SOME SOUNDS OF A SOUND FAITH
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Commentaries on Bible Teachings:

1. Sound Sounds of Sound Faith.
3. A Cup of Water, condensed version of Mark with comments.
4. What the Churches Don’t Want You to Hear!
SOME SOUNDS OF A SOUND FAITH

Jerry V. McMichael

dedicated to my kids, their spouses and my grandkids for whom it was written in the first place to record for them what I considered the most important subjects in the Bible after approximately 50 years of Bible study.

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**Sound 1-1: ** **GRACE TO KNOW!**

God through Christ gives us the grace to know sound doctrine and sound faith. When I first mentioned THE SOUND OF A SOUND FAITH to people, the question was asked “What is sound faith?” At that time I could only reply “that is a good question”; for we all know the different sounds of faith, churches, denominations, and religions that clamor in the world for attention. {This is the age of a proliferation of the heaping up of teachers with itching ears as we will look at in the fourth chapter.} The immediate answer is that God gives us through Christ the grace to know sound doctrine, and then the grace to have confidence in what we know! “For God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of confidence, of love, and of a sound mind.”

The sufficient answer which demands some additional explanation is that SOUND DOCTRINE (this, of course, includes sound faith) IS “EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD”, to borrow some words from Jesus as quoted from the Apostles and recorded in the Bible. Hardly anyone interested in the Bible as the Word of God would deny that sound doctrine is every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. However, it is much like the global statement that “Christ is the answer for all the problems of the world” which leaves unanswered many complementary questions such as which Christ: the Christ of the Mormons, or the Christ of the Lutherans, the Christ of the Bible of most Christians, or the Christ of some television evangelist that are in Christ’s work for the money? (It should be obvious that there must be in the world today “wolves in sheep’s clothing” that Paul told the Ephesus’ elders that would come immediately after his departure. And when you also consider the danger of popularity in Christ faith [the difference between the majority of “many” and minority of “few” of Jesus’ teachings, it seems most probable that the popular
television evangelists are the “wolves in sheep’s clothing”.

Because of the many faiths in the world today, many religions, many interpretations of the Bible, we can not back away from the simple conviction that came from the teachings of Jesus Himself who said, If any man will do His (God’s) will, he will know of the doctrine if it came of God. It is important to get the exact wording as recorded in John 7:17 by the Apostle John (who, by the way heard it for himself from Jesus): “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” The bottom line of this very fundamental principle of Bible understanding {hermeneutics, to use the word of preachers and Bible scholars} is that understanding of the Bible is an individual matter that is largely determined by a persons will to do what it teaches. In other words, a good attitude promotes good understanding and a bad attitude promotes bad understanding.

Although we desire in our preaching and teaching of sound faith no to be brutal, there are some simple Bible facts that must be faced up to as we struggle with the problem of why so few people really understand the Bible: (1) God actually blinds the eyes of most people so that they can not understand as for example most of the Jewish nation up to this present except for a chosen few like Paul and the other Apostles and the first churches; (2) As Romans 1 informs us God gives up most people and civilizations to a “reprobate mind” that can not understand the things of God, do not care to understand, and in fact have a predisposed attitude to prevent an understanding of the Bible; (3) God plays with the wisdom of the world and of the university scholars as He chooses to save those through the foolishness of preaching to save those who believe (“When in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe…”); (4) The wisdom of this world of the universities and books (except a select few) are foolishness with God, and not many mighty
or noble or wise are called to a proper spiritual understanding; and (5) It is necessary to face up to the fact that true Bible faith in Christ is a minority endeavor as “many are called but few are chosen”, and “broad is the way that leads to destruction and many go that way” while “narrow is the way that leads to eternal life” and few there are that take that way of life. It is the simple difference between the majority and the minority that we are talking about.

This applies to the United States also. You can hardly make a legitimate case that this majority and minority thing of the Bible applies to the whole world apart from the United States. Even as it applied also to Israel, the originally chosen nation of God, in the days of Christ, it also applies to the currently chosen nation of God, the United States, during this age of the fullness of the Gentiles. What we have in the United States, to use the words of some of the American Studies scholars, is an AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC FAITH. It can be summarized as spoken by former Prime Minister of Israel Begin, “You Americans are born Christians just as Jews are born Jews.” Neither is true, but it takes a close study of that part of the Word of God called the book of Romans, by the Apostle Paul and the Spirit of God, to understand it. That will be explained in the third chapter, “God’s Watershed of History: Choice of a Beloved and Foolish Nation”. Suffice it to say for now as Paul, “not every Jew is born of Israel”, nor is every child of God born of Israel, and there is a spiritual Israel. In other words, until the fullness of the Gentiles age is complete, there will be more children of God from among the Gentiles, the United States leading the way, than from among the physical nation of Israel. {Enjoy it while you can.}

Second to the proper attitude, it is necessary to work hard to understand the Bible. Jesus uses the words “asking”, “seeking”, and “knocking”. Another way to say it is that those who search after the truth from the Bible are the ones most likely to find the truth. One of the so-called “beati-
"Beatitude" describes the way God will bless those who seek the truth of the Bible, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Many like to talk about this as happiness or the beatitudes. No, it is the blessings of God; and if God Himself blesses you beyond that of the sun and rain, beyond that of the majority on the earth, it is indeed a blessing. God can and will bless you by understanding of every word that proceeds out of His mouth if you will develop the right attitude and put out effort in knowing the truth. We live among many who desire the instant spiritual blessings of salvation and special insight; however there is never and has never been a quick and easy way. Many point to the salvation of Paul on the road to Damascus as an example of instantaneous salvation; but there would not have been a salvation experience of the road except for the extended time of that preceded it in which "he kicked against the pricks". And still his salvation was not complete as indicated by the physical blindness {a sign of incomplete spiritual insight}, until Ananias assisted him with more truth from the Ascended Christ. Even so Paul was not yet ready to preach. He must spend time in the Arabian Desert with the Ascended Christ, and then go back to Tarsus to reread the Old Testament in the light of what Christ had taught him.

Paul teaches about the yearn in Hebrews for the sound doctrine of the Word of God as the equivalent motivation of a new born baby desiring to have milk. All know of that yelling and screaming and crying of the baby for milk, and the person who yearns with that intensity after every word from the mouth of God as recorded in the Word of God will be rewarded in like manner as a mother cares for her child. Someone besides Jacob must wrestle with the angel for a spiritual blessing, and that someone is the person, having established a proper attitude, who seeks to know the truth of God and Christ, the truth of the Word of God which is divine in origin, absolute in authority, sufficient in message, and high fidelity in communication.
A Few Biblical Statements About What Sound Doctrine Is!

1. What is Sound Doctrine? Since doctrine is another word for teachings, and of course for Bible believers the teachings of Jesus and of God, which are the same, then sound doctrine is also sound teachings from God Himself and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus made it clear often during His three years ministry on earth that His teachings or doctrines were not His own but belonged to God His Father, and furthermore that whatever God taught Him to say is exactly what He taught on this earth. Parenthetically, it should be stated at this point that sound faith is a subset of sound doctrine. Even as sound doctrine includes all that comes from God and Jesus and all that can be known as truth about God and Jesus and their teachings, even so sound faith is a subset in that it is both beliefs and a process of confidence in that sound doctrine. {This will be discussed more thoroughly from the Bible in the chapter on FAITH.}

2. What is Sound Doctrine? Sound doctrine is synonymous with “the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (verse 3) of the book of Jude. It was delivered once for all by Jesus and the Apostles who recorded what He said in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; it was recorded once for all in the books written by the Apostles and Prophets; it has been sealed once for all in the history of the Christ faith in the book of 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament, by the assembly of the Firstborn and their leaders as they have crystallized as the Holy Bible this book.

You see right here at this point at least half of the confusion is eliminated as on how to distinguish between sound doctrine and all the beliefs that clamor for recognition. At least half of all of the religions and denominations did not subscribe to the Bible as the Word of God, and therefore do not subscribe to this as the only sufficient source of sound doctrine. Then you can eliminate another one-fourth of so-called Christian denominations and religions who do not believe as stated in Jude 3, that the sound faith and doc-
trine was once for all delivered to the saints. They believe in the evolution of sound doctrine; they believe that they like the Prophets and Apostles of old are the recipients of special revelations from God. At the extreme of this spectrum are the Mormons who have replaced the single Bible of the faith once delivered with four Bibles, and also subscribe to constant new revelation from the Heads of the LDS churches. To express it in the words of the Doctrine and the Covenants any time the Head Prophet of the Mormon church speaks, it is Word of God. \{Later, I will discuss how this places two curses from the Holy Bible itself on the head of the Latter Day Saints.\}

And at the other end of the spectrum of the group who do not see sound doctrine and sound faith as “once for all delivered” are those people and groups who see knowledge of truth from God as sort of an evolution that comes as we learn more and as we acquire more scientific knowledge. As an example, and this is very subtle, is the religious person who will take God’s name in vain as excusable as if the words no longer apply, “the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” as taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Or the person that somehow sees God and His Word as outdated because this new generation is so much smarter than the last generation that lived. J.B. Phillips expressed it years ago when he wrote the book, YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL. People did not believe that God understood radar or the modified Bohr Theory of the atom. Today people do not believe that God understands computers and genetics and information technology. You see we confuse some older Christ believers and what they understand with the God of this universe who understands and knows all things; and further who created the minds who can probe and invent these things and the fundamentals laws of the universe that make the understanding of these technical matters possible.

3. What is Sound Doctrine? It is doctrine that comes from God through the work and will of the Holy Spirit of God. Here, I must quote from the
Word of God itself as found in II Timothy 3:16,17:
“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness…” You see it came from God is a gift from God for the profit of humanity in order that humanity may come to know the way that God wants us to live {that is the instruction, another word for teachings, and “instruction in righteousness” another way to correct our behavior and beliefs.} As far as Scripture coming more specifically from the work on earth of God the Holy Spirit, we turn to the teachings of Jesus as recorded in John 14-16 where Jesus taught saying, “...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” (John 16:13)

4. What is Sound Doctrine? It also helps to shift out the wheat from the chaff of sound doctrine to know not only the origin of sound doctrine as from God through the Spirit but that it must have come through an approved apostle or prophet. How do we know who has been approved? Once again it is from the Bible itself which tells of how Jesus chose both apostles and prophets. If you believe about the Apostle Peter, then you believe that the Apostle Paul wrote Scriptures as much the Word of God as those of the Old Testament Prophets because Peter states that in his books, and so on epistle after epistle in the Bible the approximately 20 writing prophets of the Old Testament are confirmed and the approximately 7 writing Apostles of the New Testament confirm each other.

5. What is Sound Doctrine? It is the doctrine or teachings or faith taught by the Holy Spirit of God Himself. Refer again to John 16:13 above, “the Spirit of truth...will guide you into all truth.” Isn’t just a little bit of conviction and certainty like this from the Bible, from the teachings of Jesus Himself, from the book written by the Apostle John, and that has come to be
believed by the great cloud of witnesses of the Christ faith that have gone before [Hebrews 11 and 12] worth a lot more than the tendency to wallow in he mud puddle of uncertainly and doubt of looking at all the teachings and beliefs in the world. (Underlying all sound doctrine and the efforts to know and do sound doctrine is the fundamental belief based on the teachings of Jesus that the majority are wrong and the minority is right, and this applies in the United States as in all countries of the world.)

6. What is Sound Doctrine? It is life related—can not be learned apart from the way life is lived—in that it must proceed from a deep-seated yearning to know the truth, with the confidence that the truth is more likely to be learned when it is passionately sought; can not be learned apart from a desire to know the will of God; and can not be learned unless equal life priority is given to “every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” to the life priority of making a living.

What are Some Obstacles to Learning Sound Doctrine?

1. Pastor James, the pastor of the first church ever, in Jerusalem immediately after the life of Christ, and the half-brother of Jesus, had a lot to say in the little book of James about truth, doctrine, and what causes obstacles to sound doctrines in churches. It is very practical because Pastor James is dealing with the problems in a very real church, the First. First of all the Apostle James says that the wars and battles over sound doctrine in local churches (and denominations) come from individual desires for pleasure and status. Once again I must quote from the Word of God:

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust (for control, for recognition, for power, etc) and do not have. You murder (that includes anger and fighting) and covet (desire to have and be what someone else in the church has and is) and cannot obtain. You fight (in your home church) and war (in the denomination). Yet you do not have
because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” (James 4:1-3)

Wow! It never can be said any better than that and never will be said any better than that. Don’t look for some deep meaning that causes the splits in churches and the warfare in the Southern Baptist Convention, it comes out of wars and battles for pleasure. Crude, but true!

2. Another obstacle to sound doctrine in individual lives, in beliefs, and in the practices of churches is the lack of wisdom. Contrary to the old wives tale “that if the majority of the church votes to do something, it is right” is the teaching of Pastor James in the Word of God that where there is no real prayer there is no real wisdom from God and from above, and further where in any church there is “self-seeking” and “confusion” that is the sure sign that the wisdom from above has never come.

3. Another obstacle to sound doctrine is the “doctrines of devils”. Do the devils, alias the fallen angels and Satan, really have doctrine? Oh yes, and that doctrine is subtle and often so close to the truth of Jesus that it is difficult to shift out from the truth. Recall the way Satan tempted Jesus Himself in order to divert Jesus from the real will of God. First of all, he quoted Scripture. Do not be deceived, every quoter of Scripture is not on the side of Jesus. In fact, it is very possible that Satan—especially in this time of intolerance toward sound doctrine—has as many people who quote Scripture as Jesus: the big difference being in the way they implement and interpret and apply the Scripture. For example, Satan tempted Jesus (Luke 4:1-13) on three fronts with unsound doctrine from Scripture: first, the temptation or obstacle from Satan was to live by bread instead of by the will of God; second, the obstacle from Satan was to worship Satan and to get the whole world rather than worship God; and third, the obstacle was to tempt God by leading Himself into futile tests of God Himself, a very common practice today in very popular churches.
4. The obstacle of seducing spirits. Along with the warnings of the Bible about doctrines of devils is also the warning of seducing spirits. Once again to quote from the Bible, the Word of God: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” (I Timothy 4:1-3)

This was expressly told to Paul by the Holy Spirit of God. It is an inevitable prediction, called a prophesy, of what will take place in history: in fact is a accepted burden of proof of this book on THE SOUND OF A SOUND FAITH that has already happened, the time of intolerance toward sound doctrine. It is generally referred to by Bible scholars as the Great Apostasy. The only reason I do not like that phrase as it seems like something to happen way out in the future instead of now!

The short and simple of the meaning is: that is the doctrines of devils that come to you, and which must inevitable come as long as there is a Satan and other devils, if those doctrines of devils do not present obstacles to your sound faith and sound doctrine, then the seducing or deceiving spirits can get you. The bad thing about a bad spirit is that it can be clothed in clothing that is very deceptive, say for example black clothing or sheep’s clothing.

5. The last obstacle to be mentioned to sound doctrine is the most serious obstacle to most Protestant, non-Mormon believers: it is the wall of intolerant doctrine built up in churches and denominations by itching ears teachers, preachers, and people that protects them from the sound of sound doctrine. When the Bible says in II Timothy 4:3,4, about the time of intolerance toward sound doctrine and mentions how those of itching ears will “HEAP” to themselves teachers of itching ears, the “heaping” has the implica-
tion of extensive effort to protect against sound doctrine. For example the effort that the divorced in churches go to, who have not confessed divorce as adultery when there is remarriage, the effort they go to protect themselves from hearing the true words of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus on the matter. The "heaping" is like building up a vast wall of protection against sound doctrine. It reminds of what some of the New Jersey ladies who lost husbands in 9/11 were quoted as saying about the Bush administration, "they have built up around the White House a wall of secrecy." Well, the wall of intolerance toward sound doctrine is a wall for comfort, a wall built by itching ears.
## SOME SOUNDS OF A SOUND FAITH
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Sound #1-2: CONTEMPORARY SOUNDS OF FALLING AWAY SIGNS.

Even as the “falling away” is given in the Word of God, II Thessalonians 2:3, as a sign of the imminence of the Second Coming of Christ, so there are certain signs given by Christ and the Apostles of the Falling Away itself. Christ said in Matthew 24 that because “sin would abound, the love of many would wax cold.” Jesus also said that there would be many “false prophets” that would deceive many. The Apostle Paul wrote in I Timothy of the explicit prediction by the Holy Spirit of a departure from faith. (I Timothy 4:1-5) Then in II Timothy Paul elaborated on this falling away first in terms of “perilous times” where churchmembers will have a “form of godliness that denies the power thereof”, and then secondly near the end as churchmembers will no longer endure sound doctrine, but out of their own desires heap up teachers with itching ears, turn away from the truth, and be turned into fables.

Are we in the Falling Away now? Is this a time that churches, church leaders, and churchmembers will no longer endure sound doctrine? Do we have some signs where Bible teachings have turned into fiction-like fables? Do we see many indications that churches seek and find pastors and other leaders who will teach in a manner to soothe and comfort their itching ears? Do we see in our time the “heaping up of teachers”, extensive and popular movements on new Bible teachings? In short, can we find signs that this present age in 2004 and 2005 is a time that churchmembers will “no longer endure sound doctrine”?

The answer is “YES”! There are obvious signs in the churches and denominations of America that these very same churches are in the Falling Away. Here are six apparent signs of the Falling Away of today’s American churches, just to get us started on the subject before we look at the
details of the Falling away from Hebrews and other books of the Bible: (1) The apparent gap in all churches and denominations between Christ and the Teachings of Christ is a sign that we are presently in the Falling Away, and it is apparent also to most that the gap is widening to the extent that shortly, if not presently, churchmembers will be going in the opposite direction from Christ; (2) The anarchy in church government where groups in a church run off the pastor so prevalent in Southern Baptist churches is another sign that we are in the Falling Away; (3) Another sign that we are presently in the Falling Away is the popularity in churches of non-biblical concepts of marriage and divorce which allow, condone, and promote divorces and gay marriages as well as distort the Bible requirements for deacons and pastors; (4) The taking of the name of God in vain among active churchmembers is another sign that all is not right in Camelot, a sign of the Falling Away; (5) the popularity today in churches and related church activities of itching-ear teachings such as Warren’s “Purpose” books, LeHaye’s eschatology books of fiction based on fiction, and books on the faith of George Bush which promote the American Democratic Faith more than the faith of the Bible; and (6) The popularity and prevalence of the seducing spirit of “fighting” as personified by the fundamentalists takeover and control of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the world.

Of course, each of these six need some preliminary explanation in the introduction, before we get into the exegesis of Hebrews and other books which will prove that they are so! What you are going to find in this conservative Bible commentary on the subject of THE FALLING AWAY is that the book of Hebrews is about the falling away. It tells of the first falling away by the children of Israel in the wilderness after they saw and turned away from the works of God for 40 years. And the book of Hebrews describes in details the warning signs for churchmembers to see if they themselves are in danger of falling away from God, Christ, and the sound doctrine of the Bible. Let it
be said right now and up front, that the Falling Away is not from churches. Church attendance in some cases may actually go up as churchmembers heap up the kind of preachers and teachers which their desires dictate, generally it will be to put the American Democratic Faith before the faith of Christ and the Bible and it will be to preach and teach on minors while ignoring the majors of the Bible. {sort of a departure from the faith by default} Also Paul and the Spirit of God and Christ give straightforward an outright warnings to avoid the Falling Away such as “beware brothers, lest there by in any of you an evil heart of belief in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12-14)

Also faithfulness to the preaching of the Word of God on the Falling Away is not as many would like to believe the next verse of the same tune that the present generation is going to the dogs. If the Falling Away of our generation is like the first Falling Away of the children of Israel in the wilderness then all the young people 20 years of age or younger are safe! It was only the adults of 21 and older who after seeing the works of God on their behalf for 40 years were not allowed because of their unbelief to either enter the promised land of Palestine or not to enter the eternal rest of God in heaven. {There were a few exceptions of men of faith like Caleb and Joshua who were allowed in the Promised Land, and there is in the churches today also no doubt a “remnant” of believers that have not succumbed to the Falling Away, and that will also be discussed in this Bible commentary. Also, there was also Moses who because of temporary disobedience was not allowed to enter the Promised Land, but who certainly is in heaven now!}

It should be apparent to you right now that this Bible commentary judges “righteous judgment” rather than the appearance of religious matters and organizations. And if you are to enjoy and appreciate this Bible commentary as well as all nine of the commentaries of the LEARN CHRIST FROM THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS series, then you too must work at the judging of the “righteous judgment” of John 7:24. Paul elaborated on that by con-
trasting impression versus appearance. It is amazing in our day and time how impression or perception has become predominate over reality. In the last 20 years or so in management dynamics as used by big business and government, in education, in politics, in American society, and religion, appearance has taken the forefront as compared to reality. The very common saying, “Things are not what they seem to be” has been replaced by “things are what you can make them seem to be.” A case in point is the takeover approximately 20 years ago of the Southern Baptist Convention by the fundamentalists. They did so by convincing the southern baptist churchmembers that they, the fundamentalists, were the only conservatives on the Bible, and that if anyone disagreed with them and their fighting spirit then they were not conservative. What is more they were liberals! I think their more condescending spirit dictated calling dissenting conservatives, “the moderates”.

The seductive and fighting spirit of the fundamentalists was made evident by one of their leaders, W.A. Criswell, approximately 25 years ago when during a televised interview by Bill Moyers, Criswell said about the warfare between fundamentalists and moderates that “they would keep fighting until one side or the other won.” You get that, keep fighting with other Southern Baptist believers until one side or the other won. They did keep fighting, and won with the help of such fundamentalists who originally were not even from or trained in the SBC like Charles Stanley, Adrian Rogers, and W.A. Criswell. Fifty years ago when I was growing up in Southern Baptist work in Houston, we called them “fuedamentalists” instead of “fundamentalists” because you always knew what they were “against” more than what they were for. Or in the language of the South, “what they were agin more than what they were fer.” If you really want to know and see this fighting and seductive spirit of the fundamentalists, it is visible with the exercise of righteous judgement: you do have to ignore popularity and majority and control. For example, there is Charles Stanley who when elected by a fundamentalists majority went off on
a warfare against the Bible professors at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Recently as a knowable lady on religious affairs helped my find copies of one of Warren’s “purpose” books and a book on the faith of President Bush, first I had to explain to her that my purpose in reading the books was not what she thought, it was rather in order to support my thesis that they are both practitioners and promoters of the American Democratic Faith {I am thoroughly convinced that in this time of “will not endure sound doctrine”, the time of the Falling Away, any popular teaching is suspect, but intellectual honesty dictated that I read about it for myself and then prove it}; and then tried to help her find a copy of a book by Charles Stanley on “Spiritual Warfare”. It naturally came out of my mouth that Stanley had to be an expert on “warfare” since he is always fighting with his wife, his son in the ministry, the staff of his First Baptist Church in Atlanta, and other dedicated Bible believers and preachers in the SBC. {since then I have decided that he would be more qualified to write a book on “The Art of Warfare”}. How does he and other of the fundamentalists leaders of the SBC get away with it: appearance and impression over reality and righteous judgment. Jerry Falwell, who by the way remained a Bible Baptist fundamentalists during the changeover of many others because he was already popular, recently told Jesse Jackson during a television interview about the politics of the moral majority, that “it was better to kill them {the avowed terrorists in Iraqi} over in Iraqi than here at home”. You see the fighting spirit of “kill them”. It is consistent. Even in the moral majority you see the fundamentalist as “against” abortion more than being for something of love and conviction. Fighting and being against is as natural to them as a Christian spirit. Indeed, it is a seducing-fighting spirit armed with the doctrines of the American Democratic Faith. {By the way I really like the American Democratic Faith, and I have spent years studying it in book on American Studies; however, it is not an adequate substitute for the faith of Christ and the Bible, it can not provide salvation, and I
resent the presentation of it as if it were the same as the Faith of the Bible. It is always going to be popular to wave the American flag, and the fundamentalists know it! In the name of patriotism, you can get away with murder!}

Enough negative, let us proceed to a more extensive description of the Six Contemporary Signs of the Falling Away. {However, do not forget in this little aside about the fundamentalists, the positive effort was made to call for “righteous judgment”, and to warn you that fundamentalists will as ever also label this Bible commentary as “liberal” since their house of clay fables would fall if they recognized a Bible conservative that disagreed with them!}

1. The present and widening gap between Christ and what it means to be a churchmember alone should be adequate evidence that we are in The Falling Away. It doesn't matter whether you talk about Roman Catholic churches or denominations, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Methodist churches, the interdenominational churches, or the nondenominational churches, there is an evident gap between Christ and churchmembers. In spite of the recent efforts of Rich Warren in his Camelot-like “purpose” books to once again repeat the old excuses for non-Christlikeness in the churches {he knows that is a popular approach}, the facts remain for all to see that no primary thrust is put into “unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” (Ephesians 4:13) Beyond the lack of primary thrust in Christlikeness is the lack of trying at all to be like Christ. It is either considered not important anymore, or substitutes are found for Christlikeness as Warren does in the “purpose” books. What are the substitutes? Well, that remains a discussion for the primary body of this commentary, and in particular the conclusions in the last chapter; but a few such substitutes should be listed here: (1) if you are a member of Saddleback Church, then you do not need Christ for salva-
tion {this comes from the classic as practiced habit of all pastors now as they convince their churchmembers of how they are the elect of God, comes from a lack of the promotion of inherent unity based on the bonds of peace of the seven ONE’s, and comes from the use of behaviorism to secure and maintain unity in a local church rather than the inherent unity of the Spirit, all of which will be dealt with extensively in this Bible commentary}; (2) if you generate any strong convictions based on Christlikeness you might get kicked out of the Camelot Church for violation of the covenant to protect the unity of the church; (3) this so-called unity of fellowship is based on superficial doctrines and behaviorism with perhaps a touch of the denial of the “priesthood of believers” to the membership; and (4) the boastful of over 9,000 baptisms in 7 years without at the same time any split in the fellowship tries to make those baptisms synonymous with discipleship which even took Christ more than three years to obtain {even so among only twelve disciples there was a split in fellowship as Judas fell away}; and (5) it is questionable that Satan would allow such an avowed work of God over seven years without opposition, rather being very supportive of church work which would promote agreement on basis other than the seven ONE’s of Ephesians and the inherent unity of the Spirit. {Granted this is just a superficial look at the shortcomings of the “purpose” books by Warren. We will look at it thoroughly in the context of this Bible commentary as one of the best examples of an intolerance toward sound doctrine. Why put this much effort into countering such teachings? Because this book if being used by churchmembers to support the unity of fellowship they have which is not the unity of fellowship promoted by the book of Ephesians and the rest of the Bible. They use this book to support their lack of endurance of sound doctrine. They use this book to prove that they are not part of the Falling Away.}

How long has it been since you have seen any churchmember exhibiting
Christ-like characteristics, of any denominations or churches? Instead you hear of the rape of children, the inhumane running off of pastors in a manner not even practiced by big business, partly because it is illegal there; you hear of splits in fellowship and wars between churchmembers and other between denominations; and you hear of divorces among churchmembers where you know if they can not get along with their own spouse, how can they get along with other churchmembers; and you hear many churchmembers who take the name of God in vain. {Here I wonder how many of Warren's 9,000 take the name of God in vain while they start their discipleship, according to his teachings, by becoming a friend of God, a dubious doctrine to say the least. If Rush Warren wanted to make a real contribution to the kingdom of Christ, he should make a follow-up study of those 9,000 based on the teachings of Jesus about the seed and the fruit, where only a fourth were fruitful.} You know I have been told, although I can not verify it in writing, that the Mormons and Southern Baptist lead the nation of churches in the number of divorces. Christ taught “one man and one woman for life” with only one allowed reason for divorce, and that anything else in divorce is to commit adultery. While it is so easy to confess this sin to God as a violation of His law and of the teachings of Christ, many will not recognize it as a sin and consequently live in rebellion against the will of God. The rebellion is not the sin of divorce: it is rebellion against the legitimate teaching of Jesus against divorce.

2. Anarchy in church government is another Sign of the Falling Away, where a group of churchmembers or even the whole church exercise the will of the majority to run off the pastor. One of the most false of all false doctrines is the doctrine that the majority vote of the church is always right! That majority vote must inherently become less and less right as the church moves into the Falling Away. If you want to talk about the Purpose of God for a church, then you should see that the purpose of God for your church was to
send you your pastor; and rather than seek and find the purpose of God for your church and your life, by running off your pastor you are subverting the purpose of God.  

Unless you can twist your thinking to decide based on Warren’s exposition that your purpose from God is to run off the pastor.) I wonder if the children of Israel thought they were exercising the purpose of God when they rebelled against the authority of God as endowed to Moses their leader. If so, they must have been shocked when 12,000 of them were slain by God in one day.

Nowhere in the Bible is the doctrine taught that any majority vote of the congregation is the will of God. Instead, the Bible teaches that Christ is the Head of the Church, the control rests there and conformity to the teachings of Christ promotes that control, and Christ has appointed the pastor as the angel-messenger to your church. Most generally the running off of the pastor is a sign that your church will no longer endure sound doctrine, especially on marriage and divorce; and that you are participating in the “heaping” out of sound teachers which must precede the “heaping” in of teachers with itching ears.

This reverence for the doctrine of the majority is more a part of the American Democratic Faith than it is for the Bible. While there can be many similarities between the Doctrines of the Bible and the Doctrines of the American Democratic Faith, there are two outstanding differences: (1) In the American Democratic Faith the majority is always right while in the faith of the Bible Jesus taught that the many go the broad way to destruction and the few go the narrow way; and (2) Toleration is the name of the game in the American Democratic Faith with an acceptance of all beliefs and value systems while the same kind of toleration is not permissible in the Bible such as that suggested a few years ago in a vote by the Presbyterians as to whether the claim that Christ was the only way of salvation was intolerant. At first, when approximately 30 years ago I read an American Studies book entitled MAIN
DOCTRINES OF THE AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC FAITH, I was sceptical that such a Faith does exist; but now I know it is real. It was expressed by former Prime Minister of Israel Begin when he said, "You Americans are born Christians just we Israelis are born Jews." It has come to the point in the history of this country when just to be an American is a faith and a religion. It is best described by the American Democratic Faith. It is the faith a person has who claims to be a Christian who has never experienced the inward change of the new birth, and that includes a lot of Americans. In a recent book on the faith of President Bush, the author speaks of a "civil religion", and we come to see that as such with the influence of the fundamentalists in politics. If you look at the fundamentalists closely, you will see a deep-seated faith which goes beyond the faith of the Bible in the majority and in toleration.

3. Another Sign of the Falling Away is divorce. We have previously touched on this in this preface, so we will save most of the further discussion for the main body of the commentary where we show exactly what the Bible teaches; however, we should note that now in our country well over 50% of the marriages end in divorce. Figures are not available on what percentage of those divorces are in Southern Baptist churches, or how much divorces have increased since the fundamentalists took over the Convention. I would think that along with other absences of Christlikeness, divorces under fundamentalists have rapidly increased since this seemed to be one way in which they took over the SBC in the first place. However, once again I must emphasize that it is not the sin of adultery of divorce that Christ taught which is the problem. The problem among Southern Baptist and over churches is the denial of the legitimate teachings of Christ on marriage and divorce. Rather than individually and collectively confessing their sins of divorce, they deny they are sins; and rebel against the will of God on marriage and divorce. They, especially deacons who object to the Bible teachings which require no divorce for deaconship and pastorship, rebel against God and the clear teachings of
the Bible. And when your very church leadership is rebelling against the will of God and the teachings of Christ on something so fundamental as marriage, what else can you expect from them in the way of sound doctrine and sound behavior. {Sound Christlike behavior is also sound doctrine as doctrine is just another word for “teaching”.

4. The fourth sign of the Six Signs of the Falling Away in our generation is the taking of the name of God in vain. I do not have to prove this to you, for you have heard it for yourself, and you are constantly hearing it from churchmembers. Does the popularity of the taking of God’s name in vain among churchmembers make it right? No, the Bible says and will always say to the majority or the minority, “God will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.” The point of this Scripture from the Word of God is that there is no acceptable excuse. “Well, I don’t mean it!” The answer from the Bible comes, “God will not hold him guiltless.”

“I am a member of a church, or even Saddleback Church.” The answer from the Bible comes back, “God will not hold him guiltless.”

“Such churchmembers do not really mean it. They have been influenced by the people around them.” The answer comes back, “God will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.”

In the cubicle next to me at Raytheon sat an Engineer who half the time was giving advice to people from the Bible, and who the other half of the time was impressing people on the phone, obviously of a more worldly bent, by the constant taking of God’s name in vain. Pastor James said long ago in the book of James that such double speaking should not come from the same tongue. It is like both bitter and sweet water from the same fountain: it just can not co-exist. I know he was a former active member of some church in California, and I think it was the Saddleback Church. If it was the Saddleback Church, I can see how such a contradiction of the Christ life can happen. It seems that if you go by Warren’s purpose books, the primary and denominative
doctrine or teachings is to show agreement with all churchmembers whether that agreement exist internally or not; and I can see where someone raised in that church environment could easily make “agreement with all” the dominant drive of his life. When on the phone with a churchmember, agree with them by quoting Scripture; and when on the phone with a person of the world agree with them by taking God’s name in vain.

And unsound doctrine on God could also cause such weird behavior as the taking of the name of God in vain. If a person does not really know about the holiness and power and other characteristics of God, they might be inclined to take the name of God in vain. If what they learn about God is less than the doctrine of the Bible; for example is the teaching from Warren of how God is our friend, a very dubious doctrine, then they also might tend to take the name of God in vain. Granted Abraham was a friend of God, and so was David and Enoch who walked with God. But my goodness, to think that a whole church, Camelot or not, was full of such friends of God is ludicrous; and as a fundamental, starting doctrine, to consider God as a friend instead of Christ as the friend and the way to God is superficial if not sacri-religious. Why is it so readily accepted from Warren”. Well, during the Falling Away churchmembers want to hear new sounds that tickle and comfort their ears. Such a sound is, instead of God the Great Creator sitting on the Great White Throne with Jesus at His right hand as mediator, I bring God down to my level of daily companionship. That is not even the way Jesus taught us to pray. It is not “Our Father which is down here next to me as my Friend...“: it is “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...”

5. The fifth Sign of the Six Signs of the Contemporary Falling Away is the amazing popularity of Itching-Ears Teachings. You will have to admit that the popularity of books like those on “Last Things” by Tim LeHaye and on “purpose” by Rich Warren have surprised the American public. They are on the best selling list, and they have a popular appeal because on the surface they
sound so differently from what most churchmembers have heard. {If you will study them carefully, you will find that they are not at all differently from what fundamentalists know; and in the final analysis they are not so differently from what the world has practiced historically.}

I think there are three doctrines in the “purpose” books that appeal to churchmembers most, and perhaps also to non-churchmembers: (1) that the God of love wants to be my friend as a beginning teaching; (2) that unity in fellowship of a local church is possible through behaviorism; and (3) that God has a purpose for each life to be fulfilled in a local church rather than “a spiritual blessing in heavenly realms” from the Church of the Firstborn, written in heaven. This last doctrine, remember that doctrine is another word for “teaching”, this teaching from Warren is based on faulty exegesis of both the book of Ephesians and the usage of the word “ecclesia”, for church, in the total body. Lest this cause you to pause that a pastor of such a famous and Camelot-like church in California, could be guilty of such inadequate “exegesis”, I would remind you that several years ago the well-known associate pastor of the Crystal Cathedral would constantly talk of the book of “Revelations” instead of the book of Revelation. This is and always will be a sign of a person inadequately schooled on the Bible. In short, the Bible uses the word “ecclesia” approximately 128 times with indeed the majority of about 100 referring to the local church; however, to conclude as Warren does that the other 20 times are insignificant, where the Bible unmistakably refers to the body of all believers, the Church of the Firstborn, written in heaven, is a sign of immaturity on the part of Warren. The same kind of immaturity and unsound doctrine that allows him to promote God as the initial friend in a beginning relationship. That was meant for Christ, and Christ only. {We will look at these matters of sound doctrine in more detail in the commentary, doing Bible exegesis according to good Bible-ordained hermeneutics, the science of biblical interpretation.}
6. The fighting spirit of the fundamentalists is another of the Six Signs of the Contemporary Falling Away. You know it is really hard to think of Christian, or Christ, or Christlikeness in the same sentence with “fighting”. Yet you have seen it on every hand with the fundamentalists, and you will continue to see it. I recall a few years ago when good 'ole Bible evangelists, J. Vernon McGee, said of the fundamentalists, “I wish they could learn to contend for the faith without being contentious.” They can not even though sometimes they put on a good show when they entitle television shows like “In Touch” and “Love that Matters”, more of the impression over reality. The conclusion of this book, and the conclusion with which you must agree, is that a fighting spirit such as what the fundamentalists have is a seducing spirit; and is right next to the intolerance of sound doctrine! Also that the fighting spirit belongs more to the American Democratic Faith than to the faith of the Bible!
If the Bible has no answer on death and dying, it has no answer on life. You see as we all know too well the terminal aspect of life is dying and death. If the Bible has no answer on life, the good life, and eternal life, it has no real answers. Life is pre-defined as simply living: beginning at birth and terminal during the dying process and death; the "good life" is defined as...well, that is the purpose of this chapter: that is to define the "good life". Eternal life is defined as living forever in a good state or in a bad state; for even as the Bible teaches it is assumed that while the body dies, the soul and spirit live on.

It just must be true that the Bible as the Word of God (that is, words from God on life and living) must define what it is to live the good life and die the good death. It must be true that if the Bible is the sole criterion for faith and practice (and it is), that is has a good definition of how to live and die. If it is true that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God" (and it is true) "and that it is profitable" for life, living, dying, and "instruction in righteousness" in order "that the man of God" woman, or child or God "may be complete" in all aspects of living and dying, then it must have instruction on dying.

I must confess that for one day recently I had no answer for the friend who recently lost a wife, who the next day would be a pall bearer at the funeral of a fellow teacher who spend about two years in a comma without dying, and who he himself at age 83 faced the prospect of death. No, the prospect of death is not nearly as fearful as the prospect of a long, painful, or "out-of-it-condition" dying process. A survey showed that among adults next to the fear of speaking in public was the fear of a prolonged dying process. However
after that one day of stumbling, I turned in simple faith back to the Bible that I have come to love and learn so well, and turned back to the prompting of the Holy Spirit after seeking answers in prayer; and the answer of HOW TO HAVE A GOOD DEATH was right there in the Bible along as part of how to have a "good life". Makes sense, doesn't it, that having a good death which includes the dying process is as much a part of having a good life as marriage or any other event of life.

Well, you read it for yourself, just as I reread it from I Peter 3:10-12. You will find it in quotation marks as it is a quote from the Old Testament, from the book of Psalms, from Psalms 34:12-16. You can get the same message on how to live and die the good life from either Testament. Let us start with I Peter in the total context of I Peter 3, and then go to Psalm in the total context of Psalm 34.

1. I Peter 3:10-12.

"For 'He who would love life and see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it: For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil."

Does this mean that the person who meets these biblical standards from the Apostle Peter is entitled to a better death than the evil? Without sounding like a fundamentalists or other "know-it-all", the answer would have to be "YES!" Not according to any of our wisdom, but according to the wisdom of God as given in the Bible.

(1). This "He" person is identified as: (a) He who would love life; and (b) He who would see good days. Here we must quickly distinguish between the "love of life" and the "love of the world". The Apostle John specifically admonishes us to "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. All that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of
the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father, but is of the world. The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

Suddenly we are into "eternal life": the will of God is for us to stay away from "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"; and if we do so the majority of the time, we can live forever. However, the main point right now is the "good life".

What would be the sound of "the good life": the happy sound of children playing, the sound of pleasures with beer and friends. Really the sound of the good life as used by Peter and written in the Bible would have to include the ups and downs of life, the joys and the sorrows, the births and the deaths. And the prime point is that it would have to include a good death \{or dying process\} as well as a good life, since death is part of life.

Okay, what we come to next in I Peter 3:10-12 is HOW TO ENSURE YOURSELF ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE, A GOOD DYING PROCESS--

(2). Refrain (or keep) your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Both of these aspects sound the same. To understand the fine points of the differences, we must turn to what Pastor James wrote on the "tongue" in the book of James. \{Remember that James was also an Apostle and the half-brother of Jesus as well as being the pastor of the first church every.\} And it is not possible to repeat the whole argument here of James 3, a chapter generally referred to by the subject "the untamable tongue". We can only briefly paraphrase: first of all think carefully before you become a teacher since a teacher \{one known for speaking many words\} is judged by God with more strict standards than others. We all stumble in many ways, and must face up to those stumbling; and the supreme challenge of Christ maturity is to not stumble in words, in the classroom or otherwise. The tongue is like a bit in a horses mouth that can control the whole body; like the rubber of a ship used by the pilot to control during fierce winds; like
a fire that can kindle a forest. The tongue can bless God and curse man made in the image of God.

Where does the fires of hell in the tongue come from? ...(James 3:14) ...from "bitter envy and self-seeking". Therefore RULE #1 from Peter: in order to love life and see good days and a good death, avoid ENVY (the desire to have what you see that somebody else has) and SELF-SEEKING. I would never attempt to answer why so many that we admire have a bad death, but perhaps in the sin of "self-seeking" is the answer. You would have to agree that in our modern American context "self-seeking" has become acceptable as more "self-fulfillment".

(3). The second admonition from the Apostle Peter is to "turn away from evil and do good".

(4). The third admonition for a good life and death from the Apostle Peter is to "seek peace and pursue it."

We must keep these three admonitions for a good life in the context of I Peter 3: in other words what came before and after. What is before as a preface to a good life is the "Finally" of I Peter 3:8--all of you be of one mind {that one mind should be the mind of Christ}, having compassion for one another, love as brothers, be tenderhearted and be courteous; and then we have the words of wisdom on what it is to be called by Christ: do not return evil for evil, do not return reviling for reviling, rather in all those cases return blessings. If you do this you will inherit a blessing in life. {Remember Jesus said "blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."}

2. Psalm 34:10-12.
The words are almost the same in Psalm as in I Peter, but perhaps you would enjoy reading them devotional, and several times over the years. What is somewhat different is the preface to the quote and the application!

(1). The preface to Psalm 34:10-12. Once again it is necessary to paraphrase: I sought the LORD God, the Father, the LORD God heard me
and "delivered me from all my fears".  {does this not remind you how God's ears are always open to the "righteous" and how His face is against the evil?} The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear (respect) God properly in life and death. Those who seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.

(2). The application to Psalm 34:10-12, Psalm 34:17-22: God hears when the righteous cry out in death or life; God delivers them out of all of their troubles; God is near, oh so very near, to those of a broken heart; God SAVES those of a contrite spirit; many afflictions will come the way of the good life and death, but God delivers the righteous out of all of them; God guards their bones {and you must see that this speaks of death and life}; and God REDEEMS the soul of His servants. {You see that is eternal redemption, the salvation of the soul and the body for eternal life with God!}
Sound 2-1: THE BIBLE (II Timothy 3,4)

Some people like to start their apologetics of Christianity with God. How reasonable it is to assume a God—as Dr. R. G. Lee has said, “God is the fundamental postulate of all rational thinking.” Or in some cases even proofs of the existence of God as in Mosma’s EVIDENCE OF GOD IN AN EXPANDING UNIVERSE, where over 40 scientists from government, education, and business give testimonies to the existence of God from their individual scientific disciplines. Still other apologists like Simon Greenleaf, former Dean of the Harvard Law School, like to start more along the Christian Evidences approach, as in his book THE TESTIMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS, to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of God, Greenleaf proving that the testimony of the evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—is such that would stand up in any court of law. The approach that I prefer is to start with the Bible: this book of 66 books which itself claims to be “the Word of God” and the Word from God, and which has been accepted as such by many of our loved ones, respected teachers, and verified by the testimony of great and small from personal experience. This also was the approach of Irwin Linton in his book A LAWYER EXAMINES THE BIBLE, who stated that if any person would honestly read the Bible for themselves, they would come to accept Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. This likewise was the apologetic approach of former Governor of New Mexico, Lew Wallace, who after reading about Jesus for himself because convinced that He is indeed the Son of God; and based on his studies also wrote the novel BEN HUR.

By the way the vast field of study known as Christian Apologetics and the perhaps sub-field of Christian Evidences has two contributions to make to the world: (1) It tends to start exactly where people are in terms of unbelief and even agnosticism and atheism, then lead them intellectually step by
step to the point where intellectual clutters is removed, and Christ can be accepted in simple faith; (2) When doubts come to believers, especially those caused by intellectuals, then Apologetics and Evidences, can above all prove that there is a solid mental foundation to belief. In other words, you can turn to the testimonies of men of science like R.A. Millikan and Mosma, to men of literature like C.S. Lewis, to men of law like Linton and Greenleaf, and so on that are intellectual and believe as will as the opposite, men in those fields who do not believe.

Anyway, let’s start with the Bible and what the Bible says about itself in II Timothy 3:16,17. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

1. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...”

McLendon Day wrote a marvelous book called THE WONDER OF THE WORD in which she covers many of the classic proofs for acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God as for example: the testimony of great men to the Bible; the proof of prophecy--predictions accurately fulfilled like the very fact that not a bone in the body of Christ would be broken at crucifixion; testimonies of personal experience with the Bible {like the Chinese translator said during his work on the Scripture, “The one who wrote this book is the one who made me as He knows things about me no one else knows.”}; the survival of the Bible through history in spite of the opposition of enemies and the neglect of friends; and on and on. {Perhaps you would enjoy reading her book or the other good Evidence books that prove the Bible as the Word of God. Also many books are likewise available on how the Canon came to be, the 66 books of the Bible as we know them; and I would recommend as a start the book by F.F. Bruce entitled THE BOOK AND THE PARCHMENTS.}
In the name of “intellectual honesty” (from Elton Trueblood, a Christian Apologists and scholar of the philosophy of religion), Paul when he wrote “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...” was primarily talking about the Old Testament scriptures of 39 books; however, Paul was aware that he also after the call from Christ was writing Scriptures, and the Apostle Peter gives a testimony to Paul was the author of Scriptures inspired by God. (2 Peter 3:15,16)

For me personally, after over 50 years of Bible study, the two indisputable proofs for the Bible as the Word of God are: (1) the messages it has for me every time I turn to read or study the pages--it is the kind of messages that come only come from God; and even as my spirit says “abba” for Father when I am praying, this process is often repeated as I read the Bible; and (2) the primary ministry of Paul, I think, to be the chief editor of the Bible; and how after meeting with the Ascended Christ in Saudi Arabia, and while back at Tarsus he re-read the Old Testament writing a parchment of all the quotes that he desired to include in the New Testament, and then personally wrote 14 of the 27 New Testament books, and left parchments and sponsored John Mark and Dr Luke on three other New Testament books. This really dawned on me as a read the New Testament again, noting and recording each quote from the Old Testament; then as I re-arranged those quotes with the New Testament explanations into a Topical Outline based on the most probably Old Testament ordering. Marvelous was the way God through Christ called the lawyer, the Apostle Paul, out of the persecution of Christians to allow him to put the cap from Christ on all Scriptures where other apostles like Peter, and James, and Matthew had already made contribution. {You can see this in detail in my commentary: LEARN CHRIST FROM THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS, volume 1: “The Great Maker of History, the Old Testament according to the New Testament.”}

God is used in the very generic sense here just like “man” is used often
in the Scriptures in the very generic sense to include both men, women, and young people or children. The exact mode God used to write Scripture is through the Holy Spirit, called the Spirit of Christ often. The Apostle Peter clarified this for us when he wrote, "...holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21) And what “inspiration” comes down to, since it came from God through the Spirit, is: (1) it is divine in origin, and you should treat it like an authoritative, current, complete, and immutability daily broadcast from the Great God of the Universe that currently sits on the Great White Throne; (2) it should have from you and all others, as it has been for me for over 50 years, the respect of absolute authority (when God Himself speaks as He has done in the Bible and continues to do for the reader, and it is simple to understand, how much weight should be put with the opinion of any man, intellectual, governmental, or otherwise; (3) it is sufficient in message, in other words, God has made the Bible adequate for both salvation and the living of a proper life; and (4) it is high fidelity, and by that I mean, it is very easy to dig out the original meaning that God put in the Bible through the Spirit as long as the principles that the Bible itself lays down for understanding are met.

2. “and is profitable...” It is not enough to have the respect for the Bible such as where you leave it in the home, or even how you treat it and carry it to church. It must personally and daily and always be PROFITABLE to you. That is the way God meant it: that is the way you should honor and practice it. During my interim pastorate ministry at over 16 Southern Baptist and interdenominational churches, I would preach a series of messages which included on the Bible called “The Bible as A Guidebook for Living”. I will not try to repeat that message here; however the point was the uniqueness of the category of the Bible as contrasted to other books. The Bible is not an intellectual treatise or scholarly dissertation. It is a guidebook for living meant to be read and understood by all. Even as Christ said the “poor have the Gospel
preached to them”, so also do the poor, and humble, and non-scholarly primarily have the Bible delivered to them as the Word of God.

3. The Bible is “profitable” for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. Oh yes, doctrine is a good Bible word. It also means “teaching”, and recall that it was Jesus who told the disciples in John 14-16 that they were indeed His disciples if they read and kept His commandments or teachings. If you ignore and neglect doctrine, you are ignoring and neglecting the teachings of Christ; and if you are ignoring or neglecting the teachings of Christ, Jesus Himself said that you are not one of His. {Read John 14-16 now if you doubt or do not want to wait until the chapter on the Holy Spirit.}

“Reproof” and “correction” are not words personally directed toward us that we like to hear; indeed, among those who will not endure sound doctrine during the Falling Away, these are tones and words which they refuse to hear. Instead two things happen: (1) they are motivated by their “desires” instead of sound doctrine; and (2) out of those “desires” they become highly motivated to heap out away from themselves the teachers of sound doctrine, and to heap into themselves, like a fortress, the teachers with itching ears. The end result of this neglect of the sound doctrine of the Bible as “profitable”, is that they turn away from the truth and turn into fables.

Have you ever seen a time in America when there are so many new, novel, and different sounding teachings and teachers? Well, that is what is meant by “itching ears”. No longer do churchmembers or the public in general want to hear sound doctrines about God, Christ, and the Bible; rather, the “desires” of their itching ears lead them aggressively to seek out book teachings and teachers that will satisfy and comfort those itching ears. I don’t want to list these teachers now by names, but it will be inevitable that they come up later. You have to be careful about listening to new and novel teachers. It can sound new and novel to you for one of two reasons: (1) it is new and novel, unsound
doctrine; or (2) you have not heard that part of the Bible before.
Sound 2-2: God.

As we briefly look at Bible facts about God as recorded in the Word of God, Matthew 4 and 5, you will find some new and novel sounding things to your ears, simply because the probability is small of your having done an extensive study of those chapters with good Bible principles. For example, did you realize that in these two chapters of the Sermon on the Mount from Jesus, that Jesus, the Master Teacher, while seeming to primarily communicate “how to be part of the kingdom of God and Christ” is primarily teaching us about God the Father. Jesus wants us to know what God is like as well as urging us to be like God. Jesus wants us to know God as a Father even as God is a Father to Jesus. Jesus wants us to be able to pray, “Our Father which art in heaven..”, and the other things to say to God in prayer.

If you study carefully Matthew 4 and 5, you will find that “God” by that name is mentioned 7 times, God as “Father” is mentioned 8 times, and God as “Father in heaven” is mentioned 12 times. How do you think God and Jesus want us to think of God, naturally as Our Father in Heaven; but it is important to know that God was Jesus’ Father first, and He is only our Father because of a relationship with Jesus. [These Bible truths alone make suspect the teaching of Rich Warren about God as our friend as a starting relationship, or even afterwards. It is disrespectful, and overlooks what God through Jesus in the atonement did to make it possible. It may be more popular, but suspect as sound doctrine and teaching.]

There are some other interesting facts about the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 4 and 5. The “kingdom of heaven” is mentioned five times there, starting with the first “beatitude” of the blessing on the poor in spirit since the “kingdom of heaven” belongs to
them, and ending with an admonition to seek first the kingdom of God {obviously the kingdom of God and heaven are the same}, rather than seeking after material things. Other uses in those two chapters are in order to identify disciples that will be called least and great in the kingdom, a caution that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and Sadducees, you will not see that kingdom {we need to explain this later in terms of the religious expressions must be internal as well as external}, comfort that if you can really prayer to God the Father through Jesus in the manner of the model prayer then the kingdom is "YOURS" as well as the power and the glory.

1. Here are just some of the teachings or doctrines of Jesus that we must keep to order to be citizens of God's kingdom and to be able to pray to God the Father as our Father: (1) if you hunger and thirst after righteousness, then you will be filled {that includes Bible study and prayer}; (2) it is only the "pure in heart" that will see God so that you see even here is a stringent requirement for seeing God, much less being called His friend, and that purity of heart comes through the new birth and sanctification, hardly an instant process as Mrs Myers will like to present and as indicated by the parable of Jesus on the sower and the seed; (3) Peacemakers will be called the "sons of God" and that is much better than being a friend; (4) your reward goes up in heaven as you are reviled and persecuted for your beliefs; (5) you are to expect to be reviled and persecuted if you are a believer and speaker of sound doctrine, because the prophets were persecuted {this right here alone tells you to be cautious of popularity}; (6) you see by letting your light shine before men that they see your good works and glorify your Father, that teaching or doctrine is behavioral as well as a mental belief; (7) adultery is also a sin of the heart, looking and lusting on a woman; (8) further Jesus taught that in any case of divorce, except where they has been fornication, it is adultery for the husband and causes the woman to commit adultery when she remarries; (9) Jesus taught no swearing based on heaven or earth since
heaven is the place of God’s throne and the earth is God’s footstool; (10) Jesus taught that swearing comes from Satan; (11) while the teaching of the Old Testament law was an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, Jesus taught as the Christian way of life, the turning of the other cheek and the going of the extra mile {the way of the American Democratic Faith is the way of the law, and you will not see any teachers of the American Democratic Faith, like George Bush or Jerry Falwell, advocating the other cheek or the extra mile}; (12) rather Jesus and the Faith of Jesus teaches love your enemies, bless the peoples that curse you, do good to those that mis-use you, and pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you {you will see or hear none of that in the teachers of the American Democratic Faith}; (13) Jesus taught that this is the way you can be a son of the Father--you can be like God who provides sun and rain for the just and unjust, the good and the bad; (14) Jesus taught that any less love than this is no more than the public relations efforts of the Tax collector, who greets their friends only; (15) Jesus taught that believers are to be “perfect”, mature, just like God Himself, and this should remind you of the profitable nature of the Scripture, to make the man of God “perfect”, nature, “thoroughly furnished unto all good works"; and we could go on!

However, I think you see that doctrine of Jesus and teachings of Jesus, which we must keep in order to be a disciple, are as much or more about our behavior as they are about "beliefs". The problem of most about doctrine is that they think of it as some statement of beliefs, independent of behavior. No, see how many of these teachings or doctrines of Jesus are about behavior. You can take the cognitive approach of the Bible, as you should, that “as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." The mental thoughts and the mental emotions determine the soundness of the behavior. Even though “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”; and this takes time beyond any so-called instantaneous “new birth”, it is the subsequent “working out of your
salvation” which proves that your doctrine within is consistent with your doctrinal expressions without.

2. Some teachings of Jesus about God from Matthew 4,5.

   (1). Since God is so pure and holy, it requires that men be transformed into purity in order to see God. This matter of purity is the whole salvation experience--past, present, and future. It is first hearing and believing, it is an initial new birth experience, it is a process of sanctification as the believer becomes more Christlike, and it is the final redemption at the Second Coming of Christ when “we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is.” And do not let anyone tell you that this is a simple process. No people have been as religious as the Pharisees and Sadducees, nor at any time in history as in the generation of Jesus; and yet that kind of righteousness or purity will not work in heaven. What is required is a real internal and externally worked out purity called sanctification and glorification. It is not simple and it is not instantaneous, although many contemporary teachers would like for you to believe that it can be at the meetings where they teach.

   (2). The whole world belongs to God since it is the work of His Creation with Christ as the mediator and the Holy Spirit as the “effecting cause”. God is in control. Don't swear by heaven or earth as they both belong to God, and do not swear by your head because you are not “god” and can not make one hair white or black.

   (3). I doubt that God from the Great White Throne seeks friends except through Jesus as a Friend; however God does seek “sons”, and that is even better news as well as being far more doctrinally sound.

   (4). God seeks the maturity of perfection, because God seeks men, women, and young people to be like Him. {This also is far better than being a “world-class Christian” since we don’t know what that means anyway, and since the has the connotation of the “world” which is run by the prince of the power of the air, Satan.}
(5) God gives rewards to humanity only when those rewards have the right motivation of not being seen by men. Do deeds without your right hand knowing what your left hand does, and do them secretly because your Father lives and sees in the secret place. {God Himself is humble and secretive, or He would never through the teachings of Christ force that upon us.}

(6). God wants to hear prayer from secret places, since God sees only in the secret places; however God rewards openly in public places.

(7). You want to know what God really likes, or what makes God smile to use the words of Rich Warren. God does not like to hear vain repetitions in prayer, so pray intelligently as well as with your emotions. God likes short prayers of few words and without repetition. {By the way, I am certain that God likes the praise of worship and singing to be like prayer, short and non-repetitious.}

(8). Oh the comfort of this next teaching from Jesus: God knows what you need before you ask? So pray in the manner of the model prayer, sometimes called the Lord’s prayer.

(9). God forgives our sins and trespasses; but only if we pray properly through Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God making intercession for our sins; and only if we first forgive the trespasses that others have made against us.

(10). God wants a clean face and groomed hair when you fast in a secret place where the secret {He is the hidden God in that we neither see Him with our naked eyes in the visible spectrum.} Then God will see and reward.

(11). God demands that you be loyal and serve Him above all else on the earth. {the term of Matthew is “mammon” which includes all the works of man as homes, status, wealth, etc.} God demands being the “master” which eliminates servitude to any other “mammon”.

(12). God, the heavenly Father, values you so much better than the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, all His creations, that He will take care of you and seek that you do not worry about material things.
Sound 2-3: Christ.

If we talk about what Christ has done for us in salvation, that is in Ephesians 1,2. If we talk about what Christ did in providing salvation, that is also in Ephesians 1,2. One of the main reason that the first two chapters of Ephesians are so complete in coverage as is the total but short book of Ephesians is because Paul wrote it to be a broad general summary of the first ten books that he wrote: Romans, Hebrews, I and II Corinthians, I and II Thessalonians, I and II Timothy, Titus, and Galatians. No wonder it is packed with God's revealed meaning, especially on the death of Christ on the cross for our sins in order to provide atonement with God and redemption for us. All the great sounds of salvation are here: redemption which is the buying back to God of our bondage to sin and Satan; atonement, a means of bringing God and man back together through the cross; the cross or crucifixion, the death of Christ on Calvary's cross for the sins of the world, for our sins in particular since it must be personal; and justification in the site of God by which Christ stands before God in our stead, God accepting Christ's payment for our sins as if Christ was us. The words are not always there but the statements of faith about them are. You have others like adoption, sanctification, and glorification—all relating to aspects of our salvation—that are also in Ephesians, sometimes with those sounds and sometimes with other words.

1. Adoption in Ephesians 1:3-6. It starts with “blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ…”, and you see how careful Paul is to emphasize God first as the Father of Jesus Christ. In the “Lord Jesus Christ” you see Jesus of Nazareth as His earthly name to identify which individual born of the virgin Mary that was to be the Promised Messiah of the Old Testament; you see the “Christ” as the Promised Messiah that would save His people through death on a cross; and in “Lord” you see the mastership of
Jesus as the Son of God, and as ordained by God to have every knee bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Rich Warren is scriptural in stating that we were chosen to be adopted to God as sons from before the foundation of the world: however, he is inaccurate in stating that the purpose is individual and through the local church. What the Bible really states here in Ephesians is: the purpose is “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” (Ephesians 1:4,5) If you want to talk about the purpose of God for you, it is the same for all believers in Christ: to be adopted as sons, and specifically that has the goal of holiness, blamelessness, and in love before God. Now, if you wish to talk about God’s leadership through Christ individually, to a certain church and to other avenues of service, that is another Bible doctrine; and of course, that leadership is individually available. {Proverbs 3:5,6}

2. Redemption through Christ’s blood (Ephesians 1:7). With this redemption through the blood of Christ shed on the cross, we also have the benefit of “the forgiveness of sins” (Eph 1:7).

3. Atonement is closely related to redemption. The word is not in Ephesians, but the sound is. Redemption and to add the collective effects of it are found in Ephesians 2:11-13 as Paul summarizes how unbelievers once aliens from Christ, God, and without hope, have now brought near through the blood of Christ. Not only did this sacrifice of Christ on the cross break down the middle wall of partition between God and man {atonement}, but also the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile {the assembly of the one church, the body of Christ}.

3. Regeneration, not found in that word in Ephesians, is another word for the new birth, also a phrase not found in Ephesians. Other words are found there like “new creation”, “a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”, “Christ
may dwell in your hearts through faith”, “filled with all the fullness of God” implies the initial new birth but goes beyond that into sanctification, “one hope of your calling” also implies the initial new birth but goes all the way through the past, present, and future aspects of salvation (4:4), and lastly where the pedal meets the road in Bible terms of whether a person has real salvation or not, the new birth is implied also in “if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him….” (Ephesians 4:20,21)

By the way while we are on Ephesians, we should emphasize three Bible doctrines that Warren overlooks in His “purpose” books: (1) The purpose of God to make us His sons is among “the spiritual blessings in heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3), not at Saddleback Church or at any other particular church; but happens in the heavenly places of the Church of the Firstborn, written in heaven; (2) Granted that of the 120 places the word “ecclesia” in found in the Bible, approximately 100 refer to the local church; however by far the dominant usage of church here in Ephesians, and in the other 20 places in the Bible, is of the total body of Christ, that one new humanity; and (3) the coming into the unity of the fullness of Christ is a very complex salvation process-past, present, and future, and it is based on agreement on the Seven Ones as well as the inherent unity from the Holy Spirit, not to be simulated by any behavioral agreements or unity based on public relations.

4. Sanctification, also a word not to be found in Ephesians, per se, although the sound is there. For example the concept of God’s sanctification is found in the “hope of His calling” (1:18); it is found in the “exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe” (1:18); it is found in the power that God worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead (1:20); it is found in “His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works”; it is found in the call “to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called”; it is part of “the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry”, it is part of the “edifying of the body (assembly of the Firstborn) of Christ; and it is part of
the “unity of the faith”, complete “knowledge of the Son of God”, part of the perfect man, and part of the stature of the fullness of Christ. People like Mrs. Myers and Rich Warren insult God and the Bible and Christ when they make salvation sound any more simple and instantaneous than does the Bible, than does the book of Ephesians. This type of insult is little better than the Lutherans and others, having given lip service to the great commission of making disciples, then immediately ignore all else and baptize a baby into the kingdom of God, performing upon them by sprinkling the miracle of the new birth.

By the way, this should be a good place to straighten out the meaning of the “one baptism” as one of the Seven One’s required for unity in any church. Once again Paul is summarizing much of what he wrote in the first ten books, especially in Galatians and Romans. The one baptism represents the salvation experience of death to a life of sin {it is similar to repentance}, and the raising to walk in newness of life which includes regeneration and sanctification. Each time we practice baptism by immersion in the water, we are symbolizing: (1) the salvation experience of death to self, sin, and Satan with the raising to walk a new life; and (2) we are also portraying the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you look at church {“ecclesia”} as found in Ephesians, it will not only clearly distinguish it from the local church; but it will also promote the one body of Christ as far more significant and important than the local church. If we are lucky, and if Saddleback Church with the over 9,000 baptized in 7 years are lucky, there are a few churchmembers in the local church that are also written in heaven in the Church of the Firstborn.

(1). There is one place at the beginning of Ephesians where it does refer to the local church at Ephesus, yet the word church is not there. “To the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus.” If you want to identify how many churchmembers at Saddleback or at any other local
church are actually in the body of Christ, the Church of the Firstborn, then you can refer to (a) the saints and (b) to the faithful in Christ Jesus. You see, brother, that is the reality of the Bible.

(2). The "riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints" is another way to say the total body of Christ, and you see immediately from that it is not a local church as it includes all the real believers that have ever lived and will live. This is where I have shocked Church of Christ members when I said, after telling them the distinct meanings of the word "ecclesia" in the Bible, that they could not be the total body of Christ unless that had in their church some dead members, some there in spirit only.

(3). Besides identifying that Christ is the head of the church in Ephesians 1:22, it defines that church as "the body of Christ", as the fullness of Him who fills all in all. You see, that is just too big for a local church; and it is far to important when you consider this one verse alone to ignore as insignificant, like Rich does, any usages of the word church other than local.

(4). The usage of the word church in Ephesians 2:14-16 makes it clear how large a total body it has to be to include all Jew and Gentile believers.

(5). The description of the church as the one body of Christ is given in Ephesians 2:19-22. You see how large it is Rich Warren. It is large enough to reconcile in one body Jews and Gentiles, Americans and Africans. It is large enough to make of all humanity one new man. It is large enough to provide the basis for world peace.
Even as God is best known by what Christ showed the world, and even as the Bible is a story about Jesus Christ, so salvation is a story of what Christ has done for the world and can do for the individual. Salvation, in particular instant salvation is something being peddled daily by teachers over the television, by books, and in church-related meetings. Why? Well, for one thing “instant” along with business is two of the things Americans do best: we are masters of instant fast-food, instant success, instant coffee, instant language learning, instant marriage, instant divorce, instant happiness, and so on. Should it be considered a strange phenomenon that in the country from popular Bible teachers, we hear so much of instant salvation. Generally it centers around instant new birth, instant sanctification, instant conversion, instant discipleship as symbolized by instant baptism.

Did you ever stop to think that even in the land of the free and the home of the brave, there may be something wrong with this notion of instant salvation? You know how Jesus in John 3, in talking to Nicodemus, compared the spiritual experience of the new birth with that of physical birth. Do you recall that physical birth requires approximately 9 months, and that spiritual birth could require that much time or longer? You will notice as recorded in John 14 that it had taken Jesus over 3 years to be able to call the twelve disciples; and only after that period of time, did He tell them they were His friends instead of servants.

No strange at all if you wanted to make money at religion and gain status, the second best things to being a medical doctor that had a cure for again would be to be a religious peddler that could offer people one or both of two things: (1) instant healing of the physical body, or (2) instant on the spot in his or her meetings salvation.
Jesus told a parable about the Sower and the Seed that we should keep in mind as we look at salvation. You recall as the Sower sowed the seed: (1) some seed fell by the wayside and the birds ate it; (2) some seed fell on stony places of shallow earth which sprung up immediately but then died from the heat of the sun; (3) some seed fell among thorns and were choked out; and (4) some seed fell on good ground, yielding a crop thirty, sixty, or one hundred fold. Jesus in response to the request from the disciples explained the parable (Matthew 13:18-23). The seed by the wayside is when anyone hears the Word and does not understand it, then Satan comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. {You should notice that the seed got all the way into his heart, however not the new birth yet, and then Satan went inside his heart and snatched the seed away.} The seed on stony earth is the immediate, exuberant conversion or new birth, where the “disciple” received the Word immediately with joy; yet without root he endures only for a short time. {Now these are the words of Jesus and the Bible, not mine, he “immediately receives it with joy.” (Matthew 13:20)}

Are you beginning to get the picture that some of these, if not most, of these instantaneous conversions or new birth experiences may be more like the seed on stony earth, or by the wayside. I think like they say in the movie CHICAGO, “the whole world is a sucker for a converted sinner.” {I’m sure you can think of many in Texas which have happened, and have supported the career and profession of the repentant sinner.}

Anyway, to come closer to Jesus’ own realistic look at salvation, the seed on thorny ground is the person who hears the word, then the word is choked out into unfruitfulness. What are the thorns? Cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. Often, what do you hear false Bible teachers talk about most: riches and the cares of this world.

Rich Warren had best take those over 9,000 “disciples” that he baptized at Camelot in 7 years and divide them by four or more. We appreciate
the five goals of the church with which none could disagree: (1) love God, love fellow man; (3) make disciples; (4) baptize them; and (5) teach them to observe all things. However, the key is to make a disciple in the first place. It is not enough to say “believe and receive Jesus”, then baptize them. If you don’t take at least 9 months, how do you know that the seed fell on good ground or the three other kinds of soil.

Paul warned the Ephesus’ elders that from as early as his lifetime and in the First Christianity, “savage wolves” would come in from outside the church and slaughter the sheep, also that from within the church men and women would aggressively rise up speaking “perverse things”. Slaughter we know to be the goal of the savage wolves from without, but what is the goal of those aggressions from men? Why do they speak “perverse things”? Paul tells what their goals are, and this goal is the beginning defining for false teachers: “to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Have you noticed in any of the prodigious and popular Bible teachings and teachers both a majoring on self over Christ and a majoring on building disciples around themselves rather than around Christ.

The Mormons are the best examples as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young built up a following of disciples around themselves, yet they are only one example of many. I recall over 40 years ago a non-denominational disciple who actually cause some measure of disunity in our Navy Chapel interdenominational work in the name of promoting unity. His goal as a false teacher was to draw away disciples around himself. Our problems with recognizing false prophets and false teachers, which in this day and time in our country, have to be all around us--and must be popular--is that we are overwhelmed with the American Democratic Faith concepts of the majority is right and there must be evidence of toleration at all cost. It is marvelous for this country: it is bad for the kingdom of Christ and the church of Christ.

In spite of Jesus warning us in Matthew 24 about false prophets as
does the Apostle Paul often, we tend to think those are for some other time and some other country. Wrong! Let us assume for a minute that Satan is in control of the false teachers and false prophets; well, we know that since Satan is the prince of this world what he does is going to be popular with the whole world. This is simple to say, that if you are looking for false teachers as you should be, to keep from swallowing false doctrine, then you must look in this country for the most popular Bible teachers. You don’t think Satan, who disguises himself as an angel of light, is going to chose some nut or recognized weirdo to be his teacher of false doctrine.

The best of the false Bible teachers will quote a lot of scripture, like Satan did with Jesus in the wilderness; and then when you are open for either slaughtering or discipleship to that teacher, they will subtly ease in unsound doctrine. Today on purpose over the BYU channel I listened to an outstanding public speaker at a ladies conference. She, I thought, appeared to be a Mormon version of Joyce Myers. She was superb at quoting both the New Testament and the book of Mormon. Sometimes as she quickly moved from one to the other, it was confusing to the congregation which she was quoting from. I think I became completely lost as you casually spoke of their premortal existence.

Here are some more subtle characteristics you may look for in false Bible teachers: (1) it will appear that they are more wrapped up in themselves than in Christ; (2) rather than do exegesis of a verse they have read or quoted, they do what homiletics calls “taking a text and going every where preaching”; (3) at some critical and subtle point, probably most generally after a relaxing joke, they will divert from sound doctrine; (4) unfettered expressions of the natural self as does the world; (5) they will be popular to the world; and (6) they are getting rich off their Bible teachings.

We must get to the solution about salvation, dwelling less on the problems.
1. “Learn Christ” as Paul advocates under the leadership of the Spirit of Christ in Ephesians 4:20 is a far better way to describe the salvation experience. It would include a spiritual reawakening of the nature of the new birth very similar to the physical birth analogy of Jesus. You can also see in the “learning” process centered around Christ, the disciple process that took Jesus over 3 years with the twelve.

2. The way you are living now and have been lead to believe is your instant salvation may not be the way you should learn Christ. Paul has a lot of nerves; after all, he was the founder of the church at Ephesus, and the pastor of the church for over three years, his longest ministry anywhere. Yet he writes under the leadership of the Spirit: “But you have not so learned Christ…” (Ephesians 4:20) Of course, you also see in that statement from Paul a disclaimer since he is saying to them, “That is not the way I taught you.”

3. Then Paul has the awesome nerve that perhaps no pastor or evangelists would have today, certainly not a popular Bible teacher, to doubt their conversion or discipleship or new birth experience. In other words Paul expresses doubts about their salvation. Well, what it does is to describe discipleship or learning Christ, so they can compare it with their lives.

   “…if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus…” (Ephesians 4:21)

4. What were the churchmembers doing at Ephesus that caused Paul to question their salvation? It is the preface to Ephesians 4:20 about learning Christ, in Ephesians 4:17-20: (1) they were living just like the other Gentiles in the world around them; (2) now that alone does not sound so bad, but Paul describes how it is to walk and live like most of the world--in the futility of the mind, well that is bad. (It is enough just to have the same thoughts and patterns of thinking and behavior as the rest of the world which crowds out the thoughts of God, Christ, and sound doctrine to have futile think-
ing.}; (3) the world around them has darkened understanding--they may have all the answers on every question known to man but they are dark answers based on dark understanding; (3) the people around them are alienated from the life of God--they may be living with purpose but that purpose was far from right; (4) they were ignorance of the truth--the Bible and sound doctrine; (5) the ignorance came from a blind heart which refused to see the truth; and finally (6) their prime motivation was greed.

So when you try to recognize false teachers and false teachings, which must inevitable come during the Falling Away, you can also use those other Gentile characteristics mentioned by Paul as not the way to Learn Christ: greed for money and status, some apparent ignorance of Bible, a blind heart, darkened understanding, and living with an idle brain. Another way to recognize false teachers is to look for the appeal that they make to your own personal desires. Recall that the characteristics of the Falling Away in terms of sound doctrine is: (1) they will not endure sound doctrine; (2) they heap up teachers of itching ears, a prodigious process that is going on now--have you ever seen such a heaping up of Bible teachers; (3) they do this out of their own desires; (4) they turn away from the truth; and (5) turn into fables.

The appeal to your desires will quite often be consistent with the appeal to desires that Satan made against Jesus in the wilderness: (1) the appeal to the desire for status and position--"give you all the world"; (2) the appeal to use spiritual powers and personal capabilities for personal gain--turn these stones into bread; and (3) the appeal to get you to tempt God by placing yourself in difficult positions--throw yourself down. Another safe test is to remember the words from the Apostle John as to what comes from the Father and what comes from the world. “All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life...is of the world.” The appeals to lusts is easier to guard against than the appeal to pride of life.
“You must think we are pretty simple in our local church and on matters of Bible study to be so easily influence by false teachers”, might be the natural response of anyone reading this book. You see, right there you are being suckered into the “pride of life”. What are you proud of? Well, your local church and your own personal background in Bible Study. “Take heed”, Paul writes in the Hebrews book about the Falling Away, “take heed that while you think you stand, lest you fall.”

I doubt if your church, no matter what denomination or vintage of that denomination is better than the church at Ephesus where Paul himself ministered for other 3 years, and where he warned the elders that “grievous wolves” from inside the church would scatter the sheep and how men from outside the local church would come to draw away disciples to themselves. Do you see any of those activities today? Within your local church do you see evidence of “perverse teachings” where fellow churchmembers want to draw away disciples to themselves, increasing their own control which is ego building, and certainly part of “the pride of life”. {Well, that is the “perilous times” of II Timothy 3:1-9.} Do you also see teachers from outside your local church attracting crowds away from your local church, like strays from the sheep fold, to scatter the flock like “grievous wolves.”

Approximately 19 years ago when I wrote my first commentary on the book of Ephesians, I thought the rapid proliferation of new churches, splits, denominations, and interdenominational churches was a good sign of a unity in local churches that Billy Graham’s work had already provided on a much larger scale. I was wrong. It is rather another sign of “grievous wolves” seeking to scatter the flock, and to make disciples after themselves, feeding their own pride of life. Of course, at that time I did not realize as I have in the last
two years {It dawned on me with the initial preparation for the writing of this book for my children and grandchildren on SOME SOUNDS OF A SOUND FAITH. }, that we are deep into the Falling Away.

I know we are coming to the major sound of the Bible about the Holy Spirit, but I must present major teachings of the Bible in the realistic environment where we live. In a few moments I will relate the Coming of the Holy Spirit on the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension and to the end time withdrawal of the Holy Spirit to the Falling Away. {The withdrawal of the Holy Spirit actually marks the end of the Falling Away period.} Right now, I want you to consider that popular teachings like Joyce Myers’ “Everyday Life” may really be about the pride of life, if indeed her teachings are in the category of false teachers.} And once again remember for false teachings to be effective, it must be half-truth, or good doctrine mixed in with false doctrine.

1. The Coming of the Holy Spirit to planet earth as recorded in Acts
2. Much of the plan of God for this universe is centered around the coming and then the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit. Two great historical events happened over two thousand years ago, the coming of Christ to show humanity what God is really like and to die on the cross for the sins of the world; and then immediately after the Ascension of Christ back to heaven, the Coming of the Holy Spirit, the other Jesus, to take the place of Christ on earth. What the Pentecostals or “charismatic” can not get into their head is that this Coming of the Holy Spirit was a one time historical event that as much as they would like instantaneous sanctification in their meetings that can not be repeated. For example in their meetings like in Swaggart’s you never see the cloven tongues over the head of attendees from all over the world; and you do hear the speaking of actual and real languages like at Pentecost when men from all countries of the Roman Empire heard the Apostles speak in their own language; and you do not hear the “SOUND FROM HEAVEN like a rushing,
There are a lot of sounds not being heard today as for example the sound of this rushing and mighty wind, as well as the frequent sound of sound doctrine. And it is just not possible to stand silently by while observing on the current church scene such a disrespect for truth. There is just no “intellectually honesty” if we allow unchallenged half-truth, distortion of truth, and outright lack of sound doctrine.

2. The Withdrawal of the Holy Spirit at the end of the Falling Away. I doubt if you will see cloven tongues or hear the rush of the wind at the historical event of the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit. However, the sounds that you will hear will be a prolific increase in false teachings as the Falling Away comes to a conclusion; you will hear and see a rapid increase in lawlessness and sin, and you will see the “love of many waxing cold” directly proportional to the increase in lawlessness. You will also, with the whole world, come to recognize the entrance of the “man of sin”, the son of perdition. {May I suggest right here that Osama Bin Laden meets all the requirements of the son of perdition, the man of sin, of Daniel 11. Several people said to me recently, you mean “the anti-Christ, which is just one way in which we have been indoctrinated with unsound teachings based on the Scofield Reference Bible and fundamentalism. No, the Apostle John said there are already in his lifetime “many Antichrists.”}

I am talking about the man of sin that Paul mentions in II Thessalonians which along with the Falling Away are two of the signs that must happen before the Second Coming of Christ. Well, here it is in the words of the Bible--

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled {a false teaching was going around in the first century that the Second Coming of Christ had already taken place}, either by spirit or by
word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by an means {that applies today and well as then, do not be deceived}; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is reveled, the son of perdition....” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3)

Two things had to happen then and now before the Second Coming of Christ, called here the “day of Christ” and “that Day”: (1) The Falling Away with the rapid increase in lawlessness and final fulfillment in the Withdrawal of the Holy Spirit. {Later we will discuss the Day of the L ORD and Lord as one of the major sounds of the Bible, a sound that runs consistently throughout the Old Testament in terms of the darkened sun, moon, and the falling stars; and which continues through the New Testament around those same three sounds.} Wow, I forgot to support the Withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from Scripture; pardon that oversight, but it has been right there in II Thessalonians all along, although easy to overlook as I did for years.

We will rectify that oversight--
“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work {this mysterious historical process of lawlessness has been working a long time since it was already at work during the lifetime of Paul}; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way.” (2 Thessalonians 2:7)

Why do you think “He” is capitalized twice in this single verse: IT IS BECAUSE THIS IS THE HE, THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHO WILL BE WITHDRAWN AT THE END OF THE FALLING AWAY.

3. The period of time from the Coming of the Holy Spirit to the Withdrawal of the Holy Spirit is a variable amount of time which depends of what believers do. Recently as I was talking to a neighbor about the Falling Away, I believe she thought she had the definitive answer, and perhaps one that had come from a pastor or other Bible teacher, as she said “it is inevitable.” Well, that is half-right. The fact that it will come is as inevitable
as the Second Coming itself, but the “when” of when it will come depends on what you and I do. Have you thought much about what God in the writing of the Bible used the very indefinite and variable “one thousand years” to mark the time between the Coming and the Withdrawal of the Holy Spirit. It is because God, the Great Maker of History, has determined that believers will have a part in the terminal time of the one thousand years. In short, there are two ways that believers can control the time of the end: (1) by resistance to the flood of the increase in lawlessness and sin; (2) by the spread of the Gospel to every nation. Each Christian has a part in those two historical processes. And if you sometimes think that God has withdrawn from the human scene, then look for the hand of God in history in terms of these two processes. The Old Testament years ago recorded that “God will not do anything without letting His own people know first.”

Well, now you know! You know about the Falling Away. You know about the revelation of the man of Sin. And you know about the increase in lawlessness with the Withdrawal of the Holy Spirit; and you know when, at the end of the one thousand years. You know about the Day of the Lord and the Second Coming.

You know we tend to make “last things” so complicated (the general term in “eschatology”) when it is really simple. If we would only take and lock into the clear teachings of Jesus in Matthew 24, build on them in our study of the Book of Revelation rather than depart from them, how much easier and comforting would be our Bible study. Look at what Jesus said and how simple the flow really is--

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days (there are several tribulations but this is obviously the final tribulation) the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and
they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:29-31)

The sequence is definitely clear here and would be easily understandable if it were not for so many weird and false teachings on eschatology. This is really the sound of the Bible where you can see the fundamentalists as false teachers. Here is the sequence {look at it again and decide for yourself}: (1) the final tribulation; (2) The Day of the Lord, spoken of often in the Old and New Testaments in terms of sun, moon, starts, and the shaking of the universe; (3) The Second Coming of Christ; and (4) Finally the gathering of the elect from every corner of the world.

Now what part of that do you do understand. One, two, three, four. Why do you have to make it complicated? {Well, I know the answer there the false teachers want to draw disciples after themselves with a wild imagination with additions to the simple four-step sequence, and so on.}
Sound 2-6: FAITH.

Peter Parker says in Spiderman 2, “Am I not suppose to have what I want and what I need?” The writers did a good job of making Peter just like anyone else in New York, or elsewhere with the same desires and struggles of life. Of course, Peter Parker is primarily talking about a relationship with his lifelong sweetheart Mary Jane. Well, God will provide definite guidance for the a life’s mate. He does have someone in mind for each believer, the believer must only seek and find His guidance. However, it is a matter of priority, it is necessary according to the teachings of Jesus about a proper relationship to God, “to seek first the kingdom of God”, and then a proper marriage, career, and material possessions will be added unto you.

1. FAITH is to trust in the LORD God and the Lord Jesus Christ with all that is within you. The real challenge to Faith is to know and then work out in a practical way the “trust in the Lord with all your heart, understanding, and mind.” (Proverbs 3:5,6) Then to patiently wait until “He shall direct your paths.” Easy to quote, yes; hard to do, yes: however this is at the center of a very real and dynamic FAITH, based on a real relationship with God through Christ, and daily leadership from the Holy Spirit of God.

2. The “seeking first of the kingdom of God and His righteousness” is the equivalent of God’s purpose as given in Ephesians 1, where Christ chose the believer from before the foundation of the world to be as any other believer: holy, without blame before Him in love, and in short to be adopted as a son. The uniqueness of your purpose is not in the initial adoption of a son which is common to all believers, but is rather in the part after you have learned to seek first the kingdom of God. The uniqueness of your place in the world and in the plan of God for your life is in the manner in which “all these things” of the world and mammon are added unto you. In other words, after
having made the commitment to seek first the kingdom, then with the seek-
ing of the leadership of the Lord with trust, your unique self is molded in the
leadership toward a career, a church or other place in the kingdom, toward a
mate; and with each decision of daily life based on trust in God and Christ and
the Bible, and the subsequent seeking and finding leadership with the help of
the Holy Spirit, our daily companion, Comforter, and Helper.

3. Faith is first in the mind then in the heart. The Bible tells us “Faith
cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” When I am making
efforts for you at the true sounds of the Bible, it is because the hearing of
the Word of God involves these sounds. You must hear these sounds from
the Bible in order to generate within you faith, without being subverted by
the often louder and more dominant sounds of the world and false teach-
ings. It takes time to hear the Word of God; perhaps the same nine months
required by the physical birth and new birth, the time to grow demanded in
the sower and the seed. While it may seem it is intolerant and un-American,
even unchristian to be critical of false teachings and teachers, how much
unsound doctrine can be put up with and still get to the sound doctrine of
initial and continuing Faith. In other words, how much half-truth and untruth
can you mix in with the truth, and still have enough truth to change the heart.
I think you can see that it is dangerous to play around with half-truth or
unsound doctrine. Where is the dividing line between the acceptance of God
of how much unsound faith He will allow before salvation. The answer should
be: (1) if we know it to be truth, that is, sound doctrine then we must hold
on to it; and (2) if we know it to be false or unsound doctrine, then in spite of
pressures to conformity in a church, denomination, or society, we must cast
it aside.

4. Faith is also a set of beliefs. They may not be well organized in
your mind like Warren’s simplification of the fourfold purpose of the church
to love God, love man, make disciples, baptize, and teach them to observe all
things. The ordained set of major beliefs in the Bible in the first place are much larger than that. They are much larger than any local church: they are as large as the total body of Christ, the Church of the Firstborn written in heaven.

I believe that all believers should mature in Faith far enough to sit down with a piece of paper and list at least ten major statements of faith from the Bible. You can call these doctrines, major sounds of the Bible, major teachings from Jesus, or whatever: the sound should be the same, and they should include as a bare minimum the 9 major sounds of the Bible that are included in this book: The Bible itself, God, Christ, Salvation, the Holy Spirit, Faith, Gospel, The Assembly of the Firstborn, and the Day of the LORD and Lord. You should even be able to quote and/or find in the Bible at least one reference to each of these major doctrines of the Bible. As the wisdom of the Psalmist says, “Thy word have I hid in my heart that I may not sin against God.”

“What does sinning have to do with doctrine?”

Ah, good question; but once again we are back to trying to separate doctrine, or a set of beliefs, from behavior and the way we live. Once again the Bible says, “As a man thinketh in his heart so is he.” In other words what you set of beliefs are in your mind and heart determines your character, or behavior.

5. Faith is a way of living and life. You will see later in this book as we come to look at Faith in more detail that for the heroes of faith mentioned in Hebrews 11, Faith was a way of living and a way of life. What God let them know of sound doctrine was determinative in their lives. When Able went counter to his brother, which by the way cost his life, by the giving of a blood sacrifice, you can certainly say that a sacrifice of life was determinative: when Enoch pleased God to the extent of a Faith that allowed him to go to God without death, that was certainly an exemplary control of life by faith;
when Noah bucked the whole earth to make an ark, saving himself and seven others, that certainty was Faith in action; and faith which saved a few for the world to come; when Abraham by faith left his home and family under the leadership of God to seek a new, promised land and to become the Father of many nations, there was life forming and generation forming; when Sarah bore a child past normal age, and that son was Isaac, that was Faith that matters; when by faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh, choosing rather to suffer afflictions with the children of God, that was life changing; and when Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who went through the crucifixion while looking ahead to the joy of being back at the right hand of God the Father, that was determinative for all history.

6. There is a unity of the Faith based on conformity to Christ, not on any other agreements. I want to tell a little true story that reflects the kind of unity of agreement that Warren advocates in the “purpose” books which is based on ignorance of doctrine, and which while seeming to be new to many is as old as the First Baptist Church of Tucumcari. I sort of hate to air our dirty linen in public, but I think now the Southern Baptist Convention, with the takeover of the fundamentalists, is beyond a point that matters. Anyway while Interim Pastor twice for FBC of Tucumcari, a SBC church in New Mexico with perhaps the most outstanding reputation for evangelism and unity of fellowship, I tested the congregation on Sunday night as I did in most churches where I was Interim, small and large. The test was simple, “list 10 major doctrines of the Bible.” They did not know majors of the Bible. Instead they listed what they were often taught and preached: worship, give, read your Bible, go to Sunday School. You see what all these are: they are the things that promote and cause the church organization to grow, prosper, and have unity. This was a unity base on not knowing what the Bible really teachers, or really knowing being willing to talk about doctrines that may be controversial like the atonement, or facts about Christ, or God--the matters
about which there can easily be disagreements between churchmembers and denominations.

In short, there was a time 25 years ago when we told SBC churches that “if you stand for nothing, you will fall for anything.” There was a lack of teaching to observe all things in the name of unity; and they did fall into the hands of such fundamentalists as W.A. Criswell, Charles Stanley, and Adrian Rogers, men originally from other denominations and with training far from that of the faith traditions of Southern Baptist.

While Warren and a lot of the popular public things something novel was done at Saddleback Camelot, it was at least as old as the FBC Tucumcari. You know, I don't know the background of Warren, and it seems to be somewhat revealed like the fact that they are really Baptist; but perhaps Warren came out of the Tucumcari church, or some similar Baptist church. It is not that the FBC Tucumcari was different, although the reputation was an is different, from any other church in the Southern Baptist Convention. And the only way that men like Criswell, Stanley, and Rogers were able to lead the fundamentalists in a takeover was because of the Bible ignorance of the average SBC churchmember. While the average reading level of the American was going down from the sixth to the third grade, a sympathetic thing was happening in SBC churches where the level of reading, studying, and knowing Bible was going down to the third grade level; and the fundamentalists with their already traditional and superficial understanding of the Bible, and with a fighting spirit, were there to catch them as they fell.

Gladys, if you wish to talk about something inevitable: this was it in the contemporary history of the Southern Baptist. Over 30 years ago when we started ignoring Bible knowledge and doctrine for the sake of a unity of fellowship, that very minute the became inevitable that something very bad would overtake the SBC.
Sound 2-7: THE GOSPEL.

It is not easy to tell a fundamentalists Baptist and their teachings from that of a true blooded Southern Baptist, but perhaps by a brief look at the “Old Fashioned Gospel” of Jerry Falwell, definite leader of fundamentalists Baptists, we can get a clue. What is the difference between the “Gospel” of Jesus and the Bible, and the Old Fashioned Gospel of Jerry Falwell, First, let me say that there have been many Gospels in the history of denominations and in particular in the History of American Thought. To name a few would include the Social Gospel, the Gospel of Wealth with the corollary of success, and the American Democratic Faith while not with the word itself has sort of become a Gospel of a Civil Religion; of course, lead by Jerry Falwell as he passed from the Old Fashioned Gospel to Liberty Baptist to the Moral Majority, obvious to all should be that the Moral Majority was the beginning of a Civil Religion that grew into the full blown active on the political science American Democratic Faith.

You would think that by Old Fashioned Gospel was meant the Gospel that was originally preached by Jesus and the Apostles. Wrong! Jerry did want people to accept that connotation, but what he really meant was the Gospel of his youth, the gospel of the fundamentalists when they split from the Southern Baptist Convention approximately 1920. As you might naturally expect from a pastor and church in the very traditional state of Virginia; fundamentalism is a strong representative of custom and tradition, and as it will turn out became bogged down in tradition, right or wrong. For example, they made themselves distinct--besides with their fighting attitude--with two doctrines: (1) the verbal inspiration of the Bible, and (2) complete expos us al of the Scofield Reference Bible, 1611 English, especially taking their eschatology from the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible, accepting those
notes as if they were Scripture themselves; and making a test of fellowship of unity where Baptists were pre-millenniumists. {Yes, they actually considered and still to a certain extent considered any conservative as a liberal that did not support the thousand years of Christ’s reign on earth.)

Recently my wife and I were driving up the beautiful San Juan valley, north of Tucson, Arizona. We noticed an enticing church building just past the town of San Juan, which with a per chance for small Baptist churches would have attracted our attendance had it not be for the large sign at the front of the church. Those church members were fundamentalists of strong convictions, and wanted people to know it more than the seeing of their church building. The sign which almost blocked the church had four major doctrinal beliefs (major so these people think) written on the four corners of the sign: (1) Pre-millenniumists; (2) 1611 King James Version Bible; (3) Independent; and (4) Missionary.

"Would you like to attend there," I asked Ann, knowing what she was thinking as was I and what would be her reaction. We both knew that the people would meet you at the door ready to fight, and ready to defend these minor doctrines as if they were majors. What was most obvious was the “fighting spirit” of the fundamentalists.

Lest you think in being critical of the fundamentalists, I have departed from the Scripture, remember that the Apostle John wrote, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (I John 4:1)

(1). There are a lot of religious spirits; we are to test them—in other words not just accept them because they claim to sponsor a church of 24,000 people or even because they try to label their brand of fundamentalism as conservation. What will immediately become apparent to you as you try to judge “righteous judgment” about the spirit of fundamentalism is that it is a fighting spirit. How can you miss it? Charles Stanley fights with his wife,
fights with his minister son, fights with his church staff, and fights against all Southern Baptist preachers and professors that he puts in the category of moderates. Among young Southern Baptists in the 1950's, we knew their spirit then, before they were popular enough 20 years ago to take over the convention, and a fundamentalists then was identified because "you knew what they were against more than what they were for."

That is still true today. Their takeover of the Convention was by being "against" moderates; the moral majority of Jerry Falwell has been "against" abortion; and Jerry Falwell recently on national television was "against" Jesse Jackson, stating that it was better to kill "Muslim" over in Iraqi than to wait for them to attack us as he think they did on 9-11.

1. The real Old Fashioned Gospel as defined by the Apostle Paul.

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the GOSPEL which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He arose again the third day according to the Scriptures..." (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

(1) The really old fashion Gospel is the Gospel originally preached by the Apostle Paul, which he received from the Ascended Jesus in Saudi Arabia and which Jesus has previously taught without the fullness that Jesus gave to him in Saudi. Often you will find the fundamentalists like Rich Warren or Falwell going only as far, if that far, as Jesus did before the fullness was given to Paul. You will find many who for the sake of popularity ignore that part of the Bible written under the inspiration of the Spirit by Paul. They like to use a simple formula for instant salvation through the Gospel: like believe and receive Jesus; well done, now you are saved, you are born again. What they really do is as stated years ago by Gains Dobbins in a book on church
administration, “You can fill a church with empty people.” The Catholics have been doing it for years, and they are experts on it; the Mormon are still doing it, and are also expert; and not to mention the Lutherans, and many others.

(2) The real old fashioned Gospel of the Bible is the Gospel that we received and by which we continue to live in Christ. You see, you have to “hold fast” the doctrine, the word, which Paul delivered by instruction from Christ. You know that he got it from Christ.

(3) The real old fashion gospel has an “if” that you will hardly ever, if ever, hear from the fundamentalists. If, and you will always find that “if” in the Bible, especially from the Apostle Paul, and that is one reason that he is not so popular in Bible teaching and preacher, less so as we get more deeply into the falling away. “unless you believed in vain” The Corinthians were trying to add certain works to the Gospel beyond the grace of God just like the Mormon do in their official doctrine of the Reformed Gospel. {By the way this is another Gospel, the Reformed Gospel, which I did not mention in the introduction. It is written in THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS how by revelation the leader of the Mormons was given additional Scripture to the Word of God which restored works to salvation, and salvation by the grace of God.} By the way, this “believing in vain” would have to include the seed that falls on either wayside soil, thorny soil, or stony soil.

(4). Okay here is the heart of the Gospel, the best definition in all Scriptures: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; Christ was buried; and Christ arose on the third day as predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures.

2. Gospel and Salvation are not in simple formulas or even in simple statements, it is rather in the total sound of the Bible on Gospel and salvation. I think you saw that in Ephesians 1 where Paul weaves a complete story about salvation and the Gospel. If you did not notice it, then please read again at one seating, the interweaved story as recorded in chapter 1 and 2.
Sound 2-8: THE ASSEMBLY.

If you have been baptized according to the New Testament pattern, after becoming a real disciple with the new birth experience, and by immersion, you were baptized into the church which is total body of Christ, not baptized into a local church. To understand this statement you must see that there are at least two distinct meanings of the word “ecclesia” for church in the New Testament. Granted that of the approximately 128 times the word is used in the New Testament, most of them refer to a local church; however you will find the other meaning, that is of the total body of Christ, dominates Ephesians and Colossians, and is actually generally translated “assembly” in Hebrews 12:23 where it is called both “assembly” and “church” of the Firstborn, written in heaven where God dwells.

The area of baptism is another area where men have stepped in to make disciples unto themselves, baptizing more in the name of their local church and in the name of their pastor or priest, which just happens to be them. How often do you hear one of them talk of how you are baptized into the general assembly of the Firstborn, where Jesus is, where God is, and where all believers of all ages are also present. How often do they tell you that with that baptism, and what it represents, you have your name written in heaven. No, most often they want you to know how that very day your name is written on the church roll where you are baptized. It can happen at the same time, but not necessarily; and the priority must be given to the only church that truly counts in the final analysis.

It would be nice and convenient to think that with “baptism” in a Roman Catholic local Church, you have simultaneously been baptized into the Assembly of the Firstborn, because Peter is the foundation of the Church, meaning the Roman Catholic Church, Rome somehow finding a way to identify with Peter
after crucifying him with the Apostle Paul. It would be nice to, after placing a sign out in front of the Church which says “Church of Christ”, established in Jerusalem in 1 A.D., to think you were baptized into the General Assembly of the Firstborn because that sign in out front. It would be nice to be baptized into an inter-denominational, non-denominational, or non-denominational church, thinking you are being also baptized into the General Assembly, because since these object to all other denominations, they must be right. And we could go on and on; however, the local church and baptism in the local church is not the same as the church which is the total body of Christ.

“I am going to turn off the sound that will drag people down into the pit of despondency,” is what the Gaither vocal band sings. I think I know what they mean, that they want to sing happy and positive songs, and that is good; but it not the whole story. It is not the total truth. The total truth, good and bad, are recorded in the Bible. It is not good to neglect any words that have come from God for His creatures. Jesus, the Master Teacher Himself, gave us a more balanced perspective when He taught that they that are whole do not need a physician, and that He came to save sinners not the righteous. What that means above all, is that we must face up to the realities of the problems in order to know what we can do about them.

Near the end of my four years in Naval Aviation, flying Air Early Warning in Argentia, Newfoundland, we had one of our radar equipped super-constellations land in the water about one hundred feet from the end of the runway. Approximately half of the crew of 23 people drowned in the cold water as the life rafts failed to completed inflate out on the wings. One of my aviation electronic technician friends told me the story over in sick bay as I visited with him. He thought it was just another rough landing until the water started coming in around his feet. Still he did not want to believe. For years we had been make rough but safe landings. “How could this be happening,” he thought. Then he realized that if he was going to save himself, he must first
face up to the reality and then get motivated to get out of the plane before it went to the bottom.

That is the way it is with the Flooding Tide of the Falling Away that is primarily come in on the churches. Rich, you want to talk about the local church; well, the Falling Away will primarily focus on the local church. Of course, it will be so widespread as to include the total body of Christ. Since the falling away is not away from the churches, but within the churches. The Falling Away is from God, Christ, and the sound doctrine of the Bible. Let us briefly consider from the Bible the effects of the Falling Away on the local churches. The best way to do is to look carefully at II Timothy 3 and 4.

Approximately a year ago when I decided to make the best statement of faith for my children and grandchildren I could from 50 years of Bible study and dedication to Bible faith, I first chose nine major subjects of the Bible like God, Christ, Faith, Gospel, etc. Then I thought “what is most important in the Bible,” based on the years of preaching the Bible, studying, and writing Bible commentaries. “What do I really want for them to know about the most important things in the Bible?” Once I had the subjects in mind, I chose a primary textual context that clarified those major subjects like Matthew 4 and 5 on God and Ephesians 1 and 2 on what Christ has done for us. Like even an amateur on Bible study might do, I chose II Timothy 3:16,17 as the best Bible statement of the Bible. You know how that goes, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable…”

Well, once I made the decision about the verses, that left the context as the third chapter of II Timothy in front of the two verses and the fourth chapter of II Timothy behind the two verses. What was in front of the two verses was the discouraging message of the “perilous times“, and what was behind the two verses was the even more discouraging message of “the time will come“! Obviously there must be a difference between the “perilous times“ and “the time will come“; but what is the difference?
Then with the help of prayer for guidance and the help of the Holy Spirit, the truth dawned on me that the difference between the “perilous times” in the local church and “the time will come” in the local church, is the message of II Timothy 3:8,9--

“Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth, men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.”

(1) Jannes and Jambres are typical of the churchmembers of II Timothy 3:1-9 that are creating the “perilous times” in the church. Why do we know this horrifying description in II Timothy 3:1-9 is churchmembers? Because as the best of the commentators and common sense tells us “they have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof.” Now, who but churchmembers would have a form of godliness that still denies God?

(2). They resisted the leadership of God through Moses. Today many churchmembers are resisting the leadership of God through their pastors. Christ is the Head of the local church as well as the total body of Christ, and Christ has appointed your pastor as overseer of the local church. When you resist and run off the pastor, you are resisting Christ? {Why churchmembers are increasing running off the pastors, we will come to momentarily.}

(3) The churchmembers of which Jannes and Jambres were only typical and the leaders of the anarchy in church government were resisted the truth beyond resisting Christ’s leadership and Christ. Churchmembers in the last 20 or more years have become so accustomed to running off the pastors, that they do not stop to think that first there is a resistance of truth then a resistance of truth’s leadership. In other words the bad churchmembership behavior of II Timothy 3:1-9 was a doctrinal problem before it was a church behavior problem.
(4) To see how bad this “perilous times” behavior in the local church was and is {because if you are intellectually honest, you will admit that you are seeing it today in your local church”; you need to look carefully at the description in II Timothy 3:1-9. It is even more discouraging that the description of a civilization that neglects God of Romans 1. In fact, you will find many of the same sounds to describe the worldliness of Romans 1 as the descriptions of perilous times churchmembers of II Timothy 3:19. In order to make this presentation short, and to get to the difference between “perilous times” and “the time will come” we will save the details for later in this book; or you can read them for yourself at any time in II Timothy 3:1-9.

What is in “the time will come” of II Timothy 4:1-4? I am sure you have heard it as one of the best descriptions of the Falling Away as churchmembers will not longer endure sound doctrine...” Wow, can that really happen? This is not just a matter of neglecting sound doctrine as the FBC of Tucumcari and the SBC did: it is a positive matter of resisting sound doctrine. No, it is beyond that: they can not stand and will not stand sound doctrine. Churchmembers will heap up inside the churches all the teachers of itching ears, false teachers, that they can; and when that heaping up like a fortress is complete, then they go outside the local church to heap up a bigger fortress of teachers with itching ears. What happens to them: they pass from “resisting the truth” of the perilous time to a positive “turning away from the truth” in the time will come of intolerance toward sound doctrine. The end result is that they fulfill and justify their own desires, then they turn into fables.

People are going to believe something, especially if they are churchmembers. Everybody know that churchmembers have to believe something about God, Christ, and the Bible. Well, those beliefs become “fables”; and may I suggest that one of the best fables of our times in the same category of the Book of Mormon fables of the LDS, is the American Democratic Faith. It is not bad. Patriotism is one thing that keeps this country going, and almost all of
us have it. It is when the American Democratic Faith dominates, controls, and squeezes out the sound doctrine of the Bible, that the transition of a churchmember is made between total truth and fables.

However, I promised to clarify from the Bible the difference between the “perilous times” in the local church, and the “time will come” of the Falling Away. Well, here it is. The perilous times existed even during the life of Paul: you read him talk about them in the church at Ephesus where he labored for over 3 years. Well, think of the perilous times as the opposite of revival times. While the perilous times in a local church can be compared to the times in history when a church or churches and denominations are down in a valley, the revival times can be compared to the mountaintop.

What about when you have both, perilous times and the leading edge of the Falling Away. {the leading edge is before the finality of the Falling Away as the Holy Spirit is withdrawn, and I think we see a few signs that the Holy Spirit is still at work} Well, the point has come in history when the follies of churchmembers of the perilous times are not longer revealed. What is the difference between the perilous times where the follies of such unusual church behavior as 1-9 is revealed and the Falling Away is that in the Falling Away the follies are not longer revealed. The clarity disappears between folly behavior and normal church behavior. Men like Jannes and Jambres have taken complete control of the local church and the denomination when you come to the Falling Away. They are not revealed, because you can no longer tell the difference between the men of the perilous times and the men of the time will come.

Now, before I leave this trash which is so discouraging but necessary, let me give the bottom line of II Timothy.

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’” and, “Let every one who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (II Timothy 2:19)
It is “The Day of the LORD”, LORD for Jehovah God in the Old Testament, and it is “The Day of the Lord,” for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that same Day and hence the title “The Day of the LORD and Lord...” Even as the Sunday of the Lord’s Day belongs to both God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, so does the terminating period of history for this universal, “that Day” belong to both God and Jesus. It is the time that God stops men from doing what they want by wiping out this old earth and old heavens.

While this period of time called DAY is not found as many times in the Bible, Old and New Testaments, as is CHRIST, it is just as persistent. You have already looked at that day in the book of Acts, chapter 2.

“I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.” (Acts 2:19-20)

You see here in the New Testament the “tell-tale” always present signs of dark sun, dark moon. And each time this DAY is written of in the nature of the progressive revelations of the Bible, something is added. Here the “blood” and “vapor of smoke” are added. Also generally the moon is darkened, but here the moon is turned into blood. It is also no longer just the DAY of the LORD, it is “the great and awesome DAY of the LORD.” The only day of history that has any comparison at all, since this far exceeds the destruction of any widespread war, is the first destruction of the earth by the Flood during the days of Noah. The Bible gives us in Genesis such a straightforward presentation of the how the waters of the deep, of the oceans, opened up to provide flooding from below as from above in the rain, that we hardly stop to consider what a
major upheaval this was of the whole earth. Recently I read a Christian physicists description of how the mid-ocean ridge and the ridge that runs around all the earth’s oceans was formed during the Flood. By the way, NASA with satellite photos have proven the present existence of this ridge running around the continents. It was such a gigantic upheaval is to actually separated the continents from each other. The shock from the mid-ocean bursting up under pressure, causes mountain ripples all across the universe, including a mountain ridge up against the continents that for some period of years was above the ocean water. (By the way, this is the manner that people after the Tower of Babel were able to cross from Russian to Alaska, and perhaps at other places. Recently archaeologists have been puzzled by all the pyramids in a desert valley of Peru, 10 miles from the Pacific; and in particular, what brought this vast civilization there. If only the wise and noble could admit the Flood and the Tower of Babel, where God scattered peoples to populate the whole earth.)

This gigantic shaking of the earth and movements of the continents and mountains of the oceans is a drop in the bucket compared to what will happen on that great and awesome DAY of the LORD and Lord. Paul wrote in Hebrews 12:26, as he quoted from Haggai 12:28, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.”

By the way those words from the Apostle Peter on the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension of Christ is also a quote by Peter from the Old Testament as found in Joel 2:28-32. That is two places already we see in the Old Testament that referred to the Day of the LORD. How many more are there? Too many to look at in one brief introduction to the eschatology of the Day of the LORD. A few should be mentioned and a chart made to show the progressive revelations of the Bible about that Day. To help in the creation of the table, what is the differences between the short description in Hebrews 12:26 and that of Joel 2:28-30. Since Joel was a Prophet before
Haggai, let us start with the description of Joel: (1) wonders in heaven above; (2) signs in the earth beneath; (3) blood; (4) fire and vapor of smoke; (5) sun turned into darkness; and (6) moon turned into blood.

Before we list the events of that Day from Hebrews and Haggai, we should expand the list to include other verses in Hebrews 12. Paul further explains in Hebrews 12:27 as the “yet once more” means the removal of the physical and created things of the earth, so what we have as a simple list is: (1) the shaking of the earth; (2) the shaking of the heavens; and (3) the removal of the created things of earth. {Later I will discuss after we add to our history of that DAY the “elements melting with a fervent heat” of the Apostle Peter how I think that heat is going to destroy all the land not now under water, the heat will melt the oceans since John said in revelation that “he saw no more sea; and where we will live in the new earth is going to be on the dry land where the oceans are now.} We can go back to Haggai 2 to look for additional events: (4) God at that time will overthrow kingdoms; (5) God will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms {that includes the United States as the unquestioned leader of the Gentile nations, and we might speculate that our strength is our vast military and our perchance for business all over the world, much like the Gentile nation of Rome during the beginning time of Christianity.}

While we are thinking about it, let us add to our list for a table the events according to the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:10.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” (II Peter 3:10)

We have added to the list from Joel and Haggai that (1) there is a great noise as the heavens pass away; (2) the fervent heat is added as the elements of the earth themselves melt; and also (3) that all the works in the earth as the
earth itself will be burned up. That is scary enough without adding more, and we can make a little chart.

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<th>1. earth</th>
<th>2. heavens</th>
<th>3. humanity</th>
<th>4. man's works</th>
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<tr>
<td>Joel</td>
<td>“signs” from under earth</td>
<td>“wonders” in heaven above</td>
<td>“blood”</td>
<td>fire and vapor of smoke</td>
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<td>Haggai</td>
<td>shaking</td>
<td>also shaking</td>
<td>overthrow governments</td>
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<td>Paul</td>
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<td>removal of created things</td>
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<td>Peter</td>
<td>elements themselves melt with a fervent heat</td>
<td>great noise like an explosion as the heavens pass away</td>
<td></td>
<td>all works of the planet are burned up</td>
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Sound 3-1: GOD'S "RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF PERSONALITY".

Great is God, and great is the name of the LORD God of this Universe! How it would build up each individual to daily pray, "Please increase my awareness of you Lord God on the great white throne in great majesty, power, and glory"; and to receive in answer to pray and increased awareness of God on the great white throne in majesty, power, and glory with the Lord Jesus Christ at His right hand making intercession for our sins and preparing to come get us again in great power and glory.

Some of this edification from more awareness of God and what God is like can easily come from more appreciate about Jesus' teachings about God in the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 5,6. Often have we heard or read the "beatitudes" of Matthew 5 without an appreciation that this is teaching as much about God Himself as it is about the blessings on recipients of the kingdom of heaven; often have we repeated the model prayer, often called the Lord's prayer, without realizing that it teaches us as much about God Himself as it does how to pray; often have others been admonished, though perhaps sarcastically, to turn the other cheek as a way to follow the teachings of God as given through Jesus without realizing that this also teaches us about God; and on and on, you will see this repeated in the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 5 and 6. It is as much teachings from Jesus on God and it is teachings to disciples on how to be a citizen of the kingdom of God. The bottom line of it is that: the God who made us in the image of God demands of us similar characteristics of God Himself. That will become apparent as we look at Matthew 5 and 6 in more details; and in anticipation of what you will find in these two chapters of the famous Sermon on the Mount from
Jesus Himself, I refer to the subject as GOD'S "RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF PERSONALITY", borrowing from the title of a book by Wayne Oates, former professor of religious psychology at Southern Seminary in Louisville Kentucky. Wayne Oates' book entitled THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF PERSONALITY is really talking about the characteristics of human personality and human character that can come from a simultaneous study of psychology and the Bible.

"Religion" Wayne Oates says in Preface to THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF PERSONALITY...“Religion," he says, “is not just one fact of a many-facet reality known as personality." Oates continues that “it refers to the total personality" and that is a "psychological holism which is really a modern reaf- firmation of the vital holism of personality set forth in the Old and New Testaments."

Now what I am saying is that the Sermon on the Mount from Jesus at first reading is talking about certain religious dimensions of the man's personality that wants to be a member of the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven; yet in reality it is talking about the religious dimensions of God's personality that God and Jesus desire for us to emulate. Immediately, I must quote from Jesus and the Bible, lest that sound like we are trying to act like gods or lest we are trying to emulate God and that sounds incorrect—Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:48: "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

You see what that tells us, a characteristic of God, is Perfect; and furthermore that a religious dimension of human personality is to be the purposeful striving toward the perfection of God. And this would be a good place to list some of the specific things that Oates refers to as the religious dimensions of personality. They are: (1) meaningfulness, (2) direction, (3) balance, (4) community, (5) maturity-in-love, and (6) integration. The gist of this chapter is that these, having come from psychology and the Bible, are also character-
istics of God Himself, and further are both characteristics that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount about what God is and what God expects from man! A good illustration of this from the Sermon on the Mount is the verse quoted above from Matthew 5:48. What does this teaching from Jesus tells us about God and what God expects from us. It tells us that God the Father is perfect in love—remember the short but significant verse “God is love” which tells us something very significant about the character and personality of God as the very essence of love; and further it tells us very explicitly that we are, to use the words of Oates, to be mature in love even as God is mature in love. (Jesus gives some very specific examples of maturity in love which will be discussed later in the main outline of the chapter based on the six religious dimensions of God’s and human personality above.)

I. One of God’s religious dimensions of personality is Meaningfulness. God is Eternal. He is the great Alpha and Omega, without beginning and without end; so that if man wants the ultimate meaning he must become involved with the ultimate in time. You see this throughout the whole Sermon on the Mount and indeed in all the teachings of Jesus as well as in the teachings of all the Apostles of Jesus in the Bible.

1. First, you see meaningfulness in the beatitudes of Jesus. You know the famous blessed are they of Matthew 5. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. Well, the kingdom of heaven until this earth and the universe is forever, like God Himself, and those that have the kingdom of heaven—in this case the poor in spirit—are also possessors of eternal life.

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” (Matt 5:8) Well, if you see the eternal God in heaven then you like God have become eternal; and that is real meaning.

“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God”. Wow, what meaning there is you are a son of God you are adopted by God
Himself and you can live with God forever.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is a reminder of the eternal characteristics of God Himself in heaven and in the kingdom of heaven. What God expects of us is what God is like since man is made in His image.

II. A second characteristics of God’s Religious Dimensions of Personality as taught in the Bible and in particular in the teachings of Jesus called the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew 5 and 6 is DIRECTION. By this I mean that God always has been, is, and always will be a Righteous, Holy, and Demanding God. This is the way God’s personality lean. This is the way His character is.

1. God’s basic laws like Himself never change. (Matthew 5:17-48) Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that He was not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill. Jesus could not possible destroy the law and the prophets, because they were based on the very character of God. Often we like to quote from a promise of God given in the Bible, say for example the promise of the forgiveness of sins, and expect that God grant it to us because of this promise based on the words of the Bible. That is true but beyond being the words of the Bible it is based on the very character of God Himself. God forgives because it is His character and personality to forgive.

The God who demands to be worshipped above all else from the beginning of time still has the law of His own personality to expect to be worshipped above all else. (Thus Jesus says in Matthew 6, “no one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”) The God who originally established through the Prophet Moses the law of personality that no man should take His name in vain still has too much self-respect for His own personality to let man get away with taking his name in vain; therefore Jesus taught, “God will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain.”
God does no murder or lie or commit adultery or covet; and therefore God continues to demand the holiness of this direction to behavior.

2. Even as God’s righteousness exceeds the righteousness of many of the religious, in fact of perhaps the most religious that have ever lived, the religious leaders of Jesus’ day called the Pharisees and Sadducees...that is to say that our dimensions of personality must also be as disciples of Christ to exceed the righteous of the Pharisees and Sadducees if we desire to enter the kingdom of God and of heaven. In passing we should note some of the religious characteristics of these hypocrites of religions: (1) they would sound a trumpet in the streets and in the religious assemblies so that all would know when they had done a charitable deed; (2) they would pray on the streets and in public assemblies to be seen of other men; (3) they, like the heathen, would practice vain repetition in their prayer, thinking that the blessings of God would be directly proportional to the number of words spoken; and (4) they would also practice during fasting a sad countenance, disfiguring their faces in order that men might know they are fasting.

III. God Is A Providing God (An Integrated God). He provides sun and rain and oxygen and more on the righteous and unrighteous (Matthew 5:43-48). God provides bread and clothing. (Matthew 6:8-15 and 6:25-34). God provides relief from debts and escape from temptations. I know we generally like to quote about God having the very hairs of our head numbered, without the humorous statement that it requires less math for some of us than others, as an illustration of the love and provision—the awareness of God, if you would, about every individual on the earth; however, I think the best illustration is of the sparrow not falling to the ground without the awareness of God. Just think of all the birds including sparrows that are found in the whole earth, and all of their movements, from tree to tree and power line to power line, from yard to yard are know by God.

“Oh ye of little faith (in God),” Jesus said. “Look at the birds of the air,
for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matthew 6:26)

And the moral of that story is not just that God knows but that also God provides. OUR GOD IS A GOD OF PROVISION! THAT IS ONE OF GOD’S RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF PERSONALITY! And we must in the name of honesty to the Bible and to intellectual honesty to truth, mention that the God of Provision provides salvation to all, especially to those who believe!

IV. God Is a Secret God! I think we can call this sincerity and balance, you might even add humility to it as a characteristic of Jesus and God, a characteristic of the Jesus who washed the feet of His own disciples and of the Jesus that made His triumphant entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey instead of a great white horse. (Now, parenthetically His second great entry at the second coming will be on a great white horse in great majesty, power, and glory to show that He is indeed the Lord of the Universe under God the Father!)

1. Jesus taught that God wanted men to pray in secret because God hears in secret. I think it is easy for us to think of the secret characteristic of God’s personality. Seldom has man heard the voice of God speak; seldom has man seen God Himself, never except in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; seldom has man heard a message from God unless he opens us the book called the Word of God, the Bible and prays. Judas, not Iscariot, asked Jesus the very important question, “How can you reveal yourself to us and not to the world?” This is a practical question about seeing and knowing the Secret God. Jesus replied, “We (God the Father and Jesus the Son) stand at the door of any individual heart and knock, and if that individual will listen and open the door, the Father and the Son will come in and live with him.” (John 14)

2. God is a God of no pretence. (Matthew 6:1-4 and 6:16-18) Don’t fast to be seen of men; don’t pray on the street corner and loudly in church to be seen of other men as the most religious; don’t sound a trumpet or shoot
off your mouth in public about your charitable deeds; and pray in private in a closet if you would and the Secret God will hear and answer your prayer in secret. You see this also in the beatitudes where Jesus and God demand certain behavior like themselves to enter the kingdom of God, like humility and meekness and poverty of spirit. These believe it or not are characteristics of the image of God and those that are expected also of us. Jesus showed those as characteristics of God.

V. God Is A Forgiving God. {Let us call this the dimension of maturity in love as it is really a challenge of love to forgive.}

VI. God Is a Loyal and Jealous God. Matthew 6:19-23. {Let us call this community for the lack of any other religious dimension of personality to call it.}
Sound 3-2: “Spiritual Blessings in Heavenly Places in Christ” (Ephesians)

If Rich Warren’s teachings were not “itching ears” doctrines, then he would have been consistent with the teachings of the book of Ephesians on: (1) how the spiritual blessings are in heavenly places not in Saddleback Camelot or any other local church here on earth; (2) how the purpose of God determined for us from before the beginning of time was to be like Christ, also a spiritual blessing in heaven places, not like Rich or the Saddleback Church; (3) how the “spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace the unity which the spirit gives” is a promotion of inherent unity--that unity of the Spirit has to exist before it can be built on, and the promotion of unity is to be done with the bonds of peace of the Seven ONES, not public relation agreements based on conformity and behaviorism; and (4) the primary spiritual blessing in heavenly places is the only church that really matters in the first place, the assembly of the Firstborn. Ephesians is one of the outstanding examples of the usage of “ecclesia” for church that is the total body of believers, past and present. Unless Rich has a lot of dead people in his church like the Crystal Cathedral, it can not possible be the same as that assembly.

I. Some Introductory statements about the chapter title and the book of Ephesians.

1. The chapter title above, SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN HEAVENLY PLACES IN CHRIST is lifted directly from the first chapter of Ephesians, verse 3. Ephesians 1:3 goes like this: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Here you see the order of importance: first God, “blessed be the God and Father...” secondly Christ, “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”; and thirdly, salvation, for that is what the spiritual blessings
in heavenly places in Christ are all about. Those spiritual blessings summarize salvation and summarize what God through Christ has done for us to provide salvation.

2. This chapter is about Salvation and Christ. There is no salvation apart from Christ. It is as the Apostle Peter testified in Acts 4:12, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." "No other name under heaven" than the name of Christ, that covers it all even as the heavens cover all that is on earth.

3. The subject of SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN HEAVENLY PLACES is taken primarily from the first two chapters of Ephesians. Ephesians 1 and 2; and you will find as we briefly look at those two chapters there is a step by step enumeration of all those spiritual blessings: (1) God chose us for salvation from before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4); (2) God adopted through us through Jesus to be sons (1:5); (3) God provided us redemption (a word for one aspect of salvation which we will discuss) through the blood of Christ (1:7); (4) God has integrated all that is in heaven and earth under Christ at a specific time in history called "the fullness of times" (1:10); (5). God has given us an inheritance in heaven and among His people (1:11); and (6) God has given us a seal or guarantee of that inheritance—an irreversible down-payment if you would—in the inward gift of the Holy Spirit. These spiritual blessings in heavenly places are summarized by these six points, and this is also what is meant in Ephesians and the rest of the New Testament when you see the two words pregnant with meaning, "IN CHRIST". Ephesians chapter one is not only a chapter on what it means to have spiritual blessing from God in heavenly places through Christ, but also what it means to be IN CHRIST. If you are IN CHRIST, you have it all. Some people like the word "Christian" or the word "believer" to describe all the blessings of salvation from God, but I think according to the Word of God in Ephesians and much of the 14
New Testament books written by Paul, IN CHRIST is a better summary of all those spiritual blessings of salvation from God.

4. This leads me to bring up the subject that the book of Ephesians is a summary of the first ten epistles written by the Apostle Paul: Hebrews, Romans, I and II Corinthians, I and II Thessalonians, I Timothy, Titus, Philippians, and Galatians. And you will find as we look in Ephesians 1 and 2 more carefully at these spiritual blessings in heavenly places that each is a summary of one of the first ten books from Paul. For example the adoption as sons of God spiritual blessing is a summary of much of the book of Galatians; God’s blessing of redemption, or the buying back from bondage and sin, is a summary of Hebrews; the blessing of the inheritance from God from I and II Thessalonians; and the promise of the Holy Spirit–God’s seal or stamp of approval on all the other blessings is from the book of Romans.

5. Now, we did not complete our brief outline of the first two chapters of Ephesians. If we consider, and I think we should, that the first chapter is AFTER IN CHRIST (AIC), then the second chapter of Ephesians can be summarized as BEFORE IN CHRIST (BIC). We will find that God Himself dates time in ways quite differently from man. Salvation time for the individual believer can be dated as BIC and AIC. Ephesians 2, the BIC, describes the condition of any human being before salvation: (1) Dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1); (2) Live or walk according to the course of this world—the compass or direction of life is more determined by the customs and traditions and culture of the world than of God and Christ (2:2); (3) This course is under the control of the prince of this world (yes, that is nonetheless than Satan) (2:2); (4) BIC is also described in Ephesians 2 as human behavior conducted in the lusts of the flesh or controlled by the desires of the flesh and the desires of the mind (2:3); and (5) Lastly the BIC condition is explained in this part of the Bible as “by nature children of wrath” which simply states that apart from the new birth, the inward coming of the Holy Spirit in the life,
the human is by very nature of a child of the human race also a child of wrath against God—that is the natural disposition as being born in humanity because of original sin (2:3).

So there is the choice of Before in Christ and After in Christ. There are six spiritual blessings of AIC, and there are five curses BIC.

6. Recall from the TABLE OF CONTENTS that the first three chapters are for “edification”, or the building up of the individual believer; and even as the little Epistle of Ephesians does not leave us in doubt as to the specifics of the six spiritual blessings in heavenly places (and the five curses BIC), so also does it enumerate specifically what the building up of the individual believer is to be.

“...till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:13)

The goal of the book of Ephesians, and therefore of also the first ten epistles from God and through the Apostle Paul, so we can conclude also a goal of God and the Bible itself is to build us up to the point that: (1) We have unity in our faith (I like to call this THE SOUND OF A SOUND FAITH); (2) We have unity in the knowledge of what Christ, the Son of God, is like; (3) We have a complete maturity in the faith; and (4) This complete maturity is defined as nothing less than like Christ Himself, “measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Now, in the first chapter the Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit does not leave us in doubt about his purpose of building us up to this end. Paul prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give each of you the Holy Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, specifically that: (1) “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened”; (2) “that you may know what is the hope of His calling”; (3) “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”; and (4) “what is the exceeding greatness of His
power toward us who believe...” Wow, if you know that from God’s Holy Spirit Himself you just about know it all, and are just about as built up as any AIC believer can be.

II. The Spiritual Curse of BIC.

All you have to do is join the human race in order to be the recipient of these curses from God of Before In Christ. What that means is that you like any other person on the face of this earth, or any other person to be born on the face of this earth is under these five curses. If you are human, you are there! And don’t blame God: God made a perfect place for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden at original Creation, a place without sin, death, pain, sorrow, and toil; but Eve and then Adam in the exercise of their freedom of choice responded to the prompting of Satan; and the end result was that sin entered the blood stream of the human race. All humans for the first time as sons of Adam and Eve became by their very nature “children of wrath”. Or you might want to translate that as children under the curse or wrath of God.

1. You are born with a human nature which, after the “age of accountability” or after you are old enough to make your own decisions-alias, exercise your own freedom of choice-leaves you in the BIC condition of “dead in trespasses and sins”. Let us see what that means. It means that you can not see God see God is pure of heart and holy; it means that you are alienated from God, from heaven, and from living forever.

2. The second curse of BIC is to live according to the course of this world. Granted there is a lot of pleasure and comfort, etc in living according to the compass of this world. Many people do it. In fact Jesus taught broad was the way that leads to destruction and that the majority go that way; while narrow is the way that leads to life (AIC) and the minority go in that direction. Jesus also taught that the only way to live fully or abundantly and eternally was by losing the life according to the course of this world, or
dying to the old life. Of course, the Apostle Paul stated that “if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable”. There are a great host of saints in the Old Testament and New Testament throughout history and up to the present time that like Moses refused to enjoy “the pleasures of sin for a season”, looking for something more permanent with the Permanent God and something more Eternal.

3. The third curse of BIC mentioned in Ephesians 2 is a life controlled by Satan. You see, Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, that it is not possible to serve two masters: either a person will serve God and Christ though the decisions for AIC or a person will chose Satan as there is no in-between choice. Satan as a fallen angel made his choice thousands of years ago as he rebelled against God and was kicked out of heaven. He know his fate: it is reserved for him and his angels and most of humanity that do not chose for Christ to be cast at the end of time into the lake of fire and brimstone, often called in the Bible the second death or eternal death.

4. The fourth curse of BIC is to live a life of control only by the desires of the flesh and the mind, and recall that this is a mind and a flesh that is at enmity with God because of sin. The Apostle John summarized it adequately in I John when he wrote: “Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. The world passes away and the lust thereof, but he that does the will of God abides forever.”

5. The fifth curse of BIC is human nature by birth. Granted this is not an immediate curse until you start exercising your own freedom of choice as children who die before the age of accountability go straight to heaven. One of the nicest things about heaven will be to see so many children.

III. The Spiritual Blessings of AIC.

How much more pleasant it is to look at the spiritual blessings in heavenly
places in Christ after looking at the BIC curses.

1. The spiritual blessing of being chosen by God Himself from before Creation. Faces up to it if you truly believe then you have been chosen before Creation by God. If you do not truly believe then you have not been chosen by God. I think that this is where we ultimately see God’s religious dimension of personality previously called PROVISION. God provides salvation for all that will believe, and He started providing it from before the foundation of the world. Before God said “let there be light” He had the hairs on your head numbered and chose you; before God said at Creation ‘it is good”, He that knew when a sparrow would fall, knew of your profession of faith in Him; and the God who provided for all men sun and light and oxygen and gravity and life itself, also provided for salvation.

2. The second blessing of AIC is adoption as sons of God. The Apostle John wrote: “But as many as received Him (CHRIST) to them gave He (God) power to become sons of God (salvation).” One of the many reasons that we accept the Bible as the Word of God is that what the Apostle Paul speaks and writes in Ephesians agrees with what the Apostle John writes in the Gospel of John and the epistles of John; and what they are both telling us, perhaps two apostles that never met in their separate lives on earth, is that we can have the spiritual blessings of being a very son of God. Many of the privileges of Christ before God become ours After in Christ.

3. The third blessing of After in Christ is REDEMPTION through the BLOOD of Christ. The blood of Christ is a summary phrase of the fact that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. The redemption is that God provided through Christ a way to buy us back, literally that is the meaning of redemption, to buy back, that Christ is the way for God to buy us back from the slavery of sin and Satan and the course of this world.

4. The fourth blessing of AIC is to become part of the total plan of
God for the integration of the heaven and the earth in Christ. Often even as we do not see God’s plan for our own life including the adoption as sons from before birth, we do not see God’s plan for the universe. Believe me, if God knows when the sparrow falls to the ground, God also knows when nations rise and fall; and God likewise has a plan for the universe. That plan is summarize in Ephesians as “in the dispensation of the fullness of time He (God) might gather together in one all things in Christ”. In other words, when God was ready, that was the fullness of time. God waited years, the years of the Old Testament, to make the plan clear; then Christ was born, and taught, and died on the cross, and man began to understand in part how God was going to integrate it all.

You saw some of this in the first chapter on the RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS OF GOD’S PERSONALITY, and you will see more in the third chapter as we discuss God’s plan for two great nations, Israel and the United States.

5. The fifth blessing of AIC is you receive an inheritance. Yes, God’s will is made and written in the Bible, especially here in Ephesians that your inheritance will come from God through Christ. You have received or can receive your inheritance through Christ, through believing in Christ, through the status on the other side of After in Christ. And this is the kind of inheritance of initial salvation that continues to collect interest. It grows from initial salvation to being more like Christ each day and each year until finally at the Second Coming of Christ just before THAT GREAT DAY, we will be “like Him (Christ), for we shall see HIM as He is!”

6. The assurance or guarantee that this will happen is not only the words of God Himself as recorded in the Bible but the guarantee of the inward presence of the Holy Spirit. God can not deny Himself, the Apostle Paul wrote, and a little bit of God takes up residence in your heart through the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) when you believe in Christ. You see with that Spirit you will see God; you will live forever; and you have the promise
that eventually, body and soul you will become much like Christ.

IV. How do these spiritual blessings in Christ build you up to make a better person out of you?

1. How the eyes of your understanding are enlightened?

2. How you may know \{personally experience\} the hope of God's and Christ's calling?

3. How you may know \{personally experience\} the glory of God's inheritance in the saints?

4. How you may know \{personally experience\} the greatness of the power of God toward believers.

5. How you may come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to the fullness of Christ?

6. How you may know why God gave Apostles and Prophets (the Bible) in order to equip a chosen few of humanity to be saints, also for the work of the ministry, and for the building up of the body of Christ?

7. How you can no longer be a babe in Christ that is tossed about by winds of doctrine, by tricky men, and deceitful plots?

8. How you can speak the truth in love so that you grow up in all things in Christ, the head of the assembly of the Firstborn?

9. How you can help to grow the true body or Church of Christ, the Assembly of the Firstborn?

Conclusion: The Three Question of John 14.

1. What is the way to God the Father? Jesus replied that He Himself is the way, the truth, and the life. The only way to God the Father is through faith in Christ.

2. Show us the Father and we will be satisfied? Jesus replied that he who sees Him has seen the Father. Jesus was seen in person by the first disciples and their environment: He is seen through the work of the Holy Spirit today.
3. How can you manifest yourself to us \{disciples\} and not to the world? Another way for disciples to ask how can we see you? Jesus answered in effect that if any man will listen to the sounds of my words, and knock at our door through prayer, My Father and I will come live in his inner heart \{of course through the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit\}. 
Granted that in the last chapter you read as much about salvation as about Christ; although the primary doctrine under consideration as part of THE SOUND OF A SOUND FAITH was Christ, while here in this chapter it is about the doctrine of salvation. However, the two, Christ and salvation, cannot be separated in the Bible, in theology and the truth of God, and indeed in life without tragic consequences. Christ is the only name by which God has provided salvation; Christ is the Son of God; and in the death of Christ on the cross—sometimes called redemption, atonement, justification, etc—is the provision that God made as a plan for salvation.

So what will we have in this chapter not seen previously. A building up of the reader, it is hoped, on faith in God as the “Great Maker of History”, the history of Israel, Gentiles, and the United States; a building up of the reader, it is prayed, on the original plans of God for human history as recorded in the Bible, the Word of God; and how those plans for human history and nations fit into the individual salvation plan of God. We should be able at the conclusion of the chapter answer such questions as—

1. What happened to Israel as the chosen people of God?
2. Is the United States mentioned in the Bible? And
3. How is our salvational standing in the sight of God as compared to the original children of God, the nation of Israel? And
4. Can our nation today be called “a foolish and beloved nation” like the Apostle Paul called Israel in the book of Romans.

Those are tremendous questions, and we can answer all of them according
to the Bible, the Word of God, by a careful look at two chapters in the book of Romans, Romans 9 thru 11. However, in the process we will be looking at far more than what Paul has written in those three chapters; for we will find and briefly summarize 13 major Old Testament quotes in those two chapters and find and briefly summarize 12 minor Old Testament quotes in those two chapters. The Old Testament book that Paul quotes in those two chapters include Hosea, Isaiah, Nahum, Psalm, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah (I listed the 13 major quotes first, major in that the full text is given in a set aside quotation in most versions of the Bible), Genesis, Malachi, Exodus, Leviticus, Joel, and I Kings. Some of these books are quoted more than once. That is a total of quotes from 12 of the 39 Old Testament books, so that I think as you follow the development of those two chapters in Romans you must get much of the Old and New Testament history of salvation, not only for individuals but also for nations.

And as part of your building up on God’s history, keep in mind these words from the Apostle James, the half-brother of Jesus and Pastor of the first church ever—“Known to God from eternity are all His works.” (Acts 15:18) And these words from the Prophet Amos—“Surely the LORD God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” (Amos 3:7)

These taken together with other scriptures of the Bible pretty well guarantee that God knows history, that God has planned out the details of the histories of nations, and that God has foretold what those plans are in His Book the Bible. You will see more of this in Romans 9-11.

The part of the chapter title “foolish” and “beloved” come from Romans 9-11. “As He says also in Hosea: ‘I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved, who was not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there they shall be called sons of the living God.” (Romans 9:25,26 as quoted from Hosea 2:23
The part of the chapter title on “God’s Watershed” is based on the American Studies book by Henry Steele Commager entitled THE AMERICAN MIND where he maintains in the history of American Thought that the United States had a major watershed, a drastic change in the way of life and thinking, about 1900 or so. God never changes His way of thinking as He has planned ahead from before the beginning, but He has changed the way He deals with humanity in certain periods of history. As an undeniably example is the original covenant of God with Abraham and the children of Israel and the new covenant of God with Israel and the Gentiles after the life and death of Christ, all, of course, planned from the beginning and predicted in the Old Testament as we will look at briefly in those 25 quotes found in Romans 9-11. Let me briefly by way of introduction explain what is mean by GOD’S WATERSHED OF HISTORY. Simply stated it is that God originally chose the nation of Israel to be His own people; later those people were rejected in part (except for a remnant) until the end time; and in the place of the original children of God were put Gentiles, the United States without doubt being the leader with the most believers of the Gentile nations.

I. Let us Compare the United States and Israel.

1. A Beloved Nation.

First Israel as a beloved nation. As you will see in more detail later in Romans 9-11, God called Abraham out of Iraqi to establish a nation built around him; and let me say in passing that the Jewish people who by and large have rejected Christ, the Son of God, for almost two thousand years are extremely fortunate that God made a covenant with Abraham that included them, or the foolish people they have been would put them in trouble. Anyway
later the children of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were rescued by God from bondage in Egypt. They wandered for forty years in the wilderness before they were ready to go into the promised Land of Palestine. God tested them there for the forty years and found all of them deficient except several to be children of God, had them die in the desert, and allowed only those over 21 and a few others to go into the Promised Land. Further the Bible says that almost all of those rescued from Egyptian bondage will not be allowed Eternal Rest in heaven. Now through their history in Palestine through the period of Judges like Samson and Kings like Saul and David and Solomon and later in the Divided Kingdoms of Israel and Judah we see a pattern of ups and downs in the nation, revivals and lapses in faith, with a growth of false worship and idols taken from the nations around them, and with an oppression of the people in the land, both native and foreign in direct violation of the laws given by God through Moses. Often the Prophets spoke to Israel of the lamentations of God over His own people and their decisions to go after other gods which in reality were not gods at all. Finally God rejected Israel, sending them and Judah into Captivity for their national sins, later only allowing a remnant to return to Palestine; and with only a remnant of that remnant truly being the chosen of God.

Second the United States as a Beloved Nation. Many evangelists and even authors in American Studies have spoken and written of the "mission of America". While some conceive of America's mission to spread democracy throughout the world, others have considered that the mission was to spread the Gospel of Christ. And it can hardly be denied that the aspect of God's planned history of the spreading of the Gospel to every nation before the end time, has largely been carried out by the United States. Look at the missionaries across the world in almost every country as ambassadors of Christ and the many denominations. To consider the United States from the perspective of God, we would have to consider the history as founded on
faith in God and for religious purposes, we would have to consider the number of churches bearing the name of Christ, and we would have to consider the place the United States has had in the spread of the Bible as the Word of God throughout this country and the world. Truly, all these things would make the United States a beloved nation in the sight of God. Can you not see in the United States the once but short-lived Beloved Nation of Romans 9:25, 26 and Hosea- “I will call them My people (a great many people in this nation are now called the people of God), who were Not My people”. Of course at the writing of Hosea and the writing of Romans this nation of United States were not even a nation of people. “And her beloved, who was not beloved.” Once Israel was beloved when the United States did not exist: now the United States is Beloved although rapidly like in Romans 1 passing off the scene as the Beloved Nation.}

2. A Foolish Nation.

First again, Israel as a foolish nation. Paul said of the Israel of New Testament times: “Brethren, I pray to God for Israel that they might be saved; for I bear them record that they have a zeal of God but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted unto the righteousness of God which is through faith.”

Paul’s arguments in the first few chapters of Romans is that these first children of God have made a mockery of God throughout the world, and finally ask the question in desperation of what advantage is it now to be a Jew? Well, the answer is that to them were given the oracles of God. The ten Commandments, the Old Testament books, Christ Himself, the first Apostles including the Apostle Paul, and the New Testament books were all committed to the Jewish people as custodians of the oracles of God.

How about the United States as a foolish nation in this day and time as compared to when God, no doubt, chose them to come for religious reasons to
these foreign shores. I am afraid you can find the description of the United States in a downward spiral like other civilizations as Paul mentions them in Romans 1. The downward spiral starts when citizens knowing something about God do not honor Him, and then when they refuse to even think about God they continue into all immorality, lawlessness, and perversions, sexual and otherwise. Can you not see the United States in the foolish nation of Romans 1 and of Romans 10:19- “I will provoke you (Israel) to jealousy by those who are not a nation.” {At the time of writing of this by Moses and even the quoting by Paul, the United States did not exist as a nation.} “I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.” Certainly Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East must be moved to jealousy by the blessings of God on this upstart, young nation; and ultimately they will be moved to anger against the United States.

II. The 12 minor quotes in Romans 9-11.


“...nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called.'” It was not enough then, nor in New Testament times, nor today to be of the historical lineage of Abraham. Even as God adopting chose was at work in choosing Isaac over Ishmael from before the foundation of the world, so God has chosen some of Abraham to be children and some not to be children, of those that came out of Egypt God chose some for eternal rest and others not for eternal rest.


“For this is the word of promise: 'At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.'” This speaks more of the election of God and the promise of God according to election that God foretold. Remember all God’s works are known from the beginning of time, and often these works—in fact all the major ones—are foretold for the people of God to know through the Apostles and Prophets.
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“...it was said to her (Rebecca, the mother of Isaac and Jacob), ‘The older shall serve the younger.’” More of election and the details of God’s choice far into history as contrary to the customs of the land and of the time, Jacob was chosen to have preeminence over Isaac. Of course, it should be noted here that the name of Jacob was changed by God Himself to Israel, hence the real beginning out of the lineage of Jacob of the children of Abraham.

“As it is written, ‘Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.’” The choice is always God’s, but the hate here is real a lesser love than that of for Jacob. Consider yourself very fortunate if you feel the pull of the Spirit of God in your heart since the choice belongs to God and Christ.

5. Exodus 33:19 and Romans 9:15.
“For He (God) says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’” The sovereignty is with God. Once again if you feel the pull of the Spirit, you are among the fortunate few.

“For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’” This shows the extent, according to the Bible, of the knowledge and control by God of countries and governments. The power of Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt in the day of Moses and during the rescue from bondage of the children of Israel was great: the power and control of God was greater. The Word of the mighty God of Israel did spread throughout the known world, and it through the Bible has spread today.

The Transition of the Election of God for Who Is Saved of Romans 9 to the Righteousness by Individual Faith which Most of Israel Refused of Romans
7. Leviticus 18:5 and Romans 10:5.

“For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, ‘The man who does those things shall live by them.’” Living by law alone would be like trying to be good all the time under your own power.


“But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead), But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach).” Notice how in parentheses Paul adds to Moses quote in Deuteronomy to help explain it; and although later we will give Paul’s explanations of Romans 9-11 in continuum, without it hear we would lose the continuity completely. Righteousness by faith is under discussion. Who can go up to heaven and get the righteousness of God who is Christ or do the same down below. No, faith is a matter of not going or of boldness or courage but must be in the heart and mouth.

Since Paul’s explanation here is the very crux of righteousness by faith, the argument of Romans 9-11, and the very gist of salvation, we should continue Romans 10:8 with Romans 10:9-10.

“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

You will be saved, experience salvation if:

(1). Confession with the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ;
(2). Belief in your heart that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead
“For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.’” God will not allow any person eternally to be ashamed or shamed by faith in Him.

“For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved”. There it is in the Old Testament and quoted in the New Testament: any person that calls on the name of the LORD (notice the capital letters for Jehovah God or God the Father as contrasted to the Lord Jesus Christ).

“But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘LORD, who has believed our report?’” The Prophets of Old like Isaiah were not believed by the majority of the people even as the Apostles of New Testament times are not believed by the majority. We have the mention of a very important word here, the word gospel which literally means good news; but which with the teachings of Jesus came to be in reference to the details of the Gospel of Christ which a subject of COMFORT in the last three chapters. It should, however, be noted that “gospel” is not a word originating in the New Testament. Here it is in Isaiah, and we will read also in the Bible that Abraham had the gospel preached to Him. Verses like this in the Old and New Testament will help us later understand the Bible on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and receive comfort from that Gospel.

12. I Kings 19:10,14,18 and Romans 11:3,4.
“‘LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life’? But what does the divine response say to him ‘I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’” As it did here to Elijah often as we consider the majority going the broad way to destruction versus the minority going to narrow way, it may seem like we are alone; but God always in every generation has
a remnant. In this case and during the time of the rule of Ahab and Jezebel in the whole nation of Israel there were only seven thousand that remained true. The remnant will become less and less as we approach the end times of the Falling Away to be discussed in another chapter.

III. The 13 major quotes in Romans 9-11, which we will sample now.


“I will call them My people, who were not My people, and her beloved who were not beloved. And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ there they shall be called sons of the living God.” Several years ago Prime Minister Begin was quoted as saying, “You Americans are born Christians just as Israelis are born Jews.” Well, that needs some discussion in the light of the book of Romans, but it does set the stage. The Prophet Hosea looked around at the lack of religious worship of God in his nation, all the worship of idols, and at the oppression of people in the land; and according to the instruction of God took to wife a known harlot in order to give the message of the relationship between God and His people. Then Hosea announced for God the rejection of these first people as chosen of God.


“Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, the remnant will be saved. For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the LORD will make a short work upon the earth.” Wow, first of all you see indelible that only a remnant of Israel is going to be saved at the end of time when the LORD God makes a “short work” upon this earth at the Great Day of the LORD and Lord to be discussed in detail in latter chapters, the end of time or eschatology.

3. Isaiah 1:9 and Romans 9:29.

“Unless the LORD of Sabbath had left us a seed, we would have become like Sodom, and we would have been made like Gomorrah.” God destroyed
the twin wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire with only Lot and his family being rescued, and the children of Israel would be exactly the same if a seed had not been saved. In this case the Seed is Christ and perhaps even a double mean with the remnant included of the nation of Israel that would ultimately be saved.

This is the last major quote from the ninth chapter of Romans. “Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” We know why Paul is quoting this about be put to shame or being ashamed as we later learn in Romans 10 that whoever believes in Christ will not be ashamed. Here, the rock of offense and stumbling stone put in front of the children of Israel, another name is Zion, is Christ and in particular the offensive nature of the Cross and of righteousness by faith instead of the works at which the nation of Israel was good to a certain extent.
When it is said of American Society that the “time has already come when the churches, churchmembers, and denominations will not endure sound doctrine,” it seems tame. This within itself is the sound of a phrase, while entirely Biblical, far too moderate to adequately describe the extreme of the present state of affairs of the Christ Faith. There is nothing wrong with this portion of the Bible, II Timothy 4:3,4, as Word of God: rather the fact that it sounds mild is a commentary on our hearing in this country, and the world, as to how far we have departed from sound doctrine, so that no longer are we even alarmed that we could be in THE END TIME when churchmembers will no longer endure sound doctrine. I prefer to call it the time when churchmembers are no longer tolerant of sound doctrine.

Since you are reading this book the assumption is made that you desire to hear THE SOUND OF A SOUND FAITH; that you desire to know what the Bible teaches on the so-called “falling away from the faith” predicted by Jesus and the Apostles; and that you also want to appreciate God’s warning of the seriousness of the condition of churchmembers and churches during those end times. You can see and hear how serious it is from reading the historical description in Isaiah of when a similar state of affairs existed in Israel, shortly before their end as a great nation.

“Now go, write it before them on a tablet, and note it on a scroll, that it may be for time to come, forever and ever: that this is a rebellious people, lying children, children who will not hear the law of the LORD; who say to the seers, ‘Do not see,’ and to the prophets, ‘do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits. Get out of the way, turn aside from the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.’” (Isaiah 30:8-11)
Does the seriousness sink in like that of a cancer in our churches and among our churchmembers? Churchmembers are “rebellious” toward the law and Word of God. Ah, that sounds much different than “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine”. Recently a monument to the Ten Commandments from before a Federal court building in Alabama, and in its place the Prophet Isaiah and the Apostle Paul, as well as Jesus Himself, would advocate a new tablet with the words about “a rebellious people” and “lying children” that no longer can endure to hear the real truth of God and the Bible. American churches now “will not hear the law of the LORD”. American churches are saying to their preachers while they are replacing them in favor of preachers “with itching ears”, “do not prophesy to us right things”. While these churches and churchmembers are “heaping to themselves {this takes a lot or effort} teachers having itching ears,” in the seminaries and pulpits of America, they are effectively saying, if not in the actual words, “speak to us smooth things” and “prophesy deceits”. And in the cases where the pastors will not listen, they run them off, also effectively saying, “Get out of the way”.

This book accepts two burdens of proof: (1) to offer ten evidences from among churches and churchmembers of unsound doctrine (as for example the taking of God’s name in vain) to convince you that we are indeed in the end times of the falling away; and (2) with cues from the unsound doctrine, to determine from the Bible of the Prophets and the Apostles what the sound of sound doctrine really is. We must limit the book to the sound of sound doctrine, since there is no way to cover all of doctrine in one book. That book already exists in the Bible which is the Word of God, anyway; and since the other word for “doctrine” is “teaching”, you need only read the Bible for yourself while practicing the good principles of hermeneutics, the science of biblical interpretation. (one such principle is the willingness to do the will of God when you hear it, and this will require going counter to those around you,
the majority of whom will now “no longer endure sound doctrine”.

EVIDENCES OF THE END TIME {THE FALLING AWAY} IN WHICH CHURCHES AND CHURCHMEMBERS BECOME INTOLERANT TOWARD SOUND DOCTRINE!

Eleven evidences that should be apparent to all will be offered which indicate that we in American Society and indeed in the world are in the end times when they will no longer be an endurance toward sound doctrine as predicted in II Timothy 4,34. It is easy to be confused by some of the time-ending phrases of the Bible such as “latter days”, “latter times”, “last days”, and et cetera; however there are two very definitive words in the Bible about which there should be no misunderstanding, the word “end” and the phrase “falling away”. Christ taught both the terminal word and the terminal phrase, and the Apostles took up where He left off!

THE “END”

Matthew 24:6- “And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.”

Matthew 24:12,13- “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.”

Matthew 24:14- “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

Of course, from the word “end” in the Bible is where we get our word “eschatology”. It is the study of the end of the world. You understand at the termination of a movie or a book when you see the phrase “the end” that the story is over. Well, when you see Christ and the Apostles talking about the end of this world age, you know that the story of the earth as we know it now is over and the story of civilization on this earth as we know it is over!

THE “FALLING AWAY”
II Thessalonians 2:1-2—“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come. Let no one deceive you by an means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition…”

Therefore according to the Word of God which is divine in origin (it came from God), absolute in authority (what authority could be greater than God Himself), sufficient in message (designed to tell us all we need to know that the man of God may be complete), and high fidelity in content (God knows how to communicate His message through the Bible), there will be a falling away from the faith and an end. The burden of proof of this message with (11) proofs to follow, is that the time of the falling away is already here, in American Society as well as in the whole world; and therefore the “time will come” of which Paul writes in II Timothy 4:3,4 is already upon us. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.”

1. The first evidence of unsound doctrine offered is the proliferation of the taking of God’s name in vain. There is nothing more fundamental in the Bible than God and respect for God. Yet how often on television and in books and conversation in your environment do you hear the taking of God’s name in vain. In spite of the fact that Jesus taught, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain” and “that God will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.”

2. The second evidence that we are in the time of intolerance toward sound doctrine is the rebellion against Christ’s teaching of marriage and
divorce. Let me say up front that this is not an effort to blast those who have been divorced. Divorce is the sin of adultery, but like any other sin the offender needs only confess it to God in order to receive forgiveness. The sign of unsound doctrine is when individuals and groups rebel against the validity of what Jesus taught. In other words they will not face up to the truth that God intended for marriage to be for life, that when a man divorces a woman and remarries he commits adultery, and when a woman remarries she commits adultery.

3. Another sign of this as the time of intolerance toward sound doctrine is the proliferation of the confusion and self-seeking in churches of all denominations. The pastors have to a great extend become baby seaters and controllers of confusion.

Perilous Times versus “The Time Will Come” of II Timothy

It should be obvious for serious Bible readers that the “perilous times” of II Timothy 3:1 is the not the same as “the time will come” of II Timothy 4:3. The “perilous times” of II Timothy 3:1-3 when churchmembers exhibit a form of godliness that denies the power of God is sort of the valleys of spiritual progress even as revivals are the mountain tops of spiritual progress, while the end times (eschatology times) of “the time will come” is after all the mountain tops and valleys are over and the perilous times valleys become a steady leveling off of unsound doctrine, often called the Great Apostasy.

You can see the great difference between “perilous times” and “end times” by looking at the last characteristics the Apostle Paul under inspiration mentions in the II Timothy 3:1-9, “but they {this group of leaders in a local church that have the form of godliness} will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs {Jannes and Jambres} was (II Timothy 3:9).”

In short the perilous times are over when the folly of the lovers-of-themselves leaders, the form of godliness without inward power, is no longer
revealed. If it happens in your local church and denomination, and you can recognized it, according the descriptive words and phrases of II Timothy 3:1-9--leaders that are lovers of self and money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, denying the Biblical heritage of their parents, unthankful to God and the leadership of the past, unholy and unloving and unforgiving, unlike God and Christ, slanderers of pastors and those that disagree although sometimes subtle like Satan about it, of course with sensible excuses, without self-control exercised for the benefit of the body of Christ and for Christ, brutal in their attitude toward Biblical truth, despisers of the good that preach and teach truth without compromise, and traitors toward Christian history and faith and practices, headstrong in such a way that it looks like convictions more than fleshly desire and determination, haughty in thinking that they and their group can do no wrong, lovers of pleasure {what they personally need} more than lovers of God and what He wants for the local church and denomination, and the folly of it continues without renunciation, then we have passed from the perilous times into the end time.

The folly of such church leaders is no long revealed because they are in the majority in their church and denomination. The time has come for intolerance toward sound doctrine, and the majority is too busy heaping up teachers and a fortress against truth to listen to sound doctrine, sometimes pathetically to even know that it exists!

The Spiral Downward in the Intolerance Toward Sound Doctrine

Look at the steps in the downward spiral of the “time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine”. It reminds one somewhat with the addition of the perilous times above II Timothy 4:3,4, of the downward spiral of civilizations as given in the first chapter of Romans.

1. First, there is the lack of endurance toward sound doctrine. This I call intolerance toward sound doctrine. It can start with insincerity toward any doctrine of the Bible like on marriage, divorce, and the taking of God’s
name in vain. It can seem harmless, but it grows in the individual life and becomes contagious to other churchmembers.

2. Second, the personal desires of the churchmembers become more important than the desire of Christ and the desire of the Pastor and the desire of the Bible. Like in our society today, the churchmember says “how does this affect me” and “what does this do for me”?

3. Third, those personal desires lead churchmembers to scratch their ears. I am not sure what the connection between itching ears and personal desires is, but to the Apostle Paul and the Spirit of God there was a connection. I can speculate and say, that it is the ears that turn red with embarrassment when the Word of God is clearly taught and the teachings of Jesus are clearly known on matters like divorce, marriage, and God’s name are known; and in order to get comfort from those embarrassed ears the churchmembers seeks relief.

4. Fourth is the action item. What is the outcome of intolerance toward sound doctrine, of giving way to personal desires, and the seeking for comfort from itching ears: it is the natural outcome of getting teachers and preachers that will tell the churchmembers those things that will comfort their ears. They seek preachers and teachers like themselves who also have itching ears.

5. Fifth, they do not just seek those kinds of itching ears teachers. They heap them up into a fortress than will protect themselves from any sound of sound doctrine. Oh, how skillful becomes the man of wisdom, or scholar in Seminary, or preacher of popularity, or teacher of the masses becomes in the heaping and itching ear process. They go beyond the leading captive like a wolf in sheep’s clothing of the perilous times, they go beyond the taking captive of silly women who have not confessed their sins and need to rationalize, to the heaping high of their fortress.

6. Sixth, and how tragic this is, the almost end result is that they turn
away from “THE TRUTH”. You know who the way, the truth, and the life is; and yet that fortress of intolerance toward sound doctrine becomes such a social and political influence in churches that truth itself, and Christ Himself, is turned away from.

7. Seventh, the end comes as they are turned into fables. Wow, what a sad outcome in a church or denomination when over a period of time it goes up and down through the mountain tops of revival and the valleys of self-loving perilous times until it finally comes in the end times, the time of the great apostasy, already upon us, when there is the intolerance toward sound doctrine that finally spirals downward into fables. It is much like the Trojan Horse that seemed so simple when it was allowed to be brought into the city of Troy, but which ultimately meant the destruction of the city. One little doctrine that we ignore on divorce or God’s name in vain can be the Trojan horse, one little time that for practical means of social unity in the church we practice anarchy in church government and run God’s pastor out of the church can be the Trojan Horse that ultimate ends in your practice of beliefs in fables. You see, when you get there you no long know the difference between right and wrong, you no longer know what is sound doctrine and unsound doctrine
I. The Bible’s Own Definition of Faith.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1)

Even in the Bible, few things are as clearly defined as is “faith”!

“...faith is...”, we read in the Word of God as recorded in Hebrews 11:1.

FAITH IS:

(1). The Substance of Things Hoped For; and
(2). The Evidence of Things Not Seen.

1. Substance

Our Christian faith needs substance. Faith like so many other things in life even as love is intangible in that you can not see it, feel it, taste it, or hear it directly. You can see and hear the results of faith and love, but you can not see or hear these intangibles within themselves. As Christians what do we hope for? Well, we hope: (1) To see God face to face and eternally; (2) To be inhabitants of the new heavens and new earth; (3) To be accepted here on earth as a child of God; and so on. Well all these hopes deal with things that can not presently be seen—God Himself, heaven, salvation, and the new heavens and new earth; but the encouraging word of the Bible is that our Christian faith gives “substance” to these things that are hoped for! Actually “hoped for” being words of the King James English of 1611 does not adequately express the full meaning in today’s English of what was original written by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul in the First Century. Today’s equivalent of this portion of Hebrews 11:1 would be more that what we hope for is “more what we reasonably expect is going to happen.”

2. Evidence
Christian faith besides giving substance to our legitimate hopes also is within itself an "evidence". The Apostle Paul who wrote the book of Hebrews was first a lawyer before he became an Apostle, and naturally to lawyers there is little as important as evidence. Of course before we take the present attitude toward Paul that most people have toward lawyers, since all the law of the Hebrew nation was religious law except what they had to heed as being under the Roman government, then Paul's job as a lawyer before his conversion was to interpret and uphold the religious laws of the Old Testament as the Pharisees had come to interpret them in the First Century.

When a young man and when Christian Evidences and Christian Apologetics were so important to me in order to provide an intellectual foundation and arguments to justify Christian faith, there were two books very important to me that provided evidence of Christian faith. One was a book by a lawyer who had practiced law before the Supreme Court of the United States entitled A LAWYER EXAMINES THE BIBLE. Irwin Linton, the author, maintained in the book that sufficient evidence existed in the Bible to support a prima facie case sufficient for any modern court of law whereby Jesus Christ's claims to be the Son of God would be supported in those courts of law. Further Linton stated that he had never met a lawyer who when he said that he did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who could also say that he had read through the four gospels for himself to determine the validity of the claim. Linton also tells of Simon Greenleaf, the former Dean of the Harvard Law School, who in writing the book THE TESTIMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS, and who being at that time an authority on the subject of "evidence", stated that the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John would be sufficient in any court of law to substantiate the claim that Jesus was and is the Son of God!

Another book that was good in the defense of the Christian faith was that of Mosma's THE EVIDENCE OF GOD IN AN EXPANDING UNIVERSE.
This book is a compilation of articles written by over 40 scientists in government, education, and industry with evidence from their particular scientific fields as to why they believe in God. The biologists found in the details of the design of man and animals, evidence of God; the physicists found in the atomic and astronomical design of the small and large of the earth and universe the evidence of God; and mathematicians found in the logic of man and the universe evidence of God.

II. The Word “Faith” in the Bible.
When you deal with the word “faith” in the Bible, you are dealing with the Bible itself. Faith is indeed the primary subject of the Bible apart from the two major subjects of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and much of the Bible on those two very fundamental subjects of God and Jesus are there to engender “faith” on the part of the reader or listener. If momentarily we stick with the King James Version of the Bible—primarily because concordances such as YOUNG’S ANALYTICAL are more readily available for the King James—we will find that the word “faith” is: (1) Found in the Bible with five distinct Hebrew and Greek words; (2) Two of those five are Hebrew words of the Old Testament and naturally the other three of those words are Greek words of the New Testament; and (3) Faith is primarily a New Testament word with only two usages in the Old Testament as compared to approximately 239 times in the New Testament; and (4) The word “faith” is found in 24 out of 27 New Testament books, faith itself is found in 27 out of 27 New Testament books as we will find it is also possible to talk about faith without the usage of the word itself.

However since the purpose of this first chapter is a definition of “faith” from the Bible, we will briefly look at all 241 usages of this word “faith” in the Bible; for it is in the usages of the word faith in the context of the verses, chapters, and books of the Bible that more define the concept of faith than even the precise definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1. In fact, as we look at
the other 240 out of 241 usages of “faith”, you will come to appreciate even more the definition of Hebrews 11:1, especially when you consider the in-context weight of the fact that in Hebrews chapter 11 alone there are 23 other usages of the word “faith”; and that is a good place to start our study of the definition of faith as we find that Paul is summarizing faith in the Old Testament where the word faith itself has not previously been used. For example, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses are mentioned in Hebrews 11 as practitioners of faith, and yet the word “faith” in not mentioned except twice in the Old Testament. Just before we look as the usages of faith in Hebrews 11, we will look at the two usages in the Old Testament.

1. The Word “Faith” in the Old Testament

   (1). Faith in Deuteronomy 32:20. The Hebrew word translated “faith” here in the King James Version is more literally in modern English translated as “faithfulness” or “steadiness”.

   “And he said (God said), I will hide my face from them (from the children of Israel), I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very forward generation, children in whom is no faith.” (Deuteronomy 32:20 KJV)

   (2). Faith in Habakkuk 2:4. Here the Hebrew word is more literally “faithfulness” or “stability”; but it gets redefined as do so many other Bible words when it is quoted in the New Testament, and naturally we would have to think that in the mind and heart of God that original meaning was in the Old Testament all the time, beyond the common usage of the Hebrew, or Greek, language in the ordinary usages of the conversations or other documents of the times.


      “Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.” (Habakkuk 2:4)

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ’But the righteous man shall live by faith.’” (Romans 1:16,17 NASV)

By the way, here in Romans 1:16,17 and in Habakkuk 2:4 as quoted in Romans 1:17, we see examples of both substance and evidence in faith. Here we see: (1) Gospel; (2) God’s power; (3) Salvation; (4) Believes; (5) Righteousness; and (6) God. God we have never seen! “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (John 1:18 KJV)

3. The righteousness of God we have never seen. Fortunately the righteousness of God was given some substance in the Old Testament by the laws of God, particularly the Ten Commandments, and in the New Testament by the record of the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ— “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17 KJV)

4. “Faith” in Hebrews 11
   (1). Hebrews 11:1.
   “And what is faith? Faith gives substance to our hopes, and makes us certain of realities we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1 NEV)

   (2). Hebrews 11:2.
   “It is for their faith that the men of old stand on record.” (Hebrews 11:2 NEV)

   The New English Version adds “faith” to 11:2 whereas the implication of the King James Version is the same with “it” for faith, referring to the “faith” of Hebrews 11:1 as the “it” already is on record. “For by it the elders obtained a good report.” (Hebrews 11:2 KJV)

This also serves to remind us that we are about to look closely at the “elders”
or forefathers of the Old Testament and their good records or reports of faith, although the word “faith” is not mentioned in the original record.

(3). Hebrews 11:3.

“By faith we perceive that the universe was fashioned by the word of God, so that the visible came forth from the invisible.”  (Hebrews 11:3 NEV)  True, we can see the universe; and therefore we do not need the substance or evidence that faith gives -ah, but while we see the results, we do not see that God brought it into being instead of some great explosion or some other means that the majority of the world believes!

(4). Hebrews 11:4, “by faith” Abel left a memorial to faith and to righteousness by faith in that he sacrificed according to obedience, according to faith in the words which God spoke to him.  Cain tried another way, and it did not work in the sight of God!

(5). Hebrews 11:5—Enoch pleased God, his faith in God pleased God; and that same faith was so great that God took him straight to heaven without passing through the portal of death.

(6). Hebrews 11:6, Faith is the only way to please God! “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.”  (Hebrews 11:6  KJV)

{NOTE:  Here is something that is apparent but still needs to be noted.  “Believe” is the verb form of the noun word “faith”, so that while the book of John does not use the word “faith” as with some other books of the New Testament, indeed of the whole Bible, the word “believe” is found in those books.}

What must men believe in order to please God?

(1). That God exists.  That God is!

(2). That God rewards those who diligently seek Him.  Those that sought God sincerely in the Old Testament through the Law, and those who seek God
sincerely through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ after His Advent.

(7). Hebrews 11:7: Noah could not see the rain yet nor the Flood of the whole earth that would come, yet he believed the word of God when God said that it was going to rain for 40 days and nights enough to Flood the whole earth and destroy everything living; and by this believing or faith, Noah “became heir of the righteousness which is by faith” (Heb 11:7).

Right here we could discuss extensively if desired as to whether this “righteousness” of Noah, a righteousness by faith, was seen or not seen. In other words as to whether it needed substance or evidence like faith, or as to whether the righteousness already had substance? To sufficient answer that question as with all questions in the Bible related to man’s righteousness—even as with Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 1:16,17 quoted earlier, we must distinguish between legal righteousness and actual righteousness.

(1). Legal righteousness is that in the sight of God which therefore can not be seen by us even as God Himself can not be seen by us. Legal righteousness is sometimes called “justification” or the “atonement”. It is the legal act on the part of God whereby when God sees our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, He declares our righteousness to be the same as that of Jesus.

(2). Actual righteousness is the continuation of salvation after the initial regeneration or germ of salvation. At the new birth, or regeneration, the spirit of Christ is planted as a germ in our human spirits whereby we can grow in actual righteousness or Christlikeness. Sanctification is that process by which the power of the Holy Spirit continues to make us more actually righteous based on our increased faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

(8). Hebrews 11:8-19, the Faith of Abraham. Read it for yourself in conjunction with the fact that God Himself preached the Gospel to Abraham as recorded in Galatians 3:8 and Genesis 12:1-3—

“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all
nations be blessed.”  (Galatians 3:8) Even as you don’t see the word “faith” when you read Genesis 12:1-3, nor do you see God justifying {justification or atonement} neither Abraham nor the Gentiles to come, you also do not see the word “Gospel” in Genesis 12:1-3. However, although you do not see the word Gospel or faith there, you know it is there in concept apart from the actual words because the New Testament says it is! “Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”  (Genesis 12:1-3)

(11). “By faith” and Joshua and the children of Israel marching around the walls of Jericho, Hebrews 11:30,31.

III. IMPACT OF THE HOPE!

In order to get the full impact of Christian faith, we must first get the full impact of Christian hope—“now, faith is the substance of things HOPED FOR...” Three things are most important in the Christian life—faith, hope, and love; and although the greatest of these is love, in order to appreciate the full impact of the love of God in providing Christian faith as a way of life, we must see also all that God has provided both in this life and the life to come. All of this is summarized in HOPE!

“Behold, I make all things new...”  (Rev 21:5) One word, the word new, as found in Revelation 21:5 above can make obvious the full impact of hope upon Christian faith! While they may seem a tremendous burden to
place on one word, even the word new, it helps when we realize that this word and with the words above in Revelation 21:5 comes from God Himself, from “he that sat upon the throne” (Rev 21:5). Quickly in the book of Revelation the Almighty God the Father becomes “HE THAT SAT (AND SITS) ON THE THRONE”. In other words, God the Father reigns supreme over all the universe; and although the Father has placed all things under the feet of Jesus, and by Jesus all things consists and have their being, above the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the Almighty God the Father who is sitting supreme on the great white throne. Just above the clouds, and with His feet in the clouds, sits God the Father in another dimension that we can not see. He sits on the “circle of the earth” so that He can see every sparrow that falls to the ground or each lily of the field that neither toils nor spins, yet your heavenly Father cares for them.

This God, the God of love and power, the God of the great white throne on the circle of the earth, and the God of the Lord Jesus Christ and full salvation, is the God who speaks, saying, “Behold, I make all things new…” You can count on it that all things in the heavens and on earth will be new. Counting on it, counting on these words from the Great Almighty God sitting on the great white throne of the universe is what faith is all about. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Faith believes that God is, that God is sitting up there on the great white throne caring and watching; and that this God rewards those who diligently seek Him!

God is making “all things” new:

(1). God is making a new earth.

(2). God is making new heavens.

(3). God is making a new people to inhabit the new earth and under the new heavens.

All presently in this universe is very fragile. As physicists have told us for generations and as stated in the second law of thermodynamics—the
order of the universe is decreasing. It is called the “law of entropy”. Entropy is increasing, and entropy is essentially disorder. So that the law of entropy tells us that order is decreasing in the universe and disorder is increasing. Sometimes we might tend to think that this physical law also has a social implication as a few weeks ago we witnessed in the news the anarchy, riots, and destruction in the city of Los Angeles. As we realize that our American society has within it the potential for self-destruction. Even as we realized also with the Judge Thomas affair that if America is destroyed, it must be destroyed from within as no foes are powerful enough to destroy it from the outside; and that this way of destruction is to destroy each other democratically in the public forum as we kill reputations, careers, and respect for others. With the boomers it has become very popular to tear down without grace and without compassion. No doubt these social as well as physical potentials for destruction are what the Apostle Paul had in mind as he wrote: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” (Romans 8:22) The earth itself groans with earthquakes; the heavens of the universe groans with falling stars and entropy; and society and the individuals that make up society groan in self destruction for something better, and to be better! Even as the Creation of the world of the Genesis account includes the stars, the moon, the sun, man, and all the animals, fish, and birds, even so must the “whole creation (which) groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” includes man, earth, and the heavens. The obvious analogy here is of a woman in travail and groaning to give birth; and even as that pain of birth is endured in order for the hope of bringing forth a new child, even so the groaning of this old earth, heavens, and man is in the hope of the new earth, new heavens, and the new man.

IV. The Context of Romans 8:22
In order to build faith in hope, and hope in faith, we will base our faith and hope on the contest of the Word of God as given in these verse that surround
in context of Romans 8:22. In order words, we will develop more understanding of Romans 8:22 by developing more understanding of the words that surround Romans 8:22.

Romans 8:18-25—

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope; for what man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” (Romans 8:18-25)

The contrast is obvious between the present life and the life to come— “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”. This is the contrast between “the present life” and the future life; and while some criticisms of non-Christians or of social Christianity have been valid in that Christians have and do sometimes ignore the applications of Christian faith to this present life while concentrating solely on the future life, it is still true that THERE IS NO COMPARISON BETWEEN THIS PRESENT LIFE AND THE FUTURE LIFE.

And that while we must heed the faith contending of the Apostle James—to be discussed in the second half of this book—that faith is dead faith in this life without words in this life, it remains a fact of the Bible, the
Word of God, that the priority is for the future life where all things, people and universe, will be made new!

1. Romans 8:18. We must distinguish between the three aspects of salvation: (1) Salvation in the past which is called “regeneration” or the new birth which happens or happened the first time that a Christian expressed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) Salvation in the present which is a matter of Christian growth or growth in Christlikeness which is generally called “sanctification”; and (3) Salvation in the future of which Paul is writing in Romans 8:18, “the glory which shall be revealed in us”. This last aspect of future salvation is much greater than the past and present aspects of salvation: this last aspect of salvation in the future is the very reason that Paul at the close of this passage in Romans 8:24 writes of “we are saved by hope”; for this is a salvation still to come. One which requires hope and requires faith!

2. Romans 8:19. Here is another way to say hope and faith: “earnest expectation”. It is more than legitimate expectation: It is earnest expectation! What do we wait to happen in the future as we continue in earnest expectation? The answer is here in this verse—“for the manifestation of the sons of God” These are the new creatures of the new heavens and new earth, the new sons of God. Even as Jesus Christ was and is the “firstborn of God”, so also is every Christian the secondborns as sons of God. As the Bible tells us in John 1:12.

“But as many as received him (Christ the Word made flesh), to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12,13)

The Apostle John is so fearful that we are going to miss the prime purpose of the book of John which is to “believe” in order to have “life”, abundant life at the present time and eternal life in the future, that here at the beginning and in the first chapter he lays out the whole plan of salvation around the
Lord Jesus Christ as the “Word made flesh”.

3. Romans 8:20. This matter of every person on the face of the earth “being subjected to vanity” speaks also of this tendency of individuals and societies to self destruct. The Apostle James, quoting form the Old Testament in Proverbs, says it this way of even the Christian spirit:

“Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (James 4:5 KJV)

No, the Bible says nothing to vain for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see; and the Bible, Old and New Testaments, tells us that even after the initial faith and new birth that the old spirit stays inside us, that spirit even of a Christian which continues to envy, to vanity, and to self destruct.


“Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Romans 8:21 KJV)

(1). FROM: the bondage of corruption, from vanity, and from the spirit within us which lusteth to envy.

(2). TO: glorious liberty from corruption, from vanity, and from the spirit within that lusteth to envy; and to being a complete and completed child of God, a complete new creation in Christ!

5. Romans 8:22: “FOR WE KNOW THAT THE WHOLE CREATION GROANETH AND TRAVAILETH IN PAIN TOGETHER UNTIL NOW”. (ROMANS 8:22)

(1). Romans 8:22 in the New English Version.

“Up to this present, we know, the whole created universe groans in all its parts as if in the pang of childbirth.” (Romans 8:22 NEV)

a. “We know”—this is a matter of faith, hope, and understanding, that we have the confidence to know.

b. “The whole created universe groans”—this gives us obvi-
ous understanding that it is the whole universe of earth, heavens, and created beings.

c. “In the pangs of childbirth”—this gives us obvious understanding that the groaning and travailing of the King James Version is that of childbirth. The earth is in the pain of child birth to bring forth the new earth; the heavens are in the pains of childbirth, or entropy, to being forth the new heavens; and men and women are in the pains of childbirth to bring forth new men and new women.

“For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.” (Romans 8:22 NASV)

6. Romans 8:23.
“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” (Romans 8:23)

(1). We wait in hope and faith as Christians for the complete body.

(2). We wait in hope and faith for the completed work of the Holy Spirit inside and outside our bodies, sanctification and glorification.

(3). We wait in hope and faith for the completed adoption as children of God.

(4). We wait in hope and faith for completed redemption; that is, for the complete salvation of our bodies as well as our souls and spirits.

7. Romans 8:24.
How are we saved? “For we are saved by hope...” Is it hope if we can see our salvation already? No, “but hope that is seen is not hope...” You are out of luck if you can see your salvation as completed already, because this is not hope! If you see your salvation then you have nothing to hope for: “For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”
8. Romans 8:25.

“But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” (Romans 8:25)

V. FIRST CENTURY HISTORY OF FAITH CONTENDING.

Okay, we have the faith as set out in the first six chapters of this commentary. Now, what are we going to do with it? The Bible teachings that we are to do three things with our Christian faith: (1) Grow in it; (2) Evangelize with it; and (3) Contend for it. While growing in the Christian faith is important for both ourselves and others with whom we evangelize and contend, the second two are strictly for other people—to contend with the Christian faith for the benefit of others and we evangelize for the benefit of others, the two for others aspects of Christian faith have approximately equal priority in our Christian efforts. This is indicated by the temporal priority the Apostle Jude gave to faith contending as he stopped writing a book on the salvation of evangelism in order to write a book on faith contending—

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3 KJV)

You see how “faith” here in Jude 3 covers the two distinct usage of faith in the rest of the New Testament—as a summary and as an individual exercise—which were discussed in the first six chapters. And the way Jude writes of “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” leads us to believe that all the Apostles except Jude have already done their job of delivering in written and verbal form the summary of faith in their books of the New Testament—first Matthew, then Paul, then James and Peter, and lastly John before the Apostle Jude comes to write about the necessity of “Faith Contending”!

THE REASON THAT FAITH CONTENDING IS NECESSARY IS
1. What Happened in First Century Christianity? You miss the whole point of Jude, of faith contending, and of the primary reason for faith contending if you do not realize that the problem then and now is with certain leaders that are inside the Christian faith! “For there are certain men crept in unawares...” (Jude 4): these men, leaders in certain churches were inside the Christian movement; and that is the kind of men that the book of Jude is dealing with, the kind of problem with which faith contending then and today must deal. FAITH CONTENDING DEALS WITH CONTENTIOUS FAITH ON THE PART OF CONTENTIOUS LEADERS IN SOME CHURCHES! Let me briefly summarize what happened related to Christian faith in the First Century churches, and which simultaneously created needs for increased faith and faith contending: (1) The Apostle Paul near the end of his missionary journeys called the elders of the church at Ephesus together to warn them as to how quickly men immediately after his departure would come into their churches from outside and some men homegrown that would divert from the faith; (2) About the same time Paul was working with the Gentile churches, the Apostle James found it necessary to explain to Jewish Christians the difference between dead faith and living faith, between faith with works and faith without works; (3) Likewise about the same time the Apostle Peter had to also write the Christian Jews to warn of dogs that were returning to their vomit; (4) Later the Apostle John wrote first Revelation and then the Gospel of John to give men the proper basis for belief, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ; (5) then in 1 John while setting forth that certain men can not be prayed for who have committed the unpardonable sin, the Apostle John urged in the spirit of faith contending to “test the spirits” because many false spirits and Antichrists were already in the world; (6) II John had to deal with those false spirits and Antichrists in terms of an exclusion from the
company of Christians; (7) Since those of contentious faith quickly assimilate all characteristics of the real faith by the time of III John the practitioners of contentious faith had begin to reject a real messenger from a real Apostle from their company; and (8) The Apostle Jude reiterates about the warnings of the Apostles Paul, James, Peter, and John concerning men that would crept into the First Century Christian movement unawares, leading other Christians astray.

Above is a brief of what we will look at in more detail in this chapter. These conclusions and perspectives will be supported with quotations and references from the Scriptures. You will find that what we are talking about is a FIRST CENTURY HISTORY OF FAITH CONTENDING.

2. The Miletus Pastor’s Conference  Paul at the end of his missionary journeys and before he went to Jerusalem where he had been warned that imprisonment awaited him, called the Ephesus’ elders together at Miletus for a Pastor’s Conference. He warned them what would happen immediately after his departure, how that “grievous wolves” would come into the churches of Asia from two sources: (1) Some would come from outside the churches on promise of letter; and (2) Others would be home grown Christians and Christian leaders—

“Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has given you charge, as shepherds of the church of the Lord, which he won for himself by his own blood. I know that when I am gone, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own body there will be men coming forward who will distort the truth to induce the disciples to break away and follow them. So be on the alert; remember how for three years, night and day, I never ceased to consul each of you, and how I wept over you.” (Acts 20:28 31  NEV)

How quickly the “savage wolves” can come in behind evangelistic and Christian growth work! Paul worked at Ephesus for three years, giving them the best
efforts of a loving and knowledgeable Apostle. The Bible tells us that during this period of time that the efforts were so extensive that all Asia heard the Gospel with Ephesus as an evangelistic and teaching base. It is here that we see, no doubt, the foundation for all the seven churches of Asia Minor that are mentioned in the first chapters of the book of Revelation, which by the way is also an exercise in faith contending and part of the First Century History of Faith Contending. Now, one point that I will consistently make here is that if the savage wolves came immediately behind the Apostle Paul himself and in the First Century, what do you expect to happen in this Century? Ah yes, they are here; and they are in the Christian movement; and they are as hard, if not harder, to recognize as they were in the First Century.

Paul calls them “savage wolves” or “grievous wolves”—Acts 20:29.

The Apostle James calls them “enemies of God” since they are a friend of the world—James 4:4.

The Apostle Peter calls these “false teachers” “natural brute beasts”, comparing them to the Proverbs about dogs and vomit and pigs and mud—II Peter 2.

The Apostle John calls them false spirits and Antichrists, warning not to pray for them when they have crossed the boundary of the unpardonable sin—I John.

The Apostle Jude calls them “spots in your feasts”, clouds without water, raging waves of the sea, and wandering stars—Jude 12,13.

“Wow, these are horrible men,” you might say. “We don’t know any of them since such would be immediately apparent if they came into our fellowship.”

NOT SO; AND THAT IS PART OF THE PROBLEM—ALSO THE REASON THAT PAUL USES THE WORD “WOLVES” AS IN “WOLVES IN SHEEP’S CLOTHING. YOU CAN NOT RECOGNIZE THEM. IF YOU COULD RECOGNIZE THEM THERE WOULD BE NO PROBLEM!
3. Dead Faith versus Living Faith  The whole book of James by the Apostle James is truly an effort to “contend for the faith” by pointing out to first century Christians and therefore also to us what is the difference between real Christian faith and simulated Christian faith. The problem then as today was that many claimed to be Christians and Christian leaders who were not Christian at all!

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:19,20)

And James is much deeper than faith versus works. It is faith with a certain kind of works versus faith without a certain kind of works. All Christians and all humans have some kind of works, some sort of things which they do good or bad and in between; and the things which we do are called our works. We definitely have some kinds of works; but the Apostle James is going much deeper than faith versus works in defining the kind of works that are accepted as living proofs of living faith.

(1). Living faith brings tribulations which give birth to Christian patience, James 1:3,4. By the faith tribulation is faith contending itself because it tests your own faith—

“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” (James 1:3)

(2). Living faith receives wisdom from God, James 1:5.

(3). Dead faith doubts the receiving of wisdom, and is like driftwood on the sea that drifts from place to place, James 1:6.

(4). Practitioners of dead faith are double minded men, unstable in all their ways, James 1:8.

(5). Practitioners of living faith endure trials, receiving ultimately the crown of life which is Eternal Life, James 1:12.

(6). While dead faith listens and does not do being a forgetful
hearer, living faith listens and does, James 1:22-25.

(7). There are those who appear to be religious, these practitioners of dead faith; but the fact that they do not control their tongues shows them not to be among the practitioners of living faith, James 1:26,27. You see how the real contrast in the book of James is between a certain kind of works which cannot control the tongue versus another certain kind of works which can control the tongue. And the kind of works—the works of living faith—which can control the tongue are also the works of pure religion, the kind of works that visits the fatherless and widows in their afflictions and that keeps itself unspotted from the world.
Sound #3- 6: “THAT DAY...”, II Thessalonians 2:1-12

Paul speaks of “that day” in II Thessalonians 2:3 as if there was only one and that it was well known by all believers in New Testament times. Indeed “that day”, called the Day of the LORD with capital letters in the Old Testament for the Jehovah God, and called the Day of the Lord in the New Testament for the Second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ was well known among those who studied the Old Testament and who read the epistles and letters from the Apostles of Jesus.

That Day, the Day of the LORD and the Lord had become so well known as to be a doctrine that like all other doctrines had developed related to it heresies and follies. What happened in the New Testament times was that the Day of the LORD of the Old Testament became more identified with the Second Coming of Christ in the New Testament. It is the same period of time called a DAY; but it is understandable that the Second Coming of Christ could not become clear as teachings or doctrines until the First Coming of Christ was obvious. When the world saw and heard the Lord Jesus Christ as His first Coming; when he taught and live and died on the cross for the sins of the world, then the Apostles could take his teachings on eschatology (last things) and with the help of the Holy Spirit write the complete foreknowledge of the events at the end of the world.

1. The connotation of the Day of the LORD in the Old Testament always is that it will be a terminal world event. Almost always the Day of the LORD is mentioned with the sun turning into darkness and the moon into blood and the shaking of the total universe of the heavens and the earth. Joel 2:31 is typical of the Old Testament on the signs of the Day of the LORD. There, in Joel 2:31, it is the “great and awesome Day of the LORD”. Joel 2:31 tells
exactly the events that happen just before the Great and Awesome Day of the LORD.

(1). There are wonders and signs in the heavens and the universe. Similar references in the Old Testament amplify on these wonders and signs in the heavens and on earth, telling of objects falling from the sky and of the earth shaking beneath until men hide in caves and ask that the cave fall in on them in order to save them from what is happening.

(2). Also before the great and awesome Day of the LORD in Joel 2:31, the Prophet Joel tells of blood, fire, and pillars of smoke. Of course, the book of Revelation is the complete description of the extent of the blood, the extent of the fire, and the world-wide extent of the pillars of smoke. Also the Apostle Peter gives a good description in II Peter 3 where the fire is the elements themselves of the Periodic Table passing away with a fervent heat.

(3). The third sign just before that awesome Day of the LORD in Joel 2:31 is that the sun is turned to darkness. That is a pretty good sign that our planetary system of earth, mars, and etc which orbits elliptically about the sun is in more than trouble. Many scientists now monitor the sun as it periodically throws off balls of fire called sun spots. These signs are not obvious to all, but when the sun turns dark then it will be obvious that the Day of the LORD is immediately at hand.

(4). The fourth sign to warn humanity that the Day of the LORD is immediately at hand in Joel 2:31 is that the moon will turn to blood. While the sun becomes dark since it has fallen from its place in the sky, the moon becomes red from the flames of fire as the very constituent elements of the heavens and the earth are melting away with the heat.

I. THAT GREAT DAY OF II THESALONIANS 2:1-12.

Oh yes, as the church at Thessalonica and other believers throughout the Roman Empire read II Thessalonians 2:1-12 they knew of Joel 2:31 and
of the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles on the Day of the LORD and the Lord, and primarily they thought of THAT DAY as synonymous with the Second Coming of Christ. Let us quickly summarize what is in II Thessalonians 2:1-12.

1. (2 Thess. 2:1,2) The Apostle Paul with the assistance from the Holy Spirit and the teachings of Jesus for a background desires to talk to the brethren concerning “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him”. There you have two terminal events of the last days: (1) the Second Coming of Christ; and (2) The gathering of believers to Christ to God and to heaven as to us other words from Paul “the final trump is sound and the dead in Christ rise first then we which are alive and remain are caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air.” However, those things are fundamental and have been developed and taught as basic sound doctrine in all the churches by both Jesus and the Apostles. Paul wants to leave the foundation of these fundamental principles and go on to a question, the question is to ask them not to be so shook up with unsound doctrine. The unsound doctrine was that the Day of Christ had already come!

2. (2 Thess 2:3). Paul makes it clear that two other events have to happen before the Second Coming and the Day of the LORD. Now, you would think that since none had seen the sun turn to darkness and the moon to blood, that since the earth itself was not shaking and objects flying out of the sky that it would obvious that the Day had not come. But unsound doctrine is like that when it starts to deny and pervert one doctrine it keeps going on and on with half truth and false teachings. As part of “gnosticism” liberals had perverted the teachings of the Bible on the second coming of Christ to mean that there would be a spiritual coming of Christ in the life of the believer, and that this had already taken place. I only mention “gnosticism” as unsound doctrine for background here, but also because a characteristic of the “falling away” from Christ faith of the end days will start with a revival of all the
unsound doctrine that has ever been known to man in the New Testament and otherwise.

What is somewhat amazing is that we here in the United States in 2004, almost two thousand years after the writing of II Thessalonians, find ourselves in the same position of waiting for two events to be fulfilled that are pre-requisite to the Day of the LORD and Lord, that is to the Second Coming of Christ. You can almost sympathize with the scoffers of the Day of the Lord that the Apostle Peter spoke of in II Peter who said that everything continues the same from the time of their forefathers.

"Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, know this first: that scoffers will come in the he last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.' For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (II Peter 3:1-9)

There is only ONE of those Days: that last period of time. And all the time of almost two thousand years between Peter and Paul and now is like two days to the LORD God and to the Lord Jesus Christ.

However we are given by the Apostle Paul in II Thessalonians 2:3 the
exact two events that must happen yet before the Second Coming and the Day of the LORD: (1) the “falling away” must come first; and (2) the “man of sin must be revealed, the son of perdition” before that Day.

That is exactly what you must look for: (1) the “falling away” from the Faith, often called the departure from the faith and the Great Apostasy or the “time will come” in II Timothy 4, and until that happens you will not see THAT DAY; and (2) secondly you are to look for the man of sin, the son of perdition. This is not the anti-Christ as the Apostle John let us know that there are many Antichrists who deny that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. No, this person is so completely identified with Satan and perdition as to be called the man of sin, the son of perdition. When you see the Son of God coming in great power and glory, then you know that heaven is at hand; and when you see the son of perdition coming then you know that perdition and the lake of fire and brimstone are at hand.

I like the promise of God as recorded in the Prophet Amos many thousands of years ago, the bottom line of which is that God will not do anything in the future without adequate warning to His own people—“Surely the LORD God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the Prophets.” (Amos 3:7)

Well, He did let the secrets of the Day of the LORD be known in the Old Testament; the Day of the Lord as the Second Coming in the New Testament; and finally with the Apostle Paul in II Thessalonians let us undeniably know what remains to happen historically before the events of that GREAT DAY will happen: the falling away from faith and the revelation of the man of sin, the son of perdition. Well, shortly we will discuss both of these in details to see if in our contemporary world we can see them happening; but first let us do more justice to all that Paul is telling us in II Thessalonians 2:1-12, albeit it briefly.

3. II Thessalonians 2:4 is a preliminary description of the man of sin,
the son of perdition that we will pursue later in more detail in Daniel 11. Here in 2:4 the characteristics are: (1) and you see where he gets his name since he opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or this is worshipped as God; (2) the man of God effectively, or for all practical purposes and because of this opposition to God sits in the temple as if He is the very person of God (doesn't that remind you of the offer Satan made to Jesus as he took Him up on a high mountains, showing Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of those kingdoms, and Satan said he would give Jesus all these things if He would fall down to worship Satan: well, it didn't happen but here in the man of sin, the son of perdition you have one who has accepted Satan's offer of all the kingdoms of the world and what they offer–hence his name son of perdition); and (3) the man of sin puts himself forward as if he is God Himself.

4. (2 Thessalonians 2:5) These were not new teachings to the church at Thessalonica, and likewise I am sure to all the New Testament churches. When Paul was with them on the missionary journeys he taught about the falling away and the man of sin, the son of perdition.

5. (2 Thess 2:6). Now you know Paul says to them and Paul says to us; and the Holy Spirit says to us “now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time.” There is a certain time ordained by God of the time of the man of sin; and there is a certain time appointed by God to restrain by the power of the Holy Spirit the man of sin. In the words of the Apostle Peter, and Jesus, and Joel in Acts, I like to referring to the period of last days as the acceptable year of the Lord and that Day as the Day of the Lord. Not only is this period of time, that is the acceptable year of the Lord, marked by the Coming of the Holy Spirit to take Christ’s place on earth, but also the beginning of the restraining period of the Holy Spirit. Who is He restraining? He is restraining Satan, and this corresponds to the chaining of Satan for the thousand years of the book of Revelation.

6. (2 Thess 2:7). The mystery of lawlessness, another word for sin,
already at work; and the Holy Spirit who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment when continue to restrain until He is taken out of the way. The only reason sin and Satan has not overwhelmed the world and the churches and faith is because of the chaining of Satan as the Holy Spirit restrains sin and lawlessness. But it is still at work and Satan is still at work. Beware as the time comes when the Holy Spirit is removed and Satan or his son of perdition is no longer restrained by God through the Holy Spirit.

7. (2 Thess 2:8) As lawlessness becomes fully blossomed the lawless one that is the product of the mystery of lawlessness of Satan will be revealed. (Of course, Paul parenthetically must remind Thessalonica that which he also taught about the great battle of Armageddon lead by Jesus Himself as He consume the man of sin with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His Coming.

8. (2 Thess 2:9,10). Paul gets back to the main trend of explaining the Coming of the man of Sin whom he here calls “the lawless one”. His Coming is: (1) According to the working of Satan—this is one of the primary workings of Satan, and how long has he cultivated the environment and the culture and the times and support of this man; (2) With all power—we dare not forget that Satan is the prince of this world with all the power that he offered to Jesus in the temptations, the world and all the status that is in them; (3) Signs, the signs of Satan will be eclipsed later by Armageddon and the signs of God as He terminates the heavens and the earth, but temporarily the signs of Satan and the man of sin will be great and awesome; (4) With all lying wonders, as the wonders will be so significant and great as to remind one of the very power of God Himself; and (5) with all lying deception among those who perish—most of the world is deceived into following Satan and the man of sin and will perish, and since this is so closely related to the falling away we will discuss it in the next point.

9. (2 Thess 2:10-12) There is a close relationship between the
environment and influence of the world—that is of an increase in sin and lawlessness—and what happens to the churches and denominations of faith in Jesus. That was explained by Jesus in Matthew 24: “because sin shall abound the love of many shall wax cold” which correlates directly with the falling way or the departure from the faith. The details of that process here are: (1) increase in lawlessness so that Satan and the man of sin can ride onto the world sin in the tide of this lawlessness; (2) the working, power, signs, and lying wonders of Satan that ends in the unrighteous deception among all that will perish on the Day of the LORD and Lord; (3) and the reason most of the world perishes on that Great Day is because they did not receive the love of the truth (notice it does not say did not receive the truth, but the love of the truth—does that not remind you of what Jesus said that as the love of many will wax cold as sin abounds; (4) and it is the failure of the world to receive the love of the truth that keeps them from being saved; (5) God is still at work until the Holy Spirit is removed—what He is doing is sending in a process of history a strong delusion that most of the world will believe a lie instead of the truth—mainly believe a lie about God Himself, about Jesus, about salvation, and about the Holy Spirit, and alias a lie about what is sound doctrine; and (6) God will be justified on that Great Day of Judgment when most of the world is condemned with Satan and the angels to eternal perdition and the lake of fire and brimstone; and (6) the fate of that majority in the world who had pleasure in the unsound doctrine of unrighteousness which lead them to believe a lie!

II. The Falling Away.

I think by now you realize the Bible teachings of how “the falling away” is synonymous with the general departure from faith, with “time will come” when they will not endure sound doctrine of II Timothy 4, with the love of many that will wax cold as sin shall abound of Jesus, and with the Great Apostasy that theologians have used to explain this end time phenomenon.
1. The definition of the Falling Away. However let us attempt a more complete definition of exactly what it means for the majority of church members and member of religious denominations to fall away from the faith. The best Biblical definition is given in Hebrews 3:7-15 with the total context of what happened to the majority of the people of God that were rescued from Egyptian bondage.

"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." (Hebrews 3:12)

Obviously the falling away is a falling away from faith in the living God. It is a process of time in the individual development, and church development, and denominational development of an evil heart of unbelief that cause a departure from the very Great, and Majesty and Only Living God, the God of the Universe. Then the context of Hebrews 3:12, in other words 3:7-15 describes that historical process that happened to the children of Israel out of Egypt that will happen even on a larger scaled just before the Day of the Lord.

(1). The children of God saw the works of God in the wilderness for 40 years. They saw the God of provision, of guidance, of love, of purpose and meaning. Even so the departees from the faith of today have also seen for many years the works and blessings of God, and heard from teachers and preachers and parents of the mighty works of God.

(2). The children of Israel first went astray in their own heart. It always starts in the heart as the seat of the beginning of unbelief, unseen at first to the other people in the congregation. Likewise today, church members go astray in their heart as they become more lovers of pleasure than of God, of money and status more than of the living God.

(3). We realize the shocking news from Paul and the Holy Spirit in Hebrews that the majority of the children of God never really knew the ways of God. They were in that environment of the people saved from Egyptian bondage, but never quite comprehended the ways of God down deep in their
heart. And today the significance of the churches and denominations that the gap between church membership and Christ becomes so significant that it shows the sound doctrine of faith once delivered to the saints and the faith of Christ and of sound doctrine has never been known at all. As Gains Dobbins says, “You can fill a church with empty people”. The number of empty people in churches and denominations during this period known as the falling away.

(4). The majority of the children of Israel that came out of Egypt and wandered in the wilderness became hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. How close they were to the power and works and love of God, and yet how the deceitfulness of sin turned them in the other direction. Today, it is the increase in the mystery of lawlessness that is reeking a similar havoc on the churches of God. The lie is increasing being believed. God is allowing strong delusion among the churches even as He allowed it among the children of Israel.

(5). And here we begin to see the bottom line of the teachings of Hebrews on this matter of the falling away from the faith. “For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.” Our problem is that we can not look at professed believers and still the difference between a real partaker of Christ and a deceived and artificial partaker of Christ, and many do not know themselves; and furthermore Jesus told us to make no effort to separate the wheat from the chaff, although he does tell us that there is wheat and chaff in the churches; and that at the falling away there will be more chaff than wheat.

(6). The end result of Hebrews 3:7-15 and for the children of God that came out of Egypt and wandered in the wilderness for 40 years is that “having saved them out of Egypt, God destroyed those who did not believe”; and furthermore those who were destroyed in the wilderness are not allowed to enter into God’s eternal rest.

In order to further define the Falling Away it should be stated that:
every folly or heresy of unsound doctrine revealed in New Testament times will revive during the falling away.

2. Even as the fullness of the Gentiles must center in the United States so must the falling away center in the churches and denominations of the United States.

3. The best known churches and denominations of the so-called Christian Faith (remember a lot of so called partakering of Christ is really the American Democratic Faith) will be the leaders in the falling away. Of course, no one will believe it or can believe it in spite of the clear teachings of the Bible. There will be strong delusion and lies will be believed as true.

4. It, the falling way, of individual believers, churches, and denominations will not be obvious since by nature the falling away becomes popular. We Americans are wholehearted believers in the majority, and when the majority of believers say something is so, we start to believe it.

5. The Holy Spirit will be there right up until the end during the Falling Away in order to restrain. When we can no longer see the Spirit at work to convict of sin and righteousness and judgment it is already too late.

6. The falling away is clearly taught in II Thessalonians 2:3, in Jude 24 where the words are used in a prayer to God to "keep you from Falling", in the words and teachings of Jesus in Matthew 24:11 where "false prophets will deceive many"-the have a falling away there has to be the leaders of the falling away; from Jesus in Matthew 24:12 where "lawlessness will abound as the love of many waxes cold"; and from Jesus in Matthew 24:24 where the words are used by Jesus Himself that "even the elect" would be deceived, if possible.
Sound # 3-7:  COMFORT IN THE GOSPEL (Luke 4).

The "Gospel" like the word "Christian" has almost become totally a secular word. In the history of American thought, there has been the Social Gospel, the Gospel of Wealth, and even the "American Democratic Faith" which has become an American Gospel to replace the Gospel of Christ and the Bible. There can be no compromise on what the Bible teaches about the Gospel. Our salvation, life, and future depend on the Gospel of Jesus Christ as delivered in the Bible.

I. The Bottom Line of the Gospel is: Direct Access to God through Jesus Christ.

The audacity that anyone--smart, aggressive, intellectual, educated, or of high status--could come between you and Christ. There is only one mediator between God and man, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ and Him only. We talk about the great freedoms in this country, but the greatest freedom of all is the freedom to come to God in prayer, praying "Our Father which art in heaven". Don't let any person, or priest, or preacher, or anyone come between you and God through Christ. It is sacrilegious, and the most unsound doctrine of all, for any person to try to take the place of God through Christ in your life.

Yesterday on the tennis court at Alamogordo, I met a Chaplain and a medic who were playing tennis before our Saturday playday started for the Alamogordo Tennis Association. By the way, the Chaplain was not even a good tennis player. With braces on both knees, short and overweight, and with the strokes of a 1.0 or 2.0 tennis player; but he proceeded to remind us that he was a Chaplain if we needed the "last rites" or anything. I wanted to say more, but as he left, reminding us again that he was a Chaplain if we needed
anything, I only had time to say, "I have direct access." I only wish I had added that I have direct access through Christ.

In a moment we will look at the Gospel in Luke 4:16-30 where Jesus said that He came to live and die in order that the poor would have the Gospel preached to them. What this really means is that any person, rich or poor, any person no matter how busy making a living and without access to books or training can hear and receive the Gospel. It is the world's greatest freedom, and you should never let any tyrant come between you and God through Christ. They just do not have that right under God! This scrawny Latin American on the tennis courts with the claim to save your soul at the last minute is accepted by society as a Chaplain; he is accepted by the military as a Chaplain with such power; and he is accepted by his denomination--and you know which one still have priests--as a Chaplain with such power. But no Bible believer with a sound foundation of the way, the truth, and the life through Christ of the Bible, can possibly consider a priest or any other person that would come between him and God except the mediator which is Christ.

II. Why Do So Many Religious Leaders Wish to be or Act like a Priest?

There are many simple answers: they like the status, they like playing God, they are victims of unsound doctrine, and most often there living and well-being in society depend on such acceptance. Let us never forget that Christ came to do away with the priesthood. Christ came to eliminate any obstacle between God and man by offering Himself once for all on the cross. It was the death of Christ on the cross that made our acceptance directly in front of God possible. Christ atoned to God our sins, once for all; and the Bible teaches that the living Christ is right now at the very right hand of the throne of God, ever living to make intercessions for our sin.

In a conversation with my former Dean last week I though of the difference between "theology" and the Bible. Theology is what men think
and have thought historically about God, Christ, and other religious truths. Sometimes it is based on the Bible, and sometimes it is not based on the Bible. Like American Thought, it is a good field of study to know what other men have thought and do think, but it should never take the place of the Bible. If we admit The Falling Away, and it is inevitable as clearly taught as something that must happen before Christ comes again, then we know it also must come. If we see it happening now with such signs as non-Biblical concepts on marriage and divorce, on the taking of God's name in vain, on anarchy in church government; then we must also face up to the fact that the Falling Away will have leaders, false prophets, and primarily false teachers. Popularity in our country, though democratic, is not a good sign. The popularity of the "many" is a bad sign as Jesus taught. Where we have trouble is looking at these popular preachers and teachers on television, and then recognizing them as false with unsound doctrine. Recall, according to the Bible in II Timothy 4, the time of the falling away will come when churchmembers will not longer endure sound doctrine; they will out of their itching ears and their OWN DESIRES turn away from truth; and they will be lead, as now, by teachers that also have itching ears. That want status and money and a following so that they have learned what those "desires" of the churchmembers are.

Why do I keep saying so much about THE FALLING AWAY? Because there is no way to understand this overwhelming period of the proliferation of teachers of less than sound doctrine without facing up to the truths of the Falling Away. The Bible says that "they will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears". Have you ever seen so much heaping of teachers. Everybody is a teacher; and every wind bag or loud mouth promotes themselves as a teacher. Of course, part of the problem is that churchmembers and leaders are heaping out the teachers of sound doctrine while they are heaping to themselves the teachers of unsound doctrine.

You know what is scary? The popular acceptability as a sign of revival
"40 days of purpose". It is a new ecumenical movement hatched by the fundamentalists and the fires of hell to get the attention of churches and denominations everywhere. I would suspect that the author, and I don't even know his name, sat down to make sure that in the chapters he appealed to the "desires" of every churchmember, the desires which seek for comfort and soothing from itching ears.

You see we are so indoctrinated in American Society, that we can not distinguish readily between the "American Democratic Faith" and the "Faith of Jesus and the Bible." There are always two basic differences: (1) the American Democratic Faith is a majority movement, the Faith of Christ and the Bible is a minority movement; and (2) the tolerance of the American Democratic Faith promotes things like the Presbyterians did a few years ago when they wondered if "Christ as the only way of salvation" could be preached anymore since it sounded intolerant, while the Faith of the Bible and Christ demand Christ as the only way of salvation, the Bible of 66 books which we know as the only Word of God, etc.

Oh my, how would we ever let some scrawny--physically or mentally--individual come between us and the great white throne; between us and the living and resurrected and ascended Christ; between the sins in our life and the intercession of the sins by the Great High Priest, Jesus Christ, who is after the order of Melchisedec. Read the book of Hebrews closely; and if you can find another Priest after the likeness, or similitude, of Melchisedec then let him make intercession for your sins. However, the point of Hebrews and the rest of the Bible is than you can find no other mediator acceptable to God except the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that is the Gospel, and at the conclusion of this SOUND OF A SOUND FAITH, we will discuss the very practical nitty, gritty of your personal access to God through Christ.

I will be brutally frank for the benefit of my kids and grandkids. There are many like the Roman Catholics and the Mormons who make every effort
to re-establish everything that Christ came to eliminate during His life and death on earth. (And that is nothing less than the work of Satan and the world, because it becomes an obstacle to the salvation of thousands.) Christ eliminate the need for temple worship, for the priesthood, for sacrifices as part of salvation, and for the burden of works as necessary for salvation. However, it is not to think that other preachers do not effectively try to do the same thing. There is one very popular fundamentalists preacher who says the word "God" so much that he forgets who is really God; and rather than practice sound doctrine on the respect for other believing individuals and their calling and rather than respect sound doctrine on marriage and divorce has taken himself with "god" up beyond the sound doctrine of the Bible. Like Nixon was for "law and order", as we voted for him not knowing that he wanted his own law and order, this fundamentalists preacher and others like him have created their own "religious law and order". (And, of course, he or they could not do it without the support of a large church which likes the status that he gives them. By the way, another sign of the falling away.)

The way most fundamentalists preachers, and other wolves in sheep's clothing, try to come between you and God through Christ is: (1) by identifying for you which organization that you need to belong to for salvation, which they just happened to run; and (2) by after establishing in your mind that works are necessary for salvation, then they logically proceed to identify those works. So you are caught. Those works are as diverse as is unsound doctrine: (1) it may be the so-called receiving of the Holy Spirit and speaking on tongues in their services, which they control; (2) it may be the last rites or confession or a work of sprinkling for salvation, which they also control; (3) it may be church attendance or giving of a tithe, yes, certainly they control the organization and the money; or (4) it may be by helping to building a large building with a large attendance where the converts become fourfold more
the child of the devil than before they joined. \{Converts tend to become like the leaders!\}

Let me say right now, if you initial believed in Christ to the extent of the new birth experience then right then you became the member of the only church that counts for salvation, the Church of the Firstborn, written in heaven where God and Christ are. There is no person, priest, preacher, or otherwise, who can gain, apart from death, access to that church roll written in heaven; and therefore who can tell you whether your name is written there or not. And do not let them tell you otherwise.

The Assembly of the Firstborn is the subject of another SOUND OF A SOUND FAITH, but I dare not pass on without a quote from the Bible.

What have you come to if you have salvation?

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the Firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant..." (Hebrews 12:22-24)

III. We promised to look at the Gospel as delivered by Jesus in His hometown of Nazareth and as recorded by Luke in Luke 4:16-30.

Jesus was already well known when He came back to Nazareth to deliver the Gospel; however, like the Muslims and so many others in the world today, He was only accepted as a Teacher (Rabbi). What Jesus did and said shocked His hometown crowd. When the Bible was given to Him He read about the Gospel from Isaiah 61:1,1 and then told the people present that this very generation was the prophecy about Himself fulfilled.

What was this Gospel according to Jesus; for surely we can get no better definition of the Gospel than from Jesus Himself! Here it is: (1) the very Spirit of the Almighty God was upon Jesus who was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor; (2) Jesus came to preach to the brokenhearted (already
you see how carefully Jesus chooses the crowd to whom He directs His message, zeroing in as recipients of the Gospel those who have the characteristics of the beatitudes, the characteristics of the religious dimensions of God Himself; (3) Jesus established a pattern of preaching to captives who can recognize that they have been in bondage to sin and the world and Satan, and those only {The teaching of Jesus on the parable of the physician and the sick means that Jesus came only to take care of those who recognize their need.}; (4) Jesus want people to really see, that is part of the Gospel, part of the truth that is incarnate in Jesus Himself; (5) The Gospel of Jesus and from Jesus is that there may be liberty for the oppressed--once again do not let any take away this liberty of direct access to Jesus, do not be oppressed by any priest, preacher, or false prophet; (6) Part of the Gospel of Jesus is and was to preach the Acceptable Year of the Lord. The acceptable year of God for salvation in the Gospel to everyone started with the life and ministry of Christ, and is NOW!

IV. Reactions to Jesus.

We saw the reaction of the people at Nazareth. Of how the majority of them when they recognized His claim to be one with God, to be the Son of God, tried to kill Him. People are not that different; and even today, and in our nation, the majority reaction would be to kill Jesus. Many are killing Jesus in their own mind by refusal to think about Jesus and to think about God. Have you ever noticed how the world likes to honor the dead that they never respected extensively during their lives. They just want to bury them and get their influence and teachings out of the way. Martin Luther King is a good example. Generally despised and ignored and slandered during his life, now there are streets and a day named after him. So it is with Christ: honor the dead Christ and ignore His claims and teachings.

The reactions to Jesus on the part of the leaders and their followers during the lifetime of Jesus are also typical of the reactions in this day and
time and in this country. We should look briefly at the sequence of questions from the Jewish leaders, and the answers of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of John.

1. “Where Is He?” (John 7:11) The answer of Jesus was by showing up during the middle of the feast time.

2. “How did This Man Get An Education?” (John 7:15) Jesus explained to them that His doctrine or teachings came from the God that sent Him, and that anyone that was actually seeking God’s will they could tell whether it was from God or not. If it comes from a man himself, it is for his own glory; but it is true if the doctrine seeks the glory of the One that sent Him.

3. “Where does He intend to go that we shall not find Him? Does He intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks” after he said “You will seek Me and not find Me, and where I am you cannot come?”

REATIONS TO JESUS

“Why” you might ask, “spend so much time on the reactions to Jesus?” Because: (1) like the rest of the Bible these reactions are given to us as examples of how people did and will classical react to the claims of Jesus to be the Saviour of the world, the Son of God who died on the cross for the sins of the world; (2) your own reaction to Jesus, the Risen Christ who knocks at the door at every heart will determine your own salvation; (3) to lead momentarily to THE REACTION that is appropriate for salvation {**After all, that is the prime reaction in which we are interested!**}; And (4) to be somewhat thorough on a historical survey of the real Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of John by the Apostle John, one who was perhaps closest to Jesus than anyone else on earth during Jesus’ life on earth. {**What better person to “LEARN CHRIST” from?**}

Momentarily we will look at THE REACTION of the Apostle Peter to Jesus, the same one required of us for salvation and the only one that
writes our names on the church roll in heaven; but first a little putting of this chapter of John on Jesus in the context of this volume of the LEARN CHRIST FROM THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS commentaries. This title of the set of commentaries. (**The number is always changing and growing but the goal is to have nine of them after I rewrite and incorporate some of my ONE COMMENTARIES on the Bible written before 1995, like the one on the LIFE AND 14 LETTERS FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL, “REMEMBER MY BONDS”, the ONE COMMENTARY ON EPHESIANS, the ONE COMMENTARY ON JOHN, and a single, complete commentary on the book of Revelation.**)  

Sorry you haven’t found these in the book stores, as I have chosen to make an individual distribution of the books. The other day an acquaintance, a school teacher from Eastern New Mexico who heard me preach at University Baptist Church, said she has been expecting to see a book with my name on it in the book stores. I explained how both Dr. Charles Meister and myself had sought for many years to find a publisher, and finally, especially after bouts with Broadman Press over the title of my commentary on Romans, GOSPEL PRIDE. (**By the way that is another one I should include in the 9 LEARN CHRIST COMMENTARIES, provided the snows don’t rise and God is willing. Also by the way, Dr. Meister did find a publisher in South Carolina for his books on Russian poetry, but I am still going the personal distribution route with a priority for my kids and grandkids, those with whom I discuss Christ and the Bible, and other convenient methods as I seek to do the work of a Bible Evangelist in this day when so many churches have “heaped to themselves teachers with itching years”, “will not endure sound doctrine”, and “have turned away from the truth and turned into fables.” You must see that we are in the Falling Away in order to understand what is happening in our world, our country, our churches, and our denomination. It is too pervasive and widespread to have any other explanation.**)
Let us only pray that the Holy Spirit has not yet been withdrawn as Paul predicted in II Thessalonians 2 at the same time he said The Falling Away must take place before the Second Coming of Christ. I apologize for preaching right now, but as these commentaries are so personal, going first to my kids and grandkids, THEY MUST KNOW THAT AS CERTAIN AS IS THE SECOND COMING SO ALSO IS THE FALLING AWAY; AND IT IS AMONG THE CHURCHES OF THE UNITED STATES AS MUCH AS ANY PLACE IN THE WORLD. IT IS NOT A FALLING AWAY FROM THE CHURCHES. CHURCH ATTENDANCE MAY GO UP. IT IS A FALLING AWAY FROM GOD, CHRIST, THE BIBLE, AND THE SOUND DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE. IT CAN NOT BE BLAMED ON THE YOUNG, FOR IF THIS LAST FALLING AWAY IS LIKE THE FIRST OF HEBREWS THEN THOSE UNDER 21 ARE SAFE.**

Enough on the personal, back to the LEARN CHRIST commentaries and this third volume of “Christ for Individuals” to set the background and context for what must be your THE REACTION to Jesus’ claim to be the Son of God.

1. The purpose of the LEARN CHRIST FROM THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS can be summarized with three points. (**Homiletics teachers would say “three points and a poem”. Well, I don’t have the poetry, that was Dr. Meister’s speciality, along with American Studies and “science and religion” which we discussed often before he died about a year ago.**)  

   (1). Paul in the book of Ephesians (**my favorite book**) gave me the clue when he wrote to the church at Ephesus, a church that he had established and where his longest minister was centered: “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus…” (Ephesians 4:20,21 NKJV) (**All quotes in my LEARN CHRIST commentaries are from the
(1). Look carefully at these two verses and follow my exegesis. Can you imagine that Paul must tell a church he established that they have not appropriately learned Christ; and we are not talking about simply learning Christ in an intellectual manner. We are talking about them not learned Christ is the way they acted and lived, and in the manner necessary for salvation. Wow, the Ephesians had the best preacher in the world, next to Jesus, and a long two year minister, and yet Paul must tell them that they did not learn Christ in the proper manner. {I am sure that Paul learned this from Timothy and other messengers after he was imprisoned, and it much of the basis from writing to Timothy in II Timothy. Also the same subject of not enduring sound doctrine and falling away in I Timothy.}

(2). Paul then questions the salvation of the churchmembers at Ephesus. “if indeed you heard Christ and have been taught personally by Christ.” Wow, can you imagine sitting across from a churchmember or churchmembers and point blank questioning their salvation. “if you are in Christ indeed?”

(3). The really great part about this point blank frankness, and concern, from the Apostle Paul to a church were he had labored so long and hard is that we see in these few words the REAL way to LEARN CHRIST in the fullest sense of salvation.

a. “if indeed you have heard Christ.”; and

b. “if indeed you have been taught by Christ.”

That’s it: that is the whole plan of initial salvation. If you hear Christ like Paul is talking about here, and if you have been taught and become taught by Christ, then you are indeed saved. The inverse is true: if you have not really heard Christ for yourself, and if you have not personally been taught by Christ yourself, then you are not saved.
Someone would say, "That is not fair." How come we are cheated because we are not able to listen to the teachings of Jesus and be personally taught by Jesus as were the Apostles Peter and John and the others. No, that is not what is being discussed by Paul. You see Paul never personally met Jesus like the other Apostles were able to do, but oh yes, Paul did hear Christ and Paul was taught by Christ in an invisible way. \textit{(Pardon the word indivisible as I don't know any other way to describe the way Christ spoke and taught after the Ascension and the assistance of the Holy Spirit: it was and is an invisible work and method!)} And now Paul in his writings of Ephesians 4:20,21 and the Apostle John in his writings of John 14 want to share it with YOU.

Let me use John 14 to explain “how” we hear Christ and “how” we are taught by Christ, centered around three questions the disciples asked Jesus, and His answers, as recorded in John 14.

1. Thomas asked Jesus “how can we know the way since we do not know where you are going”. \textit{(this is a paraphrase, later I will quote it)} Jesus was preparing the first disciples for His crucifixion and Ascension, and the personal loss they would feel from an absence of His companionship and teachings. \textit{(even a loss of security)}

   a. The question from Thomas.

   “Thomas said to him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way.’” (John 14:5)

   b. The teachings of Jesus before the question from Thomas that provoked the question from Thomas.

   “Let not our heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way
you.” (John 14:1-6)

[1]. Jesus saw the disciples felt troubled and insecure.

[2]. Jesus knew that they believed in God, and He sought faith, similar faith from them in Himself. He had spent much time telling them and teaching them and showing them the works that supported His claim to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the sins of the world. THAT IS WHAT THE BOOK OF JOHN IS ALL ABOUT, AND IF YOU DON'T SEE THIS YOU MISS THE MESSAGE OF JOHN!

[3]. “in My Father's house are many mansions”—perhaps Jesus had not previously made it clear in His teachings about how many vacant mansions were left in His Father's house. Jesus does now as He teaches there in the Garden before the Crucifixion. {Of course, it has become clear to us as we have just finished the study of the last chapters of the book of Revelation, and we know about the 1500 mile high side of New Jerusalem that houses all the mansions.}

[4]. “if it were not so, I would have told you”—you see this is true about the Father’s house of many mansions, otherwise Jesus would have told us differently.

[4]. Wow, here it gets very personal: “I go to prepare a place for you”. Maybe your mansion needs a little house warming, but Jesus Himself has been there for almost two thousand years supervising the angels as they prepare that mansion for you. You see, it is not just a house or a hut, but a mansion. There is real security!

[5]. Now Jesus says that if He is going to prepare a place for them, He will also provide a mode of transportation for them to get there. It is not easy to get an indivisible mansion in an indivisible house in an indivisible city in an indivisible heaven where the indivisible God lives! Well, the Son of God who mediated the Creation of the world and mediated salva-
tion and presently mediated the confession of our sins before the Father, will come back again and provide transportation as at His Second Coming we meet Him in the air to ever be with Jesus and the Father.

[6]. We want to be where Jesus is, don’t we? We want to be where Jesus is there with the Father, don’t we? Well, “I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.”

[7]. “where I go you know” -- TO THE FATHER AND HEAVEN!

[8]. “the way you know” -- TO BELIEVE IN JESUS LIKE WE BELIEVE IN GOD. {for us faith may come in both about the same time}

c. THE ANSWER OF JESUS TO THE QUESTION OF THOMAS. Having considered in a the question of Thomas and having considered in b the teachings of Jesus before the question that provoked the question from Thomas, we now have the privilege of hearing the answer from Jesus.

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” (John 14:6) {You want the “way” to God the Father, eternity, and salvation, Jesus said “I am the way”; you want the truth about life, salvation, and all the perplexing religious question, Jesus said, “I am the truth”; you want LIFE, fuller life with God and Christ here on earth and complete eternal life in eternity, Jesus said, “I am the life.”}

2. The second question in John 14, this time asked by Philip.

“Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.’” (John 14:8)

Philip is saying just Show us what God is like. Let us see God, and that is all we need.

THE ANSWER OF JESUS TO THE QUESTION FROM PHILIP. {Maybe
you would get the flow better just to read it for yourself in John 14:1-24, but I pray this is a guide for further understanding and reinforcement."

"Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has see the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves." (John 14:9-11)

(1). Jesus taught the disciples and showed miracles and showed His character and loved them, and He expects that evidence, called “works”, to engender faith. We have engendered faith by reading about those works in John as “Signs for Believing”.

(2). When you see the visible Jesus you are looking at the invisible Father. Anyway Jesus was visible to Philip and He was visible to John as was He visible to Peter and Matthew, and they made Jesus’ life visible to us by writing it down in visible words in a visible book. {This is a simple introduction to Christian Evidences and Christian Apologetics, the classical and voluminous faith enhancing books to prove that Jesus is the Son of God, that God exists, and that the Bible of 66 books that we have is the Word of God.}

(3). Jesus said that He and the Father are in each other, inseparable.

(4). God the Father is the source and authority for all the words from Jesus.

(5). The Father dwelling in Jesus did all the miracles and other works and teachings that came from Jesus while on earth. {By the way, the Father dwelled invisible in Jesus just as the Father and Jesus must dwell
invisibly in us as we will see in the answer of Jesus to the third question.}

(6). “BELIEVE ME”, Jesus says: a. that I am in the Father and the Father in ME, or b. Believe ME for the sake of the works recorded in Gospel of John.

3. The third question in John 14, this time from Judas, not Judas Iscariot.

“Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?’” (John 14:22)

Isn’t that where we are today in 2004 and beyond? How can Jesus manifest Himself to us so that we can see Him and yet not be seen by the rest of the world?

THE ANSWER OF JESUS TO THE THIRD QUESTION FROM JUDAS.

{Finally we are here, this is how to Learn Christ by hearing Him and being taught by Him.}

“Jesus answered and said to him, ’If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (John 14:23)

I wish that I could make it more simple than this, for this is salvation, this is how to learn Christ, and this is the reaction from the Apostle Peter {still to be discussed} that we must emulate. {Many times we try to make it too simple and Christ is not really learned. The disciples had approximately three years to listen to the teachings of Jesus, watch Jesus, and develop faith; and still it had come to the point where three of the disciples had to ask the three questions of John 14. I think Jimmy Swaggart is correct on this one subject in effectively calling 40 DAYS OF PURPOSE mediocre and border-line itching ears, to think that you can simply have 13 mechanical steps to becoming a Christian.}

(1). You must keep in the process of loving Jesus. “If anyone loves
(2). The person that loves Jesus must also keep the teachings of Jesus, and will indeed keep the teachings of Jesus as proof of that love. Also I might say, as proof that he or she has indeed Learned Christ, or has been “born again” as some so glibly say with their little automatic formulas for salvation.

(3). God the Father will love the person who loves Jesus and keeps the words of Jesus. You see here is part of the reason that our little formulas and automatic plans of salvation do not work. We do not control God the Father. His love comes to us as He ordains, and He will love us when we love Jesus and the teachings of Jesus. That is, if He so desires and so ordains.

(4). Now here is the miracle of this love of God through love of Jesus Christ: God the Father and God the Son will invisibly (This is actually the work of the Spirit of God and of Christ, the Holy Spirit. I wish I had space to discuss it here, but read about the Holy Spirit in the chapter on “Some Sounds of a Sound Faith”, and even here in John 14 where Jesus taught about the work of the Holy Spirit.) come and dwell in the heart of the LOVER and Practicer. This is sometimes called the new birth, but I think this is simpler and more powerful. The new birth, of course, was taught by Jesus and recorded by John in John 3; but the disciples had been taught that, and still they needed to hear this teaching of Jesus. Much like we also need to hear LEARN CHRIST today.

“...and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (John 14:23b)

Now finally THE REACTION from the Apostle Peter that we must seek to emulate. You see that all of this is a very personal and individual matter. Parents can not do it for us; a particular preacher or pastor or church or denomination can not do it for us; a community of believers no matter how
persuasive can not do it for us; and this is at the very foundation of “Christ for Individuals”, building on the foundation of Learning Christ and from the Apostles and Prophets.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” (Matthew 16:13 KJV)

“And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” (Matthew 16:14 KJV)

“He saith unto them, But whom say ye and I am?” (Matthew 16:15 KJV)

“And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16 KJV)

Just remember however that this is in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus' teachings of John 14 are in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, much later than Peter's confession of faith, supposedly for all the disciples. While this may have worked for Peter, you can see by the three questions in John 14 that it did not work for Thomas, Philip, and Judas. At least it was a good starting point for teaching and after a while in the Garden from Jesus in John 14 the bottom line on the good news of salvation, the Gospel.
According to John 14-16, Comforter is another word for the Holy Spirit, so that it should seem very natural that Christ believers should expect Comfort from the Comforter. In order to receive some of this comfort from the Holy Spirit we must appreciate who He is. First of all He is a He and not an “IT” as Ralph Herring emphasized in his very helpful book GOD BEING MY HELPER. Herring’s book is about the Comfort and other work of the Holy Spirit which inspired him to give it the title of God the Holy Spirit as our Helper. And those are exactly the thoughts that we find in the three chapters of John—14, 15, and 16. You will remember how it started with Jesus’ announcement to the first disciples that He was leaving them; and when Jesus detected the sadness in their expressions, He told them how it was actually better for them if He went away, because the Other Helper, the Paraclete, the One who goes along beside, God the Holy Spirit would come to help them. Therefore you can immediately start receiving comfort from the Holy Spirit as you realize that is the Other Jesus and more!

I. Comfort In Spite of Difficult Times.
The “‘Comfort, yes, comfort My people,’ says your God of Isaiah 40:1 could seem superficial as it comes behind God’s announcement that the people of Judah and Jerusalem will shortly go into Babylonian Captivity, and if we fail to appreciate the nature and kind of the comfort which God provides for his people.

1. The beginning of Isaiah 40 the perspective of God that Judah has already paid for their Sins and the Captivity is over. Further it looks forward to New Testament times when John the Baptist comes to announce the Coming of Christ, the Prophet Messiah.
“Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.” (Isaiah 40:2)

Years before the northern ten tribes of Israel had gone into Assyrian Captivity, and now this perspective from God assumes that Judah had gone into Babylonian Captivity and that the Restoration has taken place. In fact, it is the first century AD and John the Baptist the voice crying in the wilderness is announcing the Gospel new of the first coming of the Messiah.

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD…'” And you remember the rest of the story as recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John how John the Baptist proclaimed his cousin as the Promised Messiah whose shoes he was not worthy to unlatch. How John not only baptized Jesus as the Spirit of God descended on Jesus in the form of a dove but also said, “Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.”

2. The important part of this announcement for the first century is that “the glory of the LORD shall be revealed” (Jesus is the glory of God the Father); and that “all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:5)—one way or another all in the Roman Empire of the First Century saw the glory of Jesus, and subsequent generations including our own through the teachings of the Apostles about Jesus as recorded in the books of the Bible.

3. With this perspective of the glory of God something else happens, and that all people of the world come to see themselves as “grass”. Isaiah is told by God to “Cry out!” Isaiah says, “What am I to cry out.” God responds.

“All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness in like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.” (Isaiah 40:6-8)

There is the perspective from God: God and God’s Word stands forever, and the people of the earth as compared to the eternal nature of God and His
word are temporal like grass. And it is clear to us from the Apostle James
that often we make plans for the future, but we will be overcome by the plans
of God for the future. This is the way the Apostle James states it:
“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such
a city spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you
do not know what will happen tomorrow {you see the perspective of God in
Isaiah 40: God knows what is tomorrow, but you do not know for certain
what is tomorrow.} For what is you life? {and here you see the similar-
ity to the grass of Isaiah 40}...what is your life? It is even a vapor that
appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”

James says such an attitude of boasting about tomorrow is arrogance,
and the opposite of arrogance is the attitude that God through the Prophet
Isaiah to trying to engender in Isaiah 40.

4. The Apostle James in that same books talks about pride in the sight
of God which is closely akin to arrogance. In fact pride and the human spirit
within us which lusts to envy is what breeds arrogance. More of the cure
for this human pride and arrogance is found in Isaiah 40:12-14 where we are
reminded that: (1) God has measured all the waters of the ocean and more
in the hallow of His hand—that is power; (2) that God has measured the
extent of the heavens with a hand’s span where we would picture God as able
to measure with two hands the full extent of the millions of light years that
encompass all that we know as the universe of stars and planets; (3) God in
this age of computers had already gone beyond the range of the computers
to calculate the exact amount of dust by grains on this earth; (4) God give
the weight of all the mountains and hills in a tabular form; and (5) here the
Spirit of the LORD, the Holy Spirit, comes in as it is noted that no director
or supervisor is any higher than the Spirit of God in the ability to provide
directions; (6) nor is any other being on earth capable of being a Counselor to
the Spirit of God since He is already the Supreme Teacher.
“...with whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice?  Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?”

5. Isaiah 40 with a perspective of God goes further in that beyond all flesh is as grass, the nations are like a drop in the bucket. “Behold, the nations are but drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering.  All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.”” (Isaiah 40:15-17

6. Where can you find a comparison to the LORD God of the Universe, the God of Jesus and of the Bible, the God of the Apostles and Prophets of the Bible? “To whom then will you like God?” (Isaiah 40:18)  A lot of effort falls short of making images of God out of molds, and gold and silver, and even the carvings of a tree, all falling short of the God of the Universe.

7. This God of the Bible and of the Universe sits on a great white throne on the circle of the earth and sees all the nations and inhabitants of the earth as grasshoppers.

8. God stretched out all the planets and stars of the earth like a curtain is opened or spreads them like a massive tent for humanity to live under.

9. God brings all the rulers or princes of the earth to nothing by His control and over-riding of history, and God makes a useless all the rulings of the judges including the Supreme Court of the United States (and that would almost seem sacri-religious if we were not talking about the God of the Universe, and perhaps still does seem sacri-ireligious to those who are practitioners of only the American Democratic Faith). Hardly are these judges and princes or governors elected or appointed than God will blow on them and they will wither like the grass or the drop in the bucket. The whirlwind of God at God’s direction will carry them away like the stubble in the field.
10. Can you find a likeness for God or can you find any equal in stature, character, or what not to God Himself? You talk about the importance of equality. Where is the equal of God? Look far up above and remember the God that has created all these things! Remember the God that placed each star or planet, all the sparkling heavenly bodies, in their appointed place, and the God who call everyone of them by name, the ones discovered and undiscovered. You see something of the might and power of God when you consider that all these heavenly bodies have a place of equilibrium in the universe: there is not one little star missing.

11. The message to the nations here is that the way of the people and the nation is not hidden from God Himself. Whether it is Israel as God’s people, or now the United States during this Fullness of the Gentiles period as God’s people, none of these countries’ ways are hidden from God. Some of the people of these nations may think God has overlooked their claims for justice: He has not.

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.” (Isaiah 40:28)

12. Then finally we come to the real comfort in the Holy Spirit in spite of the difficult times.

“He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:30, 31)

FINALLY WE COME TO THE REAL AND PRACTICAL COMFORT IN THE HOLY SPIRIT. HOW DOES THIS GREAT GOD OF THE UNIVERSE THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVE POWER TO THE WEAK; HOW DOES THIS GREAT GOD INCREASE STRENGTH FOR WORK AND MOTIVATION; HOW WHILE
THE YOUNG MEN ARE FAINTING CAN OTHER PEOPLE OF GOD FIND A RENEWAL OF STRENGTH; HOW CAN THEY MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES; HOW CAN THEY RUN AND NOT BE WEARY; HOW CAN THEY WALK AND NOT FAINT. THE ANSWER IS IN THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS FOUND IN JOHN 14-16.

II. You can answer these “how’s” above if you can answer like Jesus the question that was asked by Judas, not Iscariot, and recorded in John 14:22: the question of Judas was a very practical one for every disciple of Christ or would-be disciple of Christ, “how can you (Jesus) manifest yourself to us and not at the same time to the world?”. That is the whole crux of the matter, and the answer that Jesus gave to that question is not only in the next verse but in the total teachings of the Holy Spirit as found in John 14-16.

1. First, look at the question of Judas and the answer from Jesus in their own words and as recorded in John 14:22,23:

“Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him’”

It is so simple when Jesus spells it out that we can almost miss the points, and recall that Jesus was talking to the select group of men called His apostles that He had personally and in public instructed for about three years.

(1). Anyone that loves Jesus has the opportunity to have Jesus manifested to them. This alone eliminates the world, but this was not really the question of Judas. It was a very real and practical one just like today, “How can we see Jesus and the people of the world next to us can not see Jesus?” Well, obviously it starts with the love of Jesus!

(2). Then manifestation continues with the keeping of the “word” of Jesus. This is faith and all the teachings of Jesus that must be kept, and we are very fortunate that the twelve Apostles including Paul recording both
the teachings of Jesus and the God-authorized explanations of Jesus. {By the way, the Holy Spirit—the prime doctrine under consideration in this chapter, had much to do with both the writing of the books from the Apostles and Prophets, the later help in the understanding of them by the Apostles, and the jogging of memory on what Jesus Word and words are. Many worry about the confusion of knowing what the correct doctrine is, like for example how can we identify THE SOUND OF A SOUND FAITH? Well Jesus said, “If any man will do My will (the equivalent of the keeping of the word of Jesus), he shall know of the doctrine if it be of God.”}

(3). Love Jesus, keep the word of Jesus, then God the Father will love that individual. If you have not seen before the connection between Jesus and God the Father, you should see it here. Often Jesus said and in John 14-16 included that He did not invent the words or teachings, they came from God and belonged to God. Well, here is a further connection: as a person loves Jesus (which, by the way is a direction from God the Father), and keeps the word of Jesus (which came from God and is also Word of God), then the great God of the Universe, the author of the Bible and salvation, the sender of Jesus, the God who “was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself”, will love that individual.

(4). Now we are almost there, almost to the nitty-gritty of the “how”. Jesus says and taught with the deepest and most practical teachings of all: “and We will come to him and make Our home with him”. Who is the “We”? God the Father, certainly, and Jesus, certainly; but also the Holy Spirit.

2. To make this Holy Spirit part of the manifestation to the individual Christ-lover and Christ-word-keeper clear, Jesus reiterates in other words His answer to Judas; in fact these are words even before the question from Judas.

“If you love Me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper (often it is translated Comforter),
that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17)

Where do we start on the truth here about the Spirit of truth?

(1). Jesus prays to the Father for all those that love Jesus and keeps His commandments. We have the assurance that the Risen and Ascended Christ is presently at the right hand of God making intercession for our sins and preparing to come get us again in great power and glory.

(2). In answer to the prayer of Jesus, God sent the Holy Spirit on the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension of Jesus. The Bible in the Prophet Joel and the record of Acts as the Apostle Peter quoted Joel and explained it marks all time from this event of the coming of the Holy Spirit to the time in II Thessalonians when the Spirit is withdrawn from the earth as the “last days”. Read it carefully if you doubt as recorded in Acts 2:14 and following and Joel 2:28-32. And though the Holy Spirit is withdraw from the earth for a period at the end time, He remains “forever” in the heart of the individual that loves Jesus. “He dwells with you and will be in you.”

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT WHEN YOU LOVE JESUS AND KEEP HIS WORD DWELLS WITH YOU {He is the Paraclete Who goes along beside you} AND WILL 'BE IN YOU.”

III. Some of the Specifics in John 14-16 of the Holy Spirit living with you and being in you!

So many specific blessings does Jesus enumerate of the Spirit around and in our life, that we can almost overlook the details: (1) It is the job of the Holy Spirit to teach us all things; (2) It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring to our remembrance all that Jesus did and taught; (3) It is the job of the Holy Spirit to convict the world around us of sin; (4) It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the world around us of the righteousness of God and Jesus, the truth if you would; (5) It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the
world around us of Judgment, a subject few would think about except for this blessing from the Spirit; (6) The Spirit is a guide into all truth which takes time and is hard to bear when a person first gets serious about the Bible; (7) It is the responsibility of the Spirit to be your promise of eternal life and likeness to Jesus; (8) It is His job to testify of Jesus; (9) It is His job to glorify Jesus; and (10) It is the responsibility and joy of the Holy Spirit to deliver complete salvation to your life.

IV. Okay, let us tie in the matter of “to wait on the LORD” with the specifics of the work of the Holy Spirit.

1. To wait upon the LORD (God the Father) is to love Jesus.

2. To wait upon the LORD is to keep the word of Jesus. Memory work does not hurt from the Bible, but primarily serious reading of the Bible.

3. To wait upon the LORD is for God to love you in return. Prayer is a two way street: as you love Jesus and keep the words of Jesus and the Bible, especially on “men ought always to pray and not faint” and pray in this manner “Our Father which art in heaven”, you start talking to God the Father in the manner Jesus taught to pray in the Sermon on the Mount, and God starts talking to you in a still small voice, that still small voice coming from the Holy Spirit that is in you and lives with you.

4. To wait upon the LORD is to heed that inward Holy Spirit, not grieving the Holy Spirit by the way we live or what we say or the way we act.
Far easier to prove based on Scripture would be the question to ourselves of “what have we come to” than the question of itching ears, “where are we”; and then of trying to be a “world-class Christian” as if anything of the world can ever be a major concern to a believer. Even the word “Christian” has come to be suspect in this country as an adequate description of the believer, and even more so in the rest of the world where we heard often of “the Christian party” killing so many people in war.

It seems that all come to a point or points in life when they ask the same question that Paul asks in Hebrews 12, “What have we come to...” Of course Paul is asking it in a different manner than most of us when we question which way our life is headed and question what we have done with our life. Paul in Hebrews 12 is trying to emphasize that we have not come to the God of Mount Sinai, the God of fear and commandments of the law, and the God of sudden death if so much as one person or animal touched the mountain, the God of ear piercing sounds so much that the children of Israel cried that He no longer speak to them directly. It was the God of the dark cloud and the lightning and thunder, the God that they desired to get away from. It was the holy God that was not approachable until the way through the blood of Christ was provided on Calvary’s cross.

What have we come to? We have come not to a local church or denomina-tion that will certainly misuse and abuse our faith in them; but rather to the assembly or church of the Firstborn, the Lord Jesus Christ, which is registered in heaven.

What have we come to? Not to a local group of imperfect and fallen
churchmembers but to the assembly of the just men made perfect that are among the great cloud of witnesses from heaven selectively chosen by God throughout history.

What have we come to? Not to a judge from among men with the imperfections and politics of men; but to THE JUST JUDGE OF ALL TIME, the Almighty Lord God Himself.

What have you come to?

“But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.” (Hebrews 12:22-24)

When you are IN CHRIST, you have come to all these spiritual blessings in heavenly realms: (1) The heavenly Mount Zion and city of the living God that the Apostle John saw lowered from heaven to earth with the new heaven and the new earth after the old earth was destroyed with the consuming fire of God; (2) A guardian angel no, an innumerable company of angels in spiritual places that you join when you IN CHRIST are registered in heavenly places as a member of the ASSEMBLY of the Firstborn-Jesus being the Firstborn from the dead and all others IN CHRIST to be the secondborns from the dead at the great resurrection of the body when Christ comes the second time; (3) and you are coming to the only assembly, group, or church that is important—the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, registered in heaven with the only permanent registration that you need; (4) you are come to the Almighty LORD God Himself, the ruler of heaven and earth, the Great Creator of the Universe, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ who is also the Judge of All; (5) you are come to the spirits of just men made perfect, they are only spirits now until the Resurrection of the bodies at the Second
Coming of Christ and they are just men already made perfect because of the justification through faith in Christ that makes men perfect in the sight of God—God looks at Jesus standing in the place of all these justified men; and (6) you are come to Jesus—what better place to come—to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant where no longer sacrifices of the law are required or any good works for salvation as Jesus stands between God and man and says to God that they belong to you and me.

Oh the spiritual blessings in heavenly places are much greater than this. You have come to much more than eye can see or ear can hear or voice can tell of the personified love of God. What was listed above is only three verses of Hebrews 12 which enumerates with the assembly of the Firstborn, at least five other spiritual blessings of eternal registration. We will briefly in this message look at these six sources of Comfort in the Assembly of the Firstborn: I. The Comfort of the Cloud of Witnesses; II. The Comfort in the Christ, the author and finisher of our faith; III. The Comfort in the Chastening, which at first sounds strange but the comfort comes in knowing that God only chastens His own, and if He is chastening us it is because we are sons of the living God, and we must see how God allows hostility from sinners to be part of that chastening; IV. The Comfort of the Correct Choices; V. The Comfort of the City of the Living God which is part of the comfort of the Assembly of the Firstborn; and lastly, VI.. The Comfort of the Consuming Fire, and that also needs explanation as to how comfort can come to believers from the destruction of the earth and the whole universe by fire, and the answer is that it paves the way for an eternal, new heaven and new earth which can not be shaken and can not be destroyed.

Unless you have read and studied Hebrews 11 and 12 recently, you should be prepped on the drama and picturesque language of these two chapters. You will find that many action words here that relate to TOUCH, SOUND, and SIGHT. For example on the Mount Sinai where the Ten Commandments were
given to Moses and the children of Israel, you are not come to it and specifically you are not come to: the TOUCH of the mountain that burned with fire, the SIGHT of the blackness and darkness and tempest; and the SOUND of the trumpet and voice of words from God that the children begged to hear no more. This historical SIGHT as man witnessed only a little of the power and holiness of God, the God approachable only fully through Jesus Christ and His crucifixion, was so terrifying that Moses himself said, 'I am exceedingly afraid and trembling" (Hebrews 12:21). Also you will find SOUNDS like of God who shakes the whole earth when He speaks, but Who will shake next time both heaven and earth at the Sounding of the Final Trumpet as the universe is destroyed with the Consuming Fire; the TOUCH of the shaking earth as men cry out with fear from protecting caves for the rocks to fall on them; and the SIGHT of the universe being removed in preparation for the things which can not be shaken, in preparation for the eternal kingdom of the new heavens and the new earth.

One more preparatory perspective before we come to the five sources of Comfort of eternal membership in the Church of the Firstborn: that is the background of the definition of faith that is given in Hebrews 11:1-3: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good testimony. By faith we understand the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” You see how the Bible contrast things which can not be seen like the Church of the Firstborn, God Himself, and Christ through Whom all things were created are contrasted with things which can be seen like this earth, the universe, and even local churches and denominations. Faith deals with things which can not be seen, but yet with evidence of those things. It is much like we deal with in science and technology. The whole modified Bohr theory of the atom which is the basis of electronics and computers and the design of such deals with the atom which
can not be seen with the naked eye. There is a great deal of evidence that it is true such as the Millikan oil drop experiment where the exact charge is determined; and likewise experiments with indirect results to show what the mass is and the orbital energy of electrons, etc. Likewise you can not see radio and television waves and that they travel right now unseen through the air that you are breathing at the speed of light.

The Bible provides much of the evidence to us of how the unseen things exist that we can not see, touch, and hear now. The Bible tells us how in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and of how Jesus, the eternal Logos was there as the mediator of Creator. In the words of the Apostle John in the first chapter of John: all things were made THROUGH Christ and without Christ was not anything made which was made. The Bible provides all those example of faith in Hebrews 11 and the Old and New Testament books that preceded Hebrews 11 of what Enoch did, and Moses, and Abraham and Noah and on and on with the great cloud of witnesses to faith that have gone before us.

I. Now we should be ready to look at the six comforts of Hebrews 12, starting with the Comfort of the Cloud of Witnesses. Here are the comforting words of Hebrews 12:1,2:

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We are not alone as a practitioner of the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: we are not alone in the faith of sound doctrine and in the stand of faith for a sound doctrine. We have Jude and many others enumerated in Hebrews 11 as our witnesses to Contend for the Faith. Although sometimes in our beliefs
which must separate us from the majority, and even more so as we go deeply in the time of THE FALLING AWAY beyond the Perilous Times separate us from even churchmembers, we must feel like the Prophet Elijah as times had become so bad in the falling away of Israel than Elijah thought he was the only true follower of God that was left. God had to assure him that there were seven thousand left who had not bowed their knees to Baal. As the United States follows the example of Israel and comes down to only seven thousand believers in the whole nation, perhaps you will know none of them and become lonely; and at that time the Comfort of Hebrews 11 and 12, and the Comfort specifically of the great cloud of witnesses gone before will be increasingly a comfort to you.

1. The Comfort of Elijah. The Bible tells us that Elijah was a man of like passions as we are, and he prayed that it might not rain on the earth for three and a half years. We have the Comfort that we can pray like that and get real results.

2. The Comfort of Abraham. When God made Abraham the father of many nations, Abraham was made our father of faith. Like Abraham, we believe in God through faith.

3. The Comfort of Jesus. Later we will see in Hebrews 12 how that since Jesus endured such hostility of sinners while on earth, that we must expect the same thing; but we know that not only did Jesus go through the same things that we do—there hath no temptation taken you but such is common to man; but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will with the temptation provide a way of escape that you might be able to bear it“—and beyond that, Jesus is at the right hand of God making intercession for our sins.

II. The Comfort of Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith. While we are on the subject of Comfort from Jesus, let us go on to the Comfort that we receive from Jesus being the Author and Finisher of our
Faith; and in order to appreciate this you must see how Jesus existed as a person of the Godhead long before He walked on this earth. In fact, Jesus already existed when God the Father and God the Holy Spirit created the heavens and the earth. As a matter of Biblical fact, Jesus Christ was the mediating cause during Creation. One Bible scholar has given this definition of the Trinity: “God the Father is the originating cause; God the Son is the mediating cause, and God the Holy Spirit is the effecting cause.” You see that in reverse in prayer. You see that moving forward in salvation as God the Father thought up salvation, God the Son wrought salvation in His death on the cross, and God the Holy Spirit effects salvation in the life of the individual believer. You also see it as true in Creation. God the Father said “let there be light”, “let there be firmament in the midst of the waters”, “let the earth bring forth living creatures”, and etc. “let there be...let there be...let there be”-sometimes I wish we could have heard the sound of heavens as God spoke those words but we like the children of Israel at Mount Sinai could not stand the sound. Jesus the Mediator could stand the sound and whatever God the Father said, Jesus became the mediating cause in the works of Creation.

1. Now the same Jesus with the power to create and sustain all the universe is also THE AUTHOR of our SALVATION. Jesus wrote the book on Salvation if you want to put it somewhat crudely...but true. It was Jesus that provided the whole story of salvation: the story of how God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; the story of how the power of God overshadowed the virgin Mary and that person who was born of her was born of the Spirit of God, was the Son of God; the story of how Christ subsequently taught and performed miracles and other signs of faith from God that other man can duplicate or ever will; the story of how Jesus did on the cross for the sins of the world-no one took His life against His will but according to the will of Jesus and God; and the story of how Jesus arose from the dead on the third day thereby becoming the Firstborn from the dead.
2. It is difficult to separate Jesus the Author from Jesus the Finisher of our Faith. Somewhere in the Gospel story of the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ back to the right hand of God the Father to ever live to make intercession for our sins, Jesus passed from simply being the author of our salvation to being the author and finisher of our salvation. For example, shortly before the crucifixion Jesus told His first disciples, and subsequent the message was recorded also for us to read in the Bible...Jesus told His disciples that when He was gone He would send another Comforter, the Holy Spirit to take His place on earth and to do His work. That is obviously part of the finishing work of Jesus as the Spirit of God convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; as the Holy Spirit teaches us all things and brings things to our remembrance; as the Holy Spirit gives us a spirit not of fear but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind; and many other benefits of Comfort from the Holy Spirit which were mentioned in the last chapter.

III. The Comfort of the Chastening from God the Father.

We however must hasten on to cover quickly the other comforts of Hebrews 12; and on how there is a Comfort of Chastening from God the Father you need to hear from the Word of God itself, Hebrews 12:5-11 (with a quote from Proverbs 3:11,12):

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son {wow, what a blessing to be called by God the Father, “son”}…My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD {capital letters like this are always for God the Father}…the chastening of the LORD, not be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.
Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit {you see the Comfort of Chastening is for our benefit, for our PROFIT, and what that profit is specifically comes later in the passage—it is in order that there might be PEACEABLE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS in our lives}...that we may be partakers of His holiness {that makes it worth it, doesn’t it to have chastening...that is indeed comfort to know that thereby we become partakers of His Holiness.} Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

You see that is another way to look at the Comfort of Chastening: that is our Trainer to make us partakers of the Holiness of God, to bring in our life the Peaceable Fruit of Righteousness. “No cross, no crown” were the words from William Penn. Or as someone said, “all sunshine makes a desert“. We need, in short, the Comfort of Chastening from God the Father Himself; and further we need to be reminded that much of this chastening comes from the hostility of sinners. You see part of the context just read of Hebrews 12:5-11 is the introduction of Hebrews 12:3 and 4:

“For consider Him who endured such HOSTILITY FROM SINNERS against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”

IV. The Comfort of Correct Choices: “Make Straight Paths for your feet”.

Once again I wonder if any words could express it more eloquently on the Comfort of Correct Choices than the Apostle Paul and the Spirit of God do on Hebrews 12:12-15.

“Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees,
and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled...”

1. This is akin to what I like to call my “smart” lecture: do what is smart by choosing straight paths for your feet. The way you walk and live is up to you, and consists of many individual choices that can be called the choosing of straight paths for your feet. In other words, choose paths to walk at each intersection or decision point that are consistent with the best that you know from the Bible, the best you know of the example of Jesus and the cloud of witnesses that have gone before you.

2. This choosing of straight paths for your feet is both preventive medicine and healing for your physical body: (1). It is a cure for hands that hang down and for feeble knees; (2) It keeps what is lame from being completely dislocated; and (3) it provides for the healing of the lame limbs, the arms that hang down, and the feeble knees. What do you think of here? I hope the exhortation of the first chapter in Isaiah 43: they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.” The waiting on the LORD God through Jesus Christ and in prayer and in Bible reading and study is the equivalent of making straight paths for your feet.

3. Pursue peace with all people.

4. Pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord. There is a way to walk in a straight path, to walk toward the holiness of God and Christ.

5. Watch carefully that you do not fall short of the grace of God. In other words do not fall short of full salvation. In other words, do not fall away from God and Christ although there will inevitable come the general
apostasy of the Falling Away from God and Christ. (Note that this is not aalling away from the churches and denominations; no doubt attendance will
increase as people see the other approaching signs of the end of time, it is a
falling away from sound doctrine, a falling away from God and Christ.)

6. Don't let any root of bitterness cause trouble among your religious
associates, and a root of bitterness can cause many to be defiled by unbelief,
and be lead astray.

V. The Comfort of the City of the Living God.
Since so much has already been said about the Church of the Firstborn which
is the same as the City of the Living God, the New Jerusalem, the unshaken
kingdom, and the Mount Zion, we will not dwell on this portion of Hebrews 12
except to quickly enumerate the stages of Comfort.

1. You have come to Mount Zion and the City of the Living God. Now this
is a city to seek for, and the great cloud of witnesses of the Bible that have
gone before us by the way they lived and acted showed that they had found
no permanent city on earth. They bore testimony to the fact that they
sought “an eternal city whose builder and maker is God.”

2. You have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. Remember that the Apostle
John saw a new heaven and a new earth, and he saw the city of the heavenly
Jerusalem being lowered to the earth from heaven after the old earth and
universe were destroyed by a consuming fire and the new heaven and earth
had been created by God. I suspect that since John said that “there was no
more sea”, the new earth will be where the waters existed before the con-
suming fire melts all the elements of the earth.

3. You have come to an innumerable company of angels. Jesus told his
disciples during the period of His crucifixion that at any time he could call a
legion of angels to His rescue; and at the birth of Jesus, it was announced to
the shepherds of the birth of Christ by a host of angels; but the real home of
the angels-an innumerable company of angels-is in heaven where the Church
of the Firstborn is also located.

4. You have come to the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn who are registered in heaven. Don't place your faith and salvation in trust of any local church or denomination: place your faith in Jesus and in the Assembly of the Firstborn that is registered in heaven. It is not any churchmembership or registration here on earth that you should be concerned about; but rather in the registration in heaven. The Apostle John told in Revelation how there is a book in heaven called the book of life in which is written all the names of those who have truly believe in Christ, and that book if the registration book for the CHURCH, the Assembly of the Firstborn in heaven.

5. You have come to God, the Judge of all. Last week President Reagan was buried, one of the most powerful and respected men of our time; but God judges all, the Presidents, and ex-Presidents, men of status and wealth, and men of poverty and middle class. God judges all men according to the same standards of holiness and according to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The great separation will happen at that time as the believers receive a resurrected body like Christ, and the unbelievers are consigned like Satan to the lake of fire and brimstone. Later we will read in Hebrews 12 how our God is a consuming fire. Yes, God is love and holiness; but God is also a consuming fire. God is patient and has been patient; but the ultimate day of justice comes at the end of time. The Bible tells us about these unbelievers of all times that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

6. You have come to the spirits of just men made perfect. You see this is the cloud of witnesses enumerated in Hebrews 11 like Abraham, and Moses, and Elijah. They obeyed God's method and plan of salvation rather than trying to work up their own salvation: that plan is justification by faith. It is like the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans under the inspiration of the Spirit of God: "Brethren, my heart's desire and pray to God for Israel (or for any other nation or individual) is that they might be saved; for they being ignorant of
God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted unto the righteousness of God which is by faith”. You will certainly want to join them in the Assembly of the Firstborn by faith.

7. You have come to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant. Paul has elaborated in the preceding chapters of Hebrews how Jesus is the author and finisher of the New Covenant. The New Covenant that was promised to Abraham through His seed which is one, that seed being Christ; and the new covenant is very similar to the New Testament, that is that Jesus by His blood or His death on the Cross provided a way of salvation for all that believe. “If you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead and confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, you SHALL BE SAVED.”

VI. THE COMFORT OF THE CONSUMING FIRE.

It is like an anticlimax to now speak of the Comfort of the Consuming Fire, but we dare not preach less than the whole counsel of God; and the last five verses of Hebrews 12 is just as much part of the Word of God for all men as the rest of Hebrews, as much a part of the inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit as is all the other books of the Bible. Once again the eloquence of Paul and the Spirit can not be approved on:

“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, ‘Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.’ Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.”

You can chose a convenient doctrine which states that God is too much love
to have a lake of fire and brimstone for unbelievers...you can chose that right up to the last moment of the Judge of all when the God of the Consuming fire cast you into the lake of fire and brimstone where the thirst is never quenched and the core of a person never really dies. Look carefully at this passage by way of CONCLUSION.

1. Do not refuse God who speaks to you now through the teachings of Jesus in the Bible, through the Bible, through the unseen yet spiritual felt presence of the Holy Spirit who speaks of sin, righteousness through Jesus, and the judgment of the consuming fire. You know the Bible stories of those who rejected to listen to God on earth when He spoke: how the majority of the children of Israel in the wilderness fell through unbelief, not being allowed to enter eternal rest or even to the Promised Land of Palestine; you know the story of those who stood before Mount Sinai to hear the voice of God, be killed when they disobeyed by touching the mountain.

2. The voice of God shook the earth only during the days of Noah, destroying the whole earth by water except for the seven souls that were in the ark, but the next step at the end of time is when God will not only destroy earth but also the heavens. In the words of the Apostle Peter: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise {THAT WILL BE THE SOUND OF ALL SOUNDS TO SPLIT EARS AND CALL ATTENTION}, and the elements will melt with a fervent heat {THERE WILL BE NO WAY TO ESCAPE THE TOUCH OF THE ETERNAL AS ALL ELEMENTS OF THE PERIODIC TABLE MELT}; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up {THERE WILL BE NO CAVE OR MOUNTAIN TO HIDE AN UNBELIEVER}. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in both conduct and godliness, look for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?” (II Peter 3:10-13)
Sound 4-1: LET'S REVEAL SOME FOLLIES.

I believe that it was Edmund Burke who said something like this about freedom, "All that is necessary for the loss of freedom is for good men to do nothing." Well as we try to jump from the American Democratic Faith to the faith of the Bible and Christ, it can be said that all Baptists have to do in order to completely fall into the falling away is nothing. A case can be made that Southern Baptists are where they are today, because many church members did nothing for many years. I hope it has been adequately established from the Bible that each believer controls God’s timetable for: (1) evangelization of the Gospel into the whole world (then will the end come); and (2) the flood of the increase in godliness.

The local church of II Timothy would not have gone into “the perilous times” had other church members, including the pastors, more quickly revealed the follies of the church members. Of course, it seems from the context of II Timothy that the perilous times in church extended beyond the local church into the total body of Christ. I hope you see in your local church today and in the larger body evidences of perilous times that have already gone beyond the revelation of the follies into the time of intolerance toward sound doctrine. If you do not see such an intolerance, either you are blind to it because of the sin in your own life, or it has not happened; and it is possible to prevent your local church from passing from “perilous times” into “the time will come.” At least, you can help to slow down the rising tide of the Falling Away.

How can I do this? Well, you have to look at the Follies as listed in II Timothy 3:1-9 carefully; then you will have to exercise your spirit of discernment so that you can detect which ones are in your local church (or even your life); and then help the pastor reveal the follies for what they are. Generally
they are accepted as the natural expressions of type A personalities; and so they are--they are expressions of the “natural person” who either has never experienced the learning of Christ initially or the person who has not grown beyond a babe in Christ (no increased sanctification which is also part of the learning of Christ).

There is a large list of churchmember follies. You almost wonder how a missionary like Paul who established the church and churches in the first place, could come up with such a large list of churchmember follies. I am sure that he was briefed by the Evangelist Timothy to whom he was writing as well as by other visitors from the churches. Of course, there was then as always the leadership of the Holy Spirit of God in the writing of Scriptures.

The key to the understanding of the behavioral follies of the perilous times and the doctrinal intolerance of the Falling Away is the verse in-between-“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for (1) doctrine; (2) for reproof; (3) for correction; and (4) for instruction in righteousness. It is the same Scripture in every case that indoctrinates, reproves, corrects, and promotes righteousness. It is the same Scriptures that will correct behavior of the follies or the itching ears of the Falling Away. Actually as is often the case with Paul, and Scripture in general, it is four ways of saying the same thing: to reprove on Bible also indoctrinates on Bible; to correct with Bible as indoctrinates, and instruction that leads to more righteousness in the life of the man, women, and youth of God is a sign that sound doctrine has taken a hold in the life of faith. We can realize this as we come to see doctrine as much applicable and reflected in behavior as in mental beliefs. Perhaps the greatest doctrine of the Bible, in the words of Paul, is “the doctrine of Christ”; and certainly the doctrine of Christ has behavioral as well as cognitive implications.

If there is to be any hope at all of keeping your local church and denomination from passing into the Falling Away form the perilous times, then
you must help to reveal the follies of the perilous times. I find 24 follies: (1) lovers of self; (2) lovers of money; (3) boasters; (4) proud; (5) blasphemers; (6) disobedient to parents; (7) unthankful; (8) unholy; (9) unloving; (10) unforgiving; (11) slanderers; (12) without self-control; (13) brutal; (14) despisers of good; (15) traitors; (16) headstrong; (17) haughty; (18) lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God; (19) having a form of godliness only; (20) go into homes and captivate silly women laden with sins; (21) ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth; (22) resist the truth and rebel against the authority of God as did Jannes and Jambres; (23) men of corrupt minds; and (24) disapproved concerning sound faith.

Wow, how did so many follies get in one local church, much less in the total body of Christ. Well, as the commentators point out, it is not that all the members of a local church had all these bad habits: it was only that a group of them collectively exhibited all the follies. However, that is bad enough; and as we look at them in terms of our efforts to eliminate some of them from our local church, we will find that they have become far more accepted as normal churchmember behavior in our church than we previously thought.

Let us start the revelation process with some of the minor sounding follies like (1) lovers of self, (2) lovers of pleasure, (3) lovers of money, (4) boasters, (5) proud, (6) unthankful, (7) unholy, (8) unloving, (9) unforgiving, (10) without self-control, (11) headstrong, and (12) haughty.

Wow again, even the harmless sounding faults are half of the twenty-four follies; and perhaps at this point is our problem. We have become so tolerant of normal behavior in people that we also come to accept it in churchmembers who have no less a goal than to be like the perfect God and like the sinless Christ. {Recall how Christ ‘was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet without sin.”; and recall how that is given as a example for us to emulate, not the behavior of the world.} Paul says the same thing in Ephesians 4 when he writes of the normal behavior of the Gentile world around us, and
then tells churchmembers to be different, because “this is not the way your learned Christ.” Paul was there at Ephesus. He knows the way they learned Christ, because he knows the way he taught the learning of Christ.

However, at this point is part of the very problem in Southern Baptist and other churches: a strong foundation has never been laid for the learning of the Scriptures and of sound doctrine. Sunday school has been used for over 50 years as the vehicle for the learning of Scripture, but although a worthy goal, it has not been adequate. Not enough persistence and not enough continuity and not enough Bible.

But back to the more harmless sounding follies. You will notice how many of them have to do with “love”. Of course, we know from the Scripture of how important faith and hope are, but that the “greatest of these is love”. If the Saddleback church has truly accepted the five purposes of the local church, two of which were love for God and love for fellow man, there would never have been a split in the fellowship. However, being human it is impossible for any churchmember short of the extent of discipliship of the Apostle John who wrote, “perfect love cast out fear” to love perfectly. However, where so many churchmembers err is in not trying to love in the first place; or in redefinition of “what it is to love” in order to cover up their own folly.

Other of the harmless follies relate to love like if there was real love there would also be forgiveness; and if the Falling Away from the love of Christ and God has not already happened in many churchmembers, then there would not be the love of pleasure more than God and there would not be the love of money more than the love of Christ and God.

Also you must look both to a lack of genuine love in a churchmember as the fountain head for pride, haughtiness, and aggressive determination called “headstrong”. Of course, the first folly, that of self-love could never have happened in a churchmember had it not been for the inner vacuum created from a lack of positive love of God and humanity. I think it is safe to say
that “love will exist in some form”. It will either be love of God, Christ, and the truth of the Bible; or it will be love of self, money, or pleasure. Love is a primary motivation of life. In fact, Christ taught that in effect that one or the other would exist as He said that we must “die to self in order to live unto Christ.” Also He taught of the necessity of a positive choice between love of God over love of self, money, or pleasure when He said, ‘chose this day whom you will serve”, and “you can not serve God and mammon.”

As we pass from the more harmless sounding sins of churchmembership to the fatal sins {I am playing with words as all follies are sins, manifestations of a sinful nature--“the heart is desperately wirked and deceitful above all things, who can know it”}, we may be shocked at first to think these follies are really in the church: (1) brutal; (2) traitors; (3) despisers of good; (4) visitation in homes in order to captivate silly women; (5) in the church-memembership to have silly women laden with sins; (6) rebellion against the God appointed leadership in the church like Jannes and Jambres; (7) a learning in home or church meetings that leads nowhere but for the sake of learning--in other words the truth is never able to change the life; (8) forms of godliness that deny the very God and Christ that are the source of real godliness; (9) disobedient to parents; (10) men of corrupt minds, (11) disapproved concerning the sound faith of the Bible and Christ; and (12) slanderers.

You would not expect some of these follies in the local church where people have been redeemed, or supposedly redeemed by the blood of Christ. “Disobedient to parents”? Everybody in a church knows that one of the Ten Comandments is to “honor your father and your mother that your days may be long on the earth.” And exactly in this wording is a key to understanding waht the Spirit was after in correction of this folly: when the heritage of faith and knowledge of the Scriptures from the parents have not been honored then the loaal church can not exist in unity and peace long, just as the children of Israel could not deal long in the Promised Land where the Bible heritage from
their parents was ignored.

“Disapproved concerning the faith”? Who is going to do that in your local church when men practice anarchy in church government by running off the pastor. Well, isn’t it clear that it is God who disapproves such follies; it is Christ and the Holy Spirit that disapprove such a folly; and it is the sound doctrine of the Bible, if you have ears to hear and eyes to see, that disapproves such behavior in the local church as inhumanly running off a pastor without adequate income or a place to live, something that even big, worldly businesses or government would not do. Very unChristian behavior, to say the least; and yet through the recent years of the Falling Away it has become very acceptable among Southern Baptist churches. While maybe you have not detected “brutal” behavior in your local church, here is one avenue to consider. Has your church body acted brutal toward a pastor or former pastor. It is amazing how collectively we will accepted behavior in the name of the welfare of the church that we would never consider as acceptable Christian behavior on an individual basis. {Is that another sign of the Falling Away?} Perhaps our respect for the pastor, or our lack of respect for the pastor, is as great as our lack of real respect for God and Christ!

“Corrupt minds”? Well, this is easy to hide since the thoughts of the brain whether they are good and pure and worthy or corrupt are easy to hide. It was this corrupt thinking that lead Jannes and Jambres to rebel against the leadership of Moses who had been appointed by God to be the leader. Have you stopped to think that the lady, or deacon, or senior person you have known in your local church for years, in leadership toward the running off of the pastor, could have been exercising a “corrupt mind”. Yep, that is what the Bible says! Or does this reveal “slander” of a good preacher’s reputation that has happened moneths before he is run off. Would churchmembers really slander a pastor, former pastor, or another churchmember. Well, we of the Bible belt knows how it has been happening in local churches for over 50
years, and the bad thing is that there has been little or not “revelation” from the other church member related to these follies. How long has it been since you did your duty to the Bible by revealing some follies in your local church when you have seen very un-Christlike behavior, doctrines, or attitudes. “Not my job”, we say or think; but I wonder if God will accept that as a legitimate excuses in eternity. If you treatment of your fellow man determines to a large extent, whether you are accepted by God and Christ, could it not be that your treatment of your pastor and pastor, even the ones you don’t like, could determine your status in heaven in the Chruch of the Firstborn, written in heaven.

No doubt, you have noticed the similarity between the follies of II Timothy 3:1-9 and the depravity of godless civilizations recorded in Romans 1. They are very similar, and could that be where Paul found his list of follies which is so great as to number over 24. It would make sense as Paul often warns about the local church becomind just like the other Gentiles in our environment. It would also make sense since most of us are educated in the same schools and by the same television as the rest of the American world. You can hardly, surely say “that to be an American is to exercise Christian behavior”; although we have come to the point where observers of the United States can say that “Americans are born Christians like Israelis are born Jews.” That is the point at which we will have to consider the American Democratic Faith. Observers and writers of the History of American Thought and other American Studies have long noted that to be an American is both a religion and a character trait. Only Gabriel and a few others formalized this as a Faith, such as in his book, MAIN DOCTRINES OF THE AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC FAITH. However, as you go through that history and those thought patterns you will, and must detect thought patterns that have influenced your own faith such as evolution, the gospel of wealth and the corollary of success, the Enlightenement with men like Benjamin Franklin, the Romantic Era with men like Ralph Waldo Em-
erson, and so on! Would you be willing to say that you know how to distinguish your Faith of the Bible from your Faith as an American, or would you even wish to try. It is great to be patriotic; but what if you continued a whole lifetime relying for eternal salvation on your American Democratic Faith without a careful analysis of what your Faith in the Bible is like?

You know what the two main differences are: (1) Faith in the Bible and Christ is and always will be a minority movement—the difference between the “many” and the “few” of the teaching of Jesus, while The American Democratic Faith is a majority movement (granted there is is more respect for the minority in the United States than often even in a church); and (2) Tolerance is paramount in the American Democratic Faith while Christ believers are restricted in the tolerance they can have for unsound doctrine. And I think that all would see “patriotism” as the most outstanding characteristic of the American Democratic Faith. Statements about the government are very limited in the Bible with only two generally well-known: (1) the prayer for those in power; and (2) the yielding of things to Caesar that belong to Caesar and the things to Christ that belong to Christ.

Another obvious difference of the American Democratic Faith and the Faith of Christ is killing. In the name of the nation and the supposed welfare of the nation, it is possible to kill all known enemies of the State. Christ nowhere and in no way allowed for such murder, rather teaching the turning of the other cheek and the going of the extra mile.

If you will study the history of American thought carefully you will notice two other outstanding characteristics of the American Democratic Faith. Going back to their history of thought in William James, the frontier, and “pragmatism”, Americans are very “functional” oriented. In other words, if something works it becomes almost a religion to practice it. It is another way to say, perhaps not to the same extreme, that the end justifies the means. Some scholars try to identify the lowest common denominator of the American
Democratic Faith as: (1) the free and responsible individual; (2) the mission of America; and (3) some very natural and underlying control at the basis of all life. I think you can easily related these to the functionalism of pragmatism, what works is the underlying principle of the universe, and business--what makes a profit is justified even if it takes the Gospel of Wealth and the corollary of success--or the taking advantage of the people in the land--in order to get there.

In conclusion, let us briefly compare the characteristics of Romans 1 of a decaying civilization which has neglected God, noting how these characteristics of the society compare to the perilous times follies of churchmembers. (The extent to which they are the same and evident in your church determine the extent to which your local church or denomination has become "worldly". Maybe one more time we should from the Scripture define the difference between "of the world" and "of God"--"all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." You will see in the description of Romans 1 a lot of these three: lust of eyes, lust of flesh, and pride of life; and I'm sure that you noticed "pride" as one of the follies of churchmembership.)

Romans 1 follies of worldly civilizations: (1) when they knew God they did not honor God; (2) they did not give thankfulness to God; (3) futile thoughts, that is non-productive as far as eternity and disapproved of God and Christ and the Bible; (3) darkened hearts (notice the close relationship of what is in the heart and what is in the mind, or if you would, behavior, attitudes, and doctrines; (4) became fools in the very act of professing wisdom--recall how Paul said, "the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God: and how "God takes the wise in their own craftiness"; (5) they created the image of God into a corruptible image, men have many ways in history and still do to change God into a corruptible image like man, or beasts, or inanimate objects like a mountain; (6) God gave them up to the uncleanness (a lack of righteousness) of
their lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes and pride of life; (7) gay and lesbian dishonor of their own bodies between themselves (if this folly has gone into your local church you are no better off than heathen civilizations no matter how tolearant you are); (8) the truth of God was traded for a more convenient lie--similar to what happens to people in the Falling Away after they will no longer endure sound doctrine, turn away from the truth and turn into fables; (9) worship and serve hero creatures more than the Creator like intellectualls and movie stars and athletes; (10) vile passions; (11) unnatural use of the same sex; (12) receiving in AIDS the just recompence of reward; (13) debased mine; (14) unrighteousness; (15) sexual immorality; (16) wickedness; (17) covetousness; (18) maliciousness; (19) full of envy; (20) heart full of murder; (21) full of deceit; (22) evil-mindedness; (23) whisperers and backbiters; (24) haters of God; (25) violent; (26) proud; (27) boasters; (28) inventors of evil things; (29) disobedient to parents; (30) undiscerning; (31) untrustworthy; (32) unloving; (33) unforgiving; (34) unmerciful; (35) do and approve of others who do the same.

Yes, this could well be where Paul obtained his list of follies for church members after seeing them in the world where he lived. It could be simply that Paul is telling us, as well as observing these follies in local churches, that this is what happens to a church when they become like the world around them.
It is welcome to consider “unity” and “peace” after dragging ourselves, although necessary like realizing a sickness before there can be a cure, through the follies of church members and the decay of worldly civilizations. However, I want you to note at the beginning that the words of Ephesians 4 about “unity” and “peace” are not in the sense that the world thinks, not in the sense that most church members think. The Unity is an inherent unity that can only come from the Holy Spirit. It can not be based on a unity of public relations or a unity of organization or even of dynamic leadership as Rich Warren tried to do at Saddleback. It only comes from the Holy Spirit of God. And the bonds of peace, well Ephesians 4 identifies exactly what those bonds of peace are—one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father, and one hope of the Christ calling.

Now with those two Scriptural and doctrinal based statements of faith, look at what Paul and the Bible really say in Ephesians 4:3: “Spare no effort to make fast with bonds of peace, the unity which the Spirit gives.”

(1) only the Spirit can give unity in a local church and in the body of Christ, not man, or organization, or leadership.

(2) men, especially leaders, can promote with bonds of peace that unity which the Spirit gives based on practice, teaching, and preaching of the Seven ONEs.

1. The Inherent Unity of the Holy Spirit.

Little more of the Bible is needed to present “unity” than the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is a book about unity: how to identify real unity and how to work with the Holy Spirit in the promotion of inherent unity. We build a house on sand if we attempt to utilize the ways of the world to promote unity. The structure may look grand for years, then collapse. And let there be no mis-
take, the world does have extensive and effective means for promoting unity. It is the primary job of big business and big government and big education and big churches {yes, a lot of psychological training goes into the training of ministers in both “how to get along with people in the church”, and in church administration}, to promote unity. These organizations can not exist and continue to prosper if there is not unity in work environment. Much of training and effort in these big organizations, which touch the lives of all Americans, goes into “management dynamics”; and much of management dynamics centers around unity among the workers. Of course, and naturally, there is a lot of the best American society can do in the practical psychology of management dynamics. You will find primarily the approach of behaviorism, but also some cognitive aspect in this applied psychology. The main effectiveness comes in the controlled not realizing that they are being controlled.

Recall that the approach of this book is in common with some that think we must find our authoritative answers in the Bible. Many churches and denominations do not care about the authority of the Bible, finding all of their answers in psychology, history, and sociology. And you have to careful here, because many have the Bible method of “spiritualizing”, or as I hope you know well by now False Teachers, like Satan himself, will send up a screen of scriptural quotes and then at some subtle time depart from the truth.

So into the book of Ephesians to read out the meaning {exegesis} on the “inherent unity of the Holy Spirit.” Even the Spiritual Blessings in Heavenly Places of Ephesians 1 and the Before In Christ and the After In Christ of Ephesians 2, lays the foundation of the kind of local church and larger church unity that comes form the Spirit of God.

(1). The common purpose itself of God in choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4) provides the very fundamental basis of unity. It is closely akin to the “one hope of the calling”. You know how the Scripture states it:
“...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself...” (Ephesians 1:4)

You see even this common purpose of God through Christ for all believers has been diverted to an individualistic, non-common purpose.

(2). The larger purpose of God to “gather together in one all things in Christ” is both a work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In short, a work of God. What is the “all things” in this gathering? It is a unity as large as heaven and earth; it is a gathering to God; and it is a gathering through the Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 1:10) You know if in their discussions about unity people like Rich Warren can not get past the local church to the total body of Christ, how in the world can they possible see the unity of heaven and earth.

(3). All believers as one of their spiritual blessings in heavenly places receive a common “inheritance”, and the above-materialistic nature of this inheritance serves to also provide inherent unity among all believers. (Ephesians 1:11) IT IS GOD’S PURPOSE that believers obtain a common inheritance, and this is “THE PURPOSE of Him {God} that works all things according” to His own plans and history, according to the counsel of His will.” Notice the connotation that he hardly needs any counsel about His will from California or Saddleback.

(4). The Holy Spirit Himself is the seal of approval from God for a guarantee of the inheritance. (Ephesians 1:14) He provides inherent unity by providing a common guarantee until redemption is complete at the Second Coming of Christ. At God’s direction, Christ has purchased the “possession”, that possession being the believer, so that the Holy Spirit provides the guarantee of redemption for what has already been purchased. {Security of the believer is never in doubt. What is in doubt is which ones have truly become believers in the local church. If they are in the Church of the Firstborn written in heaven, there is no doubt at all.}
(5). Paul’s prayer for church members at Ephesus shows the way to promoting the inherent unity of the Spirit which is the subject of the second division of this Sound; however, we briefly mention it now as a precursor of the real way according to the Bible to promote unity: (1) that God may give you the “spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (and you do see again that the Holy Spirit is at work again providing the unity of (a) wisdom and (b) revelation and (c) knowledge of God.); (2) that you might know the full extent of the hope of God’s calling in Christ—remember much like the adoption that was God’s purpose in selecting you from before the foundation of the world; (3) enlightened understanding (I think you recognize that as a work of the Holy Spirit); (4) to know the hope of the calling of God in Christ; (5) the richness of the inheritance in all the saints; and (6) the great power that is available for inward change measured by nothing less than the power of God that raised Christ from the dead. (Ephesians 1:16-20)

(6). The Spirit provided inherent unity when we passed from the Before In Christ (BIC) into the After In Christ (AIC), when He “made us alive together with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5). This is of course the real new birth which takes nine months or more, and if referred to in Ephesians 4 as God and Christ coming into the heart to make their home.

(7). When Paul writes in Ephesians 2:9,10 of how the inherent unity is not of any individualistic works rather of “His workmanship”, a creating in Christ Jesus for good works, it is again the inward work of the Holy Spirit. (In salvation as in Creation and the reverse in prayer, the Father is the originating cause, the Son the mediating cause, and the Spirit the effecting cause.)

(8). In the short verse of Ephesians 2:18 we see the whole trinity at work. It is “through” Christ; it is access to the Father; and it is by the “one Spirit”. There is a repeat of this in Ephesians 2:21,22 where the “church” as the total body of Christ is added to the trinity, once again the Spirit is the glue of the dwelling place of the church.
(9). Another way that the Spirit provides the only real unity in a local church or the larger church is a way that is often looked. We think of the Bible, but how often do we think of how this is true teaching from the Apostles and Prophets. The only designated writers of Scripture authorized by God through the Holy Spirit of God. While Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone, the Apostles and prophets provide a solid foundation for fundamental, basic, initial, and complete understanding. (Ephesians 2:20)

(10). By the way here is the unity of “the whole building”. “In whom {Jesus Christ and the apostles} the whole building, being fitted together; grows into a holy temple in the Lord...” (Ephesians 2:21) Notice the words of real unity here: the whole building, fitted together, grows into, and a holy temple in the Lord Jesus Christ.

(11). More of the real inherent unity from the Spirit. The Gentiles “should be fellowheirs of the same body”. That is also a much larger unity than the local church, a unity that can unite both Jews and Gentiles. We might add the ONLY unity that can unite Jews and Gentiles. (Ephesians 3:6a)

(12). (Ephesians 3:6b) Gentiles with Jews are “partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel”. {At some points it is difficult to decide whether the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit provide the unity. All three do, but the place where we live on this earth and in this point of time it is done by the Spirit of God.}

(13). The church of which Ephesians writes is as large as the “manifold wisdom of God. (Ephesians 3:10)

(14). Once again Rich, and all his disciples, you want to see real unity, not from the Spirit alone, but from God the Father. Well, in Ephesians 3:11 is “eternal purpose” that God accomplished as He “was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.”

(15). There is in Ephesians 3:14-21 there is another prayer of Paul for the churchmembers at Ephesus, once which I think we can also decided
is written through the Spirit of God for us also, and it is a more practical application to us of the first prayer from Paul--

a. that the Holy Spirit might strengthen you in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16);

b. that Christ may dwell inside your heart by faith;

c. that you be rooted and grounded in love (being rooted and grounded in love is also the inherent work of the Holy Spirit although love can be promoted by the bonds of peace which we will discuss next from Ephesians);

d. that you with all saints--now that is a real common effort of unity--“that you with all saints may be able to comprehend” the four dimensions of the love of Christ. (the fourth dimension is time, love that lasts);

e. that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Wow, that is unity personified.

2. The Promoting of the Bonds of Peace of the Seven ONE’s. After three chapters in Ephesians of showing the true basis of unity in the Spirit, then Paul goes on in the next chapters to show what we can do with that unity, in promoting with bonds of peace the unity which the spirit gives (Ephesians 4:3).

He {the Holy Spirit} provides unity: we strive to promote it. You will recall how important as the Apostle Peter gave it to us is “peace” in the living of the good life and the good death experience. Besides refraining from evil and doing good, peace is mentioned twice. First to seek peace, then to go beyond that to run after peace. However, the peace of Jesus and from Jesus is not the same as what the world presents. Jesus said, “I give you peace. Not as the world gives, give I you.” Jesus also said that the acceptance of His Faith and Teachings would cause divisions even in the family. I think, though, that as we keep the bonds of peace in context in Ephesians 4, we can see what this kind of peace is and what the bonds of peace are. Well, the bonds of peace
There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Ephesians 4:4-6)

These are obviously the most important doctrines, sounds, or teachings of the Bible. If you ever get short on a list of major Bible doctrines, here is a list of seven. You can do no better than the word of God itself. And should you in the future run into an obnoxious Bible teacher and interim pastor like myself who expects all churchmembers to know what is truly “major” in the Bible, then turn to Ephesians 4:4-6).

However, some explanation is needed since today’s churches and theology have departed so far from original Scripture. {Let us get back to learning Christ from the Apostles and Prophets.} You may miss salvation in the list of seven because it is hidden in the word “one baptism”. We have been indoctrinated to think of baptism as water baptism, or immersion, or Holy Spirit baptism {really doesn’t exist except more a a dedication of life} or sprinkling; and we forget that the original Baptism of the New Testament and the book of Romans is as a description of Salvation. It is really speaking of both the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; and the corresponding in the individual life death to an old life of sin and self, burial to the old way of life, and a raising to walk “in newness of life.” You will see this same approach and wording later in Ephesians 4 in terms of the old man and new man. {We do not have time to go that far since we must terminate with a conclusion.}

You notice that we hit all seven of these and more in the Sounds of Sections 2 and 3.

Now if you churchmembers want to do something to “protect” and “promote” with bonds of peace the unity which the Spirit gives, I would suggest this: (1) first of all learn the major sounds of the Bible which it has been verified time and time again that the average churchmember does not know,
and can not even list; (2) memorize scriptures to support each doctrine; (3) get over the attitudes that doctrines are bad, are separate from behavior, and have no value for the unity of the church; (4) check your life as we will do in the last chapter for violations of the friendship of Jesus in not keeping His commandments or teachings, and rectify those habits; (5) learn to detect false teachers and false teachings and help to reveal their follies lest we come too quickly to the end of the Falling Away and the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit.
Active churchmembers are most subject to the “Falling Away”. Why are active churchmembers most subject to the “Falling Away”? Active churchmembers are the most subject to the “Falling Away” because they are the ones with the most to fall away from. You can not expect inactive churchmembers to fall away. Either they have already fallen away, or they never fell into anything; and therefore have nothing to fall away from. Young people below the age of twenty have not seen the works of God long enough to have anything to fall away from. Perhaps it should be said that the “Falling Away” of the Bible is an adult over 20 years of age active churchmember problem. If the “Falling Away” of this generation is like the falling away of the children of Israel in the wilderness, then all of the young people under the age of 21 will be safe. Remember the falling away of the children of Israel as told in the book of Hebrews and other places in the Bible: it was the adults over the age of 21 who saw the works of God for 40 years in the wilderness who were not allowed to enter into the Promised Land, and they were not allowed to enter into the eternal rest of heaven either. Why? Because there was in them “an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” And that brings us to the first check item on the CHECKLIST FOR THE FALLING AWAY. {By the way, don’t forget that the “Falling Away” is not from church. Church attendance may actually go up. It is a falling away from God, Christ, and the sound doctrine of the Bible.}

1. HEART CHECK. What the “heart check” is can best be expressed by the Word of God as recorded in Hebrews 3:12.

“Beware, brethren, lest there in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God...” (Hebrews 3:12)
Two warning words at the beginning, “Beware” and “brethren”. Immediately you know that it is the churchmembers who are so active as to be called “brothers” that are being addressed by the Apostle Paul in the book of Hebrews, which by the way, is a book about the Falling Away; and furthermore, it is those active churchmembers that must “beware”. It is like a “caution, caution, warning, warning”. Oh yes, a person today being called a “brother” in a church or a “sister”--Paul did not intend to leave out women--can be walking around in the church with “an evil heart of unbelief”. We do recall that while man looks on the outside, judging most generally by appearance, God looks on the heart and judges what the Bible calls “righteous judgment”. {Later we will discuss what believers are also in Romans admonished to judge righteous judgment instead of going by impression, and how that can be done. Most people think all “judging” is prohibited by the Bible, and that is wrong thinking.}

“...and evil heart of unbelief” and “departing from the living God”. You do not get this kind of “intellectual honesty” in reading the “Purpose” books from Rush (Rick) Warren. {By the way, did you know that Rush Limbaugh died. He came back reincarnated as Rick Warren with all the answers on every question known to man. However we must recall in all fairness that this is the age of the know-it-all-windbag. You can see that from the popularity of the talk shows like from Rush Limbaugh, Oprey Winfrey, and others. It is just plain popular to have all the answers. Yet the problem with the wind-bag is that there is generally only one perspective, there is a definite bias in only one direction, and this eliminates both intellectual honesty and respect for the opinions of other people.} If you want to know the basis for the unity advocated by Rush Warren, go through his books noting all the statements in bold and/or numbered, and you will find that they are so superficial that any churchmember could not disagree with them. {That is one way to get agreement or unity, and later we will discuss the way of the book of Ephesians and the rest of the Bible on unity.}
Now, exegesis of Scripture will not allow this error in hermeneutics. (Hermeneutics is the science of biblical interpretation. By and large, it is simply a matter of letting the Bible itself dictate the way the Bible is to be read and understood. Also, more about this later.) You will notice something else about the books from Rick Warren: scriptures are attached as an appendix to previous statements. This is what Bible scholars for years have called "isogesis". You have already made up your mind what the Bible says, and then you sort of attach it to your conclusions in order to provide credence. According to Rick the references are placed at the end of the book to encourage you to read them for yourselves which he knows that most people will not do. And I am afraid this is one key to the "unity of fellowship" that he bullies on his congregation: let them read the Scripture and do their own exegesis; and then if there is any disagreements that come from them, either kick them out of the fellowship and get them to suppress their disagreeing convictions. (As near as I can figure out from such a superficial approach to Scripture, this is what Rick calls the "inductive method".)

Let us right now, do a little exegesis on the evil heart on unbelief, on the potential of departure from the living God, and on the rest of the context of Hebrews 3:12-14.

(1). "an evil heart of unbelief". First of all the President has told us that evil is in Iraqi, Korea, and Iran so that we would not naturally turn to churchmembers to look for "evil hearts". And beyond that we would think of evil heart as showing themselves in murder, terrorism, and rape, not in unbelief. You see already we come against the American Democratic Faith and what it is popular to think. Unbelief, according to God as recorded in the Bible, is as much or more "evil" than murder or terrorism. Once again do not take my opinion on it, look at the Bible. (This is another principle of biblical interpretation and something which the "Purpose" books never do: the best way to understand a text like Hebrews 3:12-14, or any text of the
Bible, is by comparing scripture with scripture. What the Bible says in the book of Revelation will agree with and help in the understanding of what the Bible says in Hebrews. This is so since “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (II Timothy 3:16). So let us look at the Word of God in Revelation 21:8--

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8)

There it is if you really want to know how bad or “evil” unbelief is you can tell by the company it keeps--right there with murderers and liars and the sexually immoral--and you can tell by the eternal results that await any evil heart of unbelief, that is the second death. {Also by the way, “fire and brimstone”, sin, and repentance that very disagreeable and unpopular words that you are not likely to see often in the Camelot books from Warren.}

2. “departing from the living God”. This truely needs some exegesis that will take a few far-reaching generalizations from the total Bible. This is not the famous “falling from grace” doctrine of the Methodists, and it is not in disagreement with the even more famous “Security of the Believer” doctrine of Baptists. The departure from the Living God is what the majority of the children of Israel did in the wilderness after seeing the works of God for 40 years.

2. UNITY CHECK. You know what the real inherent unity of the Holy Spirit for the local or larger church is, you should be able to know when unity is being promoted based on that Spirit or based on the ingenious unifying psychology of the world. False teachers, of course, will promote and talk to you about a unity based on disciplship to them. It will be subtle, because whatever false teachers and prophets are, they are not dumb. They are in sheep clothing so that they have to look like the real sheep of God; and in order to
deceive many, as Jesus predicted, that must be popular. The other manner in which false teachers, according to the Bible, will seek to promote unity is by a method that really scatters the sheep. They often “take a scripture and go ever where preaching” as for example taking the scriptures about divisions in the church as some say they are of Paul, Cephas, etc. These false teachers will claim, if not say, that because you say you are a Baptists or Methodists, etc, you are causing divisions in the body of Christ. Follow them, and you will have a unity of agreement without divisions. {How quickly believers forget the good heritage of men like Roger Williams, the Baptist, and Charles Wesley, the Methodist; and quickly think that at some point in history they are the only believers on the face of the earth. It is the ultimate in spiritual ego: it is most generally the work of Satan.}

3. MILK CHECK. Don’t be a “babe in Christ” that Paul mentions in Hebrews, the book about the Falling Away. Get some meat of the Bible into your mind and heart. Don’t piddle: read it and study it as if your life depended on it; because your eternal life really does.

4. PRIESTHOOD CHECK. And do not let any respected religious leader take the place of your own personal priesthood as a believer. You are entitled as an act of God and Christ, to come both to God the Father for yourself through Christ, and to come to the Bible under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and determine its truth for yourself.

5. ITCHING EARS CHECK. How can you know the best teachers from the false teachers? This is difficult as Satan is behind false teachers; as they are in sheep’s clothing so you can not recognize them; and as they are popular, and all of us Americans being trained and enamored with the importance of numbers and the majority are swept away with popularity and the regard the mob has for status. {If you do not think this is subtle, think of whether if a movie star came to sit on your church row how difficult it would be for you not to respect him or her more than any churchmember, which is in
violation of the “respector of persons” command from the Apostle James in the book of James.} Below we have tried to summarize in a table what the Bible has given us as ways to tell the difference between false teachings and sound teachings.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>False Teaching/ Teachers</th>
<th>Sound Doctrine</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Acceptance</td>
<td>Popularity of the “many”</td>
<td>Acceptance by “few”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Wolves hidden under sheep’s clothing</td>
<td>might not be as acceptable in looks to the world as was Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>Applause of the world</td>
<td>Jesus, the apostles and prophets were rejected by the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipliship</td>
<td>attract disciples to themselves</td>
<td>attract disciples to the Lord Jesus Christ</td>
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<tr>
<td>sanctification</td>
<td>want you to be more like themselves</td>
<td>seek the goal for you of becoming more like Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unity</td>
<td>based on psychology, wordly agreements, and organization</td>
<td>based on the inherent unity of the Spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion of Unity</td>
<td>based on catchy sayings, spiritualizing, and comforts to itching ears</td>
<td>based on practice and understanding of the Seven ONE’s and other major Bible doctrines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>lust of flesh, lust of eyes, and pride of life</td>
<td>seek first God &amp; His righteousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satan’s promptings</td>
<td>personal use and status</td>
<td>glory of God in Christian calling</td>
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At first, because of the tolerance built up among Americans in the American Democratic Faith, it might seem unusually cruel to suggest that the recent Tsunami might be destruction from God Himself for wickedness. (You have to remember that the destruction of the universe is under automatic control, and that events such as earthquakes and Tsunamis will automatically happen as earth pressures built up for the final unless God through Christ chooses to intervene.) This is not to suggest that this Indonesian part of the world is any more wicked than the rest of us; but rather is to suggest that God destroyed the whole world one time for wickedness and God is definitely going to destroy the world again for wickedness. It is only by the grace of God that it has not happened already.

Without seeming to be among those wind bags who have all the answers on all possible questions, I would like to rhetorically ask the question as to “why not”, if any Bible teachers had the real courage as they did before the fundamentalists took over; that is, why not the Tsunami for the wickedness of man. Why not also the recent hurricanes, earthquakes, tornados, and other destruction acts of nature. Why can these not be acts of God against the wickedness of man. The Tsunami was a flood that killed over 12,000 people, and we recall the Bible fact that God destroyed the whole wicked world by flood during the days of Noah, except for Noah and seven souls. Of course, the only problem is that God promised with the sign of the rainbow to never destroy the earth again by water. We note, however, that this was not a few isolated countries but the world. The plan of God is to destroy the earth, and the heavens, next time with a gigantic shaking. {Which by the way could be
in the Tsunami preliminary shakings like a woman in birth pains).

You never heard of “tsunami” in the Bible. Well, while you did not hear that word, you did hear in the “signs under the earth beneath” of the Day of the LORD and Lord, the sound. It was not the original intention to include this chapter \{of course, quite a few chapters were added as the text flow became automatic\}, but after hearing a discussion on Larry King Live from so-called religious leaders--a President of Southern Baptist Seminary, a Jewish Rabbi, a Catholic Priest, a Buddhist, and a Muslim--where their answers to the issue of “why God allowed the Tsunami” was so inadequate and superficial. It is a sound of the times that third grade answers are given to such momentous a question. I am reminded of what Dr. R. G. Lee wrote in his sermon “The Menace of Mediocrity”: “Wrens make prey where eagles dare not perch.” If they are making prey of the high religious ground in the nation and of providing answers to the most difficult of all questions, consistent with the Bible, they should have their guns loaded before they perch so high.

God, and those who purport to represent God, do not have to apologize for what happened as 155,000 plus were killed by the flooding and other destruction from the Tsunami. I don’t know how many people lived on the earth during the 40 years that Noah was building the arc, but we do know from the account of the Bible that God destroyed all living people and animals on the earth except two of each animal in the arc and the seven people. God did it, and we do not have to apologize for it. God, however, gave His reason: the people on the earth were so wicked that He tired of the unrighteousness. This Tsunami reminds us of the Flood although God promised with the sign of the rainbow to never destroy the earth by water again. Next time, according to the Bible, it is going to be destroyed by a shaking of heaven and earth and fire.

Part of the problem is that few have enough faith in the Bible as the Word of God to readily admit that God Himself did destroy the whole world
by a Flood and furthermore that He intends to destroy the whole universe, the heavens and the earth”.

I think right here between these two historical and cataclysmic events of the Bible, the Flood and the Day of the LORD and Lord, we can get a lot of insight into the why and how of the recent Tsunami. And I think the best way to present it would be in terms of the exegesis of select verses of Scripture, something also which I did not hear the so-called religious leaders doing.

First I would like to make one generalizing statement that I never heard from those “wrens”: most of what is happening to the earth and the rest of the universe called “heavens” in the Bible is on automatic control, much like gravity and other natural laws are on automatic control, between the forces built up and turned loose during the Flood and the climax in the Day of the Lord. However God, through Christ, can easily speed them up or slow them down depending on how quickly believers (1) evangelize the world with the Gospel, and (2) stem the tide of increasing godliness of the Falling Away. Christ, according to the first chapter of John, was active in initial Creation as the mediating Cause--“all things were made through Him”--and according to the book of Colossians Christ remains active in the physical glue that holds the universe together--“through Him all things consist”. Also God the Father has never subjected Himself to the works of creation, humanity or physical things. In short, even as Christ often intervened over gravity and other natural phenomena to for example walk on water, so both Christ and the Father can intervene at any time to overcome natural events of destruction that are on automatic control.

In fact, in the many miraculous events we have heard of Tsunami victims rescue, we are obviously seeing the handiwork of God in sending angels to rescue certain select individuals. It is here that we must trust both the wisdom, control, love and will of God in the selection of those who were saved. The real acts of the grace of God are that He patiently gives signs of the great
"shaking" of the heavens and the earth, in Tsunamis, earthquakes, the changing weather, and falling meteorites. Also the grace of God in His patience that He does not immediately destroy the whole earth again because of the wickedness that is perhaps as great worldwide as it was in the days of Noah. And he would, no doubt, except for the sake of the elect.

We are so indoctrinated by the wisdom of the world and the American Democratic faith and superficial knowledge of the Bible that we can not appreciate what God, the Creator and Sustainer of this universe, is really like. He is grieved daily by sin. The murder and adultery and covetousness is bad enough, but what grieves Him most is the neglect. The failure to think about God, to acknowledge Him, and to give Him the glory are far greater sins than violations of the Ten Commandments. Of course, the first three commandments apply to our attitudes toward God the Father.

Biblical statements about the Tsunami and other shakings of heaven and earth.

1. “for we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” (Romans 8:22)
This is perhaps the best description from the Bible of what I try to call “under automatic control”. (1) the whole creation groans, and (2) the whole creation labors with birth pangs.

(1) The whole Creation groans. What are some of the signs of the groans that come from God’s works of Creation. Well, sin is a groaning and the frustration of a humanity that strives to do better and fails is a groan. I would be inclined to think that animals did not fight and live off each other before original sin in the Garden of Eden, so the animals groan for something better. Then, of course, the earth itself which groans in earthquakes, and volcanos, and hurricanes {it is difficult to know whether the hurricanes are signs in the heavens or the earth, probably both}, in movements of the earth masses, and the continental shelves, the shifting of the magnetic north,
(2) The whole Creation labors with birth pangs. How much more faith we would show in God if we would see earth-“shaking” events in terms of BIRTH PANGS. The only way to get a new heaven and new earth that the Apostle John speaks of in the book of Revelation, and one new humanity that Paul writes of in Ephesians, the old must pass away. There can be no new baby until there are nine months of birth pangs with the hardest pangs coming near the point of delivery, and there can be no new earth until the pains of the old earth and heavens passing away, also which will become more violent in the “shakings” as the final time arrives.

1. “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” (Hebrews 12:26 and Haggai 2:6)

This is another way to describe what has been happening to the earth between the time of the Flood and now: it is “shaking”. Of course while God in His word admits that it is He that is shaking the heavens and the earth--“I shake”--it does not tell the method of shaking as under automatic control. I think also we would have to see in initial Creation, since known unto God according to Pastor James are all His works from the beginning, that God intended for the universe to run down on a certain time schedule. Even if there is a certain variable in that time schedule that depends on evangelism and tolerance of false doctrine.

I think you noticed that this is a quote from the Apostle Paul in Hebrews of one of the Old Testament Prophets, Haggai. Remember that God long ago promised in the Bible not to do anything without warning His own people. Here are the warnings of Tsunamis and earthquakes and ultimately the Day of the Lord where it all shakes to pieces.

The yet once more in the shaking reminds us that God did first at a certain point in history shake the whole earth. While those with a limited faith in the Bible, will believe in a limited Flood only in the Middle East, you can eas-
ily see implied in the words from Paul that it was the “whole” earth that was
shaken by the Flood. In fact as supported by modern recognition of the mid-

dean range and a sunken mountain range around the continents, that as the
depth gave up the waters that were in them, there was such a “shaking” of the
dearth as to move whole continents away from each other. {You saw how in the
recent Tsunami, whole islands had their shapes changed: just imagine,
what tons and millions of tons of water flowing over all the earth would do
to the land masses underneath.}

3. “Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of things that
are being shaken, as of things that are made....” (Romans 12:27a)
The works of man on the Day of the Lord will be removed like the houses
and streets and automobiles and trains were removed in Southeast Asia; the
works of Creation will be removed by the shaking and the elements themselves
melting with fervent heat, a thing which we did not see in the Tsunami but
of which we have been warned in the volcanos that quickly pour hot lava over
people and villages; the heavens will be shaken with diminished light from the
sun and moon and the stars falling out of the sky which we have also not seen
in any way yet to speak of. Well known to almost all is the Periodic Table of
the Elements; and when the Bible tells us at the end time that “the elements
will melt with a fervent heart” that means all the elements of that periodic
table—gold, silver, oxygen, hydrogen. This leads us to believe that the last
great battle will end with nuclear annihilation since it is the atomic and nuclear
reactions of bombs that disintegrate in heat the very atomic structure of the
elements. Of course, what man can do in nuclear bombs, God and Christ also
have the power to do; and more.