

(An unpublished monograph - see Endnote 2)

Are All Lost Who Claim Baptismal Regeneration Is Biblical? ©

Based in part on the work presented in "**Baptismal Regeneration?**"

A teaching tract by Dave Hunt of **THE BEREAN CALL**¹ (10/98 Tract 107)

(¶ symbol is used throughout to cite paragraphs from this tract.)

by

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[Note: Baptismal Regeneration is designated throughout as 'BR']

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I Introduction and Considered Implications

There are those who believe we must be water baptized in order to be saved from hell and there are those who believe scripture does not place this condition on gaining eternal life. These contradictory positions⁴ form a polarized spectrum, from 'black to white,' of spiritual understanding and practices, with proponents of either extreme claiming those who hold to the opposite position are eternally lost. While I believe the Bible plainly teaches salvation is not offered through water baptism, it is the range of *implications* of 'our'⁵ views of God's grace in this matter that concern me. The grey hues that form the bridge between these polarities are the topic of this research. Certainly, readers will line up *for or against* my conclusions, yet my interest is not in adding to the schism. No argument presented to me will change my mind from the persuasions I offer here --and likely my arguments may not change the reader's mind either. Yet I am open to consider any *correction* of the selected texts demonstrating the ***rationale I present***. (This ought to be the highest objective in forming apologetic arguments. When we consider the whole counsel of God, recalling texts we believe prove this or that teaching, it must be acknowledged how difficult it is to correctly recall *God's intended texts on a subject, in their proper priority, and applied in their right relation to each other.*) While those proficient in Bible languages like to spar over the precise *meaning* of the words⁶ of scripture, *I am interested here* in correctly applying the *truth of scripture*. Paul, our primary doctrinal teacher (of truth), was a master at using just the right words to prove God's truths. May we pay particular attention to *Paul's teachings*⁷ in our assessment of the truth or error of baptismal regeneration (BR).

After writing a typically long winded, run-on, six verse declaration of the predestinated inheritance obtained by those "...who first trusted in Christ..."⁸ (v. 7-12), Paul states in Ephesians 1:13-14:

"In whom ye also trusted(2), after that ye heard the word of truth(1), the gospel of your salvation(3): in whom also after that ye believed(4), ye were sealed with the holy Spirit(5) of promise(5a), which is the earnest of our inheritance(6) *until* the redemption of the purchased possession(7), unto the praise of his glory(8)."

This I believe summarizes the entire substance and ordered steps of salvation as taught in these verses and others, without reference to water baptism:

1. *Hear* the truthful Word
2. *Trust* in Christ
3. (1 and 2) *combined* comprise faith in the *gospel of salvation*
- 4.&.5 *Salvation is sealed by the Spirit at the point of belief*
- 5a.&.6. *The Spirit's promise is earnest money (down payment) on eternal life*
7. *Final payment* on the *already secured* possession is *made at redemption*⁹
8. *All is for* the praise of *Christ's glory*.

It is clear from Paul's statement (argued elsewhere also), that water baptism is not necessary to secure eternal salvation. This is the Bible's position. Further, the appositional implications of this truth are considered: One, if baptismal regeneration (BR) is *not* taught in scripture, are *all those* who believe this error eternally lost? Two, if one confessing Christ fails to be baptized, is that one eternally lost? This mini apologia attempts to demonstrate both these implied questions are answered in the *negative*.

Five Selected Texts

[a] "For Christ sent me not to baptize, [b] *but to preach the gospel*: [c] not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." (Paul speaking in 1 Cor 1:17)

"When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples), He left Judea, and departed again into Galilee" (John 4:1-3). (§3)

Considering this text in various Bible versions, they each state Christ did not baptize. Jesus baptized no one by water immersion, but baptized them *into Him*. "The Savior of the world must have deliberately avoided baptizing to make it clear that [water] baptism has no part in salvation" (§19).

Yet, three texts, at minimum, are claimed proof of BR. Two texts, Mark 16:16 and 1 Peter 3:21, correctly interpreted, mean baptized **by** the Holy Spirit and **by** the **water** of the **Living Word**. These are the means of effecting salvation by faith alone, in Christ alone. Jesus is that Living Word. We are baptized *into Him*, and eternally *remain in Him*, even without a trip to the baptistery. "...the very purpose of coming to Christ is to be cleansed, *and this* [requirement to be baptized] frustrates [the application of] the grace of God.¹⁰ A third text, Acts 2:37-41, fails to demonstrate *compulsion* to baptize *now*, in this Church Age, because Peter's text speaks to unredeemed Israel, yet under the requirements of the Law, during that dispensation. (See Endnote 20 on 'Right Division'.) Water baptism rightly *follows* regenerate faith.

II Highlights of Hunt's Tract

Hunt's Challenge

Dave Hunt declares:

"If baptism is essential for salvation, then to reject that gospel is to be damned. But if salvation is through faith in Christ alone, then to add baptism as a condition for salvation is to reject the true gospel and thus be eternally lost." (§ 9) (see section VI)

Texts Clarifying the Place of Baptism

Selected Texts from Hunt's tract, with my understanding of their meaning:

Matt 28:19-20: Baptism *in the name of the Godhead, not in the name of water*. (§1,6)

Acts 8:35-37: "Thou *mayest*" signifies *permission* to baptize. (§6)

Acts 16:31-34: Water baptism *after* belief, not belief contingent upon baptism. (§8,11)

Acts 10:43-47: No statement of compulsion to baptize; this text teaches that '*whosoever*' *having been baptized by/of the Holy Spirit (is saved) and may not be denied the right to public declaration of their faith through water baptism; water baptism is available to all who believe*. (§7,11)

Acts 10:33, et al: One must be able to *comprehend* the gospel to receive it. Refutes infant baptism and seriously questions some pedobaptism. (§7-8)

1 Cor 15:1-4: "When Paul reminded the Corinthians of the *essential* ingredients of the gospel which he preached, *and by which they had been saved*, he made *no mention of baptism*". (§ 10)

Seven Other Baptisms

Seven (7) baptisms not related to water baptism, as listed in Hunt's tract:

1. Baptism of the Israelites into Moses: 1 Cor 10:2 (¶13)
2. Baptism of Repentance or Baptism of John. [Note: John was preaching the **Kingdom Gospel, not the Gospel of Salvation effective in this Church Age**]: Matt 21:25, Mark 1:4, 11:30, Luke 3:3, Acts 19:3-4. (¶13)
3. Baptism attributed to Christ before the Cross: John 4:1-2, 3:22. (¶13)
4. Baptism Christ had to endure: Matt 20:22, Mark 10:38, Luke 12:50. (¶13)
5. Baptism on believers by the Holy Ghost and with Fire: Matt 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5, 11:16. (¶13)
6. Baptism by the Holy Spirit into Jesus' death: Rom 6:3-4, Gal 3:27, Col 2:12. (¶13)
7. Baptism by the Holy Spirit into the Church Body, the One Body: 1 Cor 12:13. (¶13)

One Body, One Baptism

Hunt's statement, "There is....**one** baptism (Eph 4:4-5)...proves that one's salvation can never be lost" (¶14), does not contradict Hunt's listing above of **seven** other baptisms. Those are not **the baptism** securing one's salvation. (See also Point 9, Section V).

III First Correction of Baptismal Regeneration

First scriptural correction of BR: Water baptism *symbolizes* the spiritual reality of resurrection (Rom 6:6-13, Gal 2:20.) **Without the symbol, the reality is yet the same.** Salvation is secured in repentant belief, i.e., in identification and right standing in Christ, not ceremonial *action* (John 3:16, 18, 36, 5:24, Acts 10:43, 13: 38-39, 16:31, Rom 1:16, 3:28, 4:24, 5:1, 1Cor 1:21, 15:1-4, Eph 2:8.) "That a Christian may [does] sin shows that water baptism doesn't effect a **literal** crucifixion with Christ (emphasis mine). It portrays a *spiritual baptism into Christ* which the believer must live by faith." (¶17) Paying attention to this scripture, *we obey Christ, by applying Paul's example* in [b] of the text. [a]"For Christ sent me not to baptize, [b] *but to preach the gospel*: [c] not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (1 Cor 1:17). ([a] will be covered later; and [c], the Cross of Christ, is a topic for a separate apologetic.) I ask the reader to think about this: Since baptism *symbolizes not only* the reality of our *spiritual death and resurrection* in Christ's death, burial and resurrection, occurring approximately 2,000 years ago, **but also symbolizes the future reality**, i.e., our physical resurrection in our new bodies, how can we justify getting ahead of Christ before He fully manifests this reality in our lives?¹¹ I believe it presumes upon God to define the purpose of water baptism beyond the singular purpose the Word teaches: Baptism is a witness to God's glory.¹² Using as *evidence of salvation*, the fact of water baptism, places baptism beyond what it is designed by God to accomplish. To willfully misappropriate the act of water baptism, claiming its practice secures *future* bodily resurrection, seems to me, evidence of arrogance, moving ahead of God's program. (See Endnotes 7,12) Unless water baptism testifies to a *previously* established salvation of that soul, this act only provides fuel for the adversary to delude the one in their lost state, rather than bringing glory to God. (See also # 10, section V.)

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Yes, Christ said we must be "born [again] of *water* and of the *Spirit*" to be saved, (Jn 3:5), but it is unwarranted to assume that 'water' here means [water] baptism. ***To do so would contradict the wealth of Scripture...which proves salvation is not by baptism***" (§19, emphasis mine), including these scriptures, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3) and "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1Peter 1:23.)

IV Jewish Mikvah

Of ancillary interest is the fact of Jewish mikvah (§20), a washing, a cleansing of *temporal* significance. (See Ex 30, 40, Lev 13, 15, Acts 2:38, 22:16.) In John 3:3,5,7, Jesus is answering Nicodemus' question in a manner that this Jewish man could understand. Water would not have signified immersion as practiced in the baptismal rite of spiritually dying with Christ. Christ communicated to Nicodemus that "His [Christ's] death would make it possible to 'sanctify and cleanse [His church] with the **washing of water by the word** [of the gospel] (Eph 5:25-27) (§20). 'Water' must be understood here in its cultural context. Using immersion to prove BR, is erroneous. Jewish or Catholic concepts cannot describe baptism by the Holy Spirit and by The Word.¹³

V A Ten Point Primer on Water Baptism

1. Water baptism is **not** required to effect salvation.
2. Baptism by the Holy Spirit and the washing of the Word **is** required to effect salvation.
3. Baptism performed, *symbolizes* faith, but does not *secure* it. It is a voluntary *act of obedience entered into for the sole purpose of publicly 'announcing' one's agreement to be identified with and positioned in Christ's substitute death, burial and resurrection. It provides the figurative (1 Pet 3:21), post factum participation in Christ's death, burial and resurrection, giving glory to God, after one has declared their faith in Christ.*
4. At the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSC), the true converted soul, having reached adulthood, and having willfully failed to take advantage of an opportunity to publicly profess their faith by baptism, will likely suffer loss of reward, yet not loss of salvation.
5. Baptism should be conducted when the one being baptized requests the rite, as a result of voluntarily communicated comprehension of their repentance unto salvation. This rules out the efficacy of infant baptism and brings into serious question the value of baptism for young children, especially those responding to peer pressure, the wishes of parents, or competing to match 'what sister or brother did'. Baptism should not be used as a 'life jacket' in an attempt to have the child 'model salvation,' prior to the child comprehending the true nature of their sin and need to repent and be saved. When a child dies young, they are under the age of accountability. By second guessing the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a young child, parents can influence that child to 'wade into the river and perhaps into hell', by *assuming* the child's baptism at a young

age is evidence of salvation, yet ignoring the continuing evidence as he or she grows older that signifies a lost, carnal soul, never having been to the foot of the Cross.¹⁴

6. When conducted, baptism should be by full immersion, except when physically impossible, and by someone else immersing the baptized convert, rather than the individual immersing themselves, as in Jewish mikvah. Christ was entirely buried by others, in burial clothes prepared by others, and in a borrowed tomb.¹⁵

7. It is not biblically justified to deny any adult request for voluntary baptism, based on the belief that it is a 'useless ritual' and identifies one with 'dead law' rather than 'live grace'. The Bible neither compels baptism as necessary for salvation nor prohibits the practice as useless or detrimental. Significantly, this contrarily observed belief is held by some sects, fellowships and movements within Christian Protestantism.¹⁶

8. Repeated baptism, while revealing the lack of biblical understanding on the part of the one repeating the experience, does nothing to affect eternal security. Only the true convert in Christ enters heaven and cannot be denied entry based on not having been water baptized. Nor will anyone be rewarded for repeated baptisms, conducted when one feels they've 'fallen away' and must be restored.

9. A topic for a *separate* discussion, is the recognition that *individual saved* persons are, in their individual state, *subordinate* in the larger purpose of building¹⁷ Christ's Body, His true *saved* Church. His Body is the collective *corpus* of saved *individuals*. Our *individuality* as believers (with the 'credential' of BR some would like us to produce) is entirely *renounced*, as we continually die to self, allowing Christ to conform us to the *corporate* image He alone has determined for His Body. Need we be reminded that much of the spiritual slag of this life is composed of the refuse we produce as we learn to *defer* to the other members of our body, learn to *think better of them than ourselves*, and become *more* selfless and *less* selfish. Therefore, we must be careful in requiring tangible, physical evidence of *who* are true *individual* members of the Body of Christ, defining the boundary of who is 'in' and who is 'out' *based on the traditions of men*. Inspecting baptismal certificates is paltry criteria in recognizing *who* is a member of this blood bought, betrothed, spiritual, eternal, mysterious, justified, blessed, dynamic, living, growing, sanctified, royal priesthood of the soon translated, *whole* Body of Christ.¹⁸

10. *An unregenerate individual can request and participate in a baptismal service.* Likely, some have, and do. *This 'credential' aside, the one baptized is nonetheless damned if their heart's not been washed in the blood of Jesus.* We do not know for certain, *who is saved*, with or without any attending physical evidence of a person's baptism. *Only our Father in heaven is the author of the Lamb's Book of Life.* Therefore, it remains more productive to encourage participation in truly revealing activities of Body Life. Participation in these will much more clearly expose the condition of an unrepentant heart. ***Water always seeks its own level.*** The unregenerate will *eventually* tire of feeding with the true sheep (Acts 13:43). They will reveal 'who' they are without having to pass the 'baptism' test. They will *eventually* abandon fellowship with the true flock (1 John 2:19); they will *eventually* abandon reading God's Word (John 8:31); they will *eventually* abandon 'prayer without ceasing' (1 Thes 5:17); they will not desire to 'see all of life' through the lens of God's truth, His written Word (Psa 10:4b); they will not know or seek to share His truth with others (2 Tim 2:2). These are more accurate indicators of lack of salvation, than whether one has been baptized.¹⁹

VI Right Division of Scripture Necessary to Correct Error

Where I believe Dave Hunt chose not to, I have left the 'door open' to apply a generous sprinkling of *God's gracious, longsuffering patience* on this topic. I have used Hunt's tract for years, and will continue to use it to encourage others *to trust, obey and be baptized by correctly understanding the biblical basis for such*, accurately comprehending the symbolic act. Hunt's tract competently corrects the **clearly false Romanist** interpretation and application of 'baptism,' and nearly as thoroughly addresses the **not altogether clear, incorrect teachings** of some non-Romanists who, while not denying the need to trust Christ for their salvation, look also for a 'safety net' in baptism. Of note, I think there is more to understand about this error, i.e., believing water baptism is required for salvation, than first meets the eye. Some who embrace BR are confused by the 'right division' issues²⁰ in 'commands' to be baptized. Education can remedy this *if one's heart is not hard*. There are clear distinctions, between (*false teaching*) and (*incorrect teaching and belief*). The former always addresses core issues of the faith, and presents itself through unrepenting vessels. The latter *may* address core issues, often addresses peripheral issues, yet presents through vessels amenable to correction, even if that response to correction is delayed.²¹

The Word Corrects This and All Error (2 Tim 3:16)

Clearly, if out of one's mouth comes, "You *must* be water baptized to be saved from hell," this one is speaking doctrinal error, **but likely they may not even know it!** It is only now, after several years of using Hunt's tract and more Bible study, that I've more fully understood the implications of the topic. This I believe is accurate: Those truly saved, yet believing they should be baptized in order to *effect* their salvation, suffer loss of reward in eternity for believing (and teaching) this error, unless, *when correction* is presented to them, *they heed the correction*. True followers of Christ *will* respond to correction. But this begs the question: *Correction by whom or what? The correction is presented in the Word of God!* (2 Tim 3:16) Inadequate knowledge of God's Word, i.e., failing to know His truth, will be the *evidence* presented at the **JSC**, validating a loss of reward, but that individual likely rewarded for *other* work well done. But here's what I've learned in the last nearly twenty years: I, like most Bereans (Acts 17:10), didn't understand **before** what I understand **now**...*on any number of topics!* (And this mark of growth is continually repeated.) Faith in, and walking with Christ, is a dynamic, rather than static process. May we each continue to grow in the truthful knowledge of the Word, *as the Holy Spirit*, and *not man*, corrects us in our understanding of God's Word.

Baptismal Regeneration: Evidence of Damnation or Self Imposed Burden?²²

This seems clear to me: claiming one *must* be baptized, is not, **only** of itself, a disqualifier in eternal salvation. It is critical to acknowledge this truth: 'How much light we have'²³ is a factor in God's assessment of this practiced error in the life of any soul. By virtue of reading Hunt's tract, or this research, the reader **is** offered truthful knowledge and understanding,²⁴ shedding light on this vitally important subject. We **are held accountable** for what we do with the knowledge and understanding placed in our hands. Yet, saved souls entering eternity, *not having been offered* prior correction of their belief in baptismal regeneration, will be subject to a *lesser level* of correction than those whose *opportunities*²⁵ for edification were greater.²⁶ It seems clear to me,

damnation is not the only end for one believing they *must be water baptized*. If truly saved, *correction*, and not hell awaits this one. The doctrinal teaching on all baptism(s), and their purpose and priority in God's dispensational program is *easily misunderstood*.

Dave Hunt declares:

"If baptism is essential for salvation, then to reject that gospel is to be damned. But if salvation is through faith in Christ alone, then to add baptism as a condition for salvation *is to reject the true gospel and thus be eternally lost.*" (§ 9) [Italics mine.]

I do not agree that *wrong understanding of the purpose* of one's water baptism is evidence of tampering with scripture, causing one "... *to reject the true gospel and thus be eternally lost.*" I believe Hunt's tract errs *in*, but perhaps not *by* including this dogma on 'rejection of the true gospel'. It is often better to conservatively influence on the side of caution rather than with lesser, deficient caution. If this precise wording Hunt chose applies to Romanist teaching and not to beliefs held by those who are truly born again, it well serves its purpose to challenge the thinking of so many who've been *wrongly taught*. This *is* Hunt's 'stock and trade', motivating readers to become Berean searchers of God's truth and thereby fulfill Phil 2:12, 1 Jn 2:27 and 1 Cor 11:31.

Yet, I think a better analysis says belief in BR by a saved soul *is a self-imposed* burden or test, an *unnecessary weight to carry*, a weight that one should *not* ask others also to shoulder, by teaching as 'gospel' the error of BR. Such an error in practice *may* be explained by incorrect belief, and no more. *Not all Galatians were damned!* Many were/are corrected, edified, and some likely at the JSC. There *is* a blinding --an obtuseness associated with the unwilling, stubborn inability of some to be corrected in their understanding of God's Word on particular doctrinal points --while this soul is yet saved. Since much of the rewards given the Body of Christ at the **JSC** will focus on one's correct understanding and application of God's truth, it behooves the wise follower of Christ to *continually* consider their understanding and application of the scriptures.

And those who are *not* truly saved will not be able to present in eternity their baptism or teaching of baptism as part of a counterfeit 'entrance ticket' to heaven. False beliefs held by the unrepentant soul, on all topics of spiritual discussion, are merely smokescreens, obfuscating the larger issue of that one's lack of regeneration.²⁷

Mr. Hunt could counter my conclusions here by stating that his tract seeks only to address the doctrinal inefficacy of the belief, and does not attempt to judge individual believers. However, we must consider the *effect* our doctrinal corrections work. Teachers will answer at the JSC for even unintended effects of their correction. It's the *implication* of the correction I'm concerned about. I know this about sharing spiritual truth with others: Often, many are more concerned about deflecting a *perceived* finger pointed at them, than they are about *simply considering the objective facts* of a *situation* when brought to their attention. *Knowing truth is vital*, yet I believe it is necessary to *always* make sure we've thoroughly 'plugged the drain hole', so the baby²⁸ won't wash away with the bath water, in this case, a 'BR believing baby', *if all other evidence indicates the baby is a true child of God*. (But then, Hunt is a father and I'm a mother. Perhaps our different perspectives on 'bath time', i.e., cleaning up spiritual error, explain our different orientations.) Let all of us cautiously endeavor to permit our *faith* to inform our perspective, rather than our *perspective* to inform our faith.²⁹

VII The Holy Spirit, Not Water, Seals A Soul

Key: Purpose of Water Baptism taught by Ecclesiology, Not Soteriology

If a soul *is* truly regenerate, the Holy Spirit having sealed³⁰ that life, then *nothing*³¹ can prevent the final, permanent, eternal, bodily resurrection, i.e., salvation of that soul in Christ,³² *not even the failure or inability in this life to partake of water baptism. **Salvation is never about our honor, goodness or performance. It is always about His.*** (Those fourteen words are not offered as affirmation of the convoluted arguments presented by hard shell predestinationists, specifically the teachings on 'Total Depravity,' the "T" of TULIP. See Hunt's seminal work on this topic, **What Love is This?**) But regarding BR, some among Nazarene, Holiness, Pentecostal, Church of God, Church of Christ, etc. and other fundamental fellowships do not believe the clear biblical truth of eternal security, which is *correctly apprehended now*, only as an *intangible concept*. Therefore, then, these look for *tangible* means to recognize genuine faith, such as water baptism. While *this grieves the Holy Spirit of promise*, (Eph 1:13, 4:30), this evidence of infancy (Heb 5:12-13) does not damn true babes in Christ. Validating fear of possibly *losing* one's salvation is **not** taught in scripture, *although fear of never gaining salvation due to false profession of faith or failure to respond to the gospel IS taught in scripture*. Water baptism is *not* an element of *salvation, a doctrine of soteriology, the study of redemption*. Baptism is an element of one's testimony to *faith, a doctrine of ecclesiology, the study of the Church*.

Roman Catholic Belief Compared to Protestant Belief in BR

Even though God is not a 'god of relativism,' i.e., varying or negotiating on the criteria for admission to eternal life,³³ He *is* a God of grace,³⁴ unless one fails to *receive that grace, and according to the clear gospel*. So, we should ask, "Is there a difference between a Roman Catholic believing they must undergo Catholic baptism and a member of the Church of Christ or other believing they must be water baptized?" *There is much difference, if the comparison considers, among many errors, the Romanists' embrace of Mary as co-redeemer; belief God ordains His Son be crucified, repeatedly,³⁵ and belief that a fallible, mortal man can ritually re-create Christ's body and blood.³⁶ These errors are *not believed* by the above cited fellowships, but, many of these *do* feel strongly about baptism as a sign of salvation. I do not think belief in BR is entirely settled by stating that those who hold to this view are 'adding to the gospel,' which is clearly forbidden.³⁷ Certainly, *one must truly be saved*³⁸ *according to the simple criteria of repentant faith in Christ alone*. Yet, if one believes they *must* be baptized as a demonstration of their faith, and *without that demonstration* their faith is lacking, this *may* be a result of inability to understand otherwise, and not evidence of being 'eternally lost' (¶9). [Note: It is also incorrect to teach the handling of rattlesnakes as proof of salvation, a 'rite' practiced in my neck of the woods. But I must accept that at least some snake handlers are likely saved.] It is not correct to teach that *any physical evidence* is required to validate/secure salvation. *Yet, legalists love to invoke litmus tests!* While it is true some legalists are lost souls, others are merely annoying and will eventually be corrected, in this life or the next. Further, some legalists attempt to cover their tracks by distancing themselves from any hint of 'Jewish' flavored litmus tests, hoping to not look like the Galatians they are. These naturally seek out such issues as compulsory baptism, dress codes, covenanting, Bible versions, etc. as valid tests.*

Yet, salvation is a spiritual fact. Only God, who is Spirit, is the gatekeeper. Yes, He does not arbitrarily open the gate, and He has not left us outside the gate, without providing us the key to unlock the gate. He has not hidden His truth from the eyes and ears of those who truly seek to find Him (Heb 11:6) in the *only source* of His truth, the Holy Bible. Certainly, belief in Roman Catholic BR, and/or Romanist beliefs beyond those outlined in Hunt's tract, *rather than belief limited to the Bible's teachings*, unequivocally leads to hell. Those claiming born again status as Catholics must *come out of 'her', the harlot* (Rev 18:4). *Remaining within signifies a lost soul.* Yet, others in Protestant fellowships cannot necessarily be identified the same, even if they hold in common one belief with Catholics. Often, I challenge others to think about the veracity of their guarded beliefs by simply suggesting they consider the 'company they're keeping' by *sharing in common* a belief with a *false religion, sect or cult.* The Bible teaches *congruity* in our held beliefs as Christ's unified Body. One of the first hints that we might be off base in holding to one of our beliefs is offered in looking around to see *who else* claims that belief among these errant groups. True biblical faith is consistently applicable among all groups who walk circumspect before the Lord. Hence, characteristics of *our faith held in common with any outside* biblical faith ought to make us question those characteristics, in order that we might not suffer loss at the JSC.

Let Us Respect the High Cost Paid for Some Water Baptisms

Jesus commands us to publicly testify of our faith in Him, even unto physical death if necessary. Water baptism is only **one** demonstration of this testimony! Yet, even practiced in secret, perhaps by only the one baptizing and the one baptized, in earth's darkest corners inhabited by persecuted Christians, this *voluntary water* baptism is demonstration of obedience in testifying of Christ, *not* of one's allegiance to any code of man calling for *compulsory* baptism. One of the 'heart' issues regarding belief in this error of Baptismal Regeneration is caring about fellow sisters and brothers around the world, who engage in this *voluntary* practice *under very real threat of death.* These persecuted saints are not at all concerned about the earthly requirements of men, satisfying any sect's misunderstanding of baptism and call to prove one's faith.³⁹

Love is Best Leverage in Leading to the River

Sometimes, the scaremongering influence of a 'heavy handed' shepherd (some are mere hirelings) intimidates and accuses the weaker sheep of 'falling away', 'bringing reproach on the church', 'being out of fellowship,' or being 'backslidden'.⁴⁰ Generally, these men simply cannot 'control' the sheep in a manner they believe is their right and duty. When resistance surfaces to their teachings or directions, or they cannot induce participation in their programs, they resort to shaming rather than leading the sheep by example. There are many ways to alienate people, and only a few ways of drawing them to us with bands of love.⁴¹ (No doubt, living 1 Tim 5 is an arduous undertaking.)

Among some of these BR fellowships, conformance to participation in the rite of water baptism is viewed as a test of loyalty to the leadership and cohesion of the group. Since it is not possible to access the heart, to observe and be party to the intimate process of being born again and growing in grace, as growth progresses in the saved spirit through the work of the Holy Spirit, the only option left to exert control is monitoring prescribed behaviors and applying any number of litmus tests. It becomes vitally important in these groups to build a high gate with many padlocks, barring any who will

not submit to the authoritarian leadership. Requiring total compliance with prescribed behaviors, including baptism, and, --*claiming the authority of scripture* for this requirement -- certainly must increase the number of voluntary and coerced baptisms, among all ages. Sometimes it may take years, but cajoling often works to get one considered a 'backslider' into the baptistery or the local river. *Then, all is likely lost.* Once that soul has been convinced that an outward display of moral behavior⁴² **and** conformance to the traditions, commandments and praise of men,⁴³ **and** church attendance, **and** the pronouncement, as **stated by men**, "*this soul is now saved*" by *participating in water baptism --the likelihood of this individual ever coming to the foot of the cross,*⁴⁴ *seeking true salvation, is slim.* For **contributing to** this possible scenario in the life of another, *one will suffer swift correction and great loss of reward in eternity.*⁴⁵

VIII Proof Texting Perpetuates Error

Finally, the error of conclusively stating that Mark 16:16 and 1 Pet 3:21 prove that baptism is required for salvation, only proves that 'proof-texting' is an ineffective manner of summarizing the truth of God's Word.⁴⁶ Text(s), taken out of context, merely become a pre-text in one's attempt to prove X by use of the text(s).⁴⁷ This is not some clever tongue twister, pointing to a dubious shell game of words. It is a caution for all engaged in shepherding or teaching. It is a lifelong endeavor to learn *the best texts, in the best sequence and application, that best serve to teach the theology and doctrines of the Bible.* Seeking the *whole counsel of God* must be the *process* of our search for God's truth, and *allowing scripture to interpret scripture* must be the principle that guides that search. Paul's example in our introductory verse, 1 Cor 1:17 is the **second scriptural correction of BR.** "For Christ *sent me not* to baptize..." These seven words should serve as a huge, Amber alert-type flashing road sign for us. If you don't get the point that baptism does *not* provide any means of salvation, but preaching the Word *does*, then you may have *missed the point entirely.* Although you may have missed the point, there's every reason to understand *why*, and be *corrected by the Word.* *Knowing the order, priority, sequence, and purpose of God's truths is vitally important.* There's nothing wrong with baptizing, and everything right. There is something very wrong, however, with failing to teach baptism according to the order, priority, sequence and purpose God has assigned baptism in the entire glorious revelation of truth in His Word.

From any Angle, the View's the Same

Are you born again? Are you water baptized? If you are God's child, there's every *good* reason to make this public declaration of one's faith in Christ. Your *respect for and love of the written Word* **now** will reflect much on your standing in eternity as you reign **with** the *Living Word*, Jesus. Just make sure you correctly understand *why* you're being baptized and what it signifies in your identity and standing in Christ Jesus. *To incorrectly* understand the place and purpose of baptism opens your mind to *other incorrect belief*, reducing God's ability to use your walk and witness for His glory.

Error is Both Spoken and Swallowed⁴⁸ (and may be retrieved or regurgitated)

This research asked, "Are *all lost* who claim baptismal regeneration is biblical?" This question expanded to consider two sub questions, and, whether false belief is best explained by incorrect teaching or incorrect understanding of the Word. I believe the

answer to the initial question is no, *if the one believing BR is born again*. The answer to the sub questions certainly must be false also. If saved, believing baptism regenerates does not nullify that faith, or, if saved, but lacking water baptism, that faith is also valid. It may serve no good purpose to condemn one who incorrectly teaches or believes. Better counsel trusts the Holy Spirit will, over time, continually wash minds and hearts with the water of the Word, bringing understanding and recognition of the place and purpose of baptism as a *symbolic* act, yet an act that should be performed. This grace glorifies God. Truthfully applying God's Word *never returns void*. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it." (Isa 55:11)

IX No Cure in This Life for Disagreement Among Members of the Body

We must realize the sinful condition of (even saved men's hearts⁴⁹) and minds prevents the resolution, in this life, of the inconsistencies in our beliefs in Christian doctrine and unity.⁵⁰ Sadly, *some actually prefer to flash a type of 'badge' declaring distinctions* between Body members, *rather than celebrate the commonality* among us.⁵¹ Truly, if we all agreed, that would pull down the barriers between us, and then, Baptist and Methodist and Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ, et al, would likely 'get along.' Paradoxically, *this is exactly what ecumenism is encouraging*. Syncretism, rather than biblically commanded separatism, has about completed its evil work to legitimize the synthesis of all beliefs to form the final, worldwide apostate 'church.' While I firmly agree the Bible does not teach baptismal regeneration, *I cannot say this particular false understanding even begins to compare with the stench reaching God's nostrils from the whoredom of the self discovery, self affirmation and self worship offered by the many claiming their programs accomplish worldwide 'purpose', 'renewal' and 'transformation' of the Body of Christ. Evidence of this Laodicean flesh is piled all around us while we must ask: where is the evidence of converted souls?* God is not mocked.⁵² For now, we ought to prayerfully seek strength for the continuing journey. It will likely become an even wilder ride before we hear the last trump⁵³ and are relieved of these many disagreements within the true confessing Body, *even questions on baptism*.

The Last Words on Baptism

Let us allow God's word to be the *last* word:

"...the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but *according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*" (Titus 3:4-5)

"...but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor 6:11b

¹ Contact Hunt at The Berean Call at www.thebereancall.org, POB 7019, Bend, OR 97708-7019, 800-937-6638.

² E. TN Theological Museum and Research Center is in development near the Smoky Mountain National Park. Call M. J. Greene, 865.774.7895, mjfromtn@webtv.net. The ministry of PPRS, Inc. researches ↓

topics relevant to the defense of the faith; recommends credible ministry resources; and develops teaching materials for the purpose of *challenging professing members* of the Body of Christ to *examine themselves to see if they truly are in the faith* (2 Cor 13:5), *diligently study the Word of God* (2 Tim 2:15), *separate from false spiritual belief and practice* (2 Cor 6:14-18), and *glory only in increasing knowledge of the cross of Christ* (Jer 9:23-24 and 1 Cor 1:31). **Some of the Endnotes of this work provide a 'mini apologetic' of selected teachings, beyond that of baptism.**

³ Plagiarism is increasing, not decreasing, even among *professing* members of the Body of Christ. I've been asked why I cite so many references. I believe Solomon got it right: There *is nothing new* under the sun. Therefore, none of us have truly 'original' thoughts. We simply 'express' thoughts in ever changing, varying ways. Some of these 'expressions' are more accurate and compelling than others; Some research is more thorough and credible than other research. **Hence, the temptation, even for Christians, to plagiarize.** Especially among Christian writers, their character and integrity is reflected in how they use or fail to use notes and references. It would appear that some have the attitude, "I've read this; now I'll *use it as I like.*" The audacity of some is amazing. Copyright compliance is about keeping oneself on the straight and narrow, for which we will all answer in eternity, before our God who has *every jot and tittle catalogued as to its original source.* Over forty years ago in high school Lit and Comp class I was trained to accurately *cite sources, a practice I continue.* I expect nothing less from my readers and critics.

⁴ The irrefutable Law of Non-contradiction proves *both* these opposing views cannot be true, and requires a stand.

⁵ As the *indivisible, unified* Body of Christ, I believe we hold these *opposing views* on baptism within a context of 1 Cor 13:12, "...seeing through a glass darkly." So, if we're not persuaded by the argument of scripture, we are still called to be at peace and trust that God will clarify all in His timing. Yet many claim those holding an *opposing view* on BR are lost --no matter which they support. I believe this is an incorrect conclusion *on both sides.* While it is clear to me there are certain theological questions which clearly distinguish sheep from goats, I do not believe this is one of them, *absent any further evidence the individuals in question fail to affirm biblical truth in their witness.*

⁶ Some believe there is merit in mastering biblical Hebrew, Aramaic and/or Greek in order to be armed *to correct* others' understanding of *English!* I do not see many laymen able to accomplish this feat. Most lay language students gain just enough command of the linguistic components to be dangerous. Moreover, it is ultimately a *matter* of the heart what we conclude to believe on any matter. I, as much as anyone, respect the value of studying the truth of God's Word, and that truth in the received languages certainly *may* give us insights 'lost in translation'. Yet, when all is said, it is not *education*, but *orientation* that determines what we choose to believe, regardless of the language we believe it in. God promises in His Word that He will not abandon any true seeker of His truth. (See exception in Endnote number 21.) If you and I don't agree today, this does not mean in eternity we'll not see eye to eye. I pray this caution will temper analysis of what I offer here, as I allow it to temper assessment in my research.

⁷ "The thirteen Epistles of Paul (Romans to Philemon) form a ***distinct body of truth***; and this realm of truth is about us, the Church, the Body and Bride of Christ, as no other Scriptures are. And Paul is the Father's special messenger to us...Israel was, and in God's gracious purpose is yet to be, His earthly people. That is, their calling is to represent God on the earth, as the chief nation of the earth, dwelling in a special country, in an earthly order of things, with earthly hopes, rewards, etc. But the Church, the Body of Christ, into which, in the Fathers' wondrous grace, we have been called, is heavenly. The church has nothing to do with the earth, except to witness in the name of the Lord, and then pass on into glory, into heaven, her eternal home." (***Pauline Dispensationalism***, Miles J. Stanford, pp. 55-56.) (Contact www.mjsbooks.com to purchase this booklet and other material on spiritual growth.)

⁸ Let us *understand* (see Endnote 24 on understanding) that the Apostle *Paul did not suffer* from lack of skill in his command of syntax (the grammatical pattern exemplified by a writer in their order and use of words to form phrases, building sentences). Regarding at least this one point, most Bible versions *other than* the King James, fail to maintain Paul's syntax. *Therefore, often, they fail to maintain his meaning.* Other versions often short change the reader by 'tidying' up Paul's syntax. Thinking of one man I know who complains Paul's meanings (and others) are not clearly and easily discernable in the KJV, hence *this man's preference for the NIV (the 'New Inspired Version' as he calls it)*, I laugh with God at this *attorney's* complaint! (Psalm 37:12-15) Of *all* persons justifiably qualified to complain that Paul's work lacks unclouded thought and clarity, *a lawyer is not one!* Paul's syntax *is critically important* in maintaining the full weight of meaning, intensity of light, hue of color and force of thought in the divine truths he was commissioned to teach. Any Bible student looking for more understanding of the KJV, especially Paul's writings (his work forming the core of Christian doctrine) should try studying *phrase by phrase* rather than verse by verse. Extra time and effort profits our study. After all, we're trying to *bite off, chew, swallow, digest and profit from the revealed truth of the Most High God!* How 'easy' a task should we expect this to be?

⁹ Those of us 'ancient' enough to remember 'redemption stamp centers' can appreciate the analogy this graphic example provides. "Redemption Center: a commercial establishment at which trading stamps of a specific brand may be exchanged for merchandise." (Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, p. 1615) *Note: one had to be loyal to a particular brand in order to redeem stamps for rewards.* As a young child over fifty years ago, my interest in redeeming the green (and sometimes yellow stamps) was quite elementary. Every few months my mother would have me sit down with sponge in hand and prepare these books to exchange at the redemption store. I enjoyed the challenge of matching up the different groupings of stamps to fill in one page at a time. I anticipated the merit of my 'work' for my mother. How quickly could I get the pages filled? How many books would I fill up? Would my mother be pleased with my 'work?' As a child I did not comprehend what maturity provided later: *until the filled books were taken to the redemption store, and given up in exchange for the toaster or the clock or the fountain pen, the books offered no true value, despite my childish interest in them.* The filled books were merely symbols of possessions not yet in hand, but **promised in the future and secured by the character of the S & H Company** (that edifice now dissolved, like all others man builds.) When we obey in childlike obedience and are baptized by the Spirit and the washing of the Word, and declare this fact by our water baptism (filling the books with stamps), that water baptism merely *symbolizes* our eternal spiritual inheritance (the anticipated gift), waiting for the time it will be redeemed for the real thing (filled books exchanged at the redemption center for the desired gift), either at death or the gathering of the saints. This is what we finally learn when we understand *our eternal life is not secured by earthly elements!* We are truly alien creatures, heavenly creatures, in a foreign land. Physical (fleshly acts) have no legitimate connection to our spiritual inheritance.

¹⁰ 'Faith and Repentance', p. 3, reprinted by permission from *A Dispensational Theology*, by Charles F. Baker.

¹¹ "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves *groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*" (Rom 8:23)

¹² After prayer, the first step in discerning biblical truth involves correct understanding of the Bible's theme. Covenant and Reform theologies claim the Bible's theme is the Plan of Redemption. This is incorrect. Revealing God's redemptive plan is the primary *subordinate* feature of the Bible's grand theme: the revelation of God's glory. Understanding this distinction enables the Bible student to profit from the whole counsel of God, its entire theme and purpose, not just the primary subordinate theme and purpose: salvation. Correct understanding of the symbolic purpose of baptism is easily understood if dispensational truth is applied *rather than* the BR arguments applied by some who claim Covenant or Reform orientations. God's glorious character is not the theme in those theologies.

¹³ Those walking in Messianic Jewish fellowship would be wise to heed this fact. We do have liberty in Christ to *fellowship in various contexts* (though *not different*, Acts 15:7-11) if these bring biblically sound glory to God. Yet much over the years has transformed this movement from prior legitimate fellowship to now, an often apostate environment breeding non-biblical beliefs and practices. See *Messianic Judaism is Not Christianity*, by Stan Telchin, (2004), Chosen Books, a division of Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, ISBN: 0800793722.

¹⁴ This sorrowful scenario is deeply rooted in a 'spirit of religiosity' where I've come to live in the 'Buckle of the Bible Belt', specifically, in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains in east Tennessee. Getting to know and fellowship with hundreds since moving here in 1998, I've continually grieved in my spirit over the near mass delusion with most believing, that somehow, nearly *everyone* must be saved. Within the burial industry this fact is commonly admitted: *never* is it acknowledged that souls die and go to hell. Preachers readily admit, "I've never conducted a graveside service of the lost." We do *not* know for *certain* the fate of any soul, except our own if we've truly been born again. Yet there are far too many well meaning yet deceived individuals who simply will not take the Word at face value. *Broad is the path of destruction...and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it.* (Matt 7:13-14). The reality is: most are damned, fewer are saved, and nothing to do with God preferring this. Sinful souls choose to reject eternal life. "And this is the condemnation, that light came into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19) It behooves *all parents* to realize the 'proof is in the pudding,' *not in the early stages of its making.* Rebellious and prodigal children, as adults, are yet able to repent and be saved, if in fact, their lost state is acknowledged and prayerfully challenged, rather than placated by loved ones ignoring the plain fact that *God has no grandchildren.*

¹⁵ Substituting Jewish mikvah in the place of New Testament baptism only takes the unsuspecting farther away from the truth that *only* repentant death, burial and resurrection *in Christ* provides salvation. Ceremonial mikvah is the rite performed by many Messianic Jewish congregations. Unless the distinctions are made clear, these also will enter eternity having come so close to the truth of salvation, yet nonetheless hearing, "I never knew you." (Matthew 7:23)

¹⁶ Warranting further research is an odd composite of confusing and contradictory spiritual beliefs and practices of some *professing members* of the Body of Christ. During the last ten years I've encountered followers of and studied the various beliefs and teachings of what some refer to as 'Grace' theology, systems of belief unworthy of this biblical name. (Some of these groups eschew baptism while others believe it contributes to salvation.) Presenting in no single form, with no single leader, and no single governing body, these worldwide movements, fellowships and ministries misinterpret and misapply many of the teachings about the Body of Christ, i.e., Paul's teachings. Running cross current through this spiritual amalgam are a variety of incongruous beliefs in spiritual error, ranging from hyper, ultra and progressive dispensationalism, Christian separatist and conspiracy philosophy, 'biblically sanctioned' (veiled) anti-Semitism, Calvinism, Protestantism, Preterism, Christian nationalism/activism, Gnostic-elitist orientation (the 'mystery' of the church is *so mysterious* it's *hidden* from most who claim they are saved!), to strains of neo-Marcionism (Marcion was a heretic, teaching, among other errors, that Paul's writings alone are divine). A matrix of these and other beliefs form in movements and ideologies that flow in a wide, deep vein of error running through Christendom. Largely unrecognized in their apostate influence, individuals espousing these teachings are successfully forming some tentacles of the final counterfeit church. Other tentacles are forming through movements seeking to advance the 'New Reformation,' 'Third Wave' and 'Transformation' agendas. (See also Endnote 29) It is said that 'all truth meets at the top'. Certainly, all error must meet at the *root*. Evil's root manifests through 'angels of light.' Many claiming they are 'in Christ' are *deceived* simply by not *discerning what they read/hear*. Beloved: Learn to recognize spiritual error. Many visible programs and persons are teaching error.

¹⁷ "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18) Jesus' true Body is whole and healthy, not fractured and diseased.

¹⁸ Instructive answers are offered to the questions, "When did the local church begin?", "What is the Body of Christ?" and "What is the Bride of Christ?" at www.wayoflife.org, posted at "Are You a Baptist Brider?", 8-8-05. David Cloud may disagree with my perspectives offered here, yet I nonetheless concur with much of his research.

¹⁹ Every professing member of the Body of Christ is commanded to examine the veracity of their profession of faith and walk. Inquire with Glad Tidings, Inc. for materials and biblical counsel which effectively aid and encourage that examination. Especially request the teaching series aired on 8-11-05. Contact Gary Janes at POB 18824 Charlotte, NC 28218, www.gladtidingsradio.org, 704-617-0739, gtidings@bellsouth.net.

²⁰ "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman, that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word of truth*." (2 Tim 2:15) To correctly study and profit from scripture requires understanding **about whom an author of scripture is writing and to whom he is speaking**. Often we mix up texts, wrongly applying what is only directed to unsaved Jews, or unsaved Gentiles or the saved Church (comprised of both Jews and Gentiles.) Getting the 'division' right in our understanding of these distinct groups is what this verse teaches regarding 'rightly dividing'.

²¹ However, at, and after death, we have no ability to respond to correction of false belief, if false belief in this life negated one's correct belief in the only Gospel that saves, which is not water baptism. *There is no 'second chance' to get it right, to learn lessons from our mistakes or misunderstandings in this life; no access to self-conjured christ-consciousness; no universalism; no purgatory which others living may pray we receive an 'upgrade' in status; no reincarnation; no soul sleep; no nirvana; no karmic justice; no annihilation.* God's eternal, holy justice is swift, sovereign and declared *only* the Bible, the only divine text. "...now is the day of salvation." (2 Cor 6:2c) Time is no man's friend. Any 'faith' lacking these acts and processes --justification, redemption, grace, propitiation, imputation, forgiveness, sanctification and glorification -- is a dead faith with no power to save. Faith that damns is such because the held faith embraces a wrong *object* of faith. Receiving Christ's death in our place is the only object of saving faith. All other objects are counterfeits, no matter how bright that synthetic light may 'shine' in the life of the one embracing the counterfeit. **Counterfeit light is what the apostate church is peddling.**

²² Acts 15:10, 28, Gal 5:1, Rom 8:15, 1 Cor 4:22a

²³ "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105) Our *use of the lamp* will be judged.

²⁴ Knowledge: Prov 11:9, 9:10, 8:9-10, 5:2, 1:4,7, 2:3,5,6,10, Hos 6:6, Col 1:10, 2 Pet 1:2, 2:20, Rom 11:33
Understanding: Prov 1:2, 2:2, 3, 6, 11, 3:5, 13, 19, 4:1, 5:7.

²⁵ Regretfully, there are millions offered opportunity after opportunity every week to begin to search God's Word more thoroughly, and they let those opportunities pass. We are *personally* responsible to study God's Word.

²⁶ "But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." (Luke 12:48)

²⁷ Another credible source of information on regeneration, with correct discussion of baptism, is "*The Necessity of Regeneration*," by Bob DeWaay, in **Critical Issues Commentary**, Issue #29, July/August, 1995, Twin City Fellowship, POB 8068, Minneapolis, MN 55408, pastorbob@twincityfellowshp.com., 612.874.7484

²⁸ 1 Cor 3:1, Mark 10:15, Luke 18:17

²⁹ Perspective is the paramount issue in the reality of our *worldview*, a perspective *operating in every single individual*. What we believe constitutes all of reality, its cause and effect, is our worldview. This determines "who" or "what" we believe explains all of life, death and infinity. Clearly, born again followers of Christ must believe the Bible alone describes this worldview. Christian worldview is the sole truthful worldview (among many), based on the efficacy of its source: the only true God, the God of the Bible. However, in these *last hours*, legions of workers of iniquity have high jacked and stand armed with a *false application* of Christian worldview, and are now marching to *convert the world to a culture* of Christian mores rather than obeying Christ to *convert individual lives*. "mores: (mor-aze) *folkways* of central importance *accepted without question* and embodying the fundamental *moral views* of a group." (Random House Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, page 1250.) See www.MediaSpotlight.org for more. This movement is contributing to the formation of another tentacle of the spiritual error described in Endnote 16.)

³⁰ Ephesians 4:30 "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."

³¹ "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

³² (On eternal security): In '99 or '00 I heard Zola Levitt answer a question during a prophecy conference at a Knoxville, TN Baptist Church. I was encouraged in my spirit by his answer, to a question of which I no longer remember. Whatever the young questioner needed to know, Levitt's answer to his question, answered all other questions that could be posed in qualifying salvation. He answered the question *with more questions* (an apologetic strategy perfected by our Lord and His apostle, Paul). Levitt asked, "*What* can take you out of the Father's hand? Can you sin enough to be plucked out of His grasp?" The answers, of course, are "Nothing, and No." The eternal security of *the true follower of Christ* is foolproof, in spite of our continuing bent toward sin, our earthly struggle waged between two natures. In this life, spiritual *growth* can reduce our struggle as we learn to stand in Christ's merit alone, although final victory is yet future. Our enemy never ceases accusing us. We must stand on the Word.

³³ This foolish fantasy is *exactly* what most believe will greet them at the moment of death, whether the 'flavor' of their preferred delusion is christ-consciousness, universalism, reincarnation, purgatory, annihilation, sukhavati, soul sleep, nirvana, karmic justice, etc. Rather, this is the truth: "Hell and destruction are *never full*; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." (Proverbs 27:20) The endless delusions regarding the truth about the after life never cease, *until* that one *lifts their eyes in hell*. The fate for all who are spiritually deceived in this life is best told in Luke 16:19-31.

³⁴ A simple, graphic drawing illustrates *seeming* opposite and contradictory attributes of God. Draw a line, representing an infinite continuum. On one end write "Love." On the other end write "Wrath." Draw a stick figure somewhere on the line. Which way do you have the figure facing? Often, our 'view' of God, depends on the direction we're facing. Both extremes depicted on the line are truthful attributes of God. Correctly applying God's truth to our lives reveals our need to seek out His perfect application of love by accepting His Son's atoning death as the payment for our sin. Then, looking in *either* direction down the line, we have the assurance God has spared us from the effect of His wrath. The hurricane wracks havoc on the earth, but within the eye of that storm a saved soul may safely reside, because their 'view' of God chooses to receive His love, as expressed through His Son's atoning sacrifice. This simple illustration was offered to me during a Bible study, early in my walk as a new believer. Its truth has served me well over the years. Many falsely believe God is *only* a God of love *or* wrath. Yet, He is both.

³⁵ This is what the Roman Catholic Mass and similar services observe. Regretfully, this heinous ritual has been taken 'out of the closet' and paraded around for the world to shamefully honor in the 2004 movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. Among its many false portrayals, the movie mocks God by imitating a perpetual suffering of our Lord and Savior, i.e., *as is done every time mass is said*. Have you ever noticed that a crucifix is not the same cross followers

of Christ embrace? *Christ is still on THAT cross. In Romanist theology, Christ is not in glory.* I ask you to honestly answer this question: What 'creature,' in all eternity, would support the re-enactment of *what is not possible to re-enact*: our Lord's *once for all, non repeatable death, burial and resurrection?* (Rom 6:10, Heb 9:29, 10:10, 1 Pet 3:18) Who would most relish the feigned re-enactment of Christ's death and burial *minus the glory of His resurrection?* Who would want Christ's *resurrection played down* in re-enactments of this singular historic event? Christ's resurrection, the basis of our resurrection, was given no honorable place in this movie. We can honestly name Lucifer as the source of this perversion of God's truth. I believe our interest in and praise of this type of spiritually errant display does not benefit the work of Christ, yet provides continual fodder and fuel for the enemy of all men's souls, the father of lies. Christ *willingly gave up His life for all. It was not forcibly taken from Him.*

³⁶ This is the teaching of Transubstantiation, a spiritual lie. This practice earns the criticism that it is an act of 'cannibalism'. Transubstantiation, while its premise is untrue, *is* evidence of 'cannibalizing Christ'. Again, I ask you, who would seek to portray this? No one except Satan. Yet, *appropriate* observance of the Lord's Supper, acknowledging the elements are *symbols* of His broken body and poured out blood, does not evoke the 'cannibal' label. Christ directed that we observe the Lord's Supper. (Luke 22:19 and 1Cor 11:24+) Some say observing the Lord's Supper is not a legitimate observance for us during the Church Age and is to be avoided (see Endnote 16.) Fear of appearing either 'Catholic' or 'Jewish' is unfounded. Learning about Christ's cup of redemption in the Passover is highly instructive. Yet embracing the teachings of Transubstantiation is not. *We must learn to discern.*

³⁷ "Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. *Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.*" (Proverbs 30:5-6) Other texts also teach this, including Rev 22:19.

³⁸ "Ye *must* be born again." (See John 3:3, 5, 7 and 1 Peter 1:23.) *3 times in 5 verses our Lord makes this clear.*

³⁹ The persecuted church is suffering more now, than at in any other time in history (there are more people living now than ever and the means to harm are more available than ever.) To support these saints, contact The Voice of the Martyrs at www.persecution.com, 877-337-0302, POB 54, Caney, KS 67333.

⁴⁰ 'Backslidden' does not mean what most think. Nearly all envision a saved individual passively giving up, groveling in self-pity, out of God's care. The correct meaning is depicted by a mule or other four legged animal, resisting the forward pull on the animal exerted by the force of a bit and bridle in its mouth. With legs spread and back stiffened, the animal *will not go forward, will not go on, in response to the pull of the one controlling the bridle.* This is the true meaning of the word as it refers to the *unredeemed*. Backslidden does not mean we are out of God's reach. It means God is firmly pulling us toward Him, but we are not responding to the urging of the Holy Spirit. God has not abandoned the backslider, the one fearing *he is beyond God's reach.* God's staff is sufficient. He will do all the pulling if we will not resist. Sometimes He first uses His rod to correct, yet ultimately He loves the backslider. (See Hosea 14:4) This is an explanation described by the late J. Vernon McGee. www.ttb.org.

⁴¹ "I drew them with....bands of love" (Hos 11:4a). "...a threefold cord is not quickly broken." (Eccl 4:12)

⁴² "Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus *with himself*, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican....And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven...saying God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man [the Publican] went down to the house justified [saved] rather than the other [the Pharisee]: for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:10, 11, 13, 14) Did you catch that? The Pharisee prayed *with himself.* *The Lord didn't even hear his prayer! He is damned* by his self-righteous show of goodness and morality, *while the humble, repenting sinner is saved.* It is not possible to tame the flesh, making it *moral.* It must be clothed only in Christ's goodness.

⁴³ Gal 1:14, Matt 6:2, Matt 16:23, Mark 8:33, Matt 15:9, Mark 7:7, John 12:43.

⁴⁴ The foot of the cross is the only *location* where *saving faith* is found. All other locations are dead end roads.

⁴⁵ There are more texts than could be listed here, all warning us not to be a stumbling block, a false teacher, a hypocrite, a Pharisee, etc., as *these examples may contribute to another's loss of eternal life.* A concordance is great.

⁴⁶ Rather, the *systematic study of God's Word* produces the understanding of the Bible's theology and doctrine that provides the most thorough and usable summary of God's truth. (See Endnote 7 to reference this 1947 statement by Louis Sperry Chafer, one of the clear thinking teachers of the last century.) "God's [dispensational] program is as

important to the theologian as *the blueprint to the builder or the chart to the mariner*. Without the knowledge of it, the preacher must drift aimlessly in doctrine and *fail to a large degree in his attempts to harmonize and utilize the Scriptures*. Doubtless a spiritually minded person who does not know the divine program may discern *isolated* spiritual truths, much as one might enjoy a point of rare color in a painting without observing the picture itself, or the specific contribution which that color makes to the whole. In spite of its importance as one of the qualifying features of doctrine, Systematic Theology, as set forth generally in textbook, is without recognition of the divine program of the ages." (L.S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*; Dallas, Dallas Seminary Press, 1947, Vol. I, p. xiii.). Yet in my lifetime, development of systematic theology has improved, shedding much light on God's Word. But as is the case with all that man touches, there are those who aid the adversary, perverting the gleaned biblical truths that have been clarified through application of systematic study of dispensational theology and doctrine.

⁴⁷ If I didn't learn anything else from the Bibliology course through Chafer Theological Seminary, heeding this caution would have been worth the study alone. Tens of thousands of individuals believe a *privately held interpretation of the scriptures*, in abject defiance of 2 Pet 1:20: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." "Prophecy" of scripture does not mean "prophecy" as in eschatology, i.e., the study of last things. It means the *professing of God's Word*. No truth taught in the Bible contradicts any other truth in the Bible. No one text ever proves a doctrinal truth. The whole counsel of God must be applied, and in a right division (see Endnote 20) application of texts. *Use of proof texts* is the first error which explains false teaching on baptismal regeneration. *The whole counsel of God, not just some texts, refutes the validity of BR teachings*.

⁴⁸ "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." (Matt 23:24) "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself." (Eccl 10:12)

⁴⁹ One of the most confusing ploys used by the enemy of our souls is getting us to believe that we no longer have a sin nature after we are saved. 'One naturism' is taught by some of the most respected and otherwise effective teachers. Yet, the Bible declares, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) Salvation in no way ameliorates or removes the fact of that sin nature. Often we are tripped up because we either *overestimate our own ability to discern spiritual truth and avoid danger ahead* or we *underestimate the adversary's ability to blind our spiritual vision, leading to sin*. The remedy lies not in correcting either one of these imbalances, but in *standing and resting only in Him* who mediates between our two natures. See the work of Miles J. Stanford on this vastly important truth. <http://withchrist.org> and www.mjsbooks.com.

⁵⁰ A common error, one contributing to the formation of the apostate, last day's false religion, is *confusing the evidence of Christian unity with the evidence of Babylonian idolatry!* (Having spiritual discernment ends this confusion.) Christ defines His Body as unified, as One. Nothing *we do, or don't do*, affects this reality. Yet, the Word forbids us to pollute our Body by joining her to false doctrine, false fellowship, or false purpose. Unable with our human minds to entirely resolve some discord, *we are called to separate, as our conscience dictates, from any of these falsities*. There are times when broken fellowship is unwarranted. Yet, in these treacherous days it is not unusual to barely be able to keep ahead of the next wave of apostasy rolling in the front door of many churches. This trend is forming through fellowships populated by evangelicals, mainline followers, and groups heretofore considered cults, all embracing ecumenical movements. The deceived masses are being indoctrinated to band together in Christ's name to accomplish grandiose schemes to 'Christianize' (but not convert) the world. This is not evidence of unity. This is blasphemy. True saints are called to separate from spiritual error (2 Cor 6:14) and cling to "...the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," *forsaking all other agendas*. (Jude 3b.)

⁵¹ Balance in recognizing true and false fellowship is provided *only by the Holy Spirit*. It is disturbing to observe many misapply 2 Cor 6:14-18. No doubt the level of apostasy in professing Christendom is at all time high levels. But, the *oil of kindness, applied civility, and the legitimate desire to be with all God's people* ought to allow many more to celebrate what they share in common, turning to the Word for correction of beliefs not held in common. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." (Prov 27:17) May we use sharpening tools in our fellowship *to separate truth from error, but **not** separate one true believer from another*.

⁵² "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Gal 6:7)

⁵³ 1 Thess 4:13-18. Note: This is not a trumpet (horn). It is a *call*. Do you hear His voice? If you're listening for Revelation *trumpets* (horns) you're listening for the wrong sound. Are you looking for Christ or the anti-Christ? If you are in Christ, you're commanded to look *for Him*, not elements identified with the Tribulation. Worse, are you one of the deceived believing any of the Preterist, Dominionist, KingdomNOW, Restorationist, Post-Millennialist or Amillennialist lies? I pray you will let go of any of these *disbeliefs* in God's clear, uncompromising Word of truth.

BR Endnote Topics:

- 4 Law of non-contraction
- 6 Hebrew used to correct English
- 7 MJS Pauline Dispensationalism
- 8 Paul's syntax
- 9 Redemption Center analogy
- 11 Body groans waiting for redemption
- 12 Bible's theme is God's Grace
- 13 Messianic Judaism
- 14 False spirit of religiosity
- 15 Jewish Mikvah
- 16 False "grace" believers
- 17 Build my church (Matt 16:18)
- 18 David Cloud, Way of Life
- 19 Glad Tidings, Inc.
- 20 2 Tim 2:15 "Rightly Divide the Word"
- 21 No correction of false belief after death
- 22 Self imposed burdens
- 23 Psa 119:105
- 24 Knowledge, Understanding
- 26 Judged by light one has
- 27 CIC, Bob DeWaay
- 28 Spiritual baby
- 29 Worldview high jacked
- 30 Eph 4:30 "Grieve not the HS"
- 31 Rom 8:35-39 "Who shall separate us"
- 32 Zola on eternal security
- 33 Hell is never full, Prov 27:20
- 34 Love Wrath continuum
- 35 Catholic Mass/ Passion Film
- 36 Transubstantiation
- 37 Do not add to or remove from Word
- 38 John 3:3,5,7
- 39 VOM
- 40 Backslidden
- 41 Bands of love, threefold cord
- 42 Pharisee and Publican
- 43 "Praise of men" texts
- 44 Foot of the cross location of salvation
- 45 False teacher, stumbling block, hypocrite
- 46 Systematic theology
- 47 Proof texting
- 48 Blind guides; lips of a fool
- 49 One Naturism refuted
- 50 Unity vs. Babylonian idolatry
- 51 Correct application of 2 Cor 6:14-18
- 52 Gal 6:7 God will not be mocked
- 53 1 Thes 4:13-18 listening vs. looking

A primer on biblical Truth in an age of deceptive Error

A Christian life is not determined by the *'holy traditions'* of even the *most 'holy' of men*.
A Christian life is described by, and agrees with, *Christ's Holy, Perfect Word alone*.

A Christian life is not politically modeled for *public laud and display*.
A Christian life is privately molded in simple, truthful *accountability to Christ alone*.

A Christian life does not honor mere men, *venerating them as the false gods they are*.
A Christian life *honors God above all men* and *forsakes honor given among men*.

A Christian life is not demonstrated by *observing dead, religious rites and rituals*.
A Christian life is observed by Christ's demonstration that *He is above all ritual*.

A Christian life is not an inward and pure good projected for *outward, pious display*.
A Christian life is nakedness before God, *clothed only in vestments of Christ's purity*.

A Christian life is not confessing and keeping *self-discovered purpose and promises*.
A Christian life is kept only by the *eternal purposes and promises of Christ*.

A Christian life does not just 'know' about Christ; *even the demons know Him*.
A Christian life is dead in Christ, dead to self; *a new life in Christ, known by Him*.

A Christian life does not offer as merit any *personal victory over one's sins*.
A Christian life glories only in Christ's *vicarious victory over all sin and death*.

A Christian life does not desire position, scaling grand heights to *gloriously serve Him*.
A Christian life confesses being spared by He who scaled Golgotha, *gloriously serving all*.

A Christian life does not seek *assurance in or reward for right doing*.
A Christian life is assured by position in *and right confession of Christ alone*.

A Christian life does not seek *public worship through man made unity in false spirituality*.
A Christian life recognizes *Christian worship must be unified in Christ's spirit & His truth*.

A Christian life does not *assume and invoke Christ's name to covenant with man*.
A Christian life invokes His name in *covenant with Him alone, forsaking all others*. ↓

¹ "A Christian Life II" is a revision of an electronic message, "A Response to Rome," sent on 4/8/05 from mjfromtn@webtv.net. Contact Paraclete Press Research Service, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation at 865.774.7895, POB 4778 Sevierville, TN 37864.



A Christian life is not acceptable to many lost souls, is *not coveted by the masses*.
A Christian life is a non compromised *witness to truth, even if one must stand alone*.

A Christian life is not redeemed by the *worldly and lost following false leaders*.
A Christian life declares that *Christ alone redeems the lost out of the fleshly world*.

A Christian life is not bound up in *male roles, female roles or church rolls*.
A Christian life is found only in heaven's rolls, inscribed in the *Lamb's Book of Life*.

A Christian life forsakes any *idolatrous embrace of all that carnal men hallow*.
A Christian life honor's God's jealous, *exclusive right to our love and veneration*.

A Christian life does not profess a *man devised, church approved, earthbound faith*.
A Christian life confesses Jesus, in whom *we eternally live, move and have our being*.

A Christian life does not wait for, hope for, pray for a *man-mediated future in eternity*.
A Christian life is settled in an eternal, secure future, in the *hope of Christ's glory alone*.

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