



Let us be ready...



RIGHT TO BE SAVED

And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

John 8:32

We live in a world of wide contradictions: a world producing a Mother Teresa and an Al Capone, a world that witnesses Florence Nightingale and produces an Adolf Hitler, as we also witness the spiritual extremes that can produce deadly terror, or challenge true champions to give a new and living hope: placing some on treadmills of futility, and Another upon redemption's Cross.

We live in a world where desperate human beings soon learn what it is to be headed for Heaven . . . or Hell.

Everyone wants to go to Heaven, they say, but few seem to know how to get there, today. There was a time when the ravages and the savages of time had embraced

the Savior given to us in Bethlehem—Who gave us His life, so that we could live for Him (and others) . . . but now, as human-kind is like to do, we are turning from the hand that feeds us into the Dark, while keeping Him at arms length (as in Eden) so that we can handle things for ourselves: doing things better, we think, than He would have it.

So now we re-visit the edge of a world heading back into a dark age: while many deny it, of course; all the while being unable to give convincing evidence beyond the obvious. For how can good, come out of evil? How can humanity

(continued . . .)

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Features:
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2. Mere Faith

now embrace rabid morals, call them good, and hope to succeed in the long run? Worst, how can whole masses of people embrace a wrong idea, and hope to succeed in the endeavor . . . if there is a God, Who Himself, is good?

What is God like, at His very core?

What *is* good?

These are questions that we simply must consider coming to terms with today, whether we feel like confronting them, or not. They are coming to our homes to visit us, and are knocking on our doors. Our world is changing drastically. Over in Europe, and on our very shores, centuries of progress and ease are starting to be challenged (threatened?) by mass immigrations of people who are in very desperate need. This may only be the beginning. How do we respond to this need? How will this need change us?

But first, another question, just a little one that holds the key. "What is faith?" We say that salvation and the Gateway to Heaven is free—as is life itself, for each of us: Our parents have brought us here. Mom did the hard work, we did not. God grants salvation: Jesus went to Calvary and tore away the keys of Death and Hell: but after rebirth, is there a *cost* of discipleship?

Is there a cost of success for the little one we cradle in our arms? Do they *have* to go to school, learn, and later be graded, to pass the testing periods of life?

One question at a time, as we start to find answers within His Book. Come with me, as we first bow before God's heart (first article), and then seek to discover what "mere faith" is, in our quest to "save ourselves from this perverse generation."



GOD'S

HEART

"Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned.

But what do You say?"

John 8:5

The reference, given above, refers to levitical law within the Old Testament that cites moral infractions listed as capital offenses. The third book of the Mosaic Law, called Leviticus, names several infractions qualifying to be punishable by death within its twentieth chapter. These offenses include: adultery,

incest, bestiality, homosexuality—as well as cursing one's parents (verses 9-16). What is most interesting in this passage referred to by the men throwing a woman in front of Jesus, is that the religious leaders apparently felt there was good reason to reject the actual *practice* or application of these laws, within their day.

Consider: if women (and men) were being regularly stoned to death within the Jewish community, why

bring this question up to begin with? Even when considering the matter of Roman Law (very similar to our own, wherein government provides oversight for serious moral offenses)—why did they not simply bring the matter before the governing authorities instead of asking for an opinion from Jesus?

This would have added real “teeth” to their intent.

They could have queried Jesus about the event (of stoning her) after the act was completed!

In fact, within notable instances throughout the Bible, capital punishment for moral infractions often seems to be carefully avoided.

This silent witness is most notable. Call to mind, for example, the situation of David taking Uriah’s wife (Bathsheba—and having Uriah killed). Why was David’s own life spared by the Lord?

In a similar vein, why was Samuel not reprovved for failing to accomplish within his own home what Levi had been seriously judged for (with the death of his sons) when failing to discipline the wickedness of his own household? Why was the prophet *not* reprovved for failing to have *his* own sons follow faithfully behind him (1 Sam. 13:13,14 & 8:3-5)??

What was, and is, the purpose of Mosaic law, to begin with, as given to us within the Bible? And yes, although there were times when God showed great mercy—**His judgments could be awesome, as well** (consider the striking of Levi’s sons, dead, within the temple (Num. 3:4) —or the Uzza event, which reminds us of a New Testament incident with Ananias and Sapphira falling dead (2 Samuel 6 & Acts 5)!!)

We must tread very carefully within this area, and will not be able to “cover all bases” as we seek answers to these questions, and yet the church (and all true Christians) must confront these matters in our day for three very important reasons.

The recent Supreme Court decision on same-sex marriage has forced us to consider the rightful place, and limits, of human government within our day.

Charges are now being leveled by the homosexual (and liberal) community regarding the justice and civility of *biblical laws*.

The Muslim community is seeking to establish exclusions, exemptions, and accommodations for Shariah Law upon our shores (in fact, are

already beginning to do so)—based upon the Quran, in a manner that would be allowed to trump US civil law.

In Britain (the UK) Sharia law has already made serious inroads into the public square where citizens may seek alternative jurisdiction and legal sentences within religious courts.¹ That country is now in the process of setting up an umbrella system of alternative moral adjudication. Labeled “Acceptable Behavior Contracts” (ABC)²—not to be confused with ABC laws (Anti-bribery & Corruption laws)—this process is currently made use of among minors, but may in extreme (??) cases be applied to adults. The long and short of it is this: that within a pluralistic western society where the Bible is no longer considered the foundation of its legal system, the UK is working overtime to establish an alternate morality: something they can “pin down” as definitely “British” and acceptable behavior.

Suppose now, just suppose, these leaders in Britain (and elsewhere) were to have a eureka moment: deciding that every citizen within their country had to sign an affidavit, or give digital assent to a new moral code that declared allegiance to say . . . an international leader—involving a chip of some sort . . . or Mark (Rev. 13:16ff)?

Yes, yes, all of this is simply too (im)plausible—or is it? Who among us would have supposed, just a short decade ago, that we would have a sitting US President propose, and successfully forward, policies that promote same-sex attraction as a protected lifestyle within our lifetime?

And there is yet another pressing issue to consider,—well beyond the recent SCOTUS same-sex ruling. —How does all of this look to onlookers “from the outside”? For, in truth, many who may be considering the Christian faith may now find themselves utterly confused: wondering how they are to view Christianity and even, God Himself. For, consider this: if the Supreme Court ruling is truly just and righteous—where does this leave the Bible?

Even more serious: where does it leave homosexuals (and new refugees) who want to have their souls at peace with God? Does not God yet love them?

Just one point more, by way of admission and clarification: the world in which we live is increasingly being rocked by (what I call) the “blasphemy effect.” What is this blasphemy effect? It is the slinging of im-

**Throughout the
Bible . . .
punishment [is
sometimes] avoided.**



MERE FAITH

beyond slaying giants . . .

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, . . ."

1 Samuel 17:45

Scripture emphatically declares that at the end of the age a world class Champion will arise proposing the unthinkable: that *he* is God, and all should worship him. Possibly reasoning that we are all God (or gods) and that he is our ultimate Representative, he will continue to make use of a tactic breached within the Garden of Eden: first questioning God in our everyday living, and then by continually challenging our true belief in Him—ultimately have us break faith with God altogether, and have persons *commit* themselves to walk in the Dark.

Of course, he will accomplish this, most frequently—you guessed it, by blaspheming God: not always openly, but at first quietly, as the social appetite for this poison becomes ever more “tolerant.” At present this advance has reached the “self esteem” phase: getting post moderns to start believing that, after all, all the world exists and revolves, around ourselves. . . .

I ask that we firmly lodge this warning in the back of our minds as we now consider the *opposite* position: of the possibility of being faithful, and of firmly grabbing hold of sling and stone, as David did when confronting Goliath. For in truth—the heart with which David confronted the giant was every bit as important (more so) as those simple stones being hurled at his adversary. Within a world rapidly running after new technologies (new “sling shots”) we must realize that what makes a true champion is his *heart* not her/his machinery.

This is the simple essence of what it means to be a woman or man of faith in God. “Faith is the substance

of things hoped for,” Scripture tells us, “the evidence of things not seen” and, going even further the writer informs us, “without faith it is impossible to please God,

For he who comes to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Hebrews 11:1, 6

When Scripture (in the King James Version, etc.) speaks of faith being the “substance” of things hoped for, it is not merely stating as some modern translations do, that we have a firm belief in God—but that we are willing to back up what we believe with our lives. Such is clearly implied by the context in which the statement is made, and by the examples given. “By faith,” the writer continues, “Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.” (Heb. 11:8). The “substance” (solid evidence) of Abraham’s faith, within this example, was his simple obedience. In other words: *his life*. Put another way, without being too mundane: Abraham was willing to *bet his life* on God. He placed his life on the line—and the Lord delivered on His promise to Abraham.

³² *And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and . . . Samson . . . also of David and Samuel and the prophets:*
³³ *who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,*

Hebrews 11:32-33

Within every example given in this chapter of the “roll call of faith” as some refer to it, every believer who exercised faith lived in a manner that sought to prove/demonstrate their faith in God. Faith, for them, was *not* a rabbit’s foot, that made them rich or famous. Faith, for them (for us) is a means to an end:

Not the end itself. It is first proved out in the little things of life (or, not so little)—when making decisions to do what is right, in God’s eyes, regardless of the consequences. It is being honest, when no one is watching: being kind when there seems to be no reward; and giving God honor, when only He sees it. The purpose of faith is to please God, to hear Him say well done within our hearts, and to see Him smile when we finally stand before Him—after already having witnessed Him “coming through” for us, today within this world, as we place our trust in Him within “enemy territory”—and when facing our giants.

Faith’s purpose is not (gasp) to give us “self esteem.” Faith’s purpose is to show and demonstrate to others that God is good, and allow our neighbors to taste, and in some small measure grasp, an understanding of God’s goodness through their observation of our relationship with Him.

*Let your light so shine before men,
that they may see your good works
and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

Further, although we hate to admit it, or even to consider the possibility: faith *costs* something for us to have-and-to-hold, it. The faithful are “married” to God (Eph. 5:25) and such a union brings with it both privileges *and responsibilities*. As so often happens, Scripture has its way of presenting this nugget of truth in very practical terms: within the home, for example, between a husband and his wife.

²⁵ *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,* ²⁶ *that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,* ²⁷ *that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.* ²⁸ *So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.*

Ephesians 5:25-28

Notice with me three things from the above passage:

- Christ *loves* His people (the church).
- Christ gave *His life* for us.
- His purpose is to present us to Himself, “without spot or wrinkle.”

In other words, God is a *holy God* who understands our tendency to wallow in the mud of this life, and selfish living. So God was willing to get “down in the dirt” of everyday living and walk among us, to wash our feet (Jn. 13:3ff)—and even *die* for us, so that we could live in the purity and wholeness of Heaven’s Life (Jn. 17:3).

Now . . . He invites us to do the same for others: first within the home, from the husband to his wife, between the wife and children, and ultimately towards our neighbors. Faith’s purpose is to demonstrate a pure and rare gift: a holy love. This was always His purpose, from the beginning.

For God was not to “holding out on us” in the Garden of Eden when commanding us not to eat forbidden fruit—but He was seeking to relieve us of the responsibility of having to make every moral decision that would later come back to bite us, when we had made multiple wrong decisions.

In other words, when He forbade Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil, He gave them more than a perfect *physical* Paradise: He was giving them a perfectly moral one, as well. It was a world in which God would take all of the responsibility of their being right and righteous, while eliminating even the possibility of further temptation (provided they obeyed His first command). Then they would truly live “happily ever after.” But of course, we chose the hard path, affirmed *we* could decide right from wrong, for ourselves, and threw Paradise out window.

Notice, if you will, the primary, underlying premise of the enemy’s temptation in the Garden, when tempting Eve to throw away God’s blessings. First, to question God.

Now the serpent . . . said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"

Genesis 3:1

Eve’s response? To “up the ante” by helping God out! Eve answered:

. . . God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

Genesis 3:3

God had said only, not to eat of the tree, while Eve added that she was not to even *touch* it. Adding an extra rule, she thought, would protect her. It did not.

Adding a new stipulation only straddled Eve with a heavier burden, at this point, and the devil knew it. Now the die was cast: for Eve was considering the bait (though she did not fully appreciate her danger yet) and his next move was to sow doubt deep into her heart. In so doing he would also sow disdain for God’s warning—so that she would disregard the flashing lights, warning that her disobedience would bring certain death and anguish.

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(Continued from page 3) *God's Heart*

morality and ungodly activity into the faces of those seeking to live clean and orderly lives—for the specific purpose of knocking us off our feet. The blasphemy effect is realized when persons speak with such careless indifference (and simple wickedness) that it leaves us breathless and wondering if we should arise in faith and “slay goliath” —or simply leave the judgment of our offenders in the hands of God.

Please pause, and calmly consider that last sentence.

I will not here expose what Scripture details regarding what we are to soon expect in the future as our world goes deeper into the darkness, except to remind us that Scripture's *chief defining attribute* of the one called “the Antichrist” will indeed be his blasphemous perspective.

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

Revelation 13:1 kjv [emphasis added]

And in every day terms? We are already starting to see it become visible. No, I am *not* here endorsing “politically correct” candidates who speak nicely and carry a dirty stick (persons who *sound* nice, but would deny Christians the free exercise of our conscience). I am only speaking reality: that we must beware of putting our trust in politicians. Our society is turning towards the Dark, and our highest officials are starting to mirror the images portrayed upon living room walls and flat screens. Until/unless *we* start to turn away from such “entertainment” we would do well to stop pointing our “righteous” fingers at our political leaders. . . .

In other words, Christians must understand *in practical terms* what it means to love the sinner, and hate their (or our own) sin. This is why we started our discussion by first examining some “exceptions” made to the Law, even within the Old Testament. Yes, here it is that we begin to appreciate, and to understand, the true reason for grace and forgiveness that was implicit—even before Jesus arrived in Bethlehem. For if the law had been sufficient, Christ would not have had to come, to begin with (Gal. 2:21, Heb. 8:7-9). This is

here we begin to
appreciate . . .
the true nature of
grace.

why we find that, although the levitical law was in effect, it was not always *enforced*. Nor did the Jewish community savor stoning their neighbors.

For this reason, I do believe, that some brought the adulterous woman to Jesus for judgment, to begin with. Some within that crowd, I am certain, really wanted to know how God regarded this woman, as well as their own sin.

Is it possible to separate the two: the sinner from his sin?

It is possible to live *above* sin, and degradation?

Jesus' response to this incident is telling. For at first He does not answer, at all. We have a situation here, quite frankly, that seems contradictory: God had given the Law, and it is good and just (Romans 7:12ff). Further, this woman had indeed broken that law. Like it or not, sin kills: it kills the trust between a man and his wife when violating the marriage vows, for

example.

It kills and destroys the foundation upon which our children would hope to stand, when preparing to go out into the world with mom and dad “having their back.” For families are much more than mere “social units” and it takes *more* than a mere “village” to give children the necessary righteous support and comfort that a loving family can provide.

We are human beings; persons made in the image of God.

Further, as we have already seen, when speaking of the prophet Samuel's family: even the best among us is not without fault!

Scripture says that Jesus knelt down and wrote on the ground with His finger: reminding us of another writing with the finger of God; the law of Moses (Exodus 31:18). He reminds us what the Law was given for: to give us structure and purpose—to set boundaries for our appetites and desires, so that we would become more than alley cats copulating at will in the back rooms (or living rooms) of our minds. Marriage brings our desires into the light of a solid commitment that is made out in the open, before others within our community.

Marriage tells our world that we are fulfilling God's will, within this sacred unit, as we move to join two halves of human personhood together: male and female. Marriage does this permanently, before God. “What man has joined together,” Jesus said, “let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:6)—and yet, the life of this woman on the ground before Jesus now lay broken. So, was humankind

made for the law, or the law for humans?

“Let him who is without sin, among you, cast the first stone,” Jesus said, and the men—starting with the oldest to the youngest, faded away from the crowd (Jn. 8:9).

I do not believe that Jesus is here saying that judgment must be forever, or always, suspended. No, God has appointed a day when He will judge the world (Acts 17:31). Judges, civil laws, and even institutional corrective measures—are established to maintain civil order and to deter others from making the same wrong choices (1 Tim. 5:20). Yet, when possible, and the situation does not unravel civil order, mercy may be extended. Like a father who assists a child who has skinned his/her knee—even while being disobedient, so the Lord wishes to bandage up our wounds.

“Woman,” Jesus asked, “where are your accusers. Has no one condemned you?”

“No one, Lord.” (vs, 11). Ah, there is the opening: the door has been opened. She has addressed Him as “Lord” (*kyrios* in the Greek: Lord, Master). She has humbled herself before God.

“Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more.”

As is so often the case, Jesus in His simple response has given a world of information and encouragement to us: Yes, it is possible to go, and to sin no more—when we acknowledge Him as our own Lord: then we may exercise our faith, and allow God to energize our own obedience (Acts 5:32). Then, we may be born again, have a new life, and once more begin to prepare to enter Heaven as we place our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Come, let us do likewise.



(Continued from page 5)

==*MERE FAITH*==

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:4-5

Oh no. Did he really say that? Now any suspicions she harbored were pulled out into the open. Could it be? Could it really be that God was holding out on them? [Eve, spoiler alert: that's the wrong way to think! Do not go down that road. He really does love you. Have you ever asked God for anything, or *about anything* and He denied you an answer (Jn. 15:15)? Be careful here.] But . . . her eyes were already compromised by what she was seeing. She was not careful about the direction of her affections, and unclean thoughts came flooding like a torrent. So she reached out . . .

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Genesis 3:6

Notice two things, here:

When she *touch*ed the fruit, she remained standing. *Nothing* happened when she only “*touch*ed” the fruit.

Her husband . . . was standing right there, while she was being tempted [Adam, why didn't you say something to warn her???

In all honesty, credit must be given to Eve for realizing that *touching* the forbidden would actually place her within the proximity of danger. Millennia later the apostle Paul, when warning men against adultery would advise, “it is good not to touch a woman” (1 Cor. 7:1). Of course, he was not saying that

mere “*touching*” was adulterous: he was speaking of our heart, and intent. When being *tempted*, reaching out in any way towards the temptation is dangerous. “Flee youthful lusts” the Scriptures warn (2 Tim. 2:22)—as Joseph did, when tempted by Potiphar’s wife (Genesis 39:12). Yes, Eve, you had the right idea. Advancing *towards* evil, in any way, always puts us at risk. Yet, if we can pay attention to God’s intent: if we can allow the fear of God to intervene—even after touching, life and wholeness still remains possible.

But alas, Eve was on that “slippery slope” once she reached out towards evil, and knew not how to turn back. It was then only a matter of moments until she fell completely into the trap, and had Adam seal the tomb, with his agreement.

As for God being gracious, and merciful? Yes, they really *were* allowed to live on, in a sense. But oh, the pain and agony!

Further, what eternal ramifications! For they were, henceforth, cut off from the life Source. The “energizer bunny” was now destined to run down—for hey had (in a sense) blasphemed, and disbelieved God’s good intentions. Now they were unplugged. Destined for eternal ruin and Death!

Only One Person could undo what Eve had done, by going to the Cross and Tomb to rescue us from our Death. He is the Christ: alive forever more.

¹⁷ And when I saw Him, . . . He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of [Hell] and of Death."

Revelation 1:17-18

Yes, yes! Let us truly believe, and live with Him forever more.



What Must I Do?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."

Acts 16:31

How?

... If you will 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 man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:9,10

In Other Words

Acknowledge: your need

—as a sinner (Romans 3:23, II Cor. 5:14-15)

Accept: His work on the Cross —to be your Savior

Confess: your acceptance of His lordship over you.

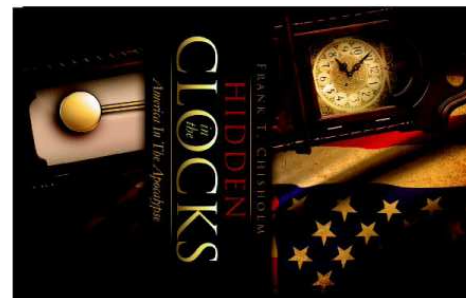
Live for Him: with your new life.

For the scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be ashamed."

Romans 10:11

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**America, America,
You haven't much Time!**
Hear me read its introduction online @
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ENDNOTES;

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¹ Sharia Law Alive and Well in UK . . . Times Mirror. <<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/sharia-law-alive-well-uk-6957168>>. Accessed 4/25/2016.

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