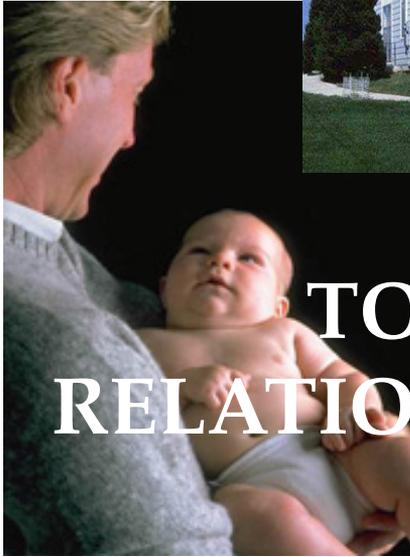
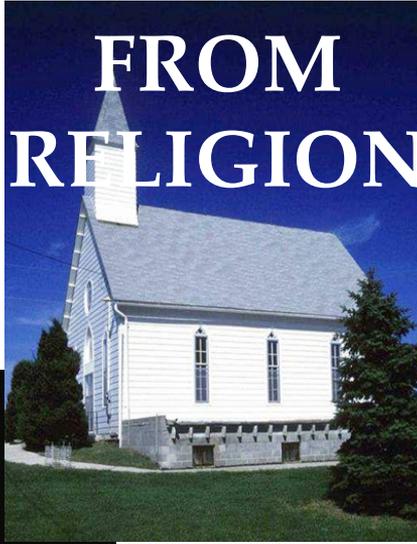


**FROM  
RELIGION**



**TO  
RELATIONSHIP**

By:  
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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New King James Version © 1982 by Thomas Nelson.

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# FROM RELIGION TO RELATIONSHIP

## How to Know God Personally

### PREFACE

Is there a difference in being religious and knowing God personally? Does faith in the existence of God qualify a person for heaven? What does it mean to be “born again”? These questions are explored in this booklet. The answers contained here are derived, not from personal opinions, but from the pages of the Holy Bible. The essential message is non-sectarian and represents basic Biblical teachings that are shared by all who accept the authority of God’s Word, interpret it in context, and open their heart to God’s leading.

**Chapter 1: Are You Good Enough to go to Heaven?** discusses God’s standards and how to meet them. The author, Ray Comfort, is an evangelist originally from New Zealand.

**Chapter 2: God’s Good News for You** explains the content of the gospel message. It is written by Ron Hughes, host of the radio program *The Family Bible Hour*, which is produced in Ontario, Canada.

**Chapter 3: The New Birth** examines the famous conversation of Jesus with a religious leader of his day.

**Chapter 4: The Nature of Saving Faith** describes the kind of faith that meets the requirements the gospel—a faith that brings one into a personal relationship with God. “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

## Chapter 1

### Are You Good Enough to Go to Heaven?

Of all the questions you will ask yourself in life, probably the most important is, “Am I good enough to go to Heaven?” The way to find this out is to ask yourself if you have obeyed the Ten Commandments. Most would answer the question, “Well, I’ve broken one or two, but nothing too serious, like murder, etc.” So, let’s go through them and see how you do:

1. “You shall have no other gods before Me.”

Is God first in your life? Do you love God above all else? Many years ago, I purchased a TV for our children, but the first evening we had it, I arrived home from work and found that they didn’t even bother to greet me. They were too busy watching television. I turned it off and explained to them that if they ignored me because they preferred to watch TV they were setting their love on the gift rather than the giver, a wrong order of affections. In the same way, if we love anything—husband, wife, children or even our own lives—more than we love God, we are setting our affection on the gift rather than the Giver, which is a transgression of the First Commandment. In fact, the Bible says that we should so love God that our love for Mom and Dad and brother and sister should seem like hatred compared to the love we have for the God who gave those loved ones to us.

We are also commanded to love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. Jesus spoke of a Samaritan who found an injured stranger, bathed his wounds, carried him to an inn, gave money for his care and told the inn-keeper

that he would pay for his expenses. We call him the good Samaritan, but in reality he wasn't "good" at all, he merely obeyed the basic command to love his neighbor as himself. That is a picture of how God expects us to love our fellow human beings. We should love them as much as we love ourselves...whether they be friend or foe.

Have you loved God with all your heart? Have you loved humanity as much as you love yourself? You be the judge. Will you be innocent or guilty on Judgment Day of breaking that Commandment? I'm not judging you—I'm asking you to judge yourself before the Day of Judgment. The sentence for breaking this Commandment is death.

2. "You shall not make for yourself any graven image."

This means that we shouldn't make a god to suit ourselves, either with our hands or our mind. I was guilty of this. I made a god to suit myself. My god didn't mind a "white" lie or a fib here and there—in fact, he didn't exist. He was a figment of my imagination, an "image" which I shaped to suit myself. Is your God the One revealed in Holy Scripture? If not, then you have made your own god to suit yourself—you have committed the oldest sin in the Book. Scripture warns that no idolater will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

3. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain."

Have you ever taken God's name in vain—instead of using a four-letter word to express disgust, you've used His name? Hitler's name wasn't despised enough to use as a curse word. If you have used His holy name in that manner, you are a blasphemer and will not enter the Kingdom of God.

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4. "Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy."

I ignored this command for 22 years. Even though God gave me the gift of life, never once did I ask what He required of me. I was guilty of breaking this Commandment.

5. "Honor your father and your mother."

Have you always honored your parents in a way that's pleasing in the sight of God? Ask Him to remind you of the sins of your youth. You may have forgotten them, but God hasn't.

6. "You shall not murder."

Jesus warned that if we get angry without cause we are in danger of judgment. If we hate our brother, God calls us a murderer. We can violate God's Law by attitude and intent.

7. "You shall not commit adultery."

Who of us can say that we are pure of heart? Jesus warned, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Remember that God has seen every thought you have had and every sin you have ever committed. The day will come when you have to face His Law, and we are told that the impure, fornicators (those who have sex before marriage) and adulterers will not enter the Kingdom of God. Punishment for transgression of this Commandment is the death penalty.

8. “You shall not steal.”

Have you ever taken something that belonged to someone else (irrespective of its value)? Then you are a thief—you cannot enter God’s Kingdom.

9. “You shall not bear false witness.”

Have you ever told a lie? Then you are a liar. How many lies do you have to tell to be a liar? Just one. The Bible warns that all liars will have their part in the Lake of Fire. You may not think deceitfulness is a serious sin. God does!

10. “You shall not covet.”

That means we shouldn’t desire anything that belongs to another person. The covetous will not inherit the Kingdom of God

Who of us can say we are not guilty of breaking these Commandments? All of us have sinned, and just as with civil law, you don’t have to break ten laws to be a lawbreaker, so the Bible warns,

*For whoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*

A little girl was once watching a sheep eat grass and thought how white it looked against the green background. But when it began to snow she thought, “That sheep now looks dirty against the white snow!” It was the same sheep, but with a different background. When we compare ourselves to man’s standard we look pretty clean, but when we compare ourselves to the pure snow-white righteousness of God’s standard—His Law, we can see ourselves in truth, that we are unclean in His

sight. That Law is the holy standard by which humanity will be judged on Judgment Day.

This may sound strange, but the worst thing you could do at this point of time is to try and clean up your lifestyle—you realize that you have sinned, so from now on you will keep the Ten Commandments, do good deeds, say the right things and think only pure thoughts. But should a judge let a murderer go because he says he will now live a good life? No, he's in debt to justice and therefore must be punished.

The Law of God is merely like a mirror—all a mirror does is show you the truth. If you see egg on your face, you don't try and wash yourself with the mirror, its purpose should be to send you to water for cleansing. Neither should you try and wash yourself with the mirror of God's Law...that's not its purpose. The sight in the mirror is not a pretty one, but if you don't face it and acknowledge that you are unclean, then all that "dirt" will be presented on Judgment Day as evidence of your guilt, and then it will be too late to be cleansed.

Perhaps you think that God is good and will therefore overlook your sins. But if you were guilty of terrible crimes in a civil court and said to the judge, "Judge, I am guilty but I believe that you are a good man and will therefore overlook my crimes," the judge would probably respond by saying, "You are right about one thing; I am a good man, and it's because of my goodness that I am going to see that justice is done, that you are punished for your crimes." The very thing that many are hoping will save them on Judgment Day, God's "goodness," will be the very thing that will condemn them. If God is good, He should punish murderers, liars, thieves, etc., and Hell will be their dreadful fate.

What a terrible place Hell must be. If you read in the newspaper that a man received a \$5 fine for a crime, you could conclude that his crime was insignificant. But if a man received multiple life sentences, you could conclude that his crime was heinous. In the same way, we can catch a glimpse of how terrible sin must be in the sight of God by looking to the punishment given for it—eternal punishment. Ungrateful human-

ity never bothers to thank God for His wonderful blessings of color, light, food, joy, beauty, love, and laughter, so He will take those blessings away from them. Instead of proving their gratitude by obedience to His will, they use His name to curse. Their punishment will be just but severe to the uttermost. Take the time to read what Jesus said Hell was like in Mark 9:43-48. I am afraid for you...please, look honestly into the mirror of the Law, then seek the "water" that cleanses every sin. If you don't believe what I am saying about the reality of Hell, it means you think God is corrupt (that He hasn't the moral backbone to seek justice), that Jesus was a liar, that the Apostles were false witnesses, that God's promises are nothing but prefabricated lies, and there is no greater insult to God than to call Him a liar. By doing so, you are adding to your transgressions. Imagine if you reject the Savior, die in your sins and find that what I have told is the Gospel truth? Then it will be too late, you will be judged for you sins. If that happens, and your eyes meet my eyes on the Day of Judgment, I'm free from your blood. I have told you the truth, but if you choose to ignore it your blood will be upon your own head...you will have no one to blame buy yourself.

Can you see your predicament? You are guilty of sinning against God Himself, and, because you have a conscience, you have sinned "with knowledge." Isn't it true that every time you lied, stole, lusted, etc., you did it with knowledge that it was wrong?

Does the fact that you have sinned against God scare you? It should. You have actually angered Him by your sin. The Bible says His wrath abides on you, that you are an "enemy of God in your mind through wicked works." But let fear work for your good in the same way that a fear of jumping out of a plane at a great height would make you put on a parachute. Let your will to live open your heart to the Gospel of salvation.

I am not the only one who doesn't want you to end up in Hell. The person who gave you this booklet cared enough to give it to you and risk your rejection, and God Himself is not willing that you perish. To make clear what an incredible thing He has done for you in the Gospel, let's look again to civil

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law: You are standing in front of a judge, guilty of very serious crimes. All the evidence has been presented and there is no doubt about your guilt. The fine for your crime is \$250,000 or imprisonment, but you haven't two pennies to rub together. The judge is about to pass sentence...he lifts his gavel, when someone you don't even know steps in and pays the fine for you. The moment you accept that payment, you are free to go. Justice has been served, the law has been satisfied, and what's more, the stranger who paid your fine showed how much he cares for you. His payment was evidence of his love.

That's what God did for you, in the person of Jesus Christ. You are guilty, He paid the fine 2,000 years ago. It is that simple. The Bible puts it this way: "he was bruised for our iniquities...Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law being made a curse for us...God commended His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

It was no small thing for Jesus to die for us. The only thing that would satisfy the demands of Eternal Law was the suffering death of the sinless Son of God. What love God must have for you! He suffered unspeakable agony, so that you wouldn't have to be punished for your sins. His sacrificial death and resurrection mean that you need no longer be in debt to the Law, and God can now grant you everlasting life if you obey Him— death no longer has a legal hold upon those who belong to Jesus Christ.

Two men were offered a parachute while seated in a plane. The first man was told it would improve his flight, but the second man was informed he had to make a 25,000 foot jump. When the flight struck severe turbulence the first man took his parachute off because as far as he was concerned it didn't improve the flight. But during the same violent turbulence, the second man clung tighter to his parachute. Each man's motive for putting the parachute on determined whether or not they would keep it on.

In the same way, the reason you should "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" shouldn't be to find peace, joy, true happiness, to have your marriage healed or your problems fixed, etc. (to

have your flight improved), but it should be to escape the jump to come—because of the fact that you have to pass through the door of death. Then, when the flight gets bumpy (when problems come) you won't fall away from the faith.

What should you then do? Simply repent and put your trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Don't put it off until tomorrow.

Would you sell an eye for a million dollars? How about both for \$20 million? No one in his right mind would. Your eyes are priceless to you, yet they are merely the windows of your soul. Your life (your soul) is of such value, Jesus said that you should despise the value of your eye compared to it. He said that if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you, for it is better to enter Heaven blind than to go to Hell seeing. In other words, of all the things you should prioritize in your life, it's not your health, your vocation, etc., it's your eternal salvation.

Think of a man who has committed adultery. His faithful wife is more than willing to take him back, so what is the attitude in which he should approach her? It should be one of tremendous humility, asking for forgiveness, and determining in his heart never to even think of committing adultery again.

That's how you should approach God. If you are not sure how to pray, read Psalm 51 and make it your prayer. Then put your faith in Jesus Christ in the same way you would put your faith in a parachute. You don't just "believe" it will benefit you, you actually trust yourself to it by putting it on. Then, once you have made peace with God, read the Bible daily and obey what you read.

Scriptures cited: Exodus 20:1-17; Matthew 5:27-29; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Revelation 21:8; James 2:10; 1:23, Colossians 1:21; Isaiah 53:5; Galatians 3:13; Romans 5:8; 13:14; Psalm 51.

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## Chapter 2

### God's Good News for You!

Let's begin with a look inside. Most of us love to look at ourselves and reference things to ourselves. That's not always a good idea, but it will serve us as a starting point. If there is one characteristic of people in general it is that we are consumed with getting our needs met. Our first cry registers our displeasure with the way things are and some of us never stop complaining until our last gasp.

At first, our concern is with satisfying our hunger pangs and our desire to be warm and dry. As we grow up, we become aware of other needs, personal, emotional, and spiritual emptiness that we seek to fill. Then there are the wants. We see things we want and strive to get them. In some ways material things and relationships can help address those deeper personal, emotional, and spiritual issues that are so hard to satisfy.

The problem comes from the fact that this focus on ourselves and our needs can lead to deep dissatisfaction and disillusionment. In the search for self-fulfillment, we can easily slip into patterns of self-destructive behavior without even noticing it. Unbridled sexual expression, lust for things, powerful desires to control our own lives and the lives of others through things like sorcery, hate, the inability to get along with others, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, breaking up of relationships, petty political intrigues, powerful desire for what others have and sometimes taking it, substance abuse of various forms, overindulgence in physical pleasure and the like. All of these become substitutes for what is really significant. So our search for meaning continues.

Actually, that list of things that I just mentioned was not my own invention. I adjusted some of the terms to make them easier to relate to, but the list itself comes from the Bible, God's

word. There are several lists of the kind of attitudes and action that mankind resorts to in the search for meaning, but this one is from the fifth chapter of Paul's letter to his Christian friends in Galatia. I should mention what he says as he concludes that list. These words are not mine but the Bible's:

*I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:21).*

There you have our situation: The characteristics and activities of man trying to fill his life with meaning and God's response to his attempts. God says if that's the way you behave and that's the way you are, then you're on a one way trip out of my presence forever. The Bible uses terms like "Hell", and "the lake of fire" to describe this horrible state of separation from the source of life.

The same passage in Galatians where we found that list of what God calls "the works of the flesh", also gives us a clear indication of what God wants us to be like. In another list, He says that our lives should be characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5:22-23).

Now you have to admit that it is a huge leap from the first list to the second list. Some process of major proportions would have to take place to get you from one to the other. You can't make a pure, loving, person headed for heaven out of a sinful, selfish person headed for hell without a fundamental change. God uses the analogy of birth. He tells us that we must be born again. The change in us needs to be so complete that He must, in fact, start all over again with us. We need to be born for a second time into God's family, external changes are not sufficient.

If there is a flicker of desire on your part to enter God's kingdom, you need to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior by faith. Now, you may ask, "What on earth does that mean?" It means that you believe in Him. It means that you act on that knowledge. It means that you allow God to turn you from being a fundamentally self-centered person to a God-centered

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person. Faith is based on facts and evidenced by experience. Here are the facts of the Gospel succinctly, directly, simply.

Romans 3:10-12 says:

*There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

Your life is characterized by sinful self-centeredness. You care most about your own convenience, comfort, pleasure, status, reputation, fulfillment, and so on. Because of this you resort to sinful measures to meet your needs and goals in life. And because of this, you can never be what God wants you to be, because...

Romans 1:18 says:

*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness."*

Your sinful, selfish life offends God. He doesn't like it. He won't have it. He condemns you to death for it. Everything you do to fill your life outside of God is sin. Everything that takes the place of God and His provisions for your life is an idol which cannot save you and calls for God's anger and judgment. But...

In spite of all this, God loves you. John 3:16 says:

*For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

He wants to restore you to the privileged place in His family that He made His human creation to enjoy. God wants reconciliation with you and so He designed the way to make you new, fresh, clean, and acceptable before His holiness. He sent his Son—the man called Jesus—to die for your sin. In God's ac-

count book, Jesus' perfect life is exchanged for your sinful one and your death sentence was born by Him. Through faith, you see and accept the death of the Lord Jesus Christ as your own. When you do that, God does as well. So when God looks at you He sees you alive in his Son. However...

This is not something which God universally applies to everyone without their consent. Romans 10:9,10 says:

*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

It is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says,

*Anyone who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.*

Each individual has to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as the payment for his debt and the sufficiency for his need. You do this by faith. You believe in your heart, in your innermost being with your intellect, emotions and will, that when the Lord Jesus Christ died, He died for your sin. The instant you do that you are saved. God gives you new life by his Holy Spirit. He washes you and delivers you into His spiritual family.

That, quite simply, is the Gospel. We dare not depend on our own righteousness. Our deceitful hearts tell us, "You're okay. You're different. You're not like the rest. You're good." Yet God's standard condemns us. He knows us. He knows that the man who has committed the most despicable crime was born in what we call innocence. Sin contaminates us long before we see the light of day as so called innocent little children.

It is so important to be born again. Without it, we will never see the kingdom of God (John 3:3). We need to receive the new birth and then go on receiving the daily working of God's Spirit in our lives to bring us to maturity.

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We've come to the end of these few thoughts on the Gospel. I hope they have been helpful to you. If you'd like to know more about the Gospel and how to become a Christian, please contact us. May God bless you!

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## Chapter 3

### The New Birth

I recall when our neighbors became parents for the second time. To make it even more memorable, their son arrived on his dad's birthday. What a joy to celebrate new life.

This reminds me of the conversation Jesus had with a sincere Jewish leader (John 3:1-21). Nicodemus had come by night to inquire personally of the message and identity of Jesus. He said,

*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him (v. 2).*

Jesus answered Nicodemus with the famous words:

*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

The inquirer responded,

*How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? (v.4).*

[At this point all mothers exclaim "ABSOLUTELY NOT!!"]  
So the Lord clarifies the nature of this second birth:

*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (vv. 5-6).*

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Later in the passage is the most-quoted verse in the Bible:

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).*

From this portion of Scripture we learn several truths about gaining salvation: 1) a spiritual rebirth is required to attain eternal life; 2) this birth is identified as of 'water and Spirit'; 3) the condition to attain this new birth is personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The phrase 'new birth' is used commonly in some denominations, but it has picked up various connotations from the media. We notice in this study that the phrase is from Jesus Himself, and therefore should be of the utmost importance to every professing Christian.

The biography of Andrew Murray, the beloved devotional writer from South Africa, states that his father was a minister who prayed for revival and preached the necessity of personal salvation. However, it was not until Andrew was completing his seminary studies that he personally received Christ and was born again. His testimony reminds me of a fellow believer in our area who was a deacon in a Church for many years before he understood the plan of salvation and was born again.

At this point we should clarify some issues regarding this birth and the conditions for it. Jesus stated that this birth is 'of water and of Spirit'. This phrase is a bit ambiguous, so we should consider how the rest of the Bible sheds light on it. Some have suggested that 'born of water' relates to water baptism. Although baptism is an important testimony of faith, it is not part of God's conditions for salvation (Matt 28:19; 1 Cor 1:14-17; Acts 10:34-47). Others have suggested that 'born of water' speaks of the first, natural birth. When a baby is born, the amniotic fluid pours forth as well. If this is what Jesus meant, He would be stating the need to be born physically (first birth) and spiritually (second birth). Another possibility is that 'born of water' refers to the agency of the Word of God in the process of

conversion. Ephesians 5:26 speaks of Christ saving His people

*with the washing of water by the word.*

What is unmistakable is the necessity of this spiritual re-birth. The need for this is explained by further references to regeneration:

*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (Eph 2:1, 4, 5; Cf., Titus 3:4-7).*

This 'new birth' is often thought of as a dramatic, crisis event, and it often is (Acts 9:1-19). Yet those raised in a Christian home can come to receive Christ and this new birth in a less sensational way, like Timothy did (2 Tim 3:15). Eventually Nicodemus believed in Jesus as his personal Messiah and Savior (John 19:39).

This should lead all to examine themselves to be certain that they are 'in the faith' (2 Cor 13:5). Christ promised

*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life (John 5:24).*

In the next chapter we will explore in more detail the aspects of saving faith.

A wonderful testimony of salvation comes from the life of Edward Mote, who "knew nothing about God or the Bible as he grew up in London, England, the child of poor innkeepers. At the age of 16 he was genuinely converted to Christ. Mote later settled in a suburb of London where he became known as a successful cabinet maker and devoted church layman." (*Amazing Grace*, by Kenneth Osbeck, p. 187). As he grew spiritually,

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Mote became a faithful preacher of God's word and composed more than 150 hymns. One of my favorites is *The Solid Rock*. Alluding to Matthew 7:24-27, it clearly describes the nature of salvation in Christ.

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus' name

When darkness veils His lovely face  
I rest on His unchanging grace;  
In every high and stormy gale  
My anchor holds within the veil.

His oath, His covenant, His blood  
Support me in the whelming flood;  
When all around my hope gives way,  
He then is all my hope and stay.

When He shall come with trumpet sound  
O may I then in Him be found;  
Dressed in His righteousness alone,  
Faultless to stand before the throne.

On Christ the Solid Rock I stand—  
All other ground is sinking sand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.

Can you remember if and when you experienced this spiritual re-birth? If not, now is the time to accept the testimony of God and personally receive Christ by faith. John 1:12 promises: "As many as received Him [Christ], to them God gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name."

J.B.W.

Since faith is the condition to be reconciled to God, it becomes crucial to know what is...

## Chapter 4

### The Nature of Saving Faith

My wife, Linda, once sang at three ladies' retreats in a nine day period. Several women received Christ as their personal savior. The ministry team helped the attenders resolve spiritual conflicts and grow in grace.

This leads us back to the topic of the nature of saving faith. How does one truly become saved? Surely there is no more important question, for the Scripture warns,

*How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him? (Heb 2:3).*

This question was framed by the Philippian jailer in the New Testament book of Acts. After the earthquake opened the doors of the jail where Paul and Silas were imprisoned, the jailer was about to commit suicide. Since the missionaries loved their enemy, Paul called out,

*'Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.' Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household' (Acts 16:28-31).*

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How wonderful that the jailer and his family believed! They gave evidence of their new faith by tending to the missionaries wounds and by being baptized in water.

Throughout the New Testament we learn that salvation is by grace through faith. The Gospel of John was expressly written to show the way of gaining eternal life.

*These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:31).*

Therefore, belief is a major theme in this book. (John 1:7, 12, 50, 2:11, 22, 23, 3:12, 15, 16, 18, 36).

So, what is the nature of this saving faith? As we seek to answer this question in a Biblically balanced way, it is valuable to notice how faith relates to the mind, the emotions, and the will.

How does the mind respond positively to the gospel? By believing the gospel is true. This good news is summarized in 1 Cor 15:3,4:

*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (cf. 1 Pet 3:18; Rom 10:9,10).*

How do the emotions respond positively to the gospel? By trusting in Christ alone. As Ephesians 2:8,9 declares,

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Cf. Rom 4:5; 5:1).*

Religion says “do!”; the gospel says “done!”

How does the will respond positively to the gospel? By oneself to Christ as personal Lord and Savior. Salvation is not

just a pill we take or a doctrine we acknowledge; salvation is a personal relationship with God. Notice the role of the will:

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name (John 1:12).*

*For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved (Rom 10:13).*

This is how you accept the terms of the New Covenant (Matt 26:28).

Since conversion is compared to marriage (Eph 5:32), the bride (the believer) needs to say “I do” to the bridegroom (Christ). Commitment is not promising our efforts to maintain salvation, but the glad surrender of ourselves to God’s safe-keeping in Christ (2 Tim 1:12). The life of discipleship summons us to cooperate with God’s purpose to conform us to the image of His Son (Rom 8:28,29).

Belief, trust, and commitment are nothing more or less than aspects of saving faith.

However, some other passages of Scripture appear to require something more. For example, in the episode of the rich young ruler, he leaves Jesus with sadness and unbelief because he would not sell his possessions, give to the poor, and follow Him (Matt 19:16-26). He may have believed in Christ as a good teacher (notice how Christ redefined ‘good’ for him), but he did not believe in him as Messiah and Savior. Instead of trusting in the Redeemer, he depended on his obedience to the law, which he thought he had kept. When he was invited to respond in commitment, he was unwilling to bow the knee to Christ, which for him meant turning from the idol of material wealth. So the rich young ruler walked away, not because the conditions for salvation were harder than those given to the Philippian jailer, but because he did not respond in saving faith.

## From Religion to Relationship

Many people assume that they are a child of God because they were raised in a Christian family, belong to a church, or acknowledge the facts of the gospel.

How about you? Why not take time now to review the nature of saving faith. Be sure you have truly received Christ as your Lord and Savior. As the Apostle Peter counseled,

*Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble (2 Pet 1:10).*

The Christian life begins through repentance and faith and continues through walking with God. Roy Hession, author of *The Calvary Road* speaks of the foundational importance of saving faith:

*My Calvary Road began..., as it does with all of us, when we first experienced the cross of Calvary as sinners. All the elements of later and fuller experience in the Christian life are implicit in that first experience of grace, 'I am a sinner, but Jesus is my Savior.' Indeed, we may be suspicious of any emphasis, teaching, or experience which is not at the bottom merely an extension of these simple truths. To go deeper in the Christian life is simply to realize that we are bigger sinners than we ever thought and that Jesus is a bigger Savior than we ever conceived Him to be.*

Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Our awesome God, we examine ourselves in light of our responsibility to truly believe in the Lord Jesus. Convict any professing Christian who only has mental assent toward the Gospel, yet has not repented and received Your Son. Thank You for paying our sin debt for us through Christ's death and resurrection. We affirm and reaffirm our full trust in our Redeemer. In Christ's name, Amen.

# Grace Fellowship International

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM GRACE FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL

### Books by Dr. Charles Solomon:

*Handbook to Happiness*  
*Ins and Out of Rejection*  
*Rejection Syndrome and the Way to Acceptance*  
*Handbook to Happiness & You*  
*Handbook for Christ-Centered Counseling*  
*Handbook for Soldiers of the Cross*  
*For Me To Live Is Christ*  
*The Wisdom of (Charles R.) Solomon - 3 Volume Poetry Set*  
*The Romans Road*  
*Let Us Rise Up and Build...the Church*  
*Completing the Reformation*  
*Through Whom Shall He Then Live?*  
*Discipling the Desperate*  
*From Pastors to Pastors*  
*The Dynamic Step in Discipleship*  
*Conquering PTSD*  
*Handbook to Happiness for the Church*  
*Gems & Jargon*  
*Wheel & Line Tract*

### Books by Dr. John Woodward:

*Man as Spirit, Soul, and Body*  
*Blessed Reassurance*

### Media Materials:

*The Invisible Wall Audio Tape*  
*Conference Audio CDs*  
*Conference DVDs*  
*Conference Notebook*

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Book by Dr. Phil Jones:

*How To Exchange Your Life For A New One*

Books by Dr. Lee Turner:

*Grace Discipleship Course #1*

*Grace Discipleship Course #2*

Book by Captain Reginald Wallis:

*The New Life*

Book by John Stevens

*Suicide: An Illicit Lover*

## From Religion to Relationship

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