll do is share with you how I witness personally because I think it would be more beneficial.

Now, I'm a strong believer in following in the footsteps of Jesus. Never, ever, would I approach someone and say, "Jesus loves you." Totally unbiblical; there's no precedent for that in Scripture. Neither would I go up to someone and say, "I'd like to talk to you about Jesus Christ." Why? Because if I wanted to awaken you from a deep sleep, I wouldn't use a flashlight in your eyes. That will offend you. I'd turn on the light dimmer very gently. First, the natural, then the spiritual. Why? Because "the natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God; neither can he know them. They are foolishness to him because they are spiritually understood" (1Co 2:14). The precedent in Scripture is given in John 4 for personal witness. You can see Jesus' example with the woman at the well. He started in the natural realm, swung to the spiritual, brought conviction using the seventh commandment, and then revealed Himself as the Messiah. So, when I meet someone, I'll talk about the weather, I'll talk about sport: let them feel a little bit of sanity. Get to know them; maybe joke here and there and then deliberately swing from the natural to the spiritual. Now, the way I do this is that I use gospel tracts.

We have something like 24, 25 different tracts; we're a ministry to the body of Christ. We've printed millions and millions of tracts and our tracts are unusual. If you get a hold of them, what

you'll have to do is have a stack on you because people chase you and ask for more. Let me give you an example. This is our optical illusion tract. Which looks bigger, if you can see? Does the pink look bigger? Can you see that? For those listening by tape...They're the same size; it's an optical illusion. I say, "It's actually a gospel tract; instructions are on the back...how to get saved, actually." I say, "You can keep that." He says, "Hey...thanks a lot! This is neat...Whoa!"

"Got another gift for you." And out of my pocket I get a pressed penny with the ten commandments on it. We have a machine that does this. We buy the pennies new from the bank; nice golden-looking pennies and we feed them into this machine and it presses them, or it will do your thumbnail if you want to hold still. But it presses them with the ten commandments. It's legal to do this: this is considered art. It's not defacing a penny. So I say, "Here's a gift." He says, "Oh...what is it?" I say, "It's a penny with the ten commandments on it; I did it with my teeth....I do the i's with my eye teeth but the e's are really difficult."

Now, what I'm doing is putting out a feeler to see if he's open to spiritual things. If he negatively says, "Ten commandments? Thanks a lot," he's not open. But the usual reaction is, "Ten commandments...Hey, thanks! I appreciate this." I say, "Ah, do you think you've kept the ten commandments?" He says, "Ah, yeah...pretty much." I say, "Let's go through them. Ever told a lie?" He says, "Ah, yeah...yeah, one or two." I say, "What does that make you?" He says, "A sinner." I say, "No, no. Specifically, what does it make you?" He says, "Well, man, I'm not a liar." I say, "How many lies, then, do you have to tell to be a liar? Ten and a bell rings and 'ppppbbbt' across your forehead? Isn't it true if you tell one lie, it makes you a liar?" He says, "Yeah...I guess you're right." I say, "Have you ever stolen something?" He says, "No." I say, "Come on; you've just admitted to me you're a liar." I say, "Ever stolen something, even if it's small?" and he says, "Yeah." I say, "What does that make you?" He says, "A thief." I say, "Jesus said, 'If you look at a woman and lust after her, you commit adultery with her in your heart' (Mat 5:28). Ever done that?" He says, "Yeah, plenty of times." "Then from your own admission, you're a lying, thieving, adulterer at heart, and you have to face God on judgment day; and we've only looked at three of the ten commandments. There's another seven with their cannons pointed at you. Have you used God's name in vain?" "Yeah...I've been trying to stop." "You know what you're doing? Instead of using a four-letter filth word beginning with 's' to express disgust, you're using God's name in its place. That's called blasphemy; and the Bible says, 'Every idle word a man speaks he'll give account thereof on the day of judgment' (Mat 12:36). 'The Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain' (Exo 20:7). The Bible says if you hate someone, you are a murderer (1Jn 3:15)."

Now the wonderful thing about God's law is that God has taken the time to write it upon our heart. Rom 2:15 : "...which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness..." Now, conscience means "with knowledge." Con is "with," science is "knowledge." Conscience. So when he lies, lusts, fornicates, blasphemes, commits adultery, he does it with knowledge that it's wrong. God has given light to every man. The Holy Spirit convicts them of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Sin which is transgression of the law (1Jn 3:4); righteousness which is of the law (Rom 10:5; Php 3:9); judgment which is by the law. His conscience accuses him—the work of the law written on his heart (Rom 2:15)—and the law condemns him. So I say, "So if God judges you by this standard on the day of judgment, are you going to be innocent or guilty?" He says, "Guilty." I say, "Well, do you think you'll go to heaven or hell?" And the usual answer is, "Heaven." A product of the modern gospel. I say, "Why do you feel

like that? Is it because you think God is good and he'll overlook your sins?" He says, "Yeah, that's it. He'll overlook my sins." "Yeah, well, try that in a court of law. You've committed rape, murder, drug pushing—very serious crimes. The judge says, 'You're guilty. All the evidence is here. Have you anything to say before I pass sentence?' And you say, 'Yes, Judge. I'd like to say I believe you're a good man and you'll overlook my crimes.' The judge would probably say, 'You're right about one thing. I am a good man, and because of my goodness, I'm going to see that justice is done. Because of my goodness, I'm going to see that you're punished.' " And the very thing sinners are hoping will save them on the day of judgment, the goodness of God, will be the very thing that will condemn them. Because if God is good, He must by nature punish murderers, rapists, thieves, liars, fornicators, and blasphemers. God is going to punish sin wherever it's found. So with this knowledge, he's now able to understand. He now has light that his sin is primarily vertical: that he has "sinned against heaven" (Luk 15:21). That he has violated God's law and that He has angered God and the wrath of God abides upon Him (John 3:36). He can now see that He is "weighed in the balance" of eternal justice and "found wanting" (Dan 5:27). He now understands the need for a sacrifice. "Christ redeemed from the curse of the law being made a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). "God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). We broke the law; he paid the fine. It's as simple as that. And if a man will repent, if a woman will repent and put their faith in Jesus, God will remit their sins so that on the day of judgment, when their court case comes up, God can say, "Your case is dismissed through lack of evidence." "Christ redeemed from the curse of the law being made a curse for us." And, therefore, exercise repentance towards God, faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21), put his hand to the plough and not look back because he's fit for the kingdom (Luk 9:62). That word fit means "ready for use". The soil of his heart has been turned that he might receive the engrafted word which is able to save his soul (Jas 1:21).

Now, I haven't got time to share these quotes with you, but their in our literature. I'm sure you'll recognize these names. John Wycliffe, the Bible translator. He said, "The highest service to which a man may obtain on earth is to preach the law of God." Why? Because it will drive sinners to faith in the Savior, to everlasting life. Martin Luther said, "The first duty of the gospel preacher is to declare God's law and to show the nature of sin." In fact, as we read these quotes, these men have so much conviction you can feel their teeth grit. They say things like, "If you do not use the law in gospel proclamation, you will fill the church with false converts." Stony ground hearers who will receive the word with joy and gladness. Listen to what Martin Luther said. He said, "Satan, the god of all dissension stirs up daily new sects. And last of all which of all others I should never have foreseen or once suspected, he has raised up a sect such as teach that men should not be terrified by the law, but gently exhorted by the preaching of the grace of Christ." So what's Luther saying? He saying, "Listen, guys. There's a demonic, Satanic sect that's just risen up. Man, I never, ever would have believed this could happen. He's raised up a sect such as teach that men should not be terrified by the law, but gently exhorted by the preaching of the grace of Christ," which perfectly sums up most of our evangelism.

John Wesley said to a friend, in writing to a young evangelist, "Preach 90 percent law and 10 percent grace." And you say, "90 percent law and 10 percent grace? Pretty heavy. Couldn't it be 50-50." Think of it like this. I'm a doctor; you're a patient. You have a terminal disease. I have a cure, but it's absolutely essential that you are totally committed to this cure; if you're not 100

percent committed, it will not work. How am I going to handle it? Probably like this. “Come in here. Sit down. I’ve some very serious news for you: you have a terminal disease.” I see you begin to shake. I think to myself, “Good. He’s beginning to see the seriousness of this situation.” I bring out charts; I bring out x-rays. I show you the poison seeping through your system. I speak to you for ten whole minutes about this terrible disease. How long, then, do you think I’m going to have to talk about the cure? Not long at all. When you’re sitting there trembling after ten minutes, I say, “By the way, here’s the cure.” You grab it and gulp it down. Your knowledge of the disease and its horrific consequence has made you desire the cure.

You see, before I was a Christian, I had as much desire for righteousness as a four-year-old boy has for the word “bath.” What’s the point? See, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” How many non-Christians do you know who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness? The Bible says, “There is none who seek after God” (Rom 3:11). It says they love the darkness, they hate the light; neither will they come to the light least their deeds be exposed (John 3:19-20). The only thing they drink in is iniquity like water (Job 15:16). But the night I was confronted with the spiritual nature of God’s law and understood that God requires truth in the inward parts (Psa 51:6), that He saw my thought-life and considered lust to be the same as adultery, hatred the same as murder, I began to say, “I can see I’m condemned. What must I do to be made right?” I began to thirst for righteousness. The law put salt on my tongue. It was a schoolmaster to bring me to Christ.

Charles Spurgeon said, “They will never accept grace until they tremble before a just and holy law.” D.L. Moody, John Bunyan, John Newton, who wrote “Amazing Grace” (and if anyone had a grip on grace it was Newton), he said that “the correct understanding of the harmony between law and grace is to preserve oneself from being entangled by errors on the right hand and on the left.” And Charles Finney said, “Evermore the law must prepare the way for the gospel.” He said, “To overlook this in instructing souls is almost certain to result in false hope, the introduction of a false standard of Christian experience, and to fill the church with false converts.”

Saints, the first thing David Wilkerson said to me when he called me on his car phone was, “I thought I was the only one who didn’t believe in follow-up.” Now, I believe in feeding a new convert; I believe in nurturing him. I believe in discipling him—biblical and most necessary. But I don’t believe in following him. I can’t find it in Scripture. The Ethiopian eunuch was left without follow-up. How could he survive? All he had was God and the Scriptures. You see, follow-up...now let me explain follow-up for those of you who don’t know. Follow-up is when we get decisions, either through crusades or local church, and we take laborers from the harvest field, who are few as it is, and give them this disheartening task of running after these decisions to make sure they’re going on with God. What it is is a sad admission of the amount of confidence we have in the power of our message and in the keeping power of God. If God has saved them, God will keep them. If they’re born of God, they’ll never die. If He’s begun a good work in them, He’ll complete it to that day (Php 1:6); if He’s the author of their faith, He’ll be the finisher of their faith (Heb 12:2). He’s able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him (Heb 7:25). He’s able to keep them from falling and present them faultless before the presence and glory with exceeding joy (Jude 1:24). Jesus said, “No one will pluck you from my father’s hand” (John 10:29).

You see, saints, the problem is that Lazarus is four days dead (John 11:1-57). We can run in the tomb, we can pull him out, we can prop him up, we can open his eyes, but “he stinketh” (John 11:39). He needs to hear the voice of the Son of God. And the sinner is four days dead in his sins. We can run up and say, “Say this prayer.” Still, he needs to hear the voice of the Son of God, or there is no life in him; and the thing that primes the sinner’s ear to hear the voice of the Son of God is the law. It’s a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ that he might be justified through faith (Gal 3:24). Saints, the law works; it converts the soul (Psa 19:7). It makes the person a new creature in Christ. That old things pass away; behold, all things are become new (2Co 5:17). So find yourself a sinner, and experiment on him. But as you do so, remember this one anecdote.

You’re sitting on a plane, sipping you’re coffee, biting a cookie, and watching a movie. It’s a good flight, very pleasurable, when suddenly you hear, “This is your captain speaking. I have an announcement to make. As the tail section has just fallen off of this plane, we’re about to crash. There’s a 25,000 foot drop. There’s a parachute under your seat; we’d appreciate it if you’d put it on. Thank you for your attention, and thank you for flying with this airline.” You say, “What!? 25,000 feet!? Man, am I glad to be wearing this parachute!” You look next to you; the guy next to you is biting his cookie, sipping his coffee, and watching the movie. You say, “Excuse me, did you hear the captain? Put the parachute on.” He turns to you and says, “Oh, I really don’t think the captain means it. Besides, I’m quite happy as I am, thanks.” Don’t turn to him in sincere zeal and say, “Oh, please, put the parachute on. It will be better than the movie.” Now, that doesn’t make sense. If you tell him that somehow the parachute will improve his flight, he’s going to put it on for a wrong motive. If you want him to put it on and keep it on, tell him about the jump. You say, “Excuse me, ignore the captain if you wish. Jump without a parachute...SPLAT!” He says, “I’m sorry; I beg your pardon.” “I said, if you jump without a parachute, law of gravity. ‘Ppppbbbbbtttt’ on the ground.” “Ah! Goodness me! I see what you’re saying! Thank you very much!” And as long as that man has knowledge he has to pass through the door and face the consequences of breaking the law of gravity, there’s no way you’re going to get that parachute off his back, because his very life depends on it.

Now, if you look around you, you’ll find there are plenty of passengers enjoying the flight. They’re enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season. Go up and say, “Excuse me. Did you hear the command from our Captain about salvation, ‘Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.’ ” He turns to you and says, “Oh, I really don’t think God means it. God is love. Besides, I’m quite happy as I am, thanks.” Don’t turn to him in sincere zeal without knowledge and say, “Please, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He’ll give you love, joy, peace, fulfillment, and lasting happiness. You’ve got a God-shaped vacuum in your heart only God can fill. If you have a marriage problem, drug problem, alcohol problem, just give your heart to Jesus.” No. You’ll give him the wrong motive for his commitment. Instead say, “Oh, God, give me courage!” and tell him about the jump. Just say, “Hey, it’s appointed to man once to die. If you die in your sins, God will be forced to give you justice, and His judgment is going to be so thorough. Every idle word a man speaks he’ll give account thereof on the day of judgment; if you’ve lusted, you’ve committed adultery. If you’ve hated someone, you’ve committed murder. And Jesus warned that justice will be so thorough, the fist of eternal wrath will come upon you and [SMACK] grind you to powder. God bless.” Now saints, I’m not talking about hell-fire preaching. Hell-fire preaching will produce fear-filled converts. Using God’s law will produce tear-filled converts. This one comes because why? He wants to escape the fires of hell.

But in his heart, he thinks God is harsh and unjust, because the law hasn't been used to show him the exceeding sinful nature of sin. He doesn't see hell as being his just desert, that he deserves hell. Therefore, he doesn't understand mercy or grace; and, therefore, he lacks gratitude to God for His mercy. And gratitude is the prime motivation for evangelism. There'll be no zeal in the heart of a false convert to evangelize. But this one comes knowing he has sinned against heaven. That God's eye is in every place beholding the evil and the good and God has seen darkness, as though it were pure light. He's seen his thought life. If God in His holiness on the day of wrath made manifest all the secret sins of his heart, all the deeds done in darkness, if he made manifest all the evidence of his guilt, God could pick him up as an unclean thing and cast him into hell and do that which is just. But instead of giving him justice, he's given him mercy. He's commended his love toward him in that while he's yet a sinner Christ died for him. He falls on his knees before that blood-stained cross, and he says, "Oh, God, if You do that for me, I'll do anything for You. I delight to do Your will, oh, my God. Your law is written upon my heart." And like the man who knew he had to pass through the door and face the consequences of breaking the law of gravity and would never take his parachute off because his very life depended on it, so he who comes to the Savior, knowing he has to face a holy God on the day of wrath, would never forsake the righteousness of God in Christ because His very life depends on it.

Let me see if I can coagulate this teaching as we draw it to a close. I was in a store some time ago, and the owner of the store was serving a customer and using God's name in blasphemy. Now, if somebody used my wife's name in blasphemy, I would be extremely offended if they used her name as a curse word in that sense. But this guy was using God's name as a curse word, when God had given him life, his eyes, the ability to think, his children, his food; every pleasure he's ever had was given to him by the goodness of God, and he's using God's name as a curse word. Indignantly, between him and his customer, I leaned and said, "Excuse me. Is this a religious meeting?" The guy says, "What? H-E-L-L no!" "Yes it is, because now you're talking about hell. Let me get you one of my books." So I went out to my car and got a book that I've written called God Doesn't Believe in Atheists: Proof the Atheist Doesn't Exist. And it's a book which uses logic, humor, reason, and rationalism to prove the existence of God, which you can do in two minutes without the use of faith. It's a very simple thing to conclusively, absolutely prove God's existence; and it proves also that the atheist doesn't exist. In fact, let me show you our bumper sticker. "National Atheist's Day: April 1." So I gave him this book, and two months later I went in and gave him another book I've written called My Friends Are Dying! A book which is a true and gripping story about the ministering of the gospel in the most murderous portion of Los Angeles; a book which also uses humor in its presentation. I gave him those books and he called me and told me what had happened. He told me his wife kept giving him filthy looks, because there he was reading a book called My Friends Are Dying! and laughing every two minutes. But he was cleaning out his room and he picked up God Doesn't Believe in Atheists. He said, "Ah," and he opened it up and read the first page and then he read the whole book, 260 pages. He said, "It was weird because I hate reading." Then he read My Friends Are Dying!, gave his life to Christ, bought himself a Bible, came around to say, "Hi," and told me after two days of being a Christian, in his Bible he was already up to what he called the book of "Lev-ih-tie-kus." And I guess he was going to read "Palms" and then John. But up until his commitment, the man was a practicing witch. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." And it's as though God looked down upon me, as for many years I open-air preached, and as I fought off the enemy with the feather duster of modern

evangelism, it's as though God said, "What are you doing? My weapons are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds (2Co 10:4). Here are ten great cannons." And as I lined up the ten cannons of God's law, no longer did sinners scoff and mock. No, their faces went pale; they lifted their hands and said, "I surrender all! All to Jesus I freely give!" They came across to the winning side never to become deserters. Such converts become soul winners, not pew warmers, laborers, not layabouts, assets, not liabilities for the local church. And now saints, with every head raised and every eye open, and no music playing, let me challenge you as to the validity of your salvation. Modern evangelism says, "Never question your salvation." The Bible says the exact opposite. It says, "Examine yourself and see if you're in the faith" (2Co 13:5). Better now than on the day of judgment. The Bible says "make your calling and election sure" (2Pe 1:10), and some of you know that something is radically wrong in your Christian walk. You lose your peace and joy when the flight gets bumpy. There is a lack of zeal to evangelize. You never fell on your face before Almighty God and said, "I've sinned against You, oh God! Have mercy upon me!" You've never fled to Jesus Christ and His blood for cleansing, in desperation crying out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And there's a lack of gratitude; there's not a burning zeal for the lost. You can't say you're on fire for God; in fact, you're in danger of being one of the ones that are called "lukewarm" and will be spewed out of the mouth of Christ on the day of judgment (Rev 3:16) when multitudes will cry out to Jesus, "Lord, Lord." And he'll say, "Depart from me you worker of iniquity—lawlessness: I never knew you" (Mat 7:22-23). No regard to the divine law. The Bible says, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity"—lawlessness (2Ti 2:19). So today you need to readjust the motive for your commitment. Friend, don't let your pride stop you. I would like to pray for you: I'll remain up here, you remain in your seat. And if you'd like to be included in this prayer, I'd like for you to slip up your hand, but remember this. If you say, "Well, I should put my hand up but what will people think?" that's pride. You prefer the praises of men to the praises of God (John 12:43). Everyone who is proud of heart is an abomination to the Lord (Pro 16:5). God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. So humble yourself before the mighty hand of God; He'll exalt you in due time (1Pe 5:5-6). Call it a recommitment; call it a commitment. But whatever you call it, make your calling and election sure.

02.00. SAVE YOURSELF SOME PAIN

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02.000. Introduction

Introduction

Becoming a Christian is the most incredible event that will ever take place in your life. You have found peace with your Creator. You have found everlasting life! Be assured-God will never leave you nor forsake you. He has brought you this far and He will complete the wonderful work He has begun in you. God knows your every thought, your every care and your deepest concerns.

Let's now look at some of those possible concerns. First, and of primary concern-do you have "assurance" of your salvation? The Bible says to "make your calling and election sure" (2Pe 1:10, italics added), so, let's go through a short "checklist" to make sure that you are truly saved:

1. Are you aware that God became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ (1Ti 3:16, KJV), and that he died for the sins of the world?
2. Did you come to the Savior because you had sinned?
3. Did you "repent" and put your faith in Jesus?
4. Are you convinced that He suffered and died on the Cross and that He rose again on the third day?

God acquits us from the Courtroom of Eternal Justice on the grounds that Jesus Christ paid our fine. We are "justified" (made right with God) by His suffering death. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was God's seal of approval of the fact that His precious blood was sufficient to pay the fine.

Think of it this way... You have violated the law and face a \$50,000 fine. You tell the judge that you are truly sorry for your crime, but he answers, "So you should be-you have broken the law! Now, can you pay this fine?" He can only acquit you if the fine is paid. If someone else pays your fine, then he can let you go, but he must have "grounds" on which to release you. The reason we need a substitute (a savior) to pay our moral "fine," is because we have broken God's Law. To see how much we have transgressed this Law (the Ten Commandments), we will go through some of them-Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever stolen something? Have you ever lusted after another person? If you answered "Yes" to these questions, you admit that you are a lying, thieving, adulterer at heart, and you have to face God on Judgment Day! If you have used His name in vain, then you are guilty of "blasphemy"-you've substituted God's holy Name for a curse word. Perhaps you've hated someone, then the Bible says that you are a murderer. You have violated God's holy Law, and you're in BIG trouble. On Judgment Day, you will be found guilty and end up in Hell. That's why you need the Savior. Merely being sorry for your sins, or confessing them to God won't help you. You must turn from sin (repent), and your faith must be in Jesus Christ alone. He is the only "grounds" for God to grant mercy towards you. If you're not sure of your salvation, make Psalms 51:1-19 your own prayer.

Let's now look at some more important principles that can save you a great deal of pain...

02.01. Feeding on the Word--DAILY Nutrition

1. Feeding on the Word-DAILY Nutrition A healthy baby has a healthy appetite. If you have truly been “born” of the Spirit of God, you will have a healthy appetite. The Bible says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,” (1Pe 2:2). Feed yourself every day without fail. Job said, “I have treasured the words of His mouth More than my necessary food,” (Job 23:12). The more you eat, the quicker you will grow, and the less bruising you will have. Speed up the process and save yourself some pain-vow to read God’s Word every day, without fail. Say to yourself, “No Bible, no breakfast. No read, no feed.” Be like Job, and put your Bible before your belly. If you do that, God promises that you will be like a fruitful, strong and healthy tree (see Psa 1:1-6). Each day, find somewhere quiet, and thoroughly soak your soul in the Word of God.

There may be times when you read through its pages with great enthusiasm, and there may be other times when it seems dry and even boring. But food profits your body whether you enjoy it or not. As a child, you no doubt ate desserts with great enthusiasm. Perhaps vegetables weren’t so exciting. If you were a normal child, you probably had to be encouraged to eat them at first. Then, as you matured in life you were taught to discipline yourself to eat vegetables. This is because they would physically benefit you, even though they may not have at the time, brought pleasure to your taste buds.

02.02. Faith--Elevators Can Let You Down

2. Faith-Elevators Can Let You Down When a young man once looked at me and said, "I find it hard to believe some of the things in the Bible," I smiled and asked, "What's your name?" When he said, "Paul," I casually answered, "I don't believe you." He looked at me questioningly. I repeated, "What's your name?" Again he said, "Paul," and again I answered, "I don't believe you." Then I asked, "Where do you live?" When he told me, I said, "I don't believe that either." You should have seen his reaction. He was angry. I said, "You look a little upset. Do you know why? You're upset because I didn't believe what you told me. If you tell me that your name is Paul, and I say, 'I don't believe you,' it means that I think you are a liar. You are trying to deceive me by telling me your name is Paul, when it's not." Then I told him that if he, a mere man, felt insulted by my lack of faith in his word, how much more does he insult Almighty God by refusing to believe His Word. In doing so, he was saying that God isn't worth trusting-that He is a liar and a deceiver. The Bible says, "He who does not believe God has made Him a liar," (1Jn 5:10). It also says, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief..." (Heb 3:12). Martin Luther said, "What greater insult... can there be to God, than not to believe His promises."

I have heard people say, "But I just find it hard to have faith in God," not realizing the implications of their words. These are the same people who often believe the weather forecast, believe the newspapers, and trust their lives to a pilot they have never seen whenever they fly in a plane. We exercise faith every day. We trust our car's brakes. We trust our history books, our medical books, and we trust elevators. Yet elevators can let us down. History books can be wrong. Planes can crash. How much more then should we trust the sure and true promises of Almighty God. He will never let us down... if we trust Him.

I have often heard cynics say, "The Bible is full of mistakes." It is. The first mistake was when man rejected God, and the Scriptures show men and women making the same tragic mistake again and again. It's also full of what seem to be contradictions. For example, the Scriptures tell us "with God, nothing shall be impossible" (Luk 1:37). We are told that there is nothing Almighty God can't do. Yet we are also told that it is "impossible for God to lie" (Heb 6:18). So there is something God cannot do! There's an obvious "mistake" in the Bible. The answer to this dilemma is to be found in the lowly worm. Do you know that it would be impossible for me to eat worms, although I have seen it done. I once saw a man on TV butter his toast, then pour on a can of live, fat, wriggling, blood-filled worms. He carefully took a knife and fork, cut into his moving meal, and ate it. It made me feel sick. It was disgusting. The thought of chewing cold, live worms is so repulsive, so distasteful, I can candidly say it would be impossible for me to eat them, even though I have seen it done. It is so abhorrent, I draw on the strength of the word "impossible" to substantiate my claim.

Lying, deception, bearing false witness, etc., is so repulsive to God, so disgusting to Him, so against His holy character, that the Scriptures draw on the strength of the word "impossible" to substantiate the claim. He cannot, could not, and would not lie. That means that in a world where we are continually let down, we can totally rely on, trust in, and count on His promises. They are

sure, certain, indisputable, true, trustworthy, reliable, faithful, unfailing, dependable, steadfast, and an anchor for the soul. In other words, you can truly believe them, and because of that, you can throw yourself blindfolded and without reserve, into His mighty hands. He will never, ever, let you down. Do you believe that?

02.03. Evangelism--Our Most Sobering Task

3. Evangelism-Our Most Sobering Task

It was late in December, 1996. A large family gathered in Los Angeles for the joyous occasion of wrapping Christmas presents. It was a big family because it was the product of two marriages. There were so many gathered that night, five of the children slept in the garage. It was a converted structure, kept warm during the cold night by an electric heater which sat by the door.

During the early hours of the morning, the heater suddenly burst into flames, blocking the doorway. In seconds the room became a blazing inferno. The frantic 911 call revealed the unspeakable terror of the moment. One of the children could be heard screaming, "I'm on fire!" The distraught father vainly rushed into the flames to try and save his beloved children. He received burns to 50% of his body. Tragically, all five of the children burned to death. They died because steel bars on the windows of the garage thwarted their escape. There was only one door, and that was stopped by the flames.

You are back in time. Its minutes before the heater burst into flames. You peer through the darkness at the peaceful sight of five sleeping youngsters. You know that at any moment the room is going to erupt into an inferno and burn the flesh of horrified children. Can you in good conscience walk away? No! You must awaken them, and warn them to run from that death trap! The world sleeps peacefully in the darkness of ignorance. There is only one Door by which they may escape death. The steel bars of sin prevent their salvation, and at the same time call for the flames of Eternal Justice. What a fearful thing Judgment Day will be! The fires of the wrath of Almighty God will burn for eternity. The Church has been entrusted with the task of awakening them before it's too late. We cannot turn our backs and walk away in complacency. Think of how the father ran into the flames. His love knew no bounds, and our devotion to the sober task that God has given us will be in direct proportion to our love for the lost. There are only a few who run headlong into the flames to warn them to flee (Luk 10:2). Please be one of them. We really have no choice. The Apostle Paul said, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1Co 9:16).

It was the "Prince of Preachers," Charles Spurgeon, who said the words, "Have you no wish for others to be saved? Then you are not saved yourself. Be sure of that." A Christian cannot be apathetic about the salvation of the world. The love of God in him will motivate him to seek and save that which is lost.

You probably have a limited amount of time after your conversion to impact your unsaved friends and family with the Gospel. After the initial shock of your conversion, they will put you in a neat little ribbon-tied box, and keep you at arm's length. So it's important that you take advantage of the short time you have while you still have their ears.

Here's some advice that will save you a great deal of grief. As a new Christian, a friend of mine did almost irreparable damage by acting like a wild bull in a crystal showroom. He bullied his mom, his dad, and many of his friends into making a "decision for Christ." He was sincere, zealous, loving,

kind, and stupid. He didn't understand that salvation doesn't come through making a "decision," but through repentance, and repentance is God-given (see 2Ti 2:25). The Bible teaches that no one can come to the Son unless God "draws" him. If you are able to get a decision but they have no conviction of sin, you will almost certainly end up with a stillborn on your hands. In his "zeal without knowledge" he actually inoculated the very ones he was so desperately trying to reach. There is nothing more important to you than the salvation of your loved ones, and you don't want to blow it. If you do, you may find that you don't have a second chance. Fervently pray for them, thanking God for their salvation. Let them see your faith. Let them feel your kindness, your genuine love, and your gentleness. Buy gifts for no reason. Do chores when you are not asked to. Go the extra mile. Put yourself in their position. You know that you have found everlasting life. Death has lost its sting! Your joy is unspeakable-but as far as they are concerned, you have been brain-washed. You have become part of a weird sect. So your loving actions will speak more loudly than ten thousand eloquent sermons.

It is because of these thoughts that you should hold back from verbal confrontation until you have knowledge that will guide your zeal. Pray for wisdom and for a sensitivity to God's timing. You may have only one shot, so make it count. Keep your cool. If you don't, you may end up with a lifetime of regret. Believe me. It is better to hear a loved one or a close friend say, "Tell me about your faith in Jesus Christ," rather than you saying, "Sit down. I want to talk to you."

It is important to realize that we should share our faith with others whenever we can. The Bible says that there are only two times we should do this-"in season and out of season" (2Ti 4:2). The Apostle Paul pleaded for prayer for his own personal witness. He said, "...that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak," (Eph 6:19-20).

Remember that you have the sobering responsibility of speaking to other peoples' loved ones. Many times when you open your mouth for the Gospel, you may be the answer to the earnest prayer of another Christian. Perhaps he has cried out to God that He would use a faithful witness to speak to his beloved mom or dad, and you are that answer to prayer. You are that true and faithful witness that God wants to use.

Never lose sight of the world and all its pains. Keep the fate of the ungodly before your eyes. Too many of us settle down on a padded pew and become introverted. Our world becomes a monastery without walls. Our friends are confined solely to those within the Church, when Jesus was the "friend of sinners." So take the time to deliberately befriend them for the sake of their salvation. Remember that each and every person who dies in their sins has an appointment with the Judge of the Universe. Hell opens wide its terrible jaws. There is no more sobering task than to be entrusted with the Gospel of Salvation-working with God for the eternal well-being of dying humanity.

02.04. Prayer--"Wait For A Minute."

4. Prayer--"Wait For A Minute."

It has been well said that God always answers prayer. Sometimes He says, "Yes." sometimes He says, "NO." Sometimes He says, "Wait for a minute," and a day to the Lord is a thousand years to us (2Pe 3:8). That means that a ten year wait for us, Isa 14:1-32 minutes and 24 seconds to God, so ask in faith, but rest in peace-filled patience.

Surveys show that more than 90% of America prays daily. No doubt they pray for health, wealth, happiness, etc. They also pray when grandma gets sick, and when grandma doesn't get better (or dies), many end up disillusioned, and some end up bitter. This is because they don't understand what the Bible says about prayer. It teaches that sin will stop God even hearing your prayer (Psa 66:18). It teaches, among other things, that if we pray with doubt, we will not get an answer (Jas 1:6-7).

Here's how to be heard...

1. Pray with faith (Heb 11:6).
2. Pray with clean hands and a pure heart (Psa 24:3-4).
3. Pray genuine heart-felt prayers, rather than vain repetitions (Mat 6:7).
4. Make sure that you are praying to the God revealed in the Holy Scriptures (Exo 20:3-6).

How do you "pray with faith?" If someone says to you, "You're a man of great faith in God," they may think that they are paying you a compliment. But they aren't-the compliment is to God. For example if I said to you, "I'm a man of great faith in my doctor," it's actually the doctor I'm complimenting. If I have great faith in him, it means that I see him as being a man of integrity, a man of great ability-that he is trustworthy. I give "glory" to the man through my faith in him. The Bible says that Abraham "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform." (Rom 4:20-21). Abraham was a man of great faith in God. Remember, that is not a compliment to Abraham. He merely caught a glimpse of God's incredible ability, His impeccable integrity, and His wonderful faithfulness to keep every promise He makes. His faith gave "glory" to a faithful God. As far as God is concerned, if you belong to Jesus, you are a VIP. You can boldly come before the throne of Grace (Heb 4:16). You have access to the king, because you are the son or daughter of the king. When you were a child, did you have to grovel to get your needs met by your mom or dad? I hope not.

So, when you pray, don't say, "Oh God, I hope you will supply my needs." Instead say something like, "Father, thank you that you keep every promise You make. Your Word says that you will supply all my needs according to Your riches in glory, by Christ Jesus (Php 4:19). Therefore, I thank you that you will do this thing for my family. I ask this in the wonderful name of Jesus. Amen"

It was the great missionary, Hudson Taylor, who said, "The prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity. If we want to see Divine power wrought in the place of weakness, failure, and disappointment, let us answer God's standing challenge, 'Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things of which thou knowest not of.'"

How do you get "clean hands and a pure heart?" Simply by confessing your sins to God, through Jesus Christ. His blood cleanses from all sin (1Jn 1:7-9). When you confess them to God through Jesus, God will not only forgive your every sin, He promises to forget that sin (Heb 8:12). He will even justify you, on the grounds of the sacrifice of the Savior. That means He will count it as though you have never sinned in the first place. He will make you pure in His sight-sinless. He will even "purge" your conscience, so that you will no longer have that sense of guilt that you sinned in the first place. That's what I mean "to be justified by faith." That's why you need to soak yourself in Holy Scripture-to read the letters to the churches and see the wonderful things that God has done for us through the Cross of Calvary. If you don't bother to read the will, you won't have any idea of what has been left for you.

How do you pray "genuine heart-felt prayers?" Simply by keeping yourself in the love of God. If the love of God is in you, you will never pray hypocritical, or selfish prayers. In fact, you won't have to pray selfish prayers, if you have a heart of love. When your prayer-life is pleasing to God, the Bible says that He will reward you openly (Mat 6:6).

How do you know that you are praying to "the God revealed in Holy Scripture?" Study the Word. Don't accept the image of God portrayed by the world, even though it appeals to the natural mind. A loving, kind fatherly-figure, with no sense of justice or truth appeals to guilty sinners. Look to the thunderings and lightnings of Mount Sinai. Gaze at Jesus on the cross of Calvary-hanging in unspeakable agony because of the Justice of a holy God. Such thoughts tend to banish idolatry.

02.05. Warfare--Praise the Lord & Pass the Ammunition

5. Warfare-Praise The Lord and Pass the Ammunition When you became a Christian, you stepped right into the heat of an age-old battle. You have a three-fold enemy-the world, the flesh, and the devil. Before you became a Christian, you floated down stream with the other dead fish. But now, God has put His life within you, and you will find yourself swimming against a three-fold current. Let's look at these three resistant enemies.

First, the world. When the Bible speaks of the "world" in this context, it is referring to the sinful, rebellious, world system. This is the world that loves the darkness and hates the light (John 3:20), governed by the "god of this world" (2Co 4:4)-the "prince power of the air" (Eph 2:2). The Bible says the Christian has escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. "Lust" is unlawful desire, and is the life's blood of the world -whether it be the lust for sexual sin, for power, for money, for material things. Lust is a monster that will never be gratified, so don't feed it. It will grow bigger and bigger, until it weighs heavy upon your back, and will be the death of you-see Jas 1:15.

There is nothing wrong with sex, power, money, or material things, but when these become predominant in God's sight, the Bible calls this "inordinate affection" (Col 3:5). We are told, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (1Jn 2:15, Jas 4:4). The second enemy is the devil. As we have seen, he is known as the "god of this world." He was your spiritual father before you joined the family of God (John 8:44, Eph 2:2). Jesus called the devil a thief, who came to kill, steal and destroy (John 10:10). The way to overcome him and his demons is to make sure you are outfitted with the spiritual armor of God listed in Eph 6:10-20. Become intimately familiar with it. Sleep in it. Never take it off. Bind the two-edged sword to your hand so that you never lose its grip. The reason for this brings us to the third enemy. The third enemy is what the Bible calls the "flesh." This is your sinful nature. The domain for the battle, is your mind.

If you have a mind to, you will be attracted to the world and all its sin. The mind is the data-processing control panel for the eyes and the ears. It is the center of your appetites. All sin begins in the "heart" (Pro 4:23, Mat 15:19). We think before we sin. This happens because we don't think before we sin. The Bible warns that lust brings forth sin, and sin when it's conceived brings forth death. Every day we have life, we have a choice. To sin or not to sin-that is the question. The answer to the question of sin, is the fear of God. If you don't fear God, you will sin to your sinful heart's delight. Did you know that God kills people? He killed a man because he didn't like what he did sexually (Gen 38:10). He killed a husband and wife because they told just one lie (Acts 5:1-11). Knowledge of God's goodness-His righteous judgments against evil, should put the fear of God in us, and help us not to indulge in sin.

If we know that the eye of the Lord is in every place beholding the evil and the good, and that He will bring every work to judgment, we will live accordingly. Such weighty thoughts are valuable, for "by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil" (Pro 16:6).

Jesus said, “And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” (Luk 12:4-5).

02.06. Fellowship--Flutter by Butterfly

6. Fellowship-Flutter by Butterfly

Pray about where you should fellowship. Make sure the place you are going to call your church home calls sin what it is-sin. Do they believe the promises of God? Are they loving? Does the pastor treat his wife with respect? Is he a man of the Word? Does he have a humble heart, and a gentle spirit? Listen closely to his teaching. It should glorify God, magnify Jesus, and edify the believer. One evidence that you have been truly saved is that you will have a love for other Christians (1Jn 3:14). You will want to fellowship with them. The old saying that “birds of a feather flock together” is true of Christians. You gather together for the breaking of bread (communion), for teaching from the Word, and for fellowship. You share the same inspirations, illuminations, inclinations, temptations, aspirations, motivations, and perspirations-you are working together for the same thing, for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God on earth. This is why you attend church-not because you have to, but because you want to.

Don't become a “spiritual butterfly.” Send your roots down. If you are moving from church to church, how will your pastor know what type of food you are digesting? The Bible says that your shepherd will have to give an account to Him that has entrusted you to him (Heb 13:17), so make yourself known to your pastor. Pray for him regularly. Pray also for his wife, his family, and the elders. Being a pastor is no easy task. Most people don't realize how many hours it takes to gather a fresh sermon each week. They don't appreciate the time spent in prayer and in the study of the Word. If the pastor makes the same joke twice, or shares something he has shared before, remember, he's human. So give him a great deal of grace, and double honor. Never murmur about him. If you don't like something he has said, pray about it, then leave the issue with God. If that doesn't satisfy you, leave the church, rather than divide it through murmuring and complaining. A woman once spread some hot gossip about a local pastor. What he had supposedly done became common knowledge around town. Then she found that what she had heard wasn't true. She gallantly went to the pastor, and asked for his forgiveness. The pastor forgave her, but then told her to take a pillow full of tiny feathers to a corner of the town, and in high winds, shake the feather out. Then he told her to try and pick up every feather. He explained that the damage had already been done. She had destroyed his good reputation, and trying to repair the damage was like trying to pick up feathers in high winds. The Bible says that there is life and death in the power of the tongue. We can kill or make something alive with our words. The Scriptures also reveal that God hates those who cause division among the brethren (Pro 6:16). Pray with the psalmist, “Set a guard O Lord, over my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”

Remember the old saying, “He that gossips to you, will gossip about you.”

02.07. Thanksgiving--Do the Right Thing

7. Thanksgiving-Do the Right Thing For the Christian, every day should be Thanksgiving Day. We should even be thankful in the midst of problems. The Apostle Paul said, "I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation" (2Co 7:4). He knew that God was working all things together for his good, even though he was going through trials (Rom 8:28).

Problems will come your way. God will see to it personally that you grow as a Christian. He will allow the storms, to send your roots deep into the soil of His Word. We pray more in the midst of problems, but it's been well said that you will see more from your knees, than you will on your tip toes. A man once watched a butterfly struggling to get out of its cocoon. In an effort to help it, he took a razor blade, and carefully slit the edge of the cocoon. The butterfly escaped from its problem... and immediately died.

It is God's way to have the butterfly struggle. It is the struggle that causes its tiny heart to beat fast, and send the life's blood into its wings.

Trials have their purpose. They make us struggle-they bring us to our knees. They are the cocoon in which we often find ourselves. It is there that the life's blood of faith in God helps us spread our wings.

Faith and thanksgiving are close friends. If you have faith in God, you will be thankful because you know His loving hand is upon you, even though you are in a lion's den. That will give you a deep sense of joy, and joy is the barometer of the depth of faith you have in God. Let me give you an example. Imagine if I said I would give you one million dollars if you sent me an email. Of course, you don't believe that I would do that. But imagine if you did. Imagine if you had knowledge of more than 1,000 people who had sent me an email, and every one received their million dollars-no strings attached. More than that. You had actually called me, and I had assured you personally that I would keep my word. If you believed me, wouldn't you have joy? If you didn't believe me-no joy. The amount of joy you have would be a barometer as to how much you believed my promise.

We have so much to be thankful for. God has given us "exceeding great and precious promises" that are "more to be desired than gold." Do yourself a big favor-believe those promises, thank God continually for them, and "let your joy be full." An old farmer once had an ungodly relative visit him. After the farmer had bowed his head and thanked God for the food they were about to eat, the relative rudely said, "What did you do that for? There's no God. We live in an age of enlightenment." The old farmer smiled and said, "There is one on the farm who doesn't thank God before he eats." The relative sat up and said, "Who is this enlightened one?" To which the farmer quietly replied, "My pig."

02.08. Water Baptism--Sprinkle or Immerse?

8. Water Baptism-Sprinkle or Immerse? The Bible Says, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38). There is therefore no question as to whether or not you should be baptized. The questions are how, when, and by whom?

It would also seem clear from scripture that those who were baptized, were fully immersed in water. Here's one reason why:

“And John was also baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there...” (John 3:23).

If John was merely sprinkling believers, he would have only needed a cup full of water. The Philippian jailer and his family were baptized at midnight, as soon as they believed. So what are you waiting for? Who should baptize you? It is clear from Scripture that other believers had the privilege, but check with your pastor, he may want the honor himself.

02.09. Giving to God

9. Giving to God

It was once said that the wallet is the “last frontier”- that it’s the last thing that comes to God in surrender. But it should be the first, along with our surrendered heart. Jesus spoke much about money. He said that we cannot serve God and mammon (see Mat 6:24). The word “mammon” was the common Aramaic word for riches and it signifies “that which is to be trusted.” In other words, either money is our source of joy, our sense of security, the supplier of our needs-or God is. When you give, make sure you do so with a cheerful heart. Our giving should be a systematic and purposeful giving to the church where we fellowship (see 2Co 9:7). It should be in response to need (see Acts 27:1-29). It should be sacrificial (see Gal 2:10), and should be done in secret with a humble heart (see Mat 6:1-4). It is a key to spiritual fruit (see Luk 16:10-11).

02.10. Troubleshooting Cults, Atheists, Skeptics

10. Troubleshooting Cults, Atheists, Skeptics

If you know the Lord, nothing will shake your faith. It is true that the man with an experience is not at the mercy of a man with an argument. Take for example a little boy who is looking at a heater. His father warns him that it's hot. The child says, "O.K. I believe it's hot." At that point, he has an intellectual belief that the heater is hot. When his Dad leaves the room, he says, "I wonder if it really is hot?" He then reaches out his little hand and grabs the heater bar with his fingers. The second his flesh burns he stops believing the heater is hot. He now knows it's hot! He has moved out of the realm of "faith" into the realm of "experience." In comes a heater expert and says, "Son, I have a B.A. in the study of heat. The heater is definitely not hot. I can prove it to you." The child would probably say, "Mr. Expert, I don't care how many B.A.'s you have. I know that heater is hot-I touched it! I'm not in the realm of belief, I'm in the realm of experience. Goodbye."

If you have touched the heater bar of God's love and forgiveness, if the Holy Spirit has "born witness" that you are a child of God (Rom 8:16), if you have received the Gospel with "power, the Holy Ghost and much assurance" (1Th 1:5), you will never be shaken by a skeptic. When cults tell you that you must acknowledge God's name to be saved, that you must worship on a certain day that you must be baptized by an elder of their church, don't panic. Merely go back to the Instruction Manual. The Bible has all the answers, and searching them out, will make you grow.

If you feel intimidated by atheists-if you think they are "intellectuals," read the book, 'God Doesnt Believe in Atheists. It will show you that they are the opposite. It will also instruct you on how you can prove God's existence, and also prove that the "atheist" doesn't exist.

Finally, the way to prevent sporting injury and pain, is to keep yourself fit. Exercise. The Apostle Paul kept fit through exercise. He said, "Herein do I exercise myself, to always have a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16). Do the same. Listen to the voice of conscience. It's your friend, not your enemy.

Remember the words of Solomon: "Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecc 12:13-14).

Keep the Day of Judgment before your eyes. On that Day, you will be glad for the cultivations of a tender conscience.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope the principles expounded have been helpful, and that any knowledge you have gained from it, will some day save you some pain.

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