

ONE WAY



A Collection of Devotionals to Help You Find the Way

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” – Jesus Christ

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One Way

Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' - Matthew 7:20-23.

Imagine the shock, you have a dream vacation planned to the city of Sydney, Australia with all of its attractions but when you get off the plane you are on the wrong continent. Instead of Australia you're in Canada! Emma Dunn and Raoul Sebastian purchased their tickets in London over the Internet and did not realize anything was wrong until they landed in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In Halifax they were asked to transfer to a small propeller driven plane for the last leg of the trip to Sydney. *Sydney, Nova Scotia!* Nova Scotia's Sydney is known as the "steel city" with a population of 26,083. Emma and Raoul are now trying to make the best of their unexpected visit to the wrong continent and the wrong Sydney. Andrea Batten, an employee of Air Canada in Nova Scotia said, *"They decided they might as well stay for a few days, having come all this way. It's going to be a trip to remember."*

Spiritually there are many who are on their way to an unexpected destination. When they arrive it will be the ultimate in surprise and disappointment. Instead of Heaven it will be that other place. There are many who honestly believe they are serving God and that they will one day be in Heaven but Jesus says they will not be. *How could this happen?*

Earthly destinations for the most part have many different ways in which you can travel to them. Many believe that Heaven is like that but it is not. Jesus makes this clear in **John 14:6** saying, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."** It is only through Jesus that we may travel to Heaven. There is no other way provided by God. Jesus is the bridge between sinful man (**Romans 3:23**) and God who is perfectly holy, perfectly righteous (**Isaiah 6:3**). Jesus who was tempted at all points without sin became the perfect sacrifice. So as by one

man, Adam, sin entered into the world by one man, Jesus, a way is provided for reconciliation with God. **“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life** (Romans 5:18 - Read all of Romans chapter 5 for context also 6:23 and 10:9 -13).” There is only one way to Heaven and that one way was provided at great cost through the sacrifice of God’s Son on the cross. To reject that one way and try to travel to Heaven by any other route will only result in our condemning ourselves (**John 3:17-21**).

Good works without Jesus is not the way to Heaven (**Ephesians 2:8-10**). Depending on church membership or baptism is not the way to Heaven because they are something that man does and is an attempt at using a different form of good work to gain access to Heaven (Note - Of course we should follow the Lord Jesus in Baptism once we know Him as Savior. However, baptism without knowing Jesus as our Savior or church membership without knowing Jesus as our Savior will not save us). Jesus says very clearly what is necessary to arrive safely at the Heavenly destination, **“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that who ever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).”** *Have you believed?* The Bible says in **John 1:12**, **“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”** *Have you received Him (Jesus) by believing on His name?* In **Revelation 3:20** we are told, **“Behold, I (Jesus) stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”** *Have you opened the door of your heart to Jesus?* The apostle Paul tells us in **Romans 10:13**, **“For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”** *Have you called upon the name of the Lord Jesus?*

There is only one way to Heaven but that way is well marked and very clear. To receive Christ as your Savior pray the prayer below which is based on the related Scriptures above *“Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you died on the cross for my sins and rose again on the third day. Please forgive me for the sins, the bad things I have done, I want to change and be like You. Please help me to change, be my Lord and my Master and my Savior. In your name Lord Jesus I ask You to come into my heart and save me. Amen.”* Please remember that words alone will not save you. Only if you truly mean it in your heart will you be saved.

GOOD WORKS

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. - Ephesians 2:8-10.

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

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

According to Barna Research Group polling, many teens have beliefs that are *"inconsistent with the Bible."* Barna says that 53 percent of teens believe that Jesus was not perfect but committed sins. Also two-thirds of teens believe that satan is not really a living being but just a symbol of evil. In addition, 60 percent of teens believe that they can earn *"eternal salvation"* by doing good works.

Why is earning your way to Heaven by doing good works *"inconsistent"* with the Bible? Because the Bible clearly indicates in Ephesians 2 that salvation is a "gift." The dictionary defines gift as, *"Something that is bestowed voluntarily and without compensation."* Most likely, you have received a "gift" from someone during your lifetime. When you received the "gift", were you required to pay for it or work for it? *No!* Because if you had to pay for the "gift" or work for the "gift" it would no longer be a "gift" but a purchase or compensation.

Ephesians 2 also gives us a reason for why salvation is a "gift" and not something that you have to earn through good works. The reason? "...lest anyone should boast...." What if you could work your way to Heaven - what would be the result once people did arrive in Heaven? In Heaven, the result would be that people would begin talking about what they had done in order to gain entrance to eternal life. Some people would believe they had done greater things than others and would therefore be proud of what they had done. These people the apostle Paul believed would be boasting about the good things they had done to earn salvation.

Doing good things will not earn you salvation but good works should be the natural result of your receiving the free "gift" of salvation. Paul says in **verse 10**, **"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."** Once we have eternal life through Jesus, we should have a desire to follow his example of doing good things. Good works do not save you but if you are truly saved you should be doing good works.

Has someone ever given you a free gift that you did not receive? My step-

grandmother for many years had been giving me a Christmas present even after my grandfather had passed away and she had remarried. The first Christmas that I was married, she told me that she had a Christmas present for me and I just needed to pick it up. To my shame, I never picked up the present. It would have been a free gift but it was not a gift since I never received it. Sadly, many have and will do the same thing with God's free "gift" of salvation. Have you received God's "gift?" If not, why not open up the greatest gift you can ever receive in life right now? Ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and life. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins and be your Lord and Master. Words will not save you but if you mean it in your heart, you will receive the "gift" of eternal life.

IF YOU ARE LOST

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh...that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. - Ephesians 2:8-20.

Luc Goguen had the most unpleasant experience of being lost for four days. Not only was he lost but he was lost in the dangerously cold environment near his home in Cocagne, New Brunswick. Luc lost control of his all-terrain vehicle and was forced to try to walk out of the backwoods. Along the way back he fell in a swamp and lost his boots. Because of being soaked from his fall and the bitter cold in the snow-covered environment he suffered severe hypothermia, frostbite and was disoriented when he was found. Luc said about the experience, *"I believe it's a miracle. I never stopped praying."*

All who are without a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ are spiritually lost and are living in a most dangerous environment. Their lives are out of control and the longer a person is spiritually lost the more dangerous their condition becomes. Eighty-eight percent of all professions of faith in Jesus come before the age of nineteen. Sixty-eight percent of all professions of faith occur between the ages of 9 and 14. It is not impossible to be saved as an adult but as age increases it becomes more and more unlikely.

The Bible clearly describes the pitiful condition of those who are lost spiritually:

The lost are without life. **“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:12).”** We have eternal life only through Jesus.

The lost are without true peace. **“‘There is no peace,’ says my God, ‘for the wicked (Isaiah 57:21).’”** Only through Christ can we truly have peace. **“For He Himself is our peace (Ephesians 2:14a).”**

The lost are without spiritual strength. **“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly (Romans 5:6).”** We have strength through Christ as the apostle Paul says in **Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”**

The lost are without hope and without God. **“...having no hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12c).”** *Our God, however, is a God of hope.* **“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:24).”**

The lost are without excuse. **“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation (Hebrews 2:3a).”** **“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).”**

So, if you are lost let me suggest that you do as Luc Goguen did - *PRAY! Pray and ask God through Jesus Christ to save you.* Jesus is saying even now to you, **“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20).”** *Why not pray right now? Open up the door of your heart and invite Jesus to come in.*

The End of Innocence

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults. Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression. - Psalm 19:12-13.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. - Romans 3:23.

At the age of three or four I had one of the first encounters that I remember with unpleasant consequences from my actions. My cousin and I were playing in my sister's closet where on a chest of drawers was an old ceramic piggybank. The bank had belonged to one of our ancestors and I had been warned about climbing on the chest because of the danger of breaking the bank. But my cousin and I were playing when in the midst of our play the piggybank fell and broke into many pieces. Of course I felt bad about it and apparently my parents were even more upset. Never again would my play be quite as innocent as it had been before the piggybank broke.

In the 1980's Don Henley sang a song called *"the end of the innocence."* Here are some of the words, *"Remember when the days were long and the road beneath the deep blue sky didn't have a care in the world, with mommy and daddy standing by. When happily ever after fails and we've been poisoned by these fairy tales, when lawyers dwell on small details, says daddy had to fly. Oh we'll find a place where we can go still untouched by men, and sit and watch the clouds roll by and the tall grass raise in the wind. You can lay your head back on the ground, and let your hair fall around you, offer up your defense, this is the end of the innocence."*

David asks the question, **"Who can discern his errors?"** *Who can understand or even know all the ways that we have failed?* There comes a point in every person's life when we know that we have failed. As the apostle Paul says, **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** Most of us realize there may even be ways in which we have failed that we are not even aware of. The age of innocence has passed - *it is over.* The burden of failure has fallen upon us.

Is there any hope of relief from this burden of failure and loss of innocence? **Yes!** **"Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool (Isaiah 1:18)."** And the apostle Paul tells us, **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23)."** And the apostle John writes, **"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9)."** The burden of our failures can be washed away and a renewed age of innocence can begin in the sight of God.

LIVING IN BEULAH LAND

You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. - Isaiah 62:4. (Hephzibah means

literally, my delight is in her. Beulah means literally, married.)

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.' - Revelation 21:1-3.

Looking out my back door I can see calves grazing on the green wheat pasture. It is a peaceful setting, an idyllic setting. The calves have no worries about their future because their immediate need of food is cared for by the expanse of wheat available for them to eat. However, the calves cannot see that at some point in their future they will be loaded up and taken to be sold. The calves will become neatly packaged meat in some grocery store.

The lives of many people resemble that of cattle. Many become absorbed in their day-to-day activities of work and play. They have little desire to hear about the future because the present is fulfilling. But *we are not cattle*. We have the capacity of mind to look forward in time with imagination to our ultimate end. What is it that you see when you look toward that time? *Do you know what is waiting for you there?* Do you look forward with *anticipation or dread?*

I can remember one of the first times I looked forward in time to the end of my life. It was a frightening experience because in my mind it was dark and unknown. I didn't know what would happen when I reached the end of my physical life. Five years later after I received Christ as my Savior I could then look ahead to the future and the darkness was gone because I knew what lie ahead. What lay ahead would be Heaven - living in a perfect place where the Lord God will be the very light. The marriage will have been completed in New Jerusalem and we will be living in Beulah Land.

The Bible says at the end of **Revelation 21**, "**But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (v. 27).**" *Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life?*

SIGNS OF LIFE

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. - 1 John 5:12.

In Soldier Township, Kansas firefighters responded to a 911 call from a woman who had attempted suicide. Upon arrival the emergency responders took one look at the woman's head wound and thought she was dead. However, while the firefighters were still outside the residence the woman regained consciousness and again called 911. She was hospitalized and is in fair condition.

Obviously you cannot always tell by looking at someone whether they are dead or alive. To determine life we would do what? Most likely we would check to see if the person is breathing and if they have a pulse. Even if those signs are absent we might still perform CPR if the skin was warm or if we knew from witnesses that they had been alive a short time before.

Spiritually there are some signs of life as well. Just looking at a person it is difficult to know whether they are alive spiritually or not. Sometimes people do not even know themselves whether or not they are alive spiritually. Apparently that was part of the reason the Holy Spirit moved the apostle John to write the little letter of 1 John. How do we know whether or not we have been born again spiritually and have the Holy Spirit living within us? There are some outward things which might lead a person to believe they are alive spiritually. Praying to receive Christ as our Savior, following the Lord in baptism, and church membership are some physical signs which we sometimes depend upon for identifying spiritual life. However, some who pray to receive Christ, are baptized, and become church members have later said that they were not really alive spiritually.

Here are some signs of life from the apostle John:

1 John 2:3-5: We have a desire to keep God's commandments.

1 John 2:9-10: We have a love for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

1 John 2:15-16: We love God more than we love the things of this world.

1 John 2:6: We walk as He walked. Act as He would act.

1 John 2:19: We continue assembling with other believers.

1 John 3:20-21; 4:13; 5:10: We have the witness of His Spirit within us that we belong to Him and our hearts do not condemn us.

What about you? Do you have any signs of life?

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS

And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean.” But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, “Indeed, I said to myself, “He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.’ Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, “Wash, and be clean’?” So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. - 2 Kings 5:10-14.

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

What would you do to be healed of leprosy or some other terrible disease? Climb the highest mountain? Crawl on your knees up a thousand steps? Give fifty percent of your income for the rest of your life? Become the slave for the rest of your life to the doctor who has the wisdom to make you well?

Naaman was a great man in Syria as the commander of the armed forces of the entire nation. He was a man of great courage. Naaman was facing something he had never faced before. He was facing an enemy more powerful and more dangerous than any he had fought before. Naaman had leprosy and he knew very well the horribleness of the disease. There was no way for Naaman to win this battle. So, when he heard of the great prophet Elisha and of his God he was willing to try it.

It was shocking to this great and mighty man that the prophet Elisha did not come himself and only sent a messenger to tell him how to be made well. Even more shocking and insulting was that he was told to dip himself in the River Jordan seven times and he would be well. Naaman’s response was predictable. He threw a fit and refused to do it turning to go back to Syria. His servants reasoned with him so that he could see that if Elisha had asked him to fight one hundred men single handedly or some other impossible thing he would have done it. Why not do this simple thing of dipping in the river seven times? Naaman obeyed and he was healed.

We are much like Naaman when it comes to our salvation. We feel like we have to earn it in some way. Maybe if we were to climb a huge mountain, feed the starving for

years, give all we have to the poor or some other wonderful and great thing then maybe, just maybe we might be able to go to heaven when we die. What if God told us in order to have eternal life we had to go dip in the River Jordan seven times? Would we do it? Of course? God has, however, told us something much more difficult for us to accept in order for us to have eternal life. What is that? He has told us that we do not have to do anything! He will give us salvation for free we just have to accept/receive the gift.

What is this gift from God that we must receive? The gift is Jesus Christ. Jesus has done all the work for us. He has paid the ultimate price so that we might live forever with Him. Have you received the gift? **"...the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23b)."** It is very simple, so simple that even a child can understand - just follow the instructions.

HOPELESS

Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days. On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. Then he issued a proclamation in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let any man or beast, herd or flock, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened. - Jonah 3:3-10.

The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. - 2 Peter 3:9.

David Rodgers is in so much trouble it appears hopeless. He was driving a truck in a Christmas parade in Anderson, South Carolina, that was a float in the parade. The truck was filled with children and adults but that did not stop Rodgers from passing another float and running a red light. Witnesses called 911 and police officers chased Rodgers for three miles before he finally stopped. Then, he attempted to attack an

officer. An open container of alcohol was found in the vehicle. As a result of all of this, Rodgers has been charged with more than 36 charges, which include Driving Under the Influence, assaulting an officer, and 18 counts of kidnapping. A child of Rodgers was riding in the parade float for the *“Steppin’ Out Dance Studio.”*

At least no one was killed or seriously injured, however, the 42-year-old Rodgers could be looking at many years in prison. How does David Rodgers or anyone ever recover from the disaster that his antics has created? Only by turning your life and the entire situation over to God can such hopeless situations be redeemed.

The reluctant evangelist/prophet Jonah finally went to Nineveh and with a one-sentence sermon the power of God fell upon them and they repented. These were wicked people who skinned their enemies alive and left them hanging outside of the cities they ransacked and destroyed. Jonah hated them but God still loved them. He loved the Ninevites enough to send Jonah to warn them. The Ninevites believed Jonah, believed God and repented turning from their sins. They were under a death sentence and their destruction was rapidly approaching but all changed by their putting their trust in God.

Those without Christ Jesus as their Savior today are also under a death sentence, an eternal death sentence. However, God loves us too. He loved us enough to send not a prophet but His own son, Jesus, to warn us and to die for us. Jesus had the same one-sentence message from God, **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matthew 4:17).”**

Only God can clean up, redeem a hopeless mess like the one that David Rodgers has made of his life. But then to some extent all of our lives are hopeless messes **(Romans 3:23)** which only Jesus can redeem. Would you turn from your sins (repent) and receive the most wondrous gift of all, eternal life **(Ephesians 2:8; Romans 6:23b)**? Only then can God begin to clean up the hopeless mess that we have made of our lives.

THE WAY HOME

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. - Matthew 7:7-8.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. - 2 Timothy 3:16.

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” - John 14:6.

*Can you imagine being in a foreign city for the first time and forgetting how to return to your hotel? What would you do? You might do what an American soccer fan did in Hanover, Germany. The 25-year-old man from Boston checked into his hotel prior to the soccer match between Poland and Costa Rica. However, after the match he was unable to remember the name of the hotel he had checked into, or the address. What he did was to search for the hotel for six hours after the soccer match without success. He finally realized that he was lost and needed help. Around three in the morning, he stumbled onto a police station and asked for help. A spokesperson for the police, Holger Jureczko said, “The only thing he could remember was paying 10 euros for a taxi ride to the city center and that he went past a park and a Mercedes dealer. There are a lot of Mercedes dealers in Hanover but we were able to find the one in the vicinity of a park.” The lost man finally recognized the hotel after driving around the streets in the area for an hour just before the morning sun rose. *It must have been a long, long night!**

*What would you do if you were in a similar situation? Being a man, I would probably do the same thing as in trying to find the hotel without asking for help. On our recent trip, I was only lost one time and I was able to buy a map and find my way back without asking for help. *But it did seem to be a source of frustration for my wife!**

How could the lost man in Hanover have resolved his situation more quickly? How can we? He could have immediately asked for help. Pride appears to be the primary motivation for not asking for help at least from my own experience. Asking for help is admitting that you cannot do it on your own and that you need the help, advice, etc. of someone else. It means that if you have to have help that you are not perfect and that you do not know everything, and cannot do everything on your own. That is hard for some of us to swallow but it is still the truth for every person on this earth. None of us knows everything, and none of us can do everything by ourselves. If we are honest with ourselves, we will realize that we all need help; assistance, advice sometimes - and that admitting it can actually make life easier for us.

It is the same in the spiritual realm. We cannot arrive at the correct spiritual destination without help. *Where should we go for spiritual help?* The very first place to go is to God. Ask Him to help you to find your way. He promises to do that in **Matthew 7:7-8**. The second place to go for spiritual help is to the Word of God, which is the Bible because **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”** *What does God say through the Bible about finding your way spiritually? Here are a few of many*

verses of Scripture about this eternally important subject:

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).”

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).”

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).”

“If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:9-10).”

“For ‘whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved (Romans 10:13).”

Jesus is **“the Way, the Truth, and the Life”** and it is only through Him that you can find your way to your spiritual home.

NO EXCUSES

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. - Revelation 20:11-15.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. - John 3:16-18.

CareerBuilder.com conducted a survey about workers being late to work. *Thirteen percent* of workers surveyed said they were late once a week. *Twenty-five percent* of the workers they surveyed said that they were late to work at least once a month. *Twenty percent* of those who said they were late to work also said that they make up excuses and lie to their supervisor if necessary to justify their being late. *A quarter* of the late workers blamed traffic conditions but many said they had just overslept. Here are some of the excuses workers surveyed said that they had used are:

Ran over a goat.

Dreamed that they had been fired and so they just stayed in bed.

Made it to the office and then realized still in pajamas and went home to change clothes into something more appropriate.

Stopped for a sandwich and while there the store was robbed. Police officers made them stay for questioning.

A bee flew in the car window and attacked them. They then had to stop the car.

Realized that the tie they were wearing was inappropriate and had to wait for stores to open to buy a different tie.

According to the survey, many of the supervisors accepted excuses offered for being late without question.

Our Heavenly Father is unlike human supervisors. He is through Jesus Christ a God of great mercy and the invitation is to all to receive Christ as their Savior. **“For God so loved the world....”** He did not just love part of the world but all those who have lived, are living, and will be living on this planet. He loved us so much that His only Son suffered and died on the cross for our sins. The Bible has many statements or invitations from God to accept His mercy. The Bible closes out in **Revelation 22** with one last invitation, **“And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely (Revelation 22:17).”**

God has done everything that can be done to provide mercy for humanity. He has done everything except to make up your mind for you. He will not force you to accept Jesus as your Savior. He loves you and died for you through Jesus but it is up to you to determine your eternal destiny. *He cannot do it for you*. Sadly, some day the opportunity for salvation and eternal life will come to an end. Jesus makes it clear in

the Gospel of John chapter 3 and verses 17 and 18 that it is not God that will condemn those who have not accepted His great invitation. No, it is those who decide by their not accepting His great invitation that condemn themselves. As Jesus says, **“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”**

There will come a day when all who have rejected Christ by their failure to chose Him will have to stand before the great white throne. It will be a day when no excuses will be allowed. The Book of Life will be searched for the person’s name and when it is not found they will be **“cast into the lake of fire.”** There will be no excuses allowed on that day.

If you have not received Christ Jesus as your personal Savior - *I plead with you to do so before it is everlastingly too late.* Remember, some day it will be too late for excuses and it will all depend on what you have done with the precious Son of God. *Have you believed or not?*

THE ETERNALLY RIGHT WAY

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints. - Psalm 116:15.

And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. - Hebrews 9:27-28.

And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. - Philippians 4:3.

I spoke at a funeral service this morning (03.14.06) for Justin Davis, a 17-year-old young man who was killed when his friend drove off a dead end and hit a tree. It was tragic but it could have been even more tragic.

When I was 17-years-old I also drove off a dead end with a friend. We were out in the country at one or two in the morning and I was driving. I was going too fast and there was gravel on the roadway so that when I hit the brakes it was like being on ice. There was nothing to do. We did have our lap belts on (They did not have shoulder belts in 1967.). Without the seatbelts we would have went through the windshield and most likely would have been killed. We still hit our heads and then had to walk a few miles in

the winter cold to find help.

The night of my accident, our parents did not know where we were and we were not where we should have been. We were not doing what we should have been doing. We both lived but it could have been even more tragic.

The fact is that if I had died that night I would not have gone to Heaven but to that other place. I was a member of a church and I had been baptized. But I did not know Jesus as my personal Savior and Lord. I had never prayed to receive Christ Jesus as my Savior. If I had died that night, it would have been eternally tragic because I would have been forever separated from God.

What did happen to Justin is tragic, terrible, awful, horrific - there are not really words to describe what has happened adequately. However, it could have been even more tragic. Justin could have been in the same shape spiritually that I was in when I was 17-years-old. I was lost and did not know Jesus as my Savior.

Justin was at his great-grandparent's home on June 14, 2004 and while he was there his great-grandmother, Clara Davis, talked to Justin about his need for salvation. Justin prayed that day to receive Jesus as his Savior and Lord. Of course, Clara is so glad that she talked to Justin about this and she had written it down on her calendar. Something else happened on June 14, 2004. The angels rejoiced in heaven (**Luke 15:7**). The sins of Justin were wiped away by the blood of Jesus and will be remembered no more (**Hebrews 8:12**) and, God also wrote down Justin's name - He wrote his name in the Book of Life (**Philippians 4:3**).

Justin's family and friends can rejoice and take comfort in knowing that some day, some day if they too know Jesus as their Savior - they will see Justin again in Heaven. Justin was killed in a terribly, tragic accident but it could have been eternally tragic.

If you have never prayed to receive Christ Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord I want to encourage you to do so even now - this day pray to be saved. Ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins, the bad things you have done. Don't put it off because none of us know what will happen tomorrow and life is so very fragile and precious. Jesus says in John 14:6, "**I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.**" Justin chose the eternally right way for his life. I pray that you will too.

FALLING SHORT

For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty

of all. - James 2:10.

Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. - James 4:17.

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. - Romans 3:23.

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. - 1 John 1:7-9.

The headline from London today is that *“Rescuers fall short in saving errant whale.”* I watched yesterday on the news, as efforts were underway to rescue the bottlenose whale that had gotten lost and swam up the Thames River. The whale was large being 18 feet long with a weight of about four tons although that may not be so large for a whale. The whale may have gotten off course because of being ill. Attempts were made to turn the whale around but they all failed. Finally, it was decided to put the whale on a barge to take it back to the sea. Sadly, the stress on the whale’s internal organs caused it to die before making it back into the water. Silvia Mazzola who watched as the rescue was attempted said, *“Yesterday, it was a carnival mood, but today it was a bit sad. It felt like a funeral on the river.”*

The effort of the rescuers to save the whale and the ultimate failure is a picture of humanity’s efforts to save themselves spiritually. Sadly, it cannot be done although many have tried. Man thinks if I can keep the Law perfectly then I will be safe. If I can avoid all sin, I will be saved. If I can do more good things than bad things then I will be saved. James points out how impossible this is by saying, **“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”** He also says, **“...to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”**

I have had it explained to me that it is like an archer shooting arrows at a target. Each arrow falls a little short. The arrows almost make it but almost does not a bullseye make. Unless the target is hit, it is a failure and the arrows have fallen short. The rescue attempts of the whale all fell short. It was a good try, many good tries, but the whale still died. It is the same spiritually for us. We may make many good tries, our arrows may come close to hitting the mark but they still fall short. Tell one little white lie. Fail to do one good thing that we know we should have done. It just takes one little tiny sin to fall short.

Of course, some people try to deceive themselves and say, “*Oh, I am perfect and I have never, ever committed any kind of sin.*” What does the Bible have to say about that person? “**If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**” If we could have saved ourselves, there would have been no need for Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. If there had been any other way Jesus would not have come down from the glories of Heaven to suffer and die for us. Jesus is the only way (**John 14:6**). He is the only One who has ever lived a perfect life, tempted at all points yet without sin (**Hebrews 4:15**) so that He could be the perfect sacrifice. As Peter tells us, “**For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).**”

THE LETTER OF THE LAW

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. - Matthew 5:17-18.

The letters of the Kurdish alphabet and the Turkish law have collided. In Turkey, it is against the law to use characters not used in the Turkish alphabet and during a Kurdish New Year celebration, 20 people had placards, which had the letters Q and W, which are not in the Turkish alphabet. A court in the city of Siirt fined all those who participated in using the unlawful letters 100 new lira.

It does appear somewhat severe to punish people for simply holding placards, which have letters on them! However, it is the law and the Turkish court has ruled according to the letter of the law. As a result, a penalty was imposed on the 20 people who disobeyed the law by holding up the unlawful letters.

Jesus is speaking in Matthew five of the Old Testament laws and because of His use of the terms “**the Law**” and the “**Prophets**” we know he is talking about the whole of the Old Testament. In **Luke 24:44** Jesus says, “**These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.**”

The letter of the Law contained in the Old Testament some would say is harsh. However, the Law is the Law and there are penalties for disobedience to that Law

even though it may appear small to us. Jesus says, **“till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”**

What is the purpose of the Law? The apostle Paul tells us in **Galatians 3:24**, **“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”** The **“tutor (Greek: *paidagogos*)”** that this word is based upon was usually an elderly and trustworthy slave that would be in charge of escorting the families’ children to school. The slave would stay at the school until the school was over and he would then escort the children home. Even though the tutor was a slave, the children would still call him *“Master”* and the slave had the authority to punish the child if necessary. In the same way, the **“Law”** is our *“tutor”*.

The apostle Paul in **Galatians chapter three** goes on to tell us how privileged we are if we know Christ as our Savior by saying, **“But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”** *This means that in Christ those who know Him as Savior are no longer in bondage but are free! Thank God! Praise God!* Because **Romans 3:23** tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. **Romans 6:23a** tells us that the penalty for sin is death. The last part of **Romans 6:23b** tells us the good news: **“but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** *Have you received the gift?*

THE LETTER OF THE LAW - PART II

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. - Matthew 5:17-19.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. - Romans 6:23.

Dave Newman is a lawbreaker and in San Marcos, Texas, he was arrested for breaking the law. Emergency personnel warned Newman repeatedly to leave the

water because they said that he was “*interfering with public duties*”. However, Newman refused and proceeded to rescue a drowning man caught in a river current. After being released from jail on a \$2,000.00 bond Newman said, “*I was amazed. I had a very uncomfortable night after saving that guy’s life (Abed Duamni). He thanked me for it in front of the police, and then they took me to jail.*” Even though Dave Newman broke the law, hopefully, a judge will use some common sense and throw it out of court. However, the prosecutor and the emergency personnel will point out that the law is the law and that it was broken by Mr. Newman in his successful rescue of Abed.

Are you a lawbreaker? The fact is that we have all, except for Jesus, broken the law, God’s Law. **Romans 3:23** states very clearly, “**For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**”. That includes all of us. Jesus says, “**I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled (Matthew 5:18).**” The OT laws, which include the Ten Commandments, are still in effect. Jesus says, “**Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill (Matthew 5:17).**”

What hope do we have of being able to go through life and perfectly keep God’s laws? None. *Have you never told a lie or a half-truth? Have you never had an ugly thought? Have you never stolen anything even a paper clip? Have you always been nice to everyone?* The fact is that we cannot perfectly obey all of God’s laws. However, the law is still the law and there is an eternal death sentence for breaking the law even at one point. God is still God and He will one day judge us. We may not like it but that is still the way it is whether we like it or not.

Wouldn’t it be nice if there were some kind of escape clause so that we could escape the penalty that we deserve for breaking the law? The fact is that God knew how difficult it would be for us to obey the Law and that is why He provided a way for us to escape the penalty of our disobedience. The Name of that escape clause is Jesus. Someone had to be penalized for our disobedience because God is a Holy and completely Righteous God. That someone who was penalized was Jesus. He took our sins upon Himself on the cross. He took our place and suffered and died for us on the cross - He died for you on the cross. His blood was shed for our sins.

When we receive the “**gift**” of salvation through Jesus Christ, His righteousness is imputed to us. When God looks at us He no longer sees us as sinners, instead He sees the righteousness of His Son because we have been washed in the blood of Jesus. The letter of the Law has been fulfilled but only through the cost of the sacrifice of the perfect lamb, Jesus, on the cross.

Want to be free from the penalty of the Law? Receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. Salvation is a gift that is available to you if you will receive it. What will you do with Jesus?

THE GREATEST DAY OF BRETT SPELL'S LIFE

Ann Scott from Madill, Oklahoma has shared with me a very moving testimony about her grandson, Brett Spells, and I want to share it with you:

THE GREATEST DAY OF BRETT SPELL'S LIFE

But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. - Philippians 1:12.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. - Romans 8:28.

Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this? - Esther 4:14.

Ann Scott shares: "My grandson Brett was such a beautiful young man, 15 years old. He first watched the video, "LEFT BEHIND," at my daughter's house and made them turn it off in the middle and fell down in the floor and began to pray, we thought, for salvation and then he finished watching the movie. He then went to the movie, "The Passion," it really stirred his heart so much. He talked about it continually. This movie touched him so deeply. We did not know at that time that Brett had been a Christian for four years and had already been leading people to the Lord. Then he came to our church and prayed at our altar - we thought for salvation. He had never mentioned his Christian experience. He attended the Methodist church in Ardmore, Ok. He was a member of the youth group in the First Baptist Church. They had a crusade for young Christian Athletes in the stadium at Ardmore High School and he went down for prayer, the evangelist asked him if he was a Christian, he told him he had prayed the sinner's prayer but he wanted to really make sure. The evangelist prayed for him and Brett got up from the altar and he was so happy. He was grabbing everyone and told them he just felt so good. Then he told one of his best friends, Cody, who was one of many, best friends, "Cody I just feel so wonderful, I feel like something wonderful is going to happen to me tomorrow. I feel like tomorrow is going to be the greatest day of my life." He was so happy, he was telling everyone. He went home and got on the internet and told others that tomorrow is going to be the greatest day of my life. AND IT WAS THE BEST DAY OF HIS LIFE.. Brett went to heaven that next day."

“On the way to school the next morning, Cody was driving Brett Spells to school and swerved to miss a deer and hit a tree, the wreck did not look that bad. They were not speeding and were wearing seat belts. Brett did not look like he was injured that bad. They took him to Mercy Memorial in Ardmore and decided to send him to the OU Trauma Hospital in OKC. His brain started to swell, his pelvic was broken, his arm was broken. His brother Aaron was sitting in class at Murray State College and one of his classmates asked the question in the class, "Did you hear about that wreck at Plainview?" Aaron told us a chill went all the way up his back. At that same time, his cell phone rang and it was his dad telling him Brett had been in a wreck.”

“The doctors came in after doing tests on Brett and told us there was no hope, no hope at all. But you know this grandma, I sat at his bed and prayed...I finally surrendered to the will of our wonderful Lord and told Brett if he wanted to go home with Jesus, I wanted him to go...I put my hand on his chest and leaned in his ear and sang the first and last verse of Amazing Grace. ‘When we've been there ten thousand years we've just begun,’ and when I finished that last verse, I told him that in ten thousand years we would still be together, his heart beat it's last beat and the most beautiful look came on his face. He saw something in the spiritual realm that this grandmother was not allowed to see yet. And Jesus took him home. I plan on going there to be with him very soon as Jesus is coming soon to take His Bride, the church, home with him. I pray that you have settled this in your heart and know for certain that your name is in the Book of Life. If you do not know Jesus personally, I ask that you do this. Ask Jesus to forgive you for your sins, write your name down in the Lamb's Book of Life and live for Jesus every moment of every day. I promise you that you will not be sorry. And ten thousand years from today you can walk up to Brett Spells and tell him, ‘Hey man, I got saved after your wreck when I heard about your testimony.’”

“There was a time that you were not, but there will never be a time that you will cease to be. Even one million years from today, you will be somewhere. So please settle it in your heart, eternity is forever. Don't just know about Jesus but become personally acquainted with Him today. You were created to have a personal relationship with God through His precious Son, Jesus Christ. God created you for a purpose and you have such value that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you. Mike, Brett's dad, made the statement that time is our greatest enemy.. We put off making that commitment to the Lord. And then after we make the commitment, in a few years we allow ourselves to become cold in our spirits. There are hundreds of young people giving their hearts and lives to the Lord in the Ardmore area and the surrounding communities. I pray they will hold fast to the Lord and let Him accomplish in their lives the work that Jesus has begun.”

"We don't know what one day in our lives will bring, so stay ready to meet your Lord. Hug your children and cherish them, they are treasures from God. He only loaned them to us and one day He will take them back home to His home that is eternal. One million years from today you will be somewhere.. I trust and pray it will be in that place called heaven with Brett Spells."

"I always thought Brett would preach the gospel. And he did preach the gospel at 11am at the Crystal Rock Cathedral in Ardmore, Ok. Tues. morning, Oct. the 12th. It was one of the greatest sermons that I ever heard. It was a sermon about the Grace of God. God's amazing grace that welcomed a young 15 year old boy into his eternal home in Christ's Kingdom because Jesus wrote the name Brett Spells into the Lamb's Book of Life. Unfortunately, Brett's sermon was preached from his casket by the life he lived on this earth. Will you consider accepting this marvelous, amazing grace today? It is a gift from God, you cannot buy this beautiful gift. Grace is a free gift. It has already been paid for on Calvary 2000 years ago." Will you receive this grace, this gift and live your life for the Lord Jesus Christ?

GO AWAY

Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. - Isaiah 55:1.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. - Revelation 3:20.

"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. - Revelation 22:16-17.

Today (06.29.04) was a sad day for me. My mother has been hospitalized for three weeks to reduce the amount of medication she is taking. Her mental condition had become very delusional and at times she was violent. Since she has been in the hospital, her mental and physical condition has improved but she still has a long way to go. I had visited or tried to visit with my mother for only a few minutes today when she told me to "go away". With my mother, it was not that shocking but still I never thought I would hear my mother tell me to "go away". Hopefully, she will be better tomorrow.

The wonderful thing about our God is that as long as we have breath He will never tell us to “*go away*”. Throughout the Bible, you will find God inviting people to come to Him from the Old Testament to the very last chapter of the New Testament. God is not only inviting us - He is out looking for us knocking on the door of our heart and waiting to be invited into our lives.

God does not invite us to a life of deadness. *No!* He invites us to the abundant life, to real life. Jesus says, **“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly (John 10:10).”** God is inviting us to continually come closer to Him. If you have never experienced Him (Jesus) as your Lord and Savior then He is inviting you to do exactly that. Once you know Jesus as your Savior He is continually inviting you to come closer to Him, to wade out further into the waters of eternal life, to experience Him in deeper and deeper ways. As long as we have breath, the invitation to that abundant life and the more and more abundant life will never end.

It is hard for me to understand but some people will never ever accept God’s invitation. How can they reject Jesus who suffered and died in their place? How can they ignore Him when He is so patiently and continually knocking at the door of their heart?

God is patient; however, there is a limit to His patience and to His invitation. God’s invitation has an expiration date which is at the exact time that we die physically (However it can come sooner if a person hardens their heart to the point they can no longer hear God’s Voice which comes about by continually rejecting the Holy Spirit’s invitation.). Those who find that they have let God’s invitation expire will hear God tell them to “*go away*”. The Bible tells us about this terrible day in **Revelation 20:11-15**, **“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”**

Those who throughout their lives tell God to “*go away*” will one day hear God tell them to “*go away*” into everlasting punishment.

HEAVEN BOUND

Then his servants said to him, "What is this that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive, but when the child died, you arose and ate food." And he said, "While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." - 2 Samuel 12:21-23.

This was the text used at a funeral I attended one afternoon in October of 1999. I will never forget it. Pastor Gerald Biswell preached the message at his own 18 year old son's funeral. Josh Biswell was returning home from seeing friends when he was in a traffic accident. Pastor Biswell recounted how his son at the age of eight had prayed to receive Christ as his Savior. He told of how on the way to the hospital he had pleaded with God, as did David for his son, to spare his son's life. But as with David the son was taken to be with the Lord.

David knew his baby son was not coming back to be with him. But David knew something else as well that made life bearable. David knew that some day he would go to be with his son. Pastor Biswell knows that too. Josh is in a place so wonderful that it is beyond human description and even if Josh could come back he wouldn't want to. The pastor extended an invitation to those attending to receive Christ as their Savior so that some day they too could be reunited with Josh and their loved ones.

During the invitation many young men came forward to make public their decision to receive Christ. One young man I talked to said, "*This has changed my life!*" Just looking at his face you could see that it had. Has Jesus ever changed your life?

INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. - Romans 3:23.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way. - Isaiah 53:6a.

Living in Oklahoma, we hear frequently of the state trial of Terry Nichols for the 1995 bombing of the Murrah building. Nichols recently (2004) made an attempt at a plea bargain in which he would plead no contest to the charges in return for escaping the death penalty. The plea bargain was rejected by prosecutors. However, Judge Steven Taylor in a pretrial hearing said that he will stress to the jury that Nichols is to be

“presumed innocent.” The judge also indicated that he should especially be presumed innocent in view of his willingness to plead no contest to the charges.

Being used to our criminal justice system in the USA it would only seem fair for God to operate in the same way. If God is fair, we think then He will consider us innocent until proven guilty. However, the flaw in this way of thinking is that we have already been found guilty. I am guilty, you are guilty, we are all guilty of sin, guilty of going our own way. One word stands out and shouts at us all in **Romans 3:23** and **Isaiah 53:6**. That word is **“all.”** All of us have sinned. Every one of us have sinned and chosen our way instead of God’s way at one point or another. Of course, we do not like this spiritual fact but that does not change the truth of the matter.

Once we arrive at the point of realizing our guilt, we must throw ourselves upon the mercies of our Judge. Is our Judge without mercy? Will our Judge condemn us all without mercy? No, because He is a Judge of mercy and He has made a way for us to escape the penalty that should be ours. **Romans 6:23** says, **“the wages of sin is death.”** But the rest of the verse gives the wonderful news of mercy, **“but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ.”** **Isaiah 53:6** says we have all gone astray but then tells us that God **“has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”**

The bad news is that we are **“all”** guilty before God but the Good News is that **“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).”**

When before the judgment bar of the Almighty it is best to plead guilty and confess (**1 John 1:9**). The punishment has already been given almost 2000 years ago when the sins of us all were laid on Jesus. *What are we to do?* Believe (**John 3:16**) upon our Savior Jesus Christ and receive the free gift of eternal life. Because if we do we will receive a full pardon for our iniquities.

SALVATION THEN WORKS

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. - Ephesians 2:8-10.

Marine Lance Cpl. Jose A. Gutierrez of Lomita, California was a *“green card soldier”* who had volunteered to fight for his adopted country. Sadly, Cpl. Gutierrez died during the first three days of the war. The United States has now granted posthumous

citizenship to Cpl. Gutierrez who was from Guatemala where he was orphaned as a young boy. He entered the U.S. illegally in 1997. *Why would someone not even a citizen join the Marines?* According to Gutierrez' foster brother, Gutierrez joined the Marines *"to pay back a little of what he'd gotten from the United States."* There are now 37,000 non-citizens serving in the armed forces of the U. S.

The Bible makes it clear that you cannot be good enough or do enough good things to make you worthy for Heaven. *Why?* The Bible says in effect that if we could do that then we would all be boasting about all the good things we had done when we arrived in Heaven - **"it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."**

Why then would anyone want to do good works as a Christian if it does not save you or work to facilitate your entrance into Heaven? It much like the story of Lance Cpl. Jose A. Gutierrez. Gutierrez was not serving in the United States Marines because he was compelled or because of a legal obligation. Gutierrez was serving in the Marine Corps because of his great gratitude for what the United States had done for him - *"to pay back a little of what he'd gotten from the United States."*

After receiving freely the gift of eternal life from our God through Jesus and being adopted into the family of God with all of the privileges of belonging to the royal family of the King of Kings we feel great gratitude. As a result of that great gratitude of the unmerited favor we have been granted - good works begin to flow out of our lives. We have a new nature (**2 Corinthians 5:17**) that desires to please our Lord. It is not forced labor. Instead it is a labor of great love and gratitude for the sacrifice of our Lord that resulted in our salvation.

Have you been trying to work your way to Heaven? It will never happen. Have you been trying to do more good things than bad things so the scales will tilt in your favor bringing you salvation? You have been deceived. Turn to the Lord Jesus and receive the free gift of salvation and then do your good works out of the great gratitude for His wondrous mercy toward you.

NOW IS THE TIME

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. - 2 Corinthians 6:1c.

Dwight L. Moody was perhaps the greatest evangelist of the latter part of the 19th Century. On October 8, 1871, Moody was preaching in Chicago a message entitled, *"What will you do with Jesus?"* He ended his sermon by stating, *"I wish you would*

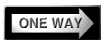
seriously consider this subject, for next Sunday we'll speak about the cross. Then I'll ask you, 'What will you do with Jesus?'" The service was ended with a hymn; however, before the completion of the hymn the roar of fire engines could be heard. The terrible 1871 Chicago fire swept through the city that night and nearly destroyed the city. Moody's sermon on the cross was never preached at least not to those who were present on the day of the fire. Moody would often say in the years to follow, *"I have never since dared to give an audience a week to think of their salvation."* Moody often thought of those who were present during the October 8 service who may have died in the fire and never had another opportunity for salvation.

The fact is that when the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts about a decision we need to make - that is the time, that is the moment we should say, "Yes". If you know that God is speaking to you about receiving Christ as your Savior; now, today is the time to receive Him. If you know that God is speaking to you about recommitting your life to Him; now, today is the time for recommitment. If you know that God is speaking to you, calling you to preach His Word, or to special service, or full time Christian vocational service; now, today is the time to respond to His call.

People do wait too long and do go out into eternity without Christ. We think that we have years of time to make these spiritual decisions but we do not even know if we have the rest of today. You may know that God wants you to serve Him in some way and you think, *"What is the harm in waiting until next week, or until I finish college, or until I'm more financially secure, or you can fill in the blank."* The harm and the problem with this is that the more and longer you resist the Holy Spirit's call; the dimmer, the less audible that call becomes. Finally, you can no longer hear that call and you no longer have a desire to respond to the call. One of my great-uncles always thought that He had missed God's call to preach. I believe he probably did.

Not only can people fail to respond to the Holy Spirit's call to salvation but also we can fail to go and share Christ with those who are lost. How many have gone out into eternity without Christ because someone did not respond to the still, small voice of God? How many have I been responsible for? How many have you been responsible for?

I would urge you even now if God has spoken to you that you would respond today!



To receive Christ as your Savior for all eternity and be saved - pray the prayer below:

“Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you died on the cross for my sins and rose again on the third day. Please forgive me for the sins, the bad things I have done, I want to change and be like You. Please help me to change, be my Lord and my Master and my Savior. In your Name, Lord Jesus, I ask You to come into my heart and save me. Amen.”

Please remember that words alone will not save you. Only if you truly mean it in your heart will you be saved. If you do pray the prayer above and mean it in your heart please send me an email at wrather@dobsonteleco.com or edwrather@theburningbush.org and I will send you additional helpful information (Or, write to me at P. O. Box 210, Sweetwater, OK 73666).

AFTER SALVATION

1. After you have prayed to receive Jesus as your Savior you should immediately share your decision with someone else. **“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:10).”**
2. Follow the Lord Jesus in Baptism. Baptism does not save you but it is a step of obedience to your Lord’s command and example (**Acts 2:38**). Baptism does not save you but it is a visual witness/testimony of what has happened in your heart (**Acts 8:36-38; Acts 16:30-34; Romans 6:4**). Baptism does not save you but it is a step of empowerment because by being obedient to this command of your Lord the next step of obedience will be made easier. Baptism is also a Sign of Conversion (**Matthew 3:11**) and a Mark of Separation (**1 Peter 3:21**).
3. Church attendance is a necessity for you to grow in Christ to be a mature believer. Church attendance is a command. We are told in **Hebrews 10:24-25**, **“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”**
4. Serving your Lord. **1 Corinthians 3:9**, **“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.”**
5. Maintain communication with your Lord through prayer (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**) and read, study, meditate on, and memorize the Word of God (**Matthew 4:4**).

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