



## ***Are You A Real Christian Or Merely One Who Presumes To Be?***

By Kurt von Schleicher

What is more important than a person's salvation? Jesus asked, "***What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?***" (Mk. 8:36 kjv). Did you accept Jesus and it somehow didn't take? I mean, are you currently living year after year with one foot in the world and one foot in the church house, or with both feet and everything else totally submerged in the world? Man, I used to live like that during the '70's—fully submerged and partying full throttle to submerge myself more. What a relief to find Jesus!

Are you still struggling with destructive besetting sins that you and the Holy Spirit together should have gained the victory over long ago? Have you really examined yourself well to see if you are in the faith? Hey, God cares for people who think they are Christians, but don't know that they are not. Could it be that even though other churchgoers say you are a Christian, you and your friends are *sincerely* wrong about you being righteous? Maybe the communication to you from the get go—from the Christian witness that came your way—just came across incomplete or faulty somehow and this was partially responsible for getting you off on the wrong foot? Maybe it was their choice of words; a haughty attitude or the inappropriate mucky illustrations that didn't help? Do you remember how their verbal witness went; you know how you were you handled with this all-important topic at that alleged time of your conversion? What was said to you about repentance and the forsaking of both your sin and your own way? Maybe there was something left unsaid that might have really helped you as the listener to gain a fuller understanding of what *must happen* in your heart, mind or prayer? And I'm not talking about baptisms, sacraments, works or some exact formulation of pious words. Whatever it was, if anything, as a representative of God's Kingdom, I sincerely apologize to you and will do my best to try and make things clearer. Personally, I never want to live under a question mark, nor have you exist that way! I pray that as you get real with the Lord and lookup at the evangelistic Bible verses below in their context, that the Holy Spirit will now illumine your heart and mind, to help you grasp the things of salvation as God would like.

It's no accident that you are reading this. People can't see into the hearts of other people, but God can and God directs His saints to people in need. None of us mere humans know other people's real motives or thoughts, but God does and He wants to set up divine appointments (using spiritual Christians) for laying down an effective witness for those unbelievers who are open. The proper diagnostic questions involved and just assessing the right approach in relationship to good witnessing, must all be handled with the utmost of sensitivity, courteously, respect and prudence, but not so much sensitivity that we Christians are too afraid to ever start verbally sharing our faith. The devil would love for us to remain too afraid that we'll blow it, to ever start telling the Good News. Of course Christians are not to carelessly judge after the flesh or cast the final judgment, verbally determining

where a sinner will spend eternity. Jesus taught us this, ***“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned”*** (Lk. 6:37 kjv). We don't know where they will go. We are to use discernment, the right bridge-building questions and judge righteously. The Bible says, ***“Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy”*** (Prov. 31:9 kjv).

### ***No Real Fruit***

Given some time, we know that if there's no real fruit of righteousness in an alleged believer's life, there's no real conversion that happened. Real Christians bear fruit and they are called by God to be fruit inspectors, because God really doesn't want false converts with a false sense of assurance going off into eternity—minus having the Jesus of the Bible—dying in mere presumption. That's why I am writing this. Many religious people who think they are righteous in God's sight are simply deceived about this, but the Bible can help us all in this area. Jesus spoke of false righteousness when He said, ***“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 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, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.' Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall" (Matt 7:15-27).***

I was discussing this passage with a relative of mine this week that I have personally spent years praying for. And they made this comment to me: ***“Actually the Bible calls these believers ‘Lord Lord Christians’—those who profess but are still in control themselves.”*** This relative viewed the person in the passage who was saying ***“Lord, Lord”*** as a saved but immature, disobedient, carnal or maybe a worldly Christian, but not one who was an unbeliever that was on their way to perdition. And I wondered how many other so called Christians thought the same thing ... as I replied by saying ***“No, look again. God's Word actually does not call them ‘Lord, Lord Christians.’”*** In fact the Bible never uses these three words: ***“Lord, Lord Christians”*** together, but all the Gospel writers say these people here, who contextually are *lost hypocrites* in these passages, will merely call Christ: ***Lord, Lord*** even though they are clearly lost and in a unregenerate condition where the wrath of God is literally abiding on them. It was Christ who said that's how it is: ***“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him”*** (Jn. 3:36). The fact that Jesus says to these people: ***“I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'”*** clearly proves that Christ identifies these people as those who are unsaved and those who won't end up in Heaven.

It's time for us Christians to WAKE UP from our slumber, for we have such limited time to go and fish for souls! And nowhere in the Bible does God teach that there is any salvation after a person dies. SAD!

## ***God Said What He Meant And Meant What He Said***

God was very careful with each and every word He used in the Bible, because He is a very just, righteous, and holy Judge that every one of us will one day face. And God's Bible has been preserved with amazing accuracy through the years, because He love us so much and really wants all people living to avoid the coming wrath and that place called hell (that He created after the fall of the angels and only created for angels not for man ...for committing the sins they've committed. He graciously made a way for us sinners, but too few take the Way seriously.

I showed this relative all the “***Lord, Lord***” verses in the Bible, and how that word ***Christian*** never followed the word Lord: ***"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you'"*** (Mat 25:10-12).

***"And some of the Pharisees said to them, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?'... (v. 2) And He [Jesus] spoke a parable to them [the religious Pharisees]: 'Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?' (v. 39)... And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye? ...Or how can you say to your brother, Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye, when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite!"*** (vv. 41-42) ...***For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"*** (Luke 6:45-48 nkjv – emphasis/underlining mine).

We were talking about soteriology and the most serious type of presumption. Soteriology is the study of salvation, but don't let that word bother you. The word comes from two Greek terms: soter, meaning "savior," and logos, meaning "word", "reason", or "principle". Many religions give emphasis to salvation, and as such some have created their own forms of soteriology. Authoritatively, the Bible alone gives us God's real soteriology—it's through a Person. Yes, as far as God is concerned, there are no multiple soteriological options of equal value or veracity. Jesus Who is God said, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*** (Jn. 14:6).

## ***If A Person Talks About Motocross Non-stop, More Than Likely They Love Dirt Bikes***

If a person never talks about Jesus, it would seem reasonable to believe that they are not a real Christian, even if they claim to be. Real Christians love Jesus Christ more than they love anything or anyone else! Have you ever been in love and not wanted to talk about that person? It's natural to talk about that person. Christians are born again inside; they know the Lord personally (and I don't mean merely knowing correct information about the Lord)<sup>1</sup> and they do His will according to His Word. You see, true Christians have a new nature in them – a nature that didn't just gradually make its way into their person over a long period of months or years as they learned. It happened in a moment. They were resurrected on the inside! The One who died on the cross in their place and paid the expensive penalty for their sins and then physically rose again on the third day – yes, the living Christ resurrected them! Therefore true Christians love that which they used to loath and loath that which they used to love (the destructive sinning, the world system, the wicked works of the flesh). Victorious Christians have great joy inside and they love to talk about Jesus Christ – HOW WONDERFUL HE IS! This joy

in Christ is effervescent and very hard to contain! They enjoy discussing with unbelievers exactly what happened to them—their own story of how they came to the point where they saw their need to repent, to believe and to surrender to Christ’s Lordship and how that all happened! They also love to share the wonderful things of God from His Word and what Christ is currently doing in their own lives and in their homes each day. Real Christians love to spend a lot of time alone with the Lord in prayer. They love to read the Bible! They love to go to Bible teaching church services for true fellowship and they love to witness to unbelievers in the right way even though some preachers and Christians do this in the wrong way. They love to give of their time, talent, and treasure as God leads them in this. Why? Simply to be a helpful blessing to people—Christians want to obey God with the right motives and give for the furtherance of His eternal Kingdom! Real Christians love to aid other people worldwide in practical ways as good witnesses for Christ. I like what that good witness, John Wesley, said about this:

***“Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can, at all the times you can,  
To all the people you can, as long as ever you can.”***

We know there are wonderful churches out there, but some churches argue and divide over the smallest things, like: Should we sing hymns or youth-friendly songs at church? Which son of our old pastor will become “heir to the throne” so to speak, after the pastor kicks the bucket? What color of carpet should we have in the foyer this time? What figures should we arrive at and set as those departmental budgets? What building additions shall we commit to? How will we keep those wild youth out of the new buildings so that nothing will get wrecked?

And in the meantime, many of our fellow church members, neighbors, and a whole lot of nominal Christians in our cities are going off to hell by the droves. Have you ever wondered why there are so many divorces, alcohol, drug, and abortion problems within the Church today? Are these churches in our nation really filled with true believers? If you’ve ever wondered why so much of the Church looks and acts just like the world, consider these following words:

***Pastor D. James Kennedy said, “The vast majority of people who are members of churches in America today are not Christians. I say that without the slightest contradiction. I base it on empirical evidence of twenty-four years of examining thousands of people.”***

***A.W. Tozer said, “It is my opinion that tens of thousands of people, if not millions, have been brought into some kind of religious experience by accepting Christ, and they have not been saved.”***

Those are some sobering words, wouldn’t you say? So what is real salvation? Sound theology teaches that salvation happens when a man repents and places his full trust in Jesus Christ as His Savior as the Holy Spirit enters and regenerates their dead human spirit (Acts 20:21). Let’s talk about true salvation and false salvation some more.

## ***How A Person Could Misinterpret What We Mean And Become A False Convert***

Here are fourteen ways that English speaking Christians have re-defined (in part) how a person becomes a true convert. Have Christians done this intentionally? No way! I really don't believe so at all. We have simply created churchy-jargon; acceptable evangelistic lingo that actually contains part of the truth of Scripture regarding salvation, but it also leaves out crucial elements. Sometimes our quick quips and short Christian clichés leave way too much open to interpretation or misinterpretation -- so extremely valuable un-converted people around us simply don't grasp what we are trying to communicate and this is done in ways that can easily lead some people into false conversions where they think they were "saved."

**1. Make Jesus your Lord and Savior.** We cannot make Jesus our Lord and Savior; He already is our Lord and Savior. We have lived in rebellion to His Lordship and He commands us to repent<sup>2</sup> and fully trust Him. Sure each of us can, by a deliberate act of our will, allow Christ to be what He already is, but we need to first see Him as He already is.

**2. Ask Jesus into your heart.** Does the Spirit of Jesus come into our hearts at the time of salvation -- into our very person? Yes He does. The question is, "How does He get in there?" It is not by simply asking Him in and that's all; this humble invitation must be mixed with true repentance and faith.

**3. Just believe in Jesus.** The demons believe and they tremble. We must trust, repent, surrender and believe in Him with a full lifelong commitment.

**4. You have a God-shaped hole in your heart and only Jesus can fill it.** We have far more than a void (a hole) that needs to be filled so that we can be complete; we have a wretched, deceitful, sinful heart that needs total cleansing. Repentance and faith applies the blood of the Lamb of God for that very cleansing. Nothing else washes white as snow!

**5. Accept Jesus.** We need to accept Jesus? We need more than that. Do people walk into a country club and say, I have been thinking I might accept you and be your member. No, it doesn't happen that way. We each need Jesus to accept us--and He will, if we recognize that we've broken His laws and hurt Him by sinning against Him -- if we repent and trust Him. Repentance doesn't save you; faith in faith doesn't save you. Christ does this miracle in you when you turn to Him in repentance. We don't merely commit to Christ; we also capitulate to Him and quit being his enemy or leader. We don't try to create God in our own image where He accepts all our sinning and moral weirdnesses. We biblically see Him as He is and face things honestly. Jesus is committed to us.

**6. Make a decision for Jesus.** Sure we need to make up our own minds and decide to come to God ...and not by aiming or attempting to clean ourselves up before we come. Determination and decision alone won't do it. Yes, making this choice by itself doesn't regenerate you. Decisional regeneration puts man in the driver's seat of salvation and that would be a very illegitimate place for a sinner to be. When we repent and trust, Jesus Christ then decides to save us. That puts Christ in the driver's seat... where He totally deserves to be, expects to be, and demands to be for unselfish purposes. Christ does the saving, not the decision we make ...and we come to God on His terms, not on our own terms.

**7. It is hyper-easy to believe.** While the formula of repentance and faith sounds simple, a complete surrendering of self in repentance calls for dying to self and giving up the driver's seat of your life. You are not your own and you don't have a right to rule your life or lead the Lord around where you want to go.

**8. God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.** Making the *earthly-life-enhancing-fringe-benefits* of salvation (i.e., peace, joy, material blessings) the draw-card for repenting

would simply be wrong. It's about knowing and serving Christ; it's about avoiding the coming wrath of God and a real place called Hell. Here are the Bible promises for the true convert: trials, temptation and persecution. So if that is how you define a wonderful life, fine. Otherwise we must command all men everywhere to repent and trust. God deeply loves you as you are, but He won't leave you as you are, and you are not to stubbornly dig in your heels with a determination to remain as you are.

**9. Come to Jesus just as you are.** Entrance into the Kingdom is on God's terms and continuing on with Christ in faith until we see Him face to face, will be on His terms. We should count the cost and come to Jesus just as the dirty sinners we are, but again, He also expects a broken heart and a contrite spirit demonstrated in repentance and faith. We don't come to Him "just as we are" expecting, demanding or intending to go on with Him through life doing things our own way. It doesn't matter what you feel like being or doing. Obeying and going the distance with Him, doing His will, His way is what matters!

**10. Come to Jesus and you will receive forgiveness of sins and \_\_\_\_\_** (fill in the blank with: gobs of money, perpetual un-interrupted health, business success, a healed marriage, anointed feelings, a spiritual buzz etc). Jesus didn't promise you or guarantee for you a healed marriage in a general sense; in fact He promised broken homes to some, because some families would unfortunately divide when one member repents and trusts Christ. And let me make it clear that the unsaved rejecting the true Christian shouldn't ever be prompted by the Christian's wrong behavior. We can confront Christians living in sin, but there is an offense in the Gospel and we are not to add to that offense and make it easy for lost people to divide against us. Contrary to popular belief, the words "success" and "prosperity" are mentioned very rarely in the Bible. Now if you were to watch typical Christian television, you would never know that. You would probably think that these two words were mentioned in every other verse throughout the entire Bible and that if you currently didn't enjoy these things; your life was under some kind of curse due to your wrong confession of doubt and unbelief. Many teach that. But these words are placed in the Bible in a context of meditating upon God's Word day and night, of right prioritizing and also of proper application of the Scriptures. The Bible says, *"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success"* (Josh. 1:8. Also see Psalm 1:1-3). We live for Jesus not for what He can bless us with!

**11. Come to Jesus and experience love, joy, peace.** Do we get the fruit of the Spirit upon conversion? Yes. But if we come seeking the gifts rather than the Giver, we will receive neither. Godly character and the fruit of the Spirit are awesome! The church needs this stuff, but we are to desire Him more than what He can give us, or develop in us. You must repent and trust to gain Him. You must be born again! Why? Because Jesus said that you must be born again.

**12. Jesus is the missing piece.** Um, no, the God of the universe is not merely the missing piece as we try to gather lots of different pieces to make us feel whole and complete. He demands that He is the center of our lives, that knowing Him is the first-priority-relationship ahead of all other relationships, things and persons, when we repent and trust. The Prince of peace can bring peace that passes all understanding to your troubled storm, but He is not a mere piece of the puzzle among other pieces.

**13. Go for Jesus, because He is better than fame and fortune.** That is a huge understatement, and frankly, it is flat out insulting. Saying Jesus is better than money and being known by many comes off like saying that a steak dinner is better than eating sawdust and jelly beans. But Christ defies all comparison and we tend to trivialize this Christ, the Son of the living God! What most of us value and esteem down here on earth doesn't even begin to come

close to what we should value and esteem. Do you like asphalt down here? No one talks about it. Gold in heaven is used for paving streets! People are walking on gold in heaven, while they are totally enamored with other-than-gold up there. We should be pleading with all men everywhere to repent and lay down their lives before Him Who is incomparably worthy!

**14. Try Jesus.** We are called to do more than try Him for a while to see if we become happier, better off financially or whatever. He rightfully commands us to repent, to believe, to submit, to worship and to humbly obey Him forever! And that's not because He has some ego problem or needs anything from us. He does desire to bless us and has our best interests at heart, but He is our Creator, Owner and Master who bought us back from slavery. We know that if a sinner comes to Christ on Christ's terms (trying Jesus the Lord's way, rather than their own way) that they will be much better off, far more than one who doesn't turn. But in our Madison Avenue marketing culture, Americans try lots of new life-enhancing things that we utilize and then eventually ditch. But we are not to experiment with and then ditch Christ. Only backsliders ditch Him and He will let them. He will have no one unhappy in heaven.

He really is Lord of all, but you must allow Him to lead you according to His Word. We need to trust God and follow Christ moment by moment, witnessing His way. Get it?

***If He's Not Lord Of All, He's Not Lord At All ...At Least For That Inordinately Independent Person***

If I showed up at your door with a smoothie blender and a yard rake offering to mow your lawn, would you respond to me by saying: "No thank you"? Sure you would! Now, if you wouldn't let someone mess with your lawn using the wrong tools or methods, why would you allow the Gospel to be presented in an unclear, faulty or half-baked way? Would you let a doctor operate on your spouse who only had part of the cure, no experience and only part of the knowledge needed? Would you let a so called doctor even get near your spouse just because he graduated from a great medical school, but he had a bad track-record in regards to surgeries where most of his patients died? No way!

The salvation of people happens one by one and nothing is more crucial for a person. God does it, we saints don't do it, but God chooses to use us in this. It's a great privilege and is far more important than getting an appendix taken out. Please consider how Jesus witnessed for the Father. Consider for yourself how to biblically share the Gospel! Many of us know exactly what we are talking about when we use these very common evangelistic phrases and terms, but do the unregenerate (lost people) who hear us? More and more people are un-churched in our nation so fewer and fewer even know what these old words and phrases mean, even when spoken about in the newer translations of the Bible. Is it possible that we have so many backsliders today (as they are labeled), because these people were never front-slid in the first place? Maybe they were never properly told about the need for owning-up to a blunder, taking responsibility for mess-ups, full confession of sins committed, sorrow for the pain caused to another, contrition, forsaking all wrong-doings, true repentance, surrendering and fully trusting Christ alone? When was the last time you heard these things taught in church? Christ bloody cross makes things right upwards, but when was the last time you heard about the need for making horizontal-restitution to the injured party—you know returning the stolen goods, paying it back with interest, fixing the fence you mowed down while drunk driving through it? Ever watch Cops? People don't even apologize to injured people anymore, and they act like getting caught is the only restitution necessary, so why would they think repentance towards their Maker had a place?

## ***Primarily Our Sin Is Vertical—Committed Against God***

You've read about King David, after the prophet Nathan went to visit him for the purpose of drawing out confession and repentance as Nathan exposed David's heinous sins of lust, hidden infidelity with Bathsheba and then the murder of the innocent. And things were quickly put in perspective as David felt deep remorse, guilty, sorrowful (not in a bad way), huge regret, convicted, in a debt too high to pay off, so what did David do? He confessed his sin and repented, ***"I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge"*** (Ps. 51:3-4 nkjv). His sins were mainly vertical, therefore his confession needed to first go vertical to the Lord. God is a Person who had been wounded and deeply hurt by people—by you and me so we need to own it and quickly come clean before Him! As a kid being raised in a traditional denomination, I certainly wanted to go to heaven, but I never heard at church that I must repent, believe and be born again to be saved. There are a lot of mega-important Bible doctrines not being taught in churches today. If churchgoers are willing to get into it and throw-down over shag verses plush carpeting in the fellowship hall where Christians often go pig-out on too much pie, shouldn't they really be more concerned about an issue that has eternal consequences?

There are big problems that can occur due to one Christian that doesn't understand that there is such a thing as *false conversion* today. It can be devastating! If we lack clear understanding in this area and fail to tell people about true repentance, they will more than likely remain strangers to real salvation. They are liable to think that simply voicing some sort of "prayer of acceptance" will do the trick. If people think they'll get saved by responding to an altar-call with crocodile tears flowing down their cheeks, uttering a prayer of commitment—with lots of emotional friends there, huddled all around, lending support and hugging them real tight along with that hyper-dressed-up preacher dude who wants to shake their hand up and down and then get them to sign his three part, glossy, perforated decision-card ...they're basically missing the important part!

Do you remember how Jesus Christ asked His disciples when they questioned Him about the *Parable of the Sower*, ***"Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all parables?"*** (Mk. 4:13). Why did He do that? Well, He was showing them that the *Parable of the Sower* is the key parable that unlocks the mysteries of all the other parables. In the *Parable of the Sower with its explanation*, what are:

### ***The Six Characteristics Of A False Convert?***

- 1. There's immediate results (Mark 4:5)**
- 2. There's a lack of moisture (Luke 8:6)**
- 3. There's no adequate root system in place (Matthew 13:6)**
- 4. There's the alleged receiving of the word with gladness (Mark 4:16)**
- 5. There's the alleged receiving of the word with joy (Matthew 13:20)**
- 6. There's people who "believe" for a while (Luke 8:13)**

Do you believe in the facts about Jesus and the Bible? Lots of churchgoers who pray prayers, do good works regularly, and give to support the ministry, do believe and yet many of them are still lost. It's tragic! The average American Christian home has eight Bibles in it and yet Billy Graham estimates that, ***"Seventy percent of those who go to church are lost!"*** True knowledge should lead a person to mental assent (*assensus*), and this assent should move that person from cognition to inner conviction and that conviction should then lead the person to deep sorrow for sinning and true repentance and

then into an actual relationship of obedient partnership with Christ as Lord living on the inside. But too many get hung-up, stopped and content at mental assent feeling nothing more is needed. When we assent to a belief we are admitting the truth of a claim or we are agreeing with the facts of that claim. Hey, demons know that God exists and then some, but they will never get saved or be with us heaven. In James 2:19 the Bible says, ***“You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble.”*** This verse clearly tells us that mere belief in true facts about the existence of the Person of Christ – when not accompanied by true repentance (Luke 13:3) and placing one’s faith in Christ alone for salvation (Acts 20:21) is simply not sufficient for gaining salvation. What are:

### ***The Five Fruits Of A True Convert?***

- 1. The Fruit of Repentance (Matthew 3:8)**
- 2. The Fruit of Thanksgiving (Hebrews 13:15)**
- 3. The Fruit of Good Works (Colossians 1:10)**
- 4. The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)**
- 5. The Fruit of Righteousness (Philippians 1:11)**

What else will the real Christian experience? They are not to seek these things, but they will have tribulation, temptations, and persecution. The false convert will eventually be exposed as a hypocrite at the *Great White Throne Judgment*, after the wheat and tares will be separated.

Here are some parables that Jesus told His disciples that speak of true and false conversions: **The Wheat and Tares** (true and false harvest). The tares (from the darnel seed) look just like real wheat.

Jesus said, ***“The kingdom of heaven is compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed darnel among the wheat and went his way. But when the blade had sprung up and had produced fruit, then the darnel also appeared. So the servants of the householder came and said to him, Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? Then where have the darnel come from? He said to them, An enemy has done this. The servants said to him, Then do you want us to go and gather them up? But he said, No, lest while you gather up the darnel you also root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. And in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather together the darnel and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my granary”*** (Matt. 13:24-30).

While there are soul-winners who will accurately explain the Gospel in a proper way to people—that is the man who sows good seed—we also need to be warned that there are so called Christians and teachers who will give out wrong teaching (blatantly or in more subtle ways) to people. Many of these teachers are deceived themselves and might have a motive to really help people. They will even sound plausible to many as they quote a few verse references, especially to those who only have a minimal knowledge of the Word. My pastor Chuck Smith once told me that ninety percent of what a false teacher teaches is true.

There’s also **the good and the bad fish** (true and false) **the Wise and the Foolish Virgins** (true and false), and **the Sheep and the Goats** (true and false) that all speak of real and fake conversions.

You and I must be careful to insure that we will not be responsible for filling up the local church(es) with false converts. We can make sure we won’t do this, by spending lots of time with the Lord, learning His ways, His truth, His caring heart and also by reviewing what we’ve already discovered in the Bible. We can make sure by making it a top priority to preach the Gospel biblically, as Jesus did.

Christ gave the law to the proud to deal with the sinner’s conscience as the strong conviction of the Holy Spirit would settle in, and He gave the Gospel of grace to those who were humble. Why did He do that? Because, **“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul”** (Ps. 19:7). And the Lord hasn’t changed. He still resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (see 1 Pet. 5:5 and Jam. 4:6). Yes, this means knowing the Scriptures well and using **God’s Top Ten List** (the Ten Commandments) to carefully bring the irreligious to the knowledge of sin. This also means mentioning on occasion that there will be certain judgment ahead, consequences for sinning (often times even in this life), and that there’s a real place called Hell (yup, I actually used the despised “H” word). But we are not to talk about these things in some fuming, flippant, nonchalant, cavalier sort of way. Lots of people have grown so tired of feeling afraid to get near God at church, and I’m not talking about holly fear. They’ve just had their fill of *hell-fire and brimstone* preaching in the name of zealous dynamism, that misrepresents God’s benevolent character by making Him seem mega-harsh, unjust, cruel and mean-spirited—One who delights in sending people to the *Lake of Fire* (that’s not yet inhabited). But Jesus wants us boldly impressing upon the minds of our hearers that God really loves them in spite of being sinned against—that He is just, holy, fair, kind and not at all willing that any should perish (though many will blaspheme the Holy Spirit’s tender wooing)! Yes, God is definitely a *Giver* rather than a *Taker*. He longs to bless us lavishly for all eternity inside his Holy City, but if we were never required to give an account for our sins at the Judgment Bar of God, then He would only be denying Himself and wouldn’t be just. That’s why I thank God for the blood of Jesus, because that’s what has taken all the evidence that was piled up against me over the years, away from my case forever, so that I will never stand before this just Judge condemned! Hallelujah! We can make sure by preaching the Cross of Calvary and the imperative necessity of true repentance instead of false repentance.

Again, we can make sure we don’t fill the churches with sincere posers by fishing for souls the way that Jesus did and by intentionally shying away from many methods of the modern day evangelism unpleasant subjects like: the flesh, divine chastisement, the blood, the cross, dying to self, the wrath of God, the Great Tribulation, certain judgment, the Lake of Fire and true repentance are never mentioned. But what does happen is that people’s emotions are whipped-up, stirred-up, hyped-up by religious back-breath-yelling, jerking, screaming, shaking, howling and being “slain in the Spirit”—or pushing each other down in a lame effort to get more tears, more bodies, and more cameras down in the altar area. Some high profile ministers seem to want their devotee’s hands raised in the air than more than saint’s spirits uplifted by scriptural edification, their green offerings raised in the air for others to see more than pure worship going heavenwards to God, their bodies healed more than seeing spiritual healings where people actually get saved. And there is nothing at all wrong with receiving a physical healing. It simply looks better for the photo shoot though when people keep falling to the ground due to the minister pushing, blowing, throwing coats and anointing balls. It prints better in newsletters when there’s more numbers of decisions registered and reported to the media and subsequently, that type of thing typically brings in bucket-loads of donations. Sure, we may rejoice over the decisions with shouts of praise, but Heaven reserves its rejoicing for real conversions accompanied by real repentance accompanied by inner brokenness. Take a moment to check out these verses below and see...

***What “False” Christian The Verse Is Warning Us About:***

- |                                  |                       |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Matthew 7:15.....</b>         | <b>False Prophets</b> |
| <b>Mark 13:22.....</b>           | <b>False Christs</b>  |
| <b>2 Corinthians 11:13 .....</b> | <b>False Apostles</b> |
| <b>Galatians 2:4 .....</b>       | <b>False Brethren</b> |
| <b>2 Peter 2:1.....</b>          | <b>False Teachers</b> |

Look at Matthew 7:12-27 where the Bible makes it clear that this is a radically important issue especially for church people. Now here is part of the *Parable of the Sower* that I want you to notice.

*"A sower went out to sow his seed... And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture... Now the parable is this: The seed is the Word of God... the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away" (Lk. 8:5-13).*

*"And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'A sower went out to sow... Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away" (Matt. 13:3-24).*

***Here Are "Six Signs Of False Conversion."***

***1. A false convert does not sense the heavy weight and consequences of their sin. They fail to properly count the cost.***

Jesus said in Luke 14:27-33: *Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ... So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*

In John 1 we see that Andrew and John followed Jesus well before he officially called them as his disciples, and Mark 4:5 could be referring to this concept as well.

There have been times in the past, when I think I've explained the Gospel to people in a pretty bogus way. I was taught that the sinner just needed to voice a "*Jesus-I-accept-you*" kind of prayer and mean it. Then like magic, God would somehow overlook a whole lot of *no-sorrowful-confession, zero-admit-it-and-quit-it attitude, or never-taking-responsibility-or-ownership-in-addressing-the-damages-I-caused*, along with the *You-have-to-take-me-as-often-as-I-return-just-as-I-am-and-let-me-continue-as-I-please-mind-set*, and that He would just have to work a miracle of salvation because He's obligated to. Man, I sure hope that people I have witnessed to aren't still lost out there, living their own way, with some sort of false sense of assurance that they are going to heaven. It would really bug me when over a long period of time after they said "that prayer" and I just didn't see any change in lifestyle or any fruit begin to develop. Even though God is the one who changes people, and character development, sanctification and the appearance of fruit don't just happen over night, I feel responsible. I hate to see just leaves when there should be buds or fruit on those branches. Listen, if someone apparently comes to faith in an instant without considering the cost, they may have had a false conversion and got a false sense of assurance.

I was out there learning by trial and error and I'm still learning. None of us should allow our fears of witnessing wrong or fears of human rejection, or of persecution, or of mocking, keep us from verbally witnessing altogether. We all need to study, prayerfully practice and grow in

this area—never quitting, because soon none of us will be able to witness in heaven! Remember, an unbeliever can actually count the cost pretty quickly before repenting and trusting in Christ—it could be a very simple matter for some people as they see that Hell is not at all the preferable retirement spot.

But if they appear to trust Christ, with some time, there should be a noticeable change in the way that person lives and communicates. Yes, there is such a thing as “said faith” and true “saving faith.” And so many people with *said faith* always want to come running in repeatedly for pastoral prayer and love at church, just to comfort their guilty conscience, but why should Christians help someone try to gain assurance of salvation from the Bible when that person simply won’t turn from a life of sin?—especially when the Bible says, ***“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God”*** (1Cr 6:10 nkjv). Now, here are some more signs of false conversion:

## ***2. Spiritual Dryness and 3. Lack of Spiritual Roots***

Do these two aspects seem to be connected to you? The excitement of the Gospel appears to have quenched the person's thirst, but very quickly the person leaves and is talked out of the reality of Christ by parents or peers and they stop participating in church or they simply stop claiming to believe at all.

If a professing believer doesn't develop any spiritual convictions or devotional disciplines over a good period of time, we should be very concerned for them and sit down with them to address this, but not by putting pressure on them. Some Christians seem to be instantly transformed in the altar but the post-new-birth-sanctification process happens differently with each of us. Immediate, obvious fruit might not appear for a little while, but the person keeps seeking the Lord with earnestness. That’s wonderful! Paul tells us Christians that we each still carry around the old, sinful nature—it is "with" us, and God eliminates that sinful nature either slowly or quickly. We are to die to our fleshly nature. Romans 6:6-18 explains the Christian's struggle with sin. When a sinner is saved, they have basically made a great exchange of masters. They were formerly a servant of sin, but now they are a bond servant of God. In the old world, if a slave's master was suddenly changed, that servant for a time may be confused or might even seek to serve their old master—however, this state did not last for long. The new master would give some important instructive teaching. Just as a master will bring his slave into submission through pleasant or painful ways, God (how is nothing like an evil earthy slave owner) is more gracious and brings his saved ones into submission through blessings and tribulations—most importantly, by the renewing indwelling life of the Spirit inside the saved ones (see Col. 1:27-28, 1 Cor. 3:16, Rom. 8:9-11).

True conversion isn’t brought about by the sinner striving or doing good works. Good works—those are deeds for the person who is already saved and showing their growth in holiness as a good witness for Christ. Good works contribute nothing whatsoever in bringing about salvation. Christians are not “more saved” by future good works.

#### ***4. Lack of Contrition over one's Sins and 5. Having nothing but joy***

The verses in number two mention only joy in the false convert's experience. In 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 we see a "godly sorrow" that brings about repentance. When we've broken God's laws and heart, it shouldn't be all joy right? If a murderer skips into the courtroom with nothing but a smile on his face and joy during his entire trial, would anyone say that he had remorse or has repented (see Luke 13:3)? God is the one Who sees the heart, and knows if a sinner is actually sorry for their sin. Those who say to themselves, "Sure, I'm not perfect," and considers it no big deal when they sin are more than likely not saved at all.

#### ***6. Intellectual assent (belief) for a time.***

They indeed believe for a short time. And we know that this is possible (See James 2:14 and Matthew 8:29). However, this is not the John 3:16 belief that entails receiving (John 1:12-13), repentance (Luke 13:3) and trust (Romans 4:5), but instead the knowledge that Christ exists and told the truth. That's called mere intellectual assent. These people fall away and show the facts of the Gospel really mean very little to them. Their Christian life was a phase, a fad. They were fair-weather followers.<sup>3</sup>

#### ***Are You Truly A Genuine Christian?***

The Bible says, ***"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God"*** (1 Jn. 5:13).

Thomas Paine said, *"That which we gain too easily, we esteem too lightly."* Christ shed his blood equally for all people, so in that sense, the grace that we have wasn't at all gained easily. But in the western world, being a Christian might not cost us our lives. Not too many people in the western world suffer severe persecution yet like they do in other developing nations.

#### ***From First John In The Bible, Here Are Ten Signs Of True Salvation:***

##### **1. You Recognize Your True Sinful State and Confess your Sins to God with a Heart to Permanently Turn from Them.**

***"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"*** (1 Jn. 1:8).

##### **2. You Have Knowledge of Who Jesus Christ is but also Know Him Intimately as a Friend**

***"Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also"*** (1 Jn. 2:23).

##### **3. You Are Obedient to His Commandments**

***"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."*** (1 Jn. 2:3)

##### **4. You Do Not Love the World or the Things in It**

*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”* (1 Jn. 2:15).

**5. You gladly Fellowship with Growing Christians** (you regularly and proactively seek this out until you find your place in the Body).

*“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 Jn. 1:7).

**6. You Look Forward to the Rapture and His Second Coming**

*“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”* (1 Jn. 3:2)

**7. You Do Not Practice Habitual Sin**

*“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”* (1 Jn. 3:8-10)

**8. You Love Your Brothers and Sisters in the Lord**

*“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.”* (1 Jn. 3:14)

**9. You Love Witnessing for Christ and Preaching the Gospel** (in a non-preachy way).

Yes you love to get your fill of thorough the Bible Teaching, just basking in God’s love, hearing all the counsels of God. And you love to pass it on to others in need of salvation. It’s well-fed sheep that naturally reproduce. Bill Bright once said that less than two percent of professing Christians regularly share their faith with others. That is shocking and that would mean that 98 percent do not.

*“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error”* (1 Jn. 4:6).

**10. You are not Embarrassed to Teach the Word** (you un-ashamedly proclaim Jesus and His precepts, bragging on Him the most).

*“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God”* (1 Jn. 4:15).

***"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5).***

***"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock" (Matt. 7:24-25).***

**Please check yourself out to see if you are the real deal or merely presuming to be a Christian.**

Ask yourself: Why should God, the Just Judge of the whole universe, allow you into His Holy Heaven? Have you broken the Ten Commandments? Have you ever told one lie? What would that make you? Have you ever stolen one thing? The Bible says, ***"You shall not steal."*** If you feel guilty when you hear that, why do you think that is? Could it be because you are guilty? God gave us our conscience so we would know when we break His Holy Law. The guilt we feel when we do something wrong tells us that we need to turn around (repent) and go to Christ. Have you ever lusted after someone? If so, Jesus said you are an adulterer at heart. Have you ever been angry with anyone? That would make you a murderer at heart. The passing of time, lots of good deeds and more learning won't erase that sin or gain you entrance into Heaven.

***God Loves You With A Perfect Love And He Did Something About It***

God loves you so much; He can't take His eyes off of you! Yes, and He did something about it! Jesus died on a cruel cross for you – in your place to pay the penalty of your sins and He rose again from the dead so you could enjoy newness of Life, eternal LIFE—abundant LIFE! That's Life during life. How cool is that? Seek Jesus for forgiveness and the gift of true repentance right now, asking Him for His cleansing in full surrender to His Lordship. In your own words ask Jesus to come inside of you and take you over as your Savior and benevolent Boss. Have a talk with Him about being born anew from above? He will hear you and make you an authentic spiritual Christian!

*Would you pray something like this...*

*Dear Lord Jesus,*

*I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. So as You grant me true repentance right now, I choose to appropriate it by faith, to repent and to trust You completely. I believe that You died for my sins on the cross and I want to turn away from all my sins for good. Jesus, I now invite You to come into my heart and life. Please forgive me and fill me with your Spirit. Make me into the kind of victorious godly person that you want me to be. I want to love and follow You as Lord and Savior all my days. In Jesus' name. Amen!*

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<sup>1</sup> Please see John 3:3 in the Bible and *“How To Know Him”* at: [www.fish4souls.org](http://www.fish4souls.org)

<sup>2</sup> This word “repent” as we use it in relation to salvation comes from the Greek word **Metanoea** and you can look this up in the Strongs Concordance with the Greek number 3340. It means to be remorseful and seek forgiveness from God through Christ alone. It means “to think differently” or “to think afterwards” - that is, “to reconsider”, to turn away from sin to God. The word came from two other Greek words meaning ‘after’ (implying change) and ‘to perceive’. This word is used as a concept that’s an integral part of the conversion experience. Therefore Jesus begins His three and a half year ministry (Matt. 3:2, Mark 1:15) with the words: **“Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand”** while Peter continues this same call to unbelievers (in Acts 2:38), and Paul does too in (Acts 17:30), saying that, **“...the times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent.”** In just one verse in the New Testament, the word is used to convey a changing of one’s mind and doesn’t imply a turning away from sin (2 Cor 7:8), but of the other thirty three occasions, sin is most definitely present and it is the object of the word. The word carries with it the idea of a complete change. Primarily, the idea is one of turning as an act of the will, not turning as an act based upon emotions - but one must be aware of what is wrong in order to turn from it. When we come to consider it in the light of the call of individuals to ‘repent’, the changing of one’s mind has both a ‘from’ and ‘to’ aspect—to change ‘from’ a state of sinfulness before God and ‘to’ a state of righteousness, from being in the darkness to entering the Kingdom of light and life in the Son of God. But remember, the person doesn’t earn this or make them self righteous in any way. God is the only one Who can do that.

True conversion comprises **two aspects**, the one **negative** and the other **positive**, namely **true repentance** (the negative aspect, and keep in mind there is a false repentance also) and **saving faith** (the positive aspect – a forward look). True repentance looks to the past, and may be defined as that change wrought in the conscious life of the sinner by which he turns away from sin. It includes three elements, namely:

- (1.) **an intellectual element**, in which the past life is viewed as a life of sin, involving personal guilt, defilement, and helplessness;
- (2.) **an emotional element**, a sense of sorrow for sin as committed against a holy and just God; and
- (3.) **a volitional element** or an element of the will, consisting in a change of purpose, an inward turning from sin and a disposition to seek pardon and cleansing from Christ.

The Bible says:

**“Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin”** (Rom. 3:20).

**“I now rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye were made sorry unto repentance; for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, [a repentance] which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death”** (2 Cor. 7:9-10).

**“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”** (Rom. 2:4).

Repentance is wrought in man primarily by the Spirit of God and the law of God. Traditionally, Roman Catholics have an external conception of repentance. According to them it comprises a sorrow, not for inborn sin, but for personal transgressions, which may merely result from the fear of eternal punishment; a confession made to the priest, who they believe can forgive sin; and a measure of satisfaction by external deeds of penance, such as reciting three “Hail Mary” prayers and an “Our Father” prayer, or fastings, scourgings, pilgrimages, and so on. The Bible, on the other hand, views repentance wholly as an inward act, an act of real sorrow on account of sin, and does not confuse this with the change of life in which it results.

There are different kinds of faith. The Bible does not always speak of faith in the same sense. It refers to a **HISTORICAL FAITH**, consisting in an intellectual acceptance of the truth of Scripture without any real moral or spiritual response. Such a faith does not take the truth seriously and shows no real interest in it. The Bible says:

**“King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. And Agrippa said unto Paul, with but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian”** (Acts 26:27-28).

**“Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder”** (Jam. 2:19).

It also speaks of a **TEMPORAL FAITH**, which embraces the truths of religion with some promptings of conscience and a stirring of the affections, but is not rooted in a regenerated heart. It is called temporal faith, **“And he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway he stumblith”** (Matt. 13:20-21). Because it has no abiding character and fails to maintain itself in days of trial and persecution. The Bible says:

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*"For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Heb. 6:4-6).*

*"Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith: 20 of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I delivered unto Satan, that they might be taught not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:19-20).*

*"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but [they went out], that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us" (1 Jn. 2:19).*

Moreover, it makes mention of a **MIRACULOUS FAITH** that is a person's conviction that a miracle will be performed by God.

*"And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of heaven: but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. and the servant was healed in that hour" (Matt. 8:11-13).*

*"And he saith unto them, Because of your little faith: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. 17:20).*

*"And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk. 16:17-18).*

*"The same heard Paul speaking, who, fastening eyes upon him, and seeing that he had faith to be made whole" (Acts 14:9).*

This faith may or may not be accompanied with saving faith. Finally, it not only names, but stresses the necessity of, **SAVING FAITH instead of mere SAID FAITH** that nominal Christians have (those are non-Christians who think they are Christians but are lost). **SAVING FAITH** has its seat in the heart and is rooted in the regenerated life. Its seed is implanted in regeneration and gradually blossoms into an active faith. It may sometimes be defined as a positive conviction, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, as to the truth of the Gospel, and a hearty reliance on the promises of God in Christ. We distinguish **three elements of faith** in a person with true saving faith.

*(1) An intellectual element. There is a positive recognition of the truth revealed in the Word of God, a spiritual insight which finds response in the heart of the sinner. It is an absolutely certain knowledge, based on the promises of God. While it need not be comprehensive, it should be sufficient to give the believer some idea of the fundamental truths of the gospel.*

*(2) An emotional element (assent). This is not mentioned separately by the Heidelberg Catechism, because it is virtually included in the knowledge of saving faith. It is characteristic of this knowledge that it carries with it a strong conviction of the importance of its object, and this is assent. The truth grips the soul.*

*(3) A volitional element (or an element of the will with vertical trust). This is the crowning element of saving faith. It is a personal trust in Christ as Saviour and Lord, which includes a surrender of the soul as guilty and defiled to Christ, and a reliance on Him as the only source of pardon and spiritual life. The object of saving faith is the Person of Jesus Christ and the promise of salvation in Him alone.*

*"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life... He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God... He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Jn. 3:16, 18, 36).*

*"For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (Jn. 6:40).*

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*"To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).*

*"Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe; for there is no distinction" (Rom. 3:22).*

*"Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Gal. 2:16).*

*"For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).*

*"Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9).*

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness" (Gal. 5:22).*

The *gift of faith* is not of human origin, but is also a free gift of God that was given to help the Church—just like all of God's gifts are totally free.

*"For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:8-9).*

But its exercise is to be a vertically dependant, horizontally wise application—a selfless Christian activity that edifies.

*"That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:5).*

<sup>3</sup> I have some really great evangelists named: Ray Comfort and Todd Friel (at the *Way of the Master*) to thank for many of these great ideas and "signs" as they call them. I heard Ray teach these truths at their wonderful seminar in Dallas in September 2007.