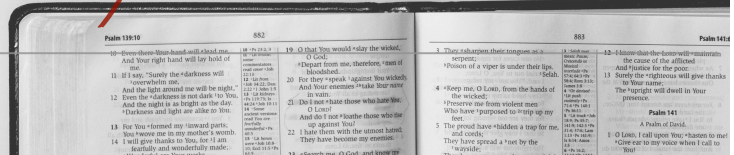


WORDS *of* TRUTH

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Theme Articles

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The Surety of Faith

Luke begins his account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by referring to "things which are most surely believed among us." The facts and details regarding Jesus' life, ministry, works, words, death, burial, and resurrection are known and believed because the Holy Spirit inspired men like Luke, the beloved physician, to record them. Their words were confirmed as they spoke them by miracles, wonders, and signs which the Holy Spirit gave them power to do. The Word of God has been both miraculously revealed and miraculously confirmed.

The message of Jesus' sacrifice is the message of eternal hope. Through the blood of God's only begotten Son, we can know that we have eternal life. Our future resurrection is as sure as the resurrection of Jesus. We believe Jesus was resurrected from the dead because the Bible records it, and because the Bible tells us there were over 500 witnesses. Jesus' resurrection is a believable fact.

To be a Christian is to have a certain confidence – not prideful confidence in our own abilities or righteousness, but humble confidence in the things we believe; confidence in the Scriptures. If our lives are dedicated to knowing the truth, we can have confidence that we do! May our faith never waver.

The City of Nineveh

David Dixon

The city of Nineveh is first mentioned in scripture in Genesis 10:11 as being built by Nimrod, the mighty hunter. Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire as it rose to power and conquered many nations. Estimates are that during its height it fetched a perimeter somewhere between 30 and 70 miles, which would fit well with Jonah's description that it was "three days journey in breadth" (Jon. 3:3). Nineveh was conquered and destroyed in 612 BC, at which time it seems to have nearly been forgotten by many historians. Zephaniah 2:13 must be the last scriptural reference to the exceeding great city because even Jeremiah omitted it from his catalogue of nations (Jer. 25). It was not until around 1850 AD that this city, which for 50 years had stood as the largest city in the world, would once again be recognized for its glory. As we consider the long and interesting history of Nineveh there are several lessons to be learned.

First of all, we learn about repentance from the city of Nineveh. God sent Jonah to this great city with a message. Jonah was to preach repentance to the Ninevites because if they did not, God would overthrow them in forty days. The Assyrians immediately responded. They repented in sackcloth and ashes, and God deferred his judgment upon them until the days of Nahum the prophet. Whether it was Jonah's passionate preaching, or the story of how he arrived in the city, or whether it was the Ninevites' prior knowledge of Jehovah God, we do not know exactly what convinced them to repent, but repent they did. This city was idolatrous and insolent. Some years later, Sennacherib would be killed in Nineveh in the temple of his false god, Nisroch, by his own sons. The people of Nineveh were not known for their compassion or piety. The Assyrians were cruel and vicious. They were uneducated and uncouth (Jon 4:11). Yet, from the Ninevites we learn something about God's part in our repentance. We learn that, despite our cruelty, ignorance, violence, or greed, God still loves us enough to desire our repentance. Jonah despised the Assyrians. Surely he understood their tendencies and reputation, and in all likelihood he was aware of the role they would play in God's judgment against many nations, including Israel and Judah. Jonah did not want the Assyrians to even have the opportunity to repent. He was frustrated because he knew God would forgive them if they did repent! What lowliness! What a judgmental heart we see in the prophet Jonah! Sometimes we are the same way. We get frustrated at those who mock us for our righteousness at school or work. We may even secretly wish ill upon those who consider themselves our enemies. We lose sight of the fact that God still loves those people and desires their repentance. From Jonah, we also learn that the ones usually most effective in calling the wicked to repentance are the ones who desire it least. When we truly have God's will as our own, we too will desire the repentance and salvation of all mankind, overstepping the petty bigotry Jonah demonstrated, while forcefully proclaiming, "Repent, or perish!"

From the great city of Nineveh we also learn about God's revelation. In his infinite wisdom, God was able to reveal His word to mankind in such a way that is free from errors, contradictions, misstatements, or inaccuracies. The Bible is not intended to be a math, science, or history textbook, but when it speaks of those matters, the Bible is right. The archaeological expeditions to the region around Nineveh began in the 1820's and what has been uncovered has proved to be the most enlightening discoveries ever unearthed. From the mounds, or *tells*, in and around the ruins of Nineveh, archaeologists have dug up perfectly preserved records of this ancient society. In 1842, Paul-Emile Botta unearthed the royal palace of Sargon II full of historical documents. In 1847 Henry Layard uncovered the lost palace of Sennacherib and the library of Ashurbanipal with over 22,000 clay tablets. Probably the most significant find from Nineveh is the Taylor Prism, which, along with the Oriental Prism and the Jerusalem Prism, comprise the Annals of Sennacherib. On these prisms, Sennacherib recorded from his perspective his campaigns against Israel and Judah. He mentions Hezekiah specifically, boasting that he had Judah's king "shut up like a bird in a cage," confirming the Biblical record of these events. What Sennacherib failed to record, however, is how Jehovah God turned him back from conquering the city of Jerusalem. Sennacherib never fired an arrow nor raised up a siege mound against God's city, but instead he turned around and went back to Assyria with "shame of face" (2 Chr. 32:21). Just as all true science will inevitably do, the archaeological works done at Nineveh have confirmed and verified the reliability and trustworthiness of the Bible.

Nineveh is under significant threat today. Because of the effects of weather, decay, looting, and vandalism, there is no way to estimate how much history has been lost from this precious site. The Mosul Dam has been called "the most dangerous dam in the world," and its failure could flood the entire site under as much as 45 feet of water (wikipedia.com, entry "Nineveh"). May God preserve this ancient city so the truths of His word can continue to be verified for future generations.

What Songbook Did Jesus Sing From?

Mike Benson

THINK ABOUT IT. Jesus was a Jew—and when He and His first-century Hebrew peers engaged in vocal worship (cf. Mat. 26:26-30), they used a songbook of sorts. Of course, there were obviously no spiralbound or hardbound songbooks to read from, and there were no electronic Paperless Hymnals to display on a screen like we use in the 21st century.

So what specific hymnal did the Jews employ? Was it some form of *OT Christian Hymns III*, or *Praise for the LORD*, or *Great Songs of the OT Church*, or *OT Church Gospel Songs and Hymns*? All kidding aside, **the songbook of the Jews was—the Psalms (cf. 1 Chr. 16:8-36), written and collected from Moses to Ezra over a period of a thousand years, which were then committed to memory.** The English title “Psalms” comes from the Greek word meaning “a sacred song or hymn—a Psalter,” while the Hebrew title, Tehillim, means “praises,” and every Psalm except the 88th contains some form of that fervent action. So when the Jews offered up the sacrifice of praise (cf. Psa. 27:6; Heb. 13:15), they didn’t simply quote the Psalms, they joyfully *sang and shouted them*, and THAT was the songbook our Lord used when He sang as well.

But this then begs yet another question. Since the Psalms served as the songbook of the Jews, who wrote and authored all of these psalters? Peter says, “Holy men of God spoke *as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Pet. 1:21b), and yet the Holy Spirit received His words *from Jesus* (cf. John 14:14-17; 16:13-15)!

Here’s ONE lesson I’m learning: **Jesus sang from the songbook which He wrote Himself—and one of His favorite subjects was—you ready for this(?), THANKSGIVING to His Father!** Watch the repetitive refrain in the following Psalms:

“Therefore I will GIVE THANKS to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, and sing praises to Your name.” Psa. 18:49
 “Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, and GIVE THANKS at the remembrance of His holy name.” Psa. 30:4
 “To the end that my glory my sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will GIVE THANKS to You forever.” Psa. 30:12
 “I will GIVE YOU THANKS in the great assembly; I will praise You among many people.” Psa. 35:18
 “Offer to God THANKSGIVING, and pay your vows to the Most High.” Psa. 50:14
 “I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with THANKSGIVING.” Psa. 69:30
 “We GIVE THANKS to You, O God, we GIVE THANKS! For Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near.” Psa. 75:1
 “So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture, will GIVE YOU THANKS forever; we will show forth Your praise to all generations.” Psa. 79:13
 “It is a good thing to GIVE THANKS unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O most High.” Psa. 92:1
 “Let us come before His presence with THANKSGIVING; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms.” Psa. 95:2
 “Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous, and GIVE THANKS at the remembrance of His holy name.” Psa. 97:12
 “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be THANKFUL to Him, and bless His name.” Psa. 100:4
 “Oh, GIVE THANKS to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” Psa. 106:1
 “Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the Gentiles, to GIVE THANKS to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise.” Psa. 106:47
 “Oh, that men would GIVE THANKS TO THE lord FOR His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!” Psa. 107:8, 15, 31
 “Oh, GIVE THANKS to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” Psa. 118:1, 29
 “At midnight I will rise to GIVE THANKS to You, because of Your righteous judgments.” Psa. 119:62

- Jesus sang.
- Jesus sang from the psalmbook which He had written.
- Jesus offered the praise of thanksgiving to His Father.

In a world where we are tempted to complain and fuss about the current state of affairs, I’m learning from Jesus that I need be more thankful, and one of the best ways to do that is by singing with a heart of zealous gratitude (Heb. 2:12): “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, GIVING THANKS always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:19-20).

What Does the New Testament Teach About the Wrath of God?

Roger Campbell

“God’s *wrath*? Are you serious? I thought that the Bible says that ‘God is love.’” In fact, it does say that (1 John 4:8). If God is the God of love and the God of grace (1 Pet. 5:10), as well as the God of patience, comfort, and hope (Romans 15:5,13), then surely we should not think of Him as the God of wrath, right? Let us take a closer look.

Students of the Bible properly observe that the Old Testament frequently makes reference to God’s wrath. Does the New Testament do the same? It does, indeed, but before we show that to be the case, consider this truth: the God of heaven does not change (Mal. 3:6). With Him “*there is no variation or shadow of turning*” (Jam. 1:17). The Lord God that created the world spoke in the Old Testament era through the prophets. He is the same God that speaks to humanity in the Christian era through His Son Jesus (Heb. 1:1,2). That is correct: the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is also the God that Christians serve.

“But is it not true that in the Old Testament we see God portrayed as a God of wrath, whereas in the New Testament He is a God of love?” Many people certainly think that is an accurate assessment of what the Bible teaches. The truth is, the Old Testament also points out the love of God (Deu. 7:7,8; Hos. 3:1; 14:4), while in several instances the New Testament mentions His wrath. So, both covenants refer to both of these aspects of God’s nature or character: love and wrath. The specific question into which we are looking, though, is what teaching does *the New Testament* set forth about the wrath of God?

First of all, in the New Testament there are a number of verses which make direct reference to “*the wrath of God.*” Jesus said that “*the wrath of God abides on*” one that does not believe in the Son (John 3:36). It is also written that “*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*” (Rom. 1:20). We further read that “*the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience*” (Ephesians 5:6). While many might prefer to think of Jesus as a *loving* Lamb, the Bible also speaks about “*the wrath of the Lamb*” (Rev. 6:16). It is true, so we must accept it.

Second, the New Testament speaks of people who are “*the children of wrath*” (Ephesians 2:3). Just who are these folks? The Bible’s own answer is that they are those who fulfil the desires of the flesh and mind (Eph. 2:3). They

are again portrayed as “*the sons of disobedience*” (Eph. 5:6). So, those that are disobedient to God can expect to be on the receiving end of His wrath.

Third, the New Testament also refers to “*the wrath to come.*” In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 we read of “*Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.*” And whose wrath would that be? The Lord’s.

Fourth, in connection with the wrath to come, the Holy Spirit speaks specifically of “*the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*” (Rom. 2:5). That same context speaks of some who will receive eternal life, but for those who “*do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath*” (Rom. 2:8). Jesus refers to such as “*everlasting punishment*” (Mat. 25:46).

Fifth, the Book of Acts records first-century demonstrations of God’s wrath. Yes, in comparison, the Old Testament records many more instances of the Divine wrath being poured out in the form of physical punishment of the wicked. However, that truth does not in any way minimize the fact that some first-century rebels were punished by the Lord. Here is a quick reminder of three such cases: (1) Ananias and Sapphira were killed for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11); (2) King Herod Agrippa I died a horrific death when “*an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died*” (Acts 12:23); (3) Elymas, known also as Bar-Jesus, was struck blind by “*the hand of the Lord*” because of his deceit and fraud (Acts 13:10,11). In view of these plain incidents, one errs greatly who claims, “*We never see God’s wrath poured out in the New Testament.*”

How can one be spared from the wrath of God at judgment? In one word, the answer is “*Jesus.*” “*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him*” (Rom. 5:9). Through Jesus, Christians have the best life in this world (John 10:10). Through Him we can escape the horrors of hell, and, yes, it is through our Lord that we live in hope of heaven. While we recognize God’s wrath, we do not live our lives in trembling fear. Why? Because the Christ paid the ransom that sets us free from sin and delivers us from the wrath to come.

Seeking the Lord

Keith Dixon

The English word *seek* translates the Greek word *zeteo*, which means, according to Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words, "to seek by thinking, to seek how to do something, or what to obtain." There are several ideas and persons for which we are to seek. Let us notice these.

SEEK THE LORD In Isaiah 55:6 we find, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near." There is a time for seeking the Lord. There will be a time when people will no longer be able to seek the Lord. The song says, "Soon will the season of rescue be o'er, Soon will they drift to eternity's shore; Haste then, my brother, no time for delay, But throw out the Lifeline and save them today" (Edward Ufford, "Throw Out the Lifeline"). There is within this song the encouragement for us to seek the lost, but also for the lost to seek the Lord. We are to be seeking Him before it is too late. Many do not even realize they need to seek the Lord at all. Again, that is our job and responsibility as Christians, but everyone also has the job and responsibility to seek the Lord. Let us "seek the Lord while He may be found!" The same idea is stated also in the New Testament. Luke 19:10 informs us, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus was seeking those that were lost, He found some and they are saved. The Lord is still seeking those that need saving. Since the entire world is lost, then all the world needs saving. One of our purposes, given to us by God, is to tell the world of the saving grace of God. We are also to tell the world what they must do to be saved. The Lord is seeking - let us seek the same today.

Understand that if we are seeking with the right kind of heart we will find. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Mat. 7:7-8). God has promised. Do we believe in the promises of God? When you read your Bible, you will find those who were seeking the Lord. Acts 10 is the record of a man, Cornelius, that sought the Lord. He found Him too.

THE LORD SEEKS WORSHIPPERS. Another time the work "seek" is used is found in John 4:23-24. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." The Father is seeking worshippers, but not just any kind of worshipers. The passage implies that not all worship is acceptable to God. God wants worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. Our heavenly Father desires for worship to come from the heart of the worshippers. People can come to worship and think that they are worshipping when their heart is not right. People can come to worship and not worship God according to Truth.

IN SPIRIT. Worship must come from the heart. That means we must have the right attitude when we are worshipping. What are we thinking about when we come to worship? Do we

listen to the words of the songs that we sing? Do we listen to the prayers that are being lead, and we are following along? This also means that our prayers must be able to be heard by all that are in the auditorium. So men should speak up during our prayers. When we enter into the Lord's Supper part of our worship, where are our minds? We can partake of the worship in an "unworthy" manner. The idea is the manner in which we take the Lord's Supper. When we give of our means, what is our attitude toward that part of our worship? Are we thankful that we have all that we do, and have the opportunity to give back to God a portion of what we He has blessed us with? David said that he would not offer to "God that which cost me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24). Are we striving to offer to God that which cost us nothing? Do we expect to have it all done for us, or are we willing to participate in our worship? During the preaching where is our mind? Are we following what the preacher is saying, or are we passing notes, talking, or not paying any attention whatsoever to the sermon? We must work on having the right attitude during our worship. The Father seeketh such to worship Him.

IN TRUTH. We also are to worship God according to truth. The truth is His Word. John 17:17 says, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Not only must we have the correct attitude, we must also worship God according to what He wants and not what we want. Many in the religious world today worship God according to what makes them happy. They like the entertainment that many churches are offering today. Many like the idea that when they come to worship they do not have to do anything but observe what is going on. If they do not like this week's production, then they may not show up the next week. This is not what God is seeking. Worship must be done according to what God has given us. Thus, we are to sing without the accompaniment of an instrument of music. The instrument that is to be used in our singing is the heart (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Let us offer to God only that which He has dictated and wants.

WITH FAITH. Finally, seeking requires faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). Again, do we believe and accept the promises of God? This passage states that we must believe that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Do we put forth the effort to seek the Lord? Some might have to spend more effort than others to seek the Lord. Some might have to spend more time in seeking the Lord. It might come easier for some than it does for others. No matter, though, let us seek the Lord all the days of our life. Let us seek the Lord in the correct way. Let us do Bible things in Bible ways.

Impossibility of Apostasy?

Chuck Webster

The form of election taught by Augustine and expanded and popularized by Calvin has led to many gross misunderstandings of scripture, not the least of which is the widespread, yet hotly debated, doctrine of eternal security (otherwise known as “Final perseverance of the saints” or “Once saved, always saved”). If the fundamental teaching of Calvinism is true, i.e., all are born totally depraved and God’s sovereignty is manifested by His arbitrarily and unconditionally electing some for salvation and the rest for condemnation, then the other tenets must likewise be true: Jesus must have died only for the elect, these elect will not be able to resist the Spirit’s call, and naturally *all* of the elect will finally persevere. According to this theology, if one is of the elect chosen before the foundation of the world, he *must* be saved; it is inconceivable that one whom God chose should be lost. The *Westminster Confession of Faith* puts it concisely:

They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither usually nor finally fall away from the state of grace: but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

Some have said that a page of the Bible can scarcely be found that does not refute this doctrine; it is certainly true that every book overturns it (some of the more notable passages are Matthew 13, Galatians 5:4, and Hebrews 6:4-6). No biblical passage, however, is any clearer than 2 Peter 2:20-22, where Peter unreservedly states that a child of God can fall from grace:

For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

In this text we see three facts which, when taken together, indisputably sound the death knell for this doctrine. Furthermore, since Calvinism cannot stand without the validity of each of its tenets, the entire system fails.

Those under consideration once were faithful children of God. In the context Peter is discussing false teachers, but he is clearly describing teachers within the church: “...there shall be false teachers *among* you” (2:1); “they feast *with* you” (2:13); they “have *forsaken* the right way, and are gone astray” (2:15) (all emphasis added). But the undeniable evidence is that Peter describes them as people who “have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2:20). The word translated “escaped” is used only three times in the New Testament and each time by Peter in this book to refer to Christians. He is writing to those who “have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (1:1), and have “*escaped* the corruption that is in the world through lust” (1:4). He refers to Christians also as those who “were clean *escaped* from them who live in error” (2:18). Both of these are clear references to Christians. Peter’s statement in verse 20 also obviously refers to believers. The statement is almost identical to his reference to the believers in his greeting: these false teachers had “escaped the pollutions of the world.” In describing the “knowledge” through which these people had escaped the world, Peter uses a pivotal Greek word. Zodhiates writes about this word:

It is more intensive than *gnosis*...because it expresses a more thorough participation in the acquiring of knowledge on the part of the learner. In the New Testament, it often refers to knowledge which very powerfully influences the form of religious life, a knowledge laying claim to personal involvement (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, p. 624).

It appears that Peter through inspiration anticipated that some would teach the impossibility of apostasy and intentionally used incontrovertible language. He is clearly referring to people who were once God’s children.

Children of God who were once faithful can lose their souls. Peter writes that it is possible for these Christians once again to be “entangled” in the pollutions of the world and “overcome” (2:20). The word translated “overcome” means “to be defeated by or succumb to a person or thing” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Arndt and Gingrich, p. 349).

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Guy N. Woods made this comment: “The word ‘entangled’ suggests the figure of fishes entrapped in a net. Though these men boasted of their freedom, they were, in reality, like fish entangled in a net, the helpless captives of their own enticements, entrapped by the very bait which they dangled before others” (*Commentary on 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude*, p. 177). The language Peter uses here is similar to that used by the Hebrews writer, who refers to the possibility of apostasy of “those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come” (Heb. 6:4-5). In easily discernible language Peter is describing the possibility of one of God’s children going back into the world.

If a child of God is overcome by the world, the end is worse than the beginning. Calvinists assert that it is possible to lose the joy of one’s salvation, but not the salvation itself. If that were true, then why would Peter write that the “latter end is worse with them than the beginning”? According to their teaching, if a believer fell away from the joy of his salvation, at least he would one day be saved in heaven. Not so, according to Peter. “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (2:21). The old axiom, “with greater knowledge comes greater responsibility,” finds its origin in scripture (cf. Luke 12:47-48). Those who became Christians and then fell back into the world will be beaten with “many stripes.” Peter closes his discussion with a vivid illustration about animals which were the most repulsive to people in his day (cf. Mat. 7:6). He obviously wanted to impress upon the minds of his readers God’s abhorrence of apostasy.

If the Calvinistic notion of eternal security is false, and it is possible for one of God’s “elect” to fall away and lose his salvation, then the underlying premise is likewise false: God has *not* unconditionally predetermined certain individuals to be part of the elect and the rest to be

lost. Calvinism, then, crumbles. As Peter clearly shows, it *is* possible for a child of God to go back into the world. God has not predetermined *individuals* to be saved, but rather He has predetermined the *class*; i.e., all faithful members of His church will one day be saved. Man’s free will remains.

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SEEKING THE LOST

Christians are commanded to “Go preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15) and “make disciples of all nations” (Mat. 28:19). The question we must each ask ourselves — individually and collectively — is, “Are we obeying the Lord’s command?” Tragically, we must confess we are not in compliance as we should be. Accordingly, we would like to make several suggestions that will help us fulfill the Lord’s command.

Suggestion #1 — Understand that those outside the church are lost. Inspiration speaks of those outside the church as being “dead” in their sins and consequently without hope (Eph. 2:1, 12). However, Paul speaks of being “alive” when one is “in Christ” (Eph. 2:5), and this is realized only when one submits to and obeys God’s plan for salvation (Gal. 3:27).

Suggestion #2 — Realize that, as Christians, we are at war. Again, inspiration speaks of our “struggle,” the “war against our soul,” and the “weapons of our warfare” (Eph. 6:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Cor. 10:3-4). Christians are not living during “peaceful” times; but rather we are daily fighting the adversary (1 Pet. 5:8).

Suggestion #3 — Realize that saving souls is a lifestyle, not an assignment. The early church grew through evangelism as a result of their influence or the daily lifestyle of the members (Acts 2:47; 4:13). Peter repeatedly reminded his readers of the evangelistic power of their daily lives (1 Pet. 2:11-12; 3:1-2).

Suggestion #4 — Stay focused on the harvest. The challenge is not and never has been the “harvest,” but rather the work force (John 4:35; Luke 10:2). Let each of us determine to be gleaners of the harvest and not spectators.

Remember: “Fruit bearing” proves our discipleship (John 15:8)!

Mike Winkler