

# Expository Files

Editors: Jon W. Quinn, Warren E. Berkley

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## What The Resurrection Of Christ Means

*Warren E. Berkley*

“Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead?’ ‘He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying,’ *The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.* And they remembered His words,” (Lk. 24:1-8).

**This means Jesus is who He claims to be.**

*<sup>1</sup>Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God<sup>2</sup>which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, <sup>3</sup>concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup>and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Rom. 1:1-4*

**This means our salvation is real.**

*<sup>23</sup>Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, <sup>24</sup>but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, <sup>25</sup>who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification. Rom. 4:23-25*

**This means God's enemies labored in vain.**

*<sup>13</sup>And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, <sup>14</sup>having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. Col. 2:13-15*

**This means, our faith is not futile.**

*<sup>12</sup>Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. <sup>14</sup>And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. <sup>15</sup>Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom*

*He did not raise up – if in fact the dead do not rise. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. <sup>17</sup>And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! <sup>18</sup>Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. 1 Cor. 15:12-19*

**This means eventual judgment is certain.**

*<sup>30</sup>Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. Acts 17:30-31*

**This means we will be raised.**

*<sup>14</sup>For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 1 Thess. 4:14*

**This means we serve a living master.**

*<sup>36</sup>“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Acts 2:36*

**This means when a genuine conversion takes place, God is active, applying the same power to raise the sinner from sin to life.**

*<sup>1</sup>And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup>among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.*

*<sup>4</sup>But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup>and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Eph. 2:1-7*

## Stephen's Life, Sermon & Death

*Acts 7:1-53*

*Warren E. Berkley*

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{Reading Recommendation: Acts 7:1-53}

One of the good men who came on the scene not long after the Lord's church was established was Stephen. He is introduced in chapter six, right before his sermon in chapter seven – concluding with his murder! *What can we learn?*

**Here is a good starting place: Stephen was a man “full of faith and the Holy Spirit,” (Acts 6:5).** His “faith” was the result of the attention of his heart to God, to what God had done and what God had revealed. In all the activity of his faith, he was guided by the Holy Spirit. There is good evidence that in his preaching and teaching, he enjoyed very direct guidance by the Holy Spirit, enabling him to speak God's Word in a time before the New Testament writings were assembled (see Acts 6:8b). He was, therefore, not a religious charlatan; not a fanatical militant of a Jewish sect or a party loyalist. He was a good man, “full of faith and power,” (Acts 6:8). As we will see below, he simply wanted to tell people the truth about God and about themselves.

**Members of the powerful Jewish Synagogue arose “disputing with Stephen.”** These local religious leaders were not believers in Christ, and they sought out opportunities to fire up debates with gospel preachers. But truth was not on their side. They were “not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which” Stephen spoke. See, Stephen was right! He spoke the truth and his message was confirmed by wonders and signs from heaven. Opposition arose from those who rejected the gospel, but they could not stand up against the truth (therefore they killed the messenger, but more about that later).

**At some point in the dispute the opponents of Stephen “stirred up the people - seized him, and brought him to the council.”** Unbelieving Jews who remained loyal to their Jewish system took this dispute to high level of agitation and even “set up false witnesses.” They were so determined to destroy the good work of gospel preaching, their attitude was, “whatever it takes” to preserve our system and get Stephen and his kind out of the way. Even when it was visibly obvious that Stephen was a man of God (see Acts 6:15), they persisted in bringing the event to crisis.

**Stephen’s opportunity to respond came after the High Priest said, “Are these things so?”** Stephen, under attack and facing likely death, spoke the truth (recorded by Luke, Acts 7:2-60). Look through Stephen’s sermon and you will see clearly what he wanted the people to know.

**Stephen wanted the people to remember their heritage (vss. 2-8).** The existence of the Jewish nation was no coincidence or human contrivance. God had a plan and one of the first steps He took was to call Abraham, gather those people together, form a covenant with them and eventually build a nation. One part of the rebellious unbelief that rejected Jesus was, the leaders lost a good sound perception of their past with God. They grew closer and closer to the world and farther and farther away from God. They constructed a religious empire that was not a function of God’s plan; *it was by men and for men*. Stephen was inspired by the Holy Spirit to take them back to their roots (a journey that, if pursued objectively, can always yield good results). His sermon establishes that Israel failed to respond to God’s purpose and that “the religion of the Jews had lost its soul” (FF Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*).

**Stephen wanted the people to understand, God never abandoned His righteous people.** When Joseph may have thought there was no hope, “God was with him, and delivered him out of all his troubles,” (v.10). In all that God did with the patriarchs, He blessed the righteous and responded justly toward the wicked. God had not changed. Even after the patriarchs

died, the nation continued and God carried out His plan to send the Savior to die for all. Through all their history, God had been faithful to His people and faithful to His plan, providentially moving history toward His holy end.

**Stephen wanted the people to see, back through their history, the destructive consequences of rejecting God.** God not only chose the patriarchs and worked through their lives, He chose Moses. The people soon rejected him, and their “hearts turned back to Egypt.” They made a golden calf, offered sacrifices to the idol, “and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.” God responded to their apostasy. He “turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven...,” (see Acts 7:42-43) and eventually carried the nation away to Babylon! Preachers are charged with the duty to tell people where they are headed; to use the written Word of God to wake people up to the future consequences of their present behavior. It is the concept of sowing and reaping that Stephen wanted the people to consider, in the reality of their rejection of Christ.

**Stephen wanted the people to know of God’s real presence.** “The Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands.” They had misunderstood the function of the temple (vss. 44-50). God cannot be confined to a place. As the Creator, it can be said, the universe is His seat and the earth a mere footstool. Good preachers always speak clearly to the people the truth about God. {Interesting note from John Phillips: “Amid a growing uproar of fury and dissent, he hammered home his conclusion. They had accused him of *reviling the holy place*. He accused them of *resisting the Holy Spirit*. They had accused him of *slighting Moses, the man of God*. He accused them of *slaying Jesus, the Son of God*. They had accused him of *blaspheming the Law*. He accused them of *breaking the law*. Stephen took the charges leveled against him, picked them up, and flung them back in the faces of his accusers,” - from p.#348, EXPLORING THE PEOPLE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT by John Phillips.}

**Stephen did get visible results!** Truth faithfully presented and applied may yield negative results (as seed put into bad soil). “When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’ They they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their wars, and ran at him with one accord.” (Told you this was visible!) “...and they cast him out of the city and stoned him . . . and Saul was consenting to his death,” (Acts 7:54-8:1).

**Stephen’s life didn’t last very far after his sermon.** But the truth Stephen lived by and delivered lives on today, and we ought to deliver it with the same devotion. Stones taking the life from his body not only did not kill him spiritually, he lives beyond the moment of his death in a peace his murderers did not comprehend. His godly life witnesses to us today. Stephen won that debate! The truth and the church continues today.

**Supplement:** “The death of Stephen was an event of most thrilling interest to the young Church, and well deserves the large space allotted to it by the historian. The disciples had embarked, with all their interests, both temporal and eternal, in the cause of one, who, though he proved himself mighty to deliver, while present with them, had now gone away beyond the reach of vision, and no longer held personal converse with them. They had struggled on faithfully thus far, and, amid many tears, some stripes, and much affliction, they had still found a deep satisfaction of soul in his service. It was demonstrated that their faith could sustain them in life, even amid very bitter trials; but it was not yet known how it would sustain them in the hour of death. No one of their number had yet tried the dread reality, and no man can now tell how much their spirits may have wavered in the prospect, and inclined backward toward the faith of their fathers, distrustful of the new arm of salvation. How great the strength, therefore, and how sweet the consolation imparted to every heart, when the first who died was so triumphant in the pangs of death! After witnessing the scene, they could go onward in their tear-dimmed course of suffering, without one fear or care for that within the grace, or beyond it. At the late day in which we live, which has been preceded by the happy death of millions of Christians, and which is often yet made deeply glad by their

triumphs in the trying hour, we are not able to appreciate the eagerness with which the first disciples drank in the consolations of this glorious death. It was a fortuitous and most fitting preparation for the fiery ordeal through which the Church were immediately afterward called to pass." J.W. McGarvey

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## **"I Have Come To Know Him"**

### **1 John 2:3-6**

*Hal Hammonds*

I know the Houston Astros. They are my team. I recognize their uniforms. I recognize many of their players by face and/or uniform number. I can tell you who plays what position, who gets more playing time, who the manager is likely to trust in a crucial situation, and who is likely to ground into a double play with the bases loaded. But I have not met any of the players personally.

I knew the late Homer Hailey. I have read many of his books. I have heard him preach the gospel on multiple occasions. I am well acquainted with his doctrinal positions – most of which I share, a few noteworthy ones I don't. One night in Pasadena, Texas, in 1988, I shook his hand and introduced myself. But I would by no means say we had any sort of a personal relationship.

I know my friend Ty. I went to school with him. He was a groomsman at my wedding. We have spent long, quality hours discussing all sorts of subjects – crucial, situational, trivial. I know that at any time I can call on him and he will be there for me – the bigger the favor, the quicker he will respond. But we are separated geographically now, and we have been for a long time. I doubt I've had five conversations of any sort with him in the last ten years.

I know my wife. I know what she likes, what she hates, her favorite foods, her favorite TV programs, her favorite books, her favorite pastimes. I can tell from a quick glance if she is sick, worried, angry, excited or tired. I am fully apprised of virtually every minute detail of her life at all times.

Clearly “knowing” someone is a relative concept. And knowing Jesus is no different. Plenty of “Christians” are content to have a passing relationship with Him, with little or no real foundation. Some are willing to take His side when convenient, go their own way when inclined. Some consider themselves true followers but do not pursue any sort of ongoing connection.

Jesus offers more than that, and He requires us to want more.

And Jesus has never been vague about how He defines this kind of “knowledge”, whether it be our knowledge of Him or His knowledge of us. As John writes in verse 4 of our text, *“The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him.”* John, who knew Jesus in the flesh better than anyone, writes by inspiration of the Holy Spirit to tell us that someone who takes a haphazard approach toward obedience, who considers His instruction to be anything less than vital to his spiritual livelihood, obviously has no idea of who Jesus is and what He is about. He Himself said as much on numerous occasions. Luke 6:46 comes to mind – *“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”* Even nominal, partial service may be rejected as having not been grounded in a true relationship with Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”* Surely the concept of “Preach the Man, not the plan!” does not have its origin in Jesus!

Many so-called Christians base their confidence in their own perception of their relationship with the Lord. A so-called “better felt than told” intuition is considered all the proof that is necessary to instill full confidence. But even the shallowest objective inspection shows the flaws in this philosophy. I may “feel” I have cancer, or “feel” my team will win the championship, or “feel” my car can travel another 50 miles without stopping for fuel. I may even have facts at my disposal that can be used to support these “feelings”. But that is hardly the same as conclusive proof.

The same is true with our relationship with Jesus. He does not ask us to base our confidence in our feelings, which is basically basing our confidence in ourselves. He wants us to trust Him, not our feelings. That is why he has given us objective truth in His word. We can measure our actions by His requirements and know for certain we are in compliance with His expectations.

And it’s not like Jesus is requiring some onerous task of us. John says our obedience is a natural result of having the love of God in our hearts (v.5) and modeling ourselves after the Lord Himself (v.6). It is our privilege and honor to seek out His commandments and spend our lives pursuing full and complete compliance.

## **We Heard of Your Faith in Christ Jesus**

**“...and the love which you have for all the saints .”**

*Jon W. Quinn*

*“We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints...” (Colossians 1:3-4).*

Evidently Paul had never met most of the disciples at Colossae when he wrote his letter to them, but he was certainly encouraged by what he had heard about them. He did know at least some of them personally, perhaps having met them as he was traveling about Asia Minor preaching the gospel of Christ. Paul knew Philemon well, having taught him the gospel at a previous time.

Paul specifically mentions his gratitude unto God for their faith in Christ and their love for the saints. Later, he adds that the gospel which they had heard was “constantly bearing fruit and increasing” and that their “love in the Spirit” (Colossians 1:6, 8).

There were three local churches in the immediate area of Colossae. In addition to the church of Christ at Colossae, there was another church at Laodicea and another at Hierapolis (Colossians 4:13). We know that Paul also wrote to Laodicea at the same time and asks that the churches exchange their letters after reading them.

### **Things to Do**

“...if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.” (Colossians 1:23).

The gospel Paul proclaims was, and is, a gospel of hope. It is an eternal hope provided to us by the grace of God, and the faithful fully expect and desire to share the glory of Christ in heaven forevermore.

But it is important to note the phrases “...if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast” and “not moved away” that set up the condition of realizing this hope one day. While the hope of heaven is secure for those who “continue in the faith” and are “firmly established

and steadfast” and therefore refuse to be “moved away”, it is not so for those who turn elsewhere. At the top of a disciple's “Things to Do” list needs to be “continue in the faith” and “be steadfast”! We must not be deterred by neglect and temptation.

But, there are many more things on the disciple's “Things to Do” list. We need to walk in Christ just in the manner we have received Him.

“Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.” (Colossians 2:6).

Again, a stability and firmness of faith is urged on the parts of all disciples. This kind of living and dynamic faith is not found, rather it is made when we accept the gospel on the terms “just as you were instructed.” We are never, ever urged to become mediocre disciples anywhere in God's holy word. It is never suggested that being a mediocre disciple is better than to be no disciple at all!

In fact, a sad irony here is that this letter was to be sent from the church at Colossae to the church at Laodicea. It would be about thirty years later that the Lord would severely criticize Laodicea's satisfaction with mediocrity. Do not allow the Evil One to lead you away from your hope as they did (Revelation 3:14-22).

Other things to do included to beware of false teachings and vain philosophies (Colossians 2:4-10; 16-18; 20-23). But that generation had no monopoly on such false doctrines. The faces and names may have changed, but corruptions of the gospel as well as new philosophies continue to offer false hopes as they compete with the gospel of Christ. The wise counsel of

Paul is still needed today; “Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize...” (Colossians 2:18).

Rather, keep on seeking the things above (Colossians 3:1,2). Put to death fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language, lying (Colossians 3:5-9). In their places, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness, meekness, longsuffering, love (Colossians 3:12-14). Let the peace of God rule in your hearts and be thankful (Colossians 3:15). Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...admonishing one another in psalms...singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord as you do all things in the name of the Lord (Colossians 3:16, 17).

### **Principles for Us**

The Scriptures are timeless in their importance and application. God's word is eternal, and there never has been nor will there ever be a time where it is not significant. It is important for us today. To sum up some of the points that have been made in Paul's letter to the Colossians:

We can remain faithful even though we are surrounded by temptations and trials (Colossians 1:21-23). We must not swallow the lie that faithful living is impossible, or even close to impossible, for all things are possible with God. We must refuse to be moved away from our hope. We serve a God that is more powerful than our adversary. (Colossians 1:9-11; cf. 1 Corinthians. 10:13; 1 John 4:4; 5:4).

We must seek the things that are above if we hope to be in heaven. This simply means to refuse to allow our lives to be focused and directed only by the things of the world. While we certainly have purposes and plans for our days in this world, that is not all that there is for us. There is also a world to come, and we will not forget it as we live out our days here.

These days here will come to an end, but that Day in which we place our hope is everlasting (Colossians 3:1-4; Hebrews 12:1,2; 1 John 2:15-17).

“We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints...”

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## **Love and Hate**

### **1 John 3:9-13**

*Ethan R. Longhenry*

*Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, brethren, if the world hateth you (1 John 3:9-13).*

As John has progressed through his letter, he has been demonstrating the differences between true believers and false teachers: true believers walk in the light, do Jesus' commandments, walk in His ways, and do not sin, while false teachers have departed from the faith and have done and justified wickedness (1 John 1-2). In 1 John 3:3-8, John continued this contrast: believers in God are pure and do righteousness, while those who sin are of the devil.

This contrast continues in 1 John 3:9-10. Believers are marked by their righteous conduct, and how they eschew sin (cf. Romans 12:9). The

distinction is manifest: those who do not practice righteousness are not of God, while, by necessity, those who do righteousness are of God.

We must take care not to distort John's message in verse 9. John's statement should not be read as a declaration that Christians never sin: Romans 3:23 and 1 John 1:8 work against such a view. The English Standard Version's translation is preferable: No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. Christians, being fallible, will stumble-- but when they stumble, they will get up, repent, and strive again, and not make sin a habit (cf. Hebrews 10:26-31). True Christians will recognize the distinction between right and wrong and turn toward the light (Hebrews 5:14).

John begins a transition in 1 John 3:10 to his next subject: how Christians are to treat one another. John notes that it is not just those who do not practice righteousness that are not of God, but also those who do not love their brothers. John indicates that this is the case in verse 11 because they have heard the message "from the beginning," that they should love one another. This confirms that John speaks regarding love in 1 John 2:7-8 when he speaks there regarding the "'new' old commandment." God has desired for human beings to love one another from the beginning of time, but it is within Jesus Christ that we see the ultimate demonstration of love, as John will continue to make clear in 1 John 3-4. If Jesus Christ is the ultimate demonstration of love, it stands to reason that only those who love can be in God, and those who do not love have no share in God!

John then appeals to the example of Cain in Genesis 4:1-8 in verse 12. Cain and Abel both offer sacrifices; Abel's is accepted, Cain's is rejected, and the text never tells us why. John intimates that Cain's deeds, which likely includes his sacrifice, were evil, and that was the reason that he was rejected. This is consistent with the text in Genesis, considering that Cain's reaction to his rejection is not to repent and do what is right but instead to

kill his brother and add sin upon sin. Because of this, Cain is said to be of the evil one, and we ought not be like him! John demonstrates powerfully that we should love one another: those who do not love their brethren are not of God, and such ones are akin to Cain, of Satan, committing evil deeds. And then John turns, in verse 13, and says that Christians should not be surprised when the world hates them.

The connection should be evident. Jesus Himself warned His disciples, John included, that the world would hate them (Matthew 10:21-26). This is because people are under the spell of the Devil and do his work, for their deeds are evil (John 8:34-47). Those who do what is right and follow after God represent a threat and convict their consciences.

John demonstrates to us that we are all part of the conflict of love versus hate, and we must decide who we shall follow: God and love or Satan and hate. Let us work on the side of love and follow God today!

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Topic Page

**The Foundation of  
Spirituality – Honesty**  
*BY LARRY ROUSE*

Why does the preaching of the gospel seem not to be effective in our society today? We know that God's word has not changed, nor has its power (Rom. 1:16). We are assured by God that His word will never return to Him void, but it will always accomplish the purpose for which He sent it (Isa. 55:11). Today, with this present generation, as it has in past generations, the word of God is able to expose hearts and allow men to choose light or darkness (Jn. 3:19-21). This choice depends upon the kind of heart a man possesses.

When Jesus described the kind of heart in which the word of God would be received and would prosper, He described it as “good and honest” (Lk. 8:15 KJV). Will a man choose light or darkness, honesty or dishonesty? If a man decides that he “hates the light” then God will let him “believe a lie” and will not do anything further other than the presentation of His word (2 Thess. 2:10-11).

### **We must fight the temptation to be dishonest**

The battle for honesty lasts a lifetime. God emphatically warns the Christian to guard his heart and to keep it pure. “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds” (Col. 3:9). God has plainly told us: “He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence” (Psalm 101:7).

The nature of man has not changed. Without continual exposure to the word of God, men’s hearts will be pulled back to self-justification and blindness (Pr. 16:2; Jer.17:10-11). Why do men prefer dishonesty? Psychologists suggest that men tend to make up the reasons for their behaviors *after* they do them, and that their “reasons” and behavior usually have nothing to do with each other.

King Saul was a prime example of a good man who gave in to dishonesty to his own destruction. Do you remember the various explanations that he made to Samuel when he was confronted about his direct disobedience to God’s command (1 Sam. 15:3, 15, 20-21)? “I was going to sacrifice them! No, wait, it was the people that did it!” Finally, after a spiritual wrestling match, Saul admits his sin, but without true repentance! Saul thought that his outward confession without a changed heart would put him right with God. In this he had deceived himself! This pattern would remain throughout Saul’s life.

### **We must recognize dishonesty**

God’s love will lead us to look to the good in others. Indeed, we want to believe the best about others and not be quick to judge another’s actions

without sufficient evidence. Nonetheless, the Bible is filled with warnings concerning those who would deliberately mislead us and the kind of tactics they will use to accomplish this task. “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Eph. 4:14). “These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling *words*, flattering people to gain advantage” (Jude 16).

It is a difficult thing for good and honest Christians to see the deceit and manipulation from those who have a hidden agenda to pull others into their circle. Flattery is first used to gain a closer association and trust. Then lies are told in secret to inflame emotions and close minds (Pr. 18:19). Finally, these men succeed in having their new disciples cut off association with their former brethren without so much as talking about these newly discovered “differences” over an open Bible (Gal. 4:16-17).

A commitment to honesty will keep us from these “closed door decisions” that result in one “cutting and running.” Instead we will openly discuss and test those who have beliefs that they say are of God (1 Jn. 4:1). Also, we will not accept testimony about the personal actions of another without first giving that person a chance to defend himself (Pr. 18:17; Mt. 18:15-17)!

### **Pride always leads to dishonesty**

Those who do not know God cannot stand to look at themselves honestly. The driving force behind pride is the desire to be recognized and have praise because we wish to appear to be something that we are not. “For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (Gal 6:3). Those that follow this path must wear a mask. They must fight to “keep up appearances” and work to tear others down so that they can receive this vain and temporary recognition of men. There is a better way to live your life!

## God's forgiveness allows us to be honest

God sees me as I am, and, in spite of that, He loves me and seeks my best. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). God sees the darkness of my sin and has provided a sacrifice that will wash away my sins and restore my relationship with Him (Rom 3:23; 6:23). What do I need to do? I need to be honest! I must see my own sin and make no excuses. The love of God must move me to change my heart in repentance that will result in a changed life. I then will take the final step in water baptism, yielding my body to a burial and resurrection like the Lord's (Rom. 6:3-5). I now am the Lord's, not because I am perfect, but because I am forgiven and have yielded my heart to Him (Acts 2:38-39).

The Christian life is characterized by the forgiveness of God. Rather than run from my shortcomings, I can now run to God for a greater sight and to seek His help in growing to be something more in His service. I come to love the truth, to love bold and honest preaching because it allows me to see what God already sees and what I need to know. Most of all, I am thankful that God's word is able to penetrate my heart when it drifts into dishonesty and point me back to Him. "For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account" (Heb. 4:12-13).

Be honest. Are you genuinely serving the Lord with all of your heart (II Cor. 13:5)? "He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy" (Pr. 28:13). — *Via Auburn Beacon*

# **Plan of Salvation**

## **By Jon W. Quinn**

### Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

Acts 2:36-38

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-38).

### Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinner were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

**Glory Seekers**  
**The Final Page**  
**By Jon W. Quinn**

*For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed -- God is witness - nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority.*

*(1 Thessalonians 2:3-6)*

Paul and Silas had taken the gospel to Thessalonica. What they taught was true. Their goal was to bring men and women to Christ, and through Him to eternal life. He was the Savior. He was Lord of all. It was not about them, but it was all about Him. It was about His grace. It was His gospel and they had been entrusted with it.

Because of this high and noble goal, their methods were different from what they would have been had they merely been seeking the glory of men. They would encourage others to do what is right, and commend those who did, but not flatter with empty words merely to make a favorable impression. They did not desire that which belonged to others. They exalted Christ; not themselves. They were not the centers of the universe, the Lord was.

But it would be amiss to say that Paul and Silas did not seek glory at all. They did, and so should we. Paul is very specific when he said they did not seek the glory of men. But he does speak of attaining the glory of the Lord.

It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
(2 Thessalonians 2:14).

We need to let this be enough - the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is all so much more than the glory of this realm. We of faith shall be satisfied with the final results.