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FOUNDATION

. . . certainty in an uncertain world

By C. Parker Thomas

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The Sure Foundation

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Introduction

This book represents a collection of four articles published in the *Midnight Cry Messenger* in 1981 and 1982. Since these articles appeared, the pace of startling change in our world has quickened dramatically. As our world careens blindly toward its fiery end, we need, as never before, to be certain we are built upon the Sure Foundation.

This is no time for spiritual complacency. The world and its inhabitants are in the same condition that they were before the flood when the imaginations of men's hearts were only evil continually. Though many were no doubt religious, yet they weren't really concerned about God and His ways or they would have listened to Noah. The condition of their hearts blinded their eyes and deafened their ears to the voice of God.

Today, many of God's little remnant are asleep and need to be awakened and prepared for the soon return of our Lord. Many who count themselves as believers are deceived by religion and need to do as Paul counselled in II Cor. 13:5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

God is permitting Satan to unleash a flood of spiritual darkness upon our world on a scale never seen before in history. Only those on the Sure Foundation will survive. God is rapidly finishing up His work before judgment falls.

I trust that you will read the following pages with a prayerful and open heart. If in your heart you desire the Lord above all else, He knows about it and will help you. May God bless you.

Midnight Cry Messenger

The *Midnight Cry Messenger* is a paper that has been published by the Bible Tabernacle of Southern Pines, North Carolina since 1957. It is an expression of the ministry that God has given to Bro. C. Parker Thomas to warn and prepare God's elect remnant for the soon return of the Lord.

You will find that this unique paper is not a voice for tradition but is an expression of truth relevant to the end of this age, truth hidden by God in the pages of His word until the proper time. Truly, "... the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. 4:18.

The *Midnight Cry Messenger* has, over the years, come to grips with many difficult and controversial subjects, not merely to be controversial, but because there was a need in God's people and because the Spirit of revelation was, through the word, moving to meet that need.

At the present time the paper is published four times a year in a four-page tabloid format. While we welcome the financial help of those who desire to share in its support, our number one desire is to see that those hungry for truth have access to it. Thus we offer the paper free and postpaid to those who write in and request it. Please write to:

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USA

Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
1 THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS	1
2 THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST	11
3 A FOUNDATION LAID IN ZION	21
4 CHOSEN IN HIM	33

Chapter 1

THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS

“Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” Isa. 28:16.

When I was considering a proper title for this subject. I first thought of it as “The True Foundation.” Upon further consideration I realized that there was only one foundation. But we need to make a distinction between the conglomerate religious mess on every hand and the one and only Sure Foundation.

Since so much confusion and error exists as to what the true foundation is this distinction is necessary. However beautiful and impressive the religious edifice may be, if it is not built on this foundation it is Babylon and must fall. Babylon will not be able to stand against the fury of Satanic power that is even now being unleashed against the world.

Crime and violence are increasing. Our prisons, jails, hospitals and mental institutions are overflowing. Mankind from individuals to nations are at each other’s throats, accusing and being accused. Wars and rumors of wars are a present tense fact. The nuclear arms race could erupt at any moment into the world’s greatest holocaust. Immorality and perversion are no longer looked upon as sin. In fact, the so-called “gay rights movement” is demanding recognition and respect by the rest of society.

Despite the scientific advancement and modern technology that enables man to clear forests, move mountains, harness the sun, explore the universe and mass-produce food, machinery and goods, much of the world is starving.

Our water, air and land are being polluted by toxic waste. Inflation, taxes and high interest rates are making havoc of the world’s economy. More and more the age-old problem of two classes of humanity is emerging – the very rich and the very poor. From every standpoint our world is on a collision course with destruction.

Needless to say, divine intervention is not necessary – left to himself man will destroy the world and himself with it. His own selfishness and greed are cords of iniquity drawing him closer and closer to annihilation. Earth man faces extinction along with other endangered species. Our only hope is the Rock of Ages.

This is the tried stone, the precious corner stone, the sure foundation. When our house (hope) is built on anything less it is sure to fall. Even now the rot and decay of manmade substitutes are beginning to give way. Matt. 7:24-29.

FALSE PROPHETS

More and more I am made to see that many things have replaced Christ in religion as well as the world system. This is why the word is filled with so many warnings about false prophets and deception.

Jesus said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves.” Matt. 7:15.

In Matt. 24:4-5 Jesus said, “... take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many.”

Please note that this scripture does not say these false prophets would actually be claiming to be Christ. That would fool very few people. They, like most preachers, will simply claim to be Christ’s representative. They will acknowledge Jesus as the Christ and profess to believe in him.

Although they acknowledge Jesus as the Christ, he is not the foundation of their faith. They have some other emphasis that keeps their converts from seeing the finished work of the cross. The gospel they preach is corrupted. It is not the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. II Cor. 4:3-4.

They cannot preach the gospel of Christ because they do not have the revelation of Christ. It is still true that you cannot minister what you do not have. Ministers and professing christians are the product of the religious systems that beget them. It is simply the fulfillment of Jesus’ words in Matt. 7:16, “Ye shall know them by their fruits...”.

MANY SPOILED

Paul likewise warned us to “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” Col. 2:8-10.

Perhaps most of our organized religious world falls in this category. They have been spoiled “through philosophy and vain deceit, after the

tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” How can they minister something they do not have or understand?

AN EXAMPLE

A good example of this is found in Acts 18:24-28 and Acts 19:1-7. These twelve men were converts of Apollos before he met Aquila and Priscilla who expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. It is obvious he lacked knowledge to bring these men into spiritual reality.

Apollos was mighty in the scriptures, fervent in the Spirit, diligent in his teaching and an eloquent man. Yet he could not minister truth that he did not have. Discerning their condition, Paul further instructed these men and baptized them again in the name of the Lord. This time they had faith to enter into the spiritual reality they lacked under Apollos’ teaching.

BLINDED BY TRADITION

We cannot have apostolic or foundational truth apart from ministries with a revelation of such truth. Such revelation cannot be found in the organized religious world. This is because they are filled with tradition and their own religious concepts.

Like the old wineskins Jesus spoke of, they not only have no room or capacity for such truth but they deplore those who have such revelation as being religious fanatics. Any ministry or individual that would dare to obey Jude’s admonition to “... earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints” would soon find himself without the camp and classified as a heretic. Jude 3 and Heb. 13:13.

Such a ministry would be a servant of God and not a servant of men or Satan. II Cor. 11:13-15. This was the unique difference between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees. This is why Jesus said, “I am come in my Father’s name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” John 5:43-44.

Nothing is any more deceptive and delusive than religious tradition. Believing their sacred traditions are not to be questioned they feel no need of further enlightenment. They dare not look for anything in the scriptures beyond the confines of their particular brand of religion.

As Moses put the veil over his face to keep the children of Israel from seeing the ultimate abolishment of the new law through Christ, that veil today keeps religious man from the revelation of Christ. Instead of turning with their heart to the Lord, they blindly base their hope on a false foundation of error and religious tradition. II Cor. 3:12-18.

Whatever measure of truth they have is dead letter incapable of imparting life. The letter of the word actually ministers death and builds a prison house of religious form from which very few escape. II Tim. 3:5.

Before we can have the revelation of Christ that sets men free, we must desire to please God more than man including ourselves personally. God's Spirit is not given to preach our pet doctrines or religious traditions. The Holy Spirit was given that we might preach Christ and him crucified. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John 16:14.

If the apostle Paul were to come on the scene today he would be branded as a false prophet by most of the religious establishments. Like the Scribes and the Pharisees in Christ's day their religious traditions would blind them to the truth. Paul's first step would be to sweep away the debris of error and lifeless form and cause men to rediscover the sure foundation of Christ and him crucified.

If he wouldn't build upon another man's foundation in his day (Rom. 15:20) he certainly wouldn't attempt to build on the false foundations of confusion and error that exist today. Once again he would say, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which Jesus Christ." I Cor. 3:11.

The one thing that Satan hates above all others is the truth of the cross. The truth of the cross is the gospel.

I do not mean just the historical account of the man Jesus Christ dying on a Roman cross. Tens of thousands of people died on wooden crosses. Two died at the same time Jesus did – one on either side of him. But their deaths meant nothing so far as man's salvation is concerned.

POWER OF THE CROSS

Of all the deaths ever experienced during the history of mankind, Christ's death is unique. No other blood ever shed upon this cursed earth can atone for man's sins. This is the cardinal truth upon which the whole structure of divine revelation rests. Without this truth everything collapses like a house of cards. Is it any wonder David said in Psalm 11:3, "If the foundation be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Paul understood this great truth when he said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Rom. 1:16.

Think of it! The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Ordinarily we think of the power of God as something miraculous or phenomenal. But the truth is, it is the glorious gospel in its many aspects of divine revelation.

It was this vital truth that permeated all of Paul's writings. Wherever error existed it was a challenge to this great truth. God's greatest instrument

against error, confusion and Satanic power was and is the preaching of the cross. This is why Paul wrote these words, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” I Cor. 1:18.

Leave this truth out and you have no gospel. Without this truth men will die in their sins. Satan does not fear the church or ministry that does not have this truth. This is also why Satan works so hard to corrupt this truth above all others.

He knows that he cannot destroy this truth altogether so he seeks to corrupt it by adding law-works, human merit or by taking away some vital aspect of the truth. All so-called christianity supposedly believes in the cross. But it is the cross plus, or the cross minus that they preach.

And this is why there is no power to save in their gospel. Without the gospel they have no foundation for their religious structure. This includes the many corrupted varieties. They are simply a part of Babylon that must fall.

The professing christian whose hope is based on a false or corrupted gospel is like a ship in a storm without an anchor. It is the gospel of Christ that brings us into the harbor of rest and anchors us there.

This truth is not only essential in the conversion of the sinner but it must be understood to bring faith, strength and stability to the christian’s life.

To simply say that Christ died for our sins is not sufficient. This is just a meaningless figure of speech to most people. What we need to know is the various aspects of what was accomplished by Christ’s death on the cross. As a foundation for our faith he is not only a stone but a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation. These various adjectives represent the various aspects of truth that relate to the person and work of Christ.

It is through an understanding of these truths that we are saved and set free. Each facet of truth serves some definite purpose in our redemption – not just our salvation from the penalty of sin but our prayer life, our christian walk and our spiritual well-being.

THE LAMB OF GOD

Although John the Baptist was Jesus’ cousin in the flesh, he never knew who he really was until the day Jesus approached him as he baptized in the river Jordan. It was the revelation of God’s Spirit to his heart that enabled John to cry out, “... Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”

By the Spirit, John knew that Jesus was the sacrificial Lamb of the Old Testament. As a type the sacrificial lamb had to be a male of the first year,

and without blemish. As a type the sacrificial lamb was representing the sinless, only begotten Son of God. Exodus 12:5.

THE SECOND ADAM

No other human being born into the world since Adam could die in our place. This is because they were all sinners and in need of redemption themselves. The sacrifice had to occupy the place of innocence that Adam occupied before the fall. This is why Jesus was called the last Adam. I Cor. 15:45-47.

This is why Jesus' birth was also unique. Natural procreation would simply bring another sinner into the world. To avoid this a virgin was chosen to give birth to a child conceived in her by the Holy Spirit.

Conceivably the first Adam could have lived forever had he not sinned. Jesus, the second Adam, did not sin and would have lived forever had our sins not been placed upon him.

JESUS' DEATH

The cause of Jesus' death was not a Roman cross – it was our sins placed upon him. He could have called ten thousand angels to rescue him but he knew that our sins were being placed upon him and that he was dying in our place. He knew he was a sacrificial lamb and must die to satisfy the demands of the law that condemned all men from Adam to the last human being born into this world.

Although God is merciful, kind, long-suffering and perfect love, he is also holy and just. If he failed in any wise he would cease to be God. His laws are holy and just and must be vindicated as they are an expression of his own being. His holiness and justice demanded death for sin. His mercy and grace provided us a substitute sacrifice in the person of his only begotten Son.

II Cor. 5:21 says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Jesus went to the cross a sinner – not his sins but ours. They were placed upon him. He chose to do this. As the sinless Son of God dwelling in that light that no man can approach unto he asked for and was granted permission to take our sins upon himself and die in our stead.

HOLY OF HOLIES

No other human being could come into the holy presence of God because they were sinners and God cannot look upon sin. This is why the Father turned his back upon Jesus on the Cross and Jesus cried out "... My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt.27:46.

We need to understand the holiness of God. This is the first lesson the Lord taught Moses when he appeared to him in the burning bush. Exodus 3:1-12. Before telling Moses what he wanted him to do, He said, "... Draw nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Exodus 3:5.

This was also the first thing the Lord taught Joshua after he replaced Moses as God's leader. He, too, was told to take off his shoes because he was standing on holy ground. Joshua 5:13-15.

Isaiah likewise learned something about the holiness of God through a vision given to prepare him for the work God had for him to do. After seeing the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, Isaiah said, "... Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." Isaiah 6:1-8.

It was the divine and awesome presence of God that caused John to fall at his feet as dead when he appeared to him on the isle of Patmos. Rev. 1:17.

It was like the same awesome presence of God that caused Jacob upon awakening at Bethel to say, "... How dreadful is this place. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Gen. 28:17.

God's holiness demands justice for sin. Sin is transgression of the law. I John 3:4. The law said the soul that sinneth must die. Ezek. 18:20. This sentence of death was carried out when Jesus died on the cross.

There can be no appeals or pardons from the penalty of sin except through our Lord Jesus Christ. Once and for all he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Heb. 9:26. Even as Adam's sin brought death upon all of his descendants, Christ's righteousness imparts life eternal to all of his descendants.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Rom. 5:19.

BY ONE OFFERING

Under the law, substitute animal sacrifices had to be made over and over again because they could never take away sin. Heb. 10:1-4. Actually they were mere types that pointed to the true and only acceptable sacrifice that was to come. Heb. 9:26-28 says "... but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment;

"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

The sacrifice of Christ brought to an end the law and all the bloody animal sacrifices of the Old Testament. There are two principal reasons for

this. First of all, man could not keep the law. The law was an expression of the righteousness of God and was not given as a means of obtaining salvation.

Romans 3:20 says, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

Man in his depraved condition could never keep the law. But the law did serve to hold transgression in check and reveal to the elect their need of salvation by grace through faith. But then, as now, many, not understanding the principle of salvation by grace through faith, tried to be justified through obedience to the law.

Gal. 3:19 says, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.”

The seed referred to here is Christ. Since man could not keep the moral aspect of the law with its commandments, the ceremonial aspect of the law served as a promissory note until man’s sin debt was actually paid at Calvary.

Gal. 3:24-25 says, “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.”

WORLD’S GREATEST EVENT

The greatest event in the history of the world was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It was the supreme expression of God’s hatred of sin. It was the supreme expression of God’s love for his creature, man. It sounded the death knell for all men and angels in rebellion against God.

It was the climactic fulfillment of all the types and shadows that pointed to a day of deliverance and redemption. It was the sacrifice that ended all sacrifices. With this one sacrifice sin, past, present and future, was forever put away. Heb. 9:26.

This sacrifice alone enabled sinful man to be justified without human merit, good works or any law regardless of its origin. Regardless of how degraded, vile and sinful a human being might be, the efficacy of this sacrifice was more than sufficient.

“But to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Rom. 4:5-8.

ONCE FOR ALL

In the mind and reckoning of God the merit of this sacrifice was once and for all. It saves and secures the believer from time to eternity. Heb. 10:10 says, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

With this one sacrifice Jesus' work on this earth was forever finished. Heb. 10:12-14. says, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

The world will not see him again until he comes with his holy angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel. II Thess. 1:7-10.

If Christ's sacrifice was not sufficient to take care of all our sins, past, present and future, we could never have spiritual rest. Heb. 4:11. If our salvation depended on his death plus or minus anything we would always have room for doubt. Either we are complete in him or we are not. Thank God! The word says, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." Col. 2:10.

Christ's blood would lose its efficacy and power if one soul was lost who put their trust in him. "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Heb. 10:14.

In fact, if Jesus' blood didn't once and for all take care of our sins, past, present and future, we would be no better off than Israel was under the law.

Heb. 10:1-3 says, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

"For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

"But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year."

Seeking to be justified by the law simply brings the curse of the law upon the seeker. This is because it is impossible for any descendant of Adam to keep God's holy law.

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

“And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

“That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Gal. 3:10-14.

This is the problem I find with so many professing christians. They are still striving to be justified by law-works. As a result they are intimidated and condemned by the adversary when they fail to measure up. The law is Satan’s greatest ally in accusing and condemning unstable souls.

Not understanding that “... Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth,” they continue to be blown about by every wind of doctrine. Eph. 4:14. Like Israel under the law, being ignorant of God’s righteousness, they seek to establish their own through false religious concept. Rom. 10:1-4.

An understanding of the purpose of the law is not only important to the christian and the seeker of salvation, it is vital. Beyond doubt it is in this area that Satan takes advantage of the ignorant and unlearned to destroy them.

Hosea 4:6 is certainly relevant to this truth. God spoke through the prophet and said, “My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge ...”

TEMPTING GOD

To those who would have brought the believers at Antioch back under the law Peter said, “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.” Acts 15:10-11.

Chapter 2

THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

There are many reasons Christ is the one and only sure foundation. In this second chapter our desire is to elaborate more fully on the various aspects of truth relating to the person and work of Christ. It is this truth revealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit that enables us to safely rest our hope in him.

It is this revelation that the Holy Spirit uses to build the church. Only when the church is built upon this rock can it withstand the onslaughts of Satan. This is the "...hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil..." Heb. 6:19.

In contrast to all other manmade or satanically conceived structures, religious or otherwise, the church alone will prevail against the gates of hell. Matt. 16:18. This truth alone enables the individual to become a living stone in the one great building. I Peter 2:5, Eph. 2:19-22.

I AM

"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me What is his name: what shall I say unto them?"

"And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." Exodus 3:13-14.

The Lord's answer to Moses concerning his name seems strange until we understand more fully the mystery of God. Col. 2:2. The strong emphasis of some as to God's true name is just another launching pad of sectarian error that ministers captivity instead of deliverance.

God never intended himself to be known by a certain name. Names are given to identify and distinguish one created thing from another. God is unique in that he is not a creature but the creator. He is the supreme being of eternity and there are no other Gods beside him.

As the eternal self-existent one, possessing all power and wisdom, nothing exists apart from him. Although he has shared his deity with his son Jesus Christ, he is the one and only absolute sovereign. This alone distinguishes and sets him apart as the federal head of all things, temporal and eternal, visible and invisible. Isaiah 45:5-7 says, “I am the Lord, and there is no one else, there is no God beside me; I girded thee, though thou has not known me:

“That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.

“I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.”

Names are given by a predecessor. In eternity there was no one around to give God a name. God named Adam and then he gave him the privilege of naming all the creatures. Gen. 2:19-20.

In revealing himself to man God used various self-explanatory attributes of his being that were relevant to man’s need at the time. In the meeting of Abraham with Melchizedek, God is revealed as El Elyon, “The most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.” Gen. 14:17-20.

Abraham’s apprehension of God at the time he planted a grove in Beersheba was El Olman, or “the everlasting God.” Gen. 21:33.

The significance of this name is not merely that God is everlasting but he is God over everlasting things past, present and future. In contrast to man who serves one term or reign in a lifetime, God’s rule and reign of things in heaven and earth are eternal. This was the lesson Nebuchadnezzar learned after his encounter with the “most high God.” Dan. 4:34-35.

God ceases to be God when we fail to see his sovereignty. We can never enter into rest until we have a sure foundation of absolute sovereignty to rest our faith on. Needless to say, the various aspects of truth relative to the person and work of Christ are meaningless without a sovereign God. It is the eternal sovereign might and wisdom of God that gives credence to the claims of Christ.

If the God we believe in isn’t sovereign then our faith is in vain. Only a sovereign God can make a promise and keep it. This is why we can rest safely in the person and work of Jesus Christ the only begotten son of God.

THE ANOINTING

However, we must see that it is not the God of silence that saves us. It is not the God of past history or the god of the future that saves us. It is not the God of the Bible or the letter of the word that saves us. Although he is the God of history, the God of prophecy and the God of the Bible, it is the great I AM that saves us.

No doubt this sounds confusing to some people who read this message, yet it's very simple when God reveals this truth to us by the anointing. Abstract truth given out by the wisdom of men, however eloquent they might be, has no power to save. God must speak to our hearts by the anointing or we will die in our sins.

The anointing is a present tense expression of God himself. It is by the anointing that the great I AM opens our understanding and ministers faith to our hearts. This is the meaning of Rom. 10:17 which says, "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

Apart from this he is a God of silence and we would never hear his voice regardless of human wisdom and eloquence. It is by the anointing that God speaks to men.

It is significant that the name Christ means "anointed." Although Christ was the virgin born Son of God, without the anointing he would have been a man like Adam was before the fall. Jesus himself recognized this when he stood up in the synagogue in Nazareth at the beginning of his ministry and said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Luke 4:18-19.

The anointing made the difference in the ministry of Christ. Acts 10:38. And it is the anointing that makes the difference today. When the anointing is present God is in our midst and is speaking to us .

All religious works, preaching, prophesying, teaching, praying for the sick and casting out devils are futile and vain without the anointing. Many who claim to do these things are actually workers of iniquity according to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. Matt. 7:21-23. It will be noted from Matt. 7:22-23 that Jesus said, "Many shall say unto me in that day Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils and in thy name have done many wonderful works?"

"And then will I profess unto them I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

I'm afraid most religious works fall in this category. When the anointing is present the great eternal I AM is in our midst. We need to listen carefully because the words that he speaks are Spirit and they are life.

Only the anointed word begets faith in the listener. The anointing is Christ. This is the Spiritual Rock that followed Israel in the wilderness. I Cor. 10:14. This is why men cannot preach except they be sent. Rom. 10:15.

No doubt most of the professional ministries of today lack the anointing because they are not called of God to preach the gospel. Heb. 5:4 is still true.

“And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. This is why most of the churches are lifeless and dead. A ministry cannot beget what it does not have.

Without the anointing it is impossible to show men that sure foundation upon which they must build. This is what Paul is talking about in I Cor. 2:4-5. “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

Many religious spirits are operating in the church world today. They are very subtle in camouflaging their presence with good works, fair speeches, feigned piety and pretended belief of the scriptures. The one thing that exposes their presence is a lack of anointed preaching of the person and work of Jesus Christ. To the contrary, a religious spirit will emphasize doctrines, experiences, ordinances, good works or even the Holy Spirit. A quite common characteristic is a strong emphasis on their own unique brand of religion as being the true representative of Christ in the earth.

The Holy Spirit will honor God’s word and guide us into all truth, not going to seed or extreme emphasis on any particular thing. The one thing the Holy Spirit will keep at the center of the whole spectrum of divine revelation is Christ and him crucified. John 3:14-15, 12:32, Rom. 1:16, I Cor. 1:18, 2:2. John 16:13-14 says, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

The anointed ministry that exalts the person and work of Christ is the means appointed of God to establish us on that one and only sure foundation. It is through the knowledge of these aspects of truth that we find peace and rest that the world cannot give. Each facet of this truth serves as a rung on the golden ladder that reaches from earth to heaven.

This is indeed the hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil. Heb. 6:19.

As we have said over and over again the word of God is more than just a vehicle for thought. It is God expressing his nature, his power, his love, his wisdom and his life through man in behalf of man. It is the incorruptible seed that must be planted in the heart of man if he is to partake of the divine nature of God. II Peter 1:2-4.

Apart from the faith imparted to man through the word he could never enter into God’s rest. Regardless of his religious experiences and good works only the word can bring him into union with the prince of peace. Until

a person crosses this threshold he has never come to true faith and must go on or fall back in unbelief. Heb. 4:11 and 10:39.

Hebrews 4:12 gives us an insight into the life and power contained in the word. *The New Testament from 26 Translations* has this to say about the word in Heb. 4:12: “For the word of God is full of life and power” - Weymouth.

“For the Logos of God is a living thing, active” - Moffett.

“For God’s message is alive and full of power in action” - Williams.

“For the word that God speaks is alive and active” Phillips.

“For whatever God says to us is full of living power” - Taylor.

From these various translations it is evident why God’s word is the means of ministering life and peace to us. Ignore or reject the word and we ignore and reject God. And it is through those chosen and sent of God that this life is imparted to us. This is why Satan works so hard to discredit the vessel sent of God to preach his word. This is also why there is such a need for the vessel or ministry to understand the various aspects of truth relative to the person and work of Christ who is that one and only sure foundation.

NO FAILURES

There are several aspects of truth that we need to understand before the security of the believer is made real to us. Without a knowledge of these truths we will never discover that one and only foundation. It is the lack of knowledge of these truths that keeps so many christian professors from ever finding the spiritual rest. Failure to understand the various aspects of truth relative to our position in Christ is the cause of failure and loss of hope by many who run well for awhile.

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

As long as we think we are righteous because of our own human merit or religious good works we will never find rest. Regardless of how zealous and diligent we are, failure on one point opens the door for Satan to accuse and condemn us.

It is through the negative use of the law that Satan finds access to our minds. He knows better than we do that if we seek to be justified by the law we must live by the law. Gal. 3:10-14. James 2:10 says, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

To negate the law in our quest for God and righteousness we must see the imputed righteousness of Christ. Righteousness based upon human merit of any kind is as unstable as the waves of the sea. Only the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ is a sure foundation that cannot be moved.

The reason it cannot be moved is because it is based upon Christ's righteousness and not ours. As the Lamb of God without spot and blemish his sacrificial death was accepted in full payment for our sins. We don't have to pay for them. Jesus did. The fact that God the Father raised him from the dead after three days in the tomb is sovereign testimony that his death was accepted as full payment for our sins.

Jesus Christ was the only human being ever born into this sin-cursed world that could pay our sin debt. With this lone exception all men are sinners and in need of redemption themselves. Only Jesus could take our sins upon himself and go to the cross in our stead. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." II Cor. 5:21.

END OF THE LAW

On the cross the penalty of death imposed by the law as a legal instrument was carried out and forever banished. This was the only possible way God could be just and the justifier of them that believe. This is why God the Father turned his back on his only begotten Son while he was in the death throes of the cruel cross. As a holy God who could not look upon sin, God the Father literally forsook Jesus who cried out in agony, "... my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mark 15:34.

Because of this the believer is as dead to the law through the body of Jesus Christ as a widow is to the law of her deceased husband. "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." Rom. 7:2.

I once knew a man accused of murder who died while awaiting trial. His own death ended the law process and he was never brought to trial. There was nothing the law could do. The worst penalty he could have received had he lived and gone to trial was death by execution. By dying while awaiting trial he escaped the legal charges of the law and was never brought to trial. Instead, his body was released by the authorities and his family buried him in the cemetery.

In Adam the penalty for sin is death. Rom. 5:12. In Christ the penalty for our sins was paid for on the cross. When Jesus said, "... It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" the law with its condemnation came to an end. Rom. 10:4 says, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

In our union with Christ we went to the cross and died with him. His death was our death. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Rom. 6:3.

This is why the believer is safe and secure. He has already been tried and put to death in Christ. Col. 3:3 says, “For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” What a transaction! What a deliverance! What a freedom! What a future! Gal. 2:20 says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION

We are not only dead and the old man buried by baptism but we have been resurrected by the new birth and have everlasting life. And it is a life that is not dependent upon our strength or human resources. It is Christ in us the hope of glory. And the life which we now live we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.

When we partake of the divine nature through these exceeding great and precious promises, we receive the faith of Christ. II Peter 1:4. And it is his faith in us that enables us to overcome the world. I John 5:4. This is why John could say, “Ye are of God little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” I John 4:4.

At the time of conversion we not only literally partake of a life we did not have before but we are judicially declared dead, buried and resurrected. We not only died when Christ died and were buried with him but we also rose from the dead when Christ did. Col. 2:12 says, “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.”

HOW GOD SEES US

God does not see us as sinners facing eternal death or saved on condition that we measure up to some religious code of ethics. He sees us as his redeemed children possessing everlasting life.

Being God and able to call those things which be not as though they were, God sees us as glorified and seated with Christ in heavenly places. With him this is past tense and not something to be accomplished in the future. Rom. 4:17, 8:30, Eph. 2:6.

Being seated with Christ in heavenly places is not just a figure of speech. The only way we can understand the literal aspect of this truth is to realize that a spiritual union between Christ and the believer is effected with the new birth. I Cor. 6:17 says, “But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.”

Not only are we literally joined to Christ by the Holy Spirit but we are also one with every other truly born again christian. In spite of our doctrinal

differences or denominational tags we are members one of another. Eph. 4:25.

Whether we like it or not, if we are God's children, we will have to put up with each other in heaven. This is in no wise intended to say that all professors of christianity are going to heaven. Nor do we believe we all ought to get together in one big world church.

PHYSICAL DEATH

Physical death, or the death of our body, is not death for the believer. It is simply putting off these bodies of death that are part of the old creation.

The death sentence was passed upon the whole groaning creation when sin entered into the world. This is why the old creation must perish. This includes the Adam man and the whole created universe.

It is inward man that has been resurrected through an infusion of the life of God. We can say as Paul did. "... though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." II Cor. 4:16.

Even as we partook of the life and nature of our original ancestor, Adam, through the physical birth we partake of the life and nature of Jesus Christ through the spiritual birth.

THE TWO SEEDS

The nature and existence of everything is determined by the seed it comes from. Adam's seed is corrupted by sin and therefore cursed with death. The believer is begotten by the incorruptible seed of God which is incapable of sin and therefore cannot die. I Peter 1:23 speaks of us as "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever."

THE TWO NATURES

From the two seeds we receive two different natures. The fallen nature of the old creation and the Christ nature of the new creation. These two natures are opposed to each other. This is also the cause of spiritual warfare and strife in and among believers.

This warfare in the believer is what Paul is talking about in Rom. 7:15-25. Like Paul, every believer delights in the law of God after the inward man. But he finds another law at work in his members warring against the law of his mind and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin in his flesh.

Although this battle against our own depravity was won by Christ's death on the cross there is a practical aspect that God wants us to win now.

This is accomplished as we learn to live by faith rather than by the surging tide of our emotions.

Although our physical bodies as part of the old creation are under the curse and subject to the law of sin and death our inward man has been quickened by God's Spirit and delivered from the curse of the law. The old, or flesh man can be influenced by the sin principle but the new, or inward, man created in Christ Jesus cannot sin and will never die.

This is the meaning of I John 3:9 which says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

This is easy to understand when we realize what part of us is born again at conversion. It is this part of our being that will never agree with or consent to sin. Our bodies still under the curse and influence of sin will be delivered also at the coming of Christ.

This is when our vile bodies shall be changed from corruptible to incorruptible and from mortal to immortality. I Cor. 15:51-57. Our new or spiritual bodies will not be subject to sickness or death. At that time all things will be made new, including our bodies. Rev. 21:4-5.

It is the effect of the curse of sin and death that inspired Paul to write, "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." Rom. 8:22-23.

Even though the christian has received the firstfruits of the Spirit through the new birth, his longing hope is for the day of deliverance of his body. Although our redemption was paid for at Calvary we wait by faith for the glorious day of our change.

In the meantime we must live by faith as we look forward to that day of deliverance. Since "... faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," we need to learn of him who is "meek and lowly in heart." In learning of him we shall find rest unto our souls. Matt. 11:28-30.

Chapter 3

A FOUNDATION LAID IN ZION

“Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.” Isa. 28:16.

The prophetic reference to Christ as “a stone,” a “tried stone,” “a precious corner stone,” being laid in Zion for a sure foundation was God’s way of symbolically extolling the virtues of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Although preeminence is properly given to Christ as the stone, the tried stone and the precious corner stone we have to recognize that Zion is the building the stone is laid in for a sure foundation.

Needless to say, our feeble efforts to plumb the depths of the riches of his grace in this prophetic reference are so limited we feel frustrated and defeated in what we write. However it is God’s ordained purpose that we try. In his faithfulness he will take our feeble efforts and bless them to those who are hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

IN ZION

Since this stone was laid in Zion for a foundation we need to know who or what Zion is. It is commonly believed by some very fundamental groups that Zion has reference to the Jewish people in general. Some of these restrict or limit their concept to the righteous or justified of Israel.

Others actually believe that the emergence of Israel in 1948 as a nation was the prophetic return of Zion to the land of their forefathers. They look upon this as the nation that was born at once according to the prophecy of Isaiah 66:8. Some interpreters of prophecy previously taught that this would result in the national conversion of Israel, the return of Christ and the millennial reign.

But, is this true or simply religious tradition that has been added to the faith that was once delivered to the saints? I believe it can be conclusively proven by the scripture that most of this is erroneous tradition.

Zion is a people, not a literal mountain or a piece of real estate. The true Zion of the Old Testament and the New is not the natural Jew or Gentile. True Zion has reference to the redeemed which is a remnant of justified believers — both Jew and Gentile.

Paul lets us know who a true Jew is in Rom. 2:28-29 where he says, “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Rom 9:6-7 also makes it plain that they are not all Israel which are of Israel. Being the natural seed of Abraham with access to the word of God and the everlasting covenant did not make true Israelites out of the vast majority of Jews. From this and other scriptures it is evident that Abraham’s true seed was spiritual and not natural. Isaac, the son of promise was a type of the true seed while Ishmael was a type of the natural which could never inherit the promise. Rom. 9:6-7, Gal. 4:22-31.

To the Jews who made their boast to Jesus that they were Abraham’s children Jesus said, “...If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.” John 8:29. In verse 44 of John 8, Jesus told them they were of their father the devil.

According to Isaiah 1:9, seven hundred and sixty years before Christ, there was only a very small remnant within the confines of the nation as a whole that were true spiritual Israelites. This was also true in Paul’s day over eight hundred years after Isaiah’s statement. Rom. 11:5.

This truth seems to contradict the popular and traditional concept of the Jews being God’s chosen people. But the truth is, the word will stand regardless of what tradition says. What could be any more explicit than Paul’s words in Gal. 3:26-29. “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Although God dealt primarily with Israel until the promised Messiah made his first advent into the world there was a change and a new emphasis with the coming of Christ. John 4:21-24. Jesus himself spoke of the ingathering of the Gentiles when he said, “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.” John 10:16.

Some think that the status of the Old Testament Jew and the Gentiles of the church age are different. The Jews are supposed to be the wife of

Jehovah and the Gentiles supposedly are the bride of Christ. This idea with varying concepts of the national conversion of Israel and the supposed millennial reign of Christ is the cause of much confusion among many groups. Let's not forget that Jesus said that there would be "...one fold and one shepherd." John 10:16.

ONE

Once we see the beauty of the oneness of God's people many dark and gray areas of error are eliminated. The mist of idolatrous and false sanctity concerning the natural Jew and Palestine with its many religious shrines will also disappear.

Much of the problem here lies in the fact that people fail to understand that God is a universal Spirit that dwells not in temples made with hands. John 4:24.

Stephen, quoting from Isaiah, made this clear in Acts 7:48-49. Paul likewise confirmed this same truth in his sermon on Mars Hill. Acts 17:24. Both of them said positively that God did not dwell in temples made with hands.

God's dwelling place is Zion, his people, the church. As the prophet says, how can we build a house large enough to contain God who fills heaven and earth? Isaiah 66:1.

Idolatrous man always wants to make a shrine out of a building, a mountain, a city, a statue, or a religious relic. In Jesus' day the Samaritans revered their mountain and the Jews thought Jerusalem was the only place men could find God. But Jesus said, "... the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." John 4:21.

In verses 23 & 24 of John 4 Jesus told us why. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

No earthly place, be it country, city or cathedral is any more sacred and holy than a chicken coop. Only when God meets with his people because they honor his Spirit and truth is that place sanctified by his presence. When God's Spirit and truth are absent or twisted and perverted God is not there regardless of the religious fervor or form of the people. II Tim. 3:5.

Psalms 132:13-16 gives us a prophetic picture of true Zion and God's purpose in her. "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will

also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.”

That Zion is the church is made plain by Paul in Heb. 12: 22-24. “But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.”

We are specifically told by Paul in Eph. 2:14-18 that the middle wall of partition between the Jew and Gentile has been abolished in Christ and they are now one body.

Eph. 2:19-22 further shows us the unity of Jew and Gentile in the building of the church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. It will further be noticed that the purpose of being built together is for a habitation of God by the Spirit. Let’s remember that Zion has been chosen by the Lord for his habitation. Psalm 132:13. I Cor. 6:17 Says, “But he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit” regardless of the culture, the religious background and the differences of opinion. Eph. 4:4-6 says, “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are 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.”

The sum total of these scriptures and many others is that God’s people from beginning to end are one. All are saved by grace through faith in the shed blood of Christ. Before the cross they offered their animal sacrifices and looked forward to the day when the Lamb of God would put an end to those types and shadows by the offering of himself. Rom. 10:4, Heb. 10:10.

Today we look back to the cross knowing that our sin was paid for in full by the sacrifice that God the Father provided for us in the offering of his only begotten Son. John 3:16.

The reason I say sin in a singular sense is because sin, like a disease, is the cause of all sins. We need a cure for the disease and the symptoms will disappear. Heb. 9:26 says, “... but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

The stone that was laid in Zion for a foundation was Jesus Christ the Son of God. And the Zion that the stone was laid in is the redeemed of God, the true seed of Abraham, the church of Jesus Christ.

BEYOND THE VEIL

It is this true Zion that all heaven is concerned about. Its citizens consist of the redeemed of all ages. This includes the spirits of just men made

perfect, an innumerable company of angels and Jesus the mediator of a better covenant. Heb. 12:22-24.

Most of the church or the redeemed are already in heaven. But they are very much aware of and concerned about what is going on in the earth realm. In fact they are actively engaged in and working from beyond the veil.

Although this sounds “far-out” to most religious people let’s consider the scriptures and what they have to say on the subject. Who were the angelic or supernatural beings that made various appearances to man in the Bible? In most instances they came in the form of men but were usually called angels. Since the word angel simply means messenger, these visitors from beyond the veil were not necessarily created or celestial beings.

Most of us are agreed that some of these appearances were the Lord Jesus in his preincarnation form. However this was not true in many instances. Although it was the angels Gabriel, Michael and our Lord Jesus Christ that appeared to Daniel (Dan. 9 & 10), who were the three men that appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre? Gen. 18: 1-2.

What about Moses and Elijah appearing to Jesus on the mount of transfiguration? They not only appeared to Jesus but they talked to him about his coming decease at Jerusalem and were recognized by James, Peter and John.

Another scriptural example of a visitation from the other realm is found in Rev. 22:8-9. At first John fell down before this being whom he thought to be an angel and would have worshipped at his feet. Refusing to accept John’s worship the angel said, “See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.”

Whether God appears to us in visible form, through an angel, man, vision or dream it is no more or less God. However we certainly need to examine all phenomena and reject everything that is unscriptural or contrary to divine principle. And above all things, we need to seek God and not signs.

Although God occasionally gets our attention through such means it is my persuasion and experience that his word is the major criteria by which he speaks to us. When an individual or group begins to drift away from or replace the word by any means they are headed for darkness and delusion. John 12:35, II Thess. 2:10-12.

WHY ZION

Why are we so concerned and occupied with the Zion this stone was laid in for a foundation? Let me say once again that Zion, the church, true Israel, the spiritual Jews, heavenly Jerusalem and the kingdom of God are one in

Christ. In reference to Jews and Gentiles, Old and New Testament, Paul contrasted earthly Jerusalem with heavenly Jerusalem by saying, “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.” Gal. 4:26.

God’s purpose from before the foundation of the world was to have a people he could share his glory with. It is this people that were redeemed at Calvary. It is this people that are one by one being brought to the knowledge of their salvation. It was for the benefit of this people that ministries of men and angels were given.

Wherever these people are located God is with and watching over them. The purpose of ministries of both men and angels from both sides of the veil is to watch over these people. Endowed with gifts from God it is the duty of these ministries to teach, lead, protect and preserve these people unto the day of redemption. Eph. 4:11-14, Heb. 1:13-14, Eph. 4:30, I Peter 1:3-5.

Were it not for this elect remnant of people in the earth and the remainder that is to be brought into the fold this world would be destroyed as Sodom and Gomorrah were. Isa. 1:9, Matt. 24:22. When the last one answers the gospel call it will all be over.

This foundation stone laid in Zion is our Lord Jesus Christ. It is for the benefit of Zion that we have this sure foundation to build upon. The greatest endeavor in earth is being occupied with and helping men find this sure foundation. Everything else will fail and come to naught.

Many religious empires and kingdoms have been built for the glory of man but the gates of hell will prevail against every one of them. Only the church, the true Zion of God built upon the sure foundation will stand when the storm comes. Matt. 7:24-27, 16:13-19.

THE FOUNDATION

Needless to say a foundation is the footing or base upon which a building or structure rests. Actually it is the most important and vital part of a building. Without a good foundation the whole building stands in jeopardy.

A sure foundation is one that will do the job it is designed to do. To sustain the weight that it must carry it has to be strong and durable. It must be so designed that it will stand the stress of heat, cold, storm and earthquake. In this particular reference it is a foundation that will not fail under any circumstances.

Certainly we can see why a sure foundation is chosen as a symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ. The whole structure of the church and the kingdom of God in general rests upon his deity. As the head of all principality and power there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Col. 2:10, Acts 4:12.

However we need to see that this tried stone that forms the foundation, though vital and important, is not to be thought of as something separate and apart from the rest of the building. And though it takes many stones of all shapes and sizes to construct a building, the architect or designer has the whole building in mind from the beginning.

Peter who was called Petra (a little rock) by the Lord when he confessed that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God later called newborn babes living stones being built into a spiritual house. Matt. 16:16-19, I Peter 2:2-6.

Everything is going according to God's blueprint. There are no accidents or improvisations. The building and all the material that goes into it is hand-picked and chosen. II Tim. 2:19 says, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

What man does or fails to do will not change God's plan. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Rom. 11:29.

When God opens our eyes to the truth, that settles it. The only choice we have is to cooperate with the inevitable and say as Paul did in Eph. 1:3-5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

CITY OF PEACE

Jerusalem, which means city of peace, is traditionally looked upon as hallowed and sacred by many religious people in the world. Today many people still hold to the traditional concept that the greatest honor that God-fearing people can do is pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They actually think there is a spiritual blessing upon them for their concern for Jerusalem. But the Jerusalem they have in mind is earthly Jerusalem.

The truth is I agree with the premise with one exception. The Jerusalem that God is concerned about is heavenly Jerusalem and not earthly Jerusalem. Earthly Jerusalem, as well as most centers of religion, is still in bondage with her children. Gal. 4:25. According to Rev. 11:8, the city where our Lord was crucified is spiritually likened to Sodom and Egypt.

Although earthly Jerusalem is a type of the true city of peace it is merely an earthly city cursed with sin and death like all the other cities of the world.

God is vitally concerned about true Jerusalem or Zion the city of the living God. This is the city and the people that Christ died for. They are destined to share eternity and the unsearchable riches of Christ together.

God is concerned about the unity and the peace of this Jerusalem. Since sin's entrance into the world and the spirit of division separated God, man and angels from each other, God has been working to reconcile all things unto himself.

This is accomplished through the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we make this our supreme goal in life all heaven will support us and God will bless our feeble effort. Jesus himself has prayed that we might be made perfect in one even as he and the Father are one.

To the degree that we become one in the church men will be convinced that the Father did indeed send the Son. John 17:21-23. This is top priority with God and when he is through with us we will be one. Eph. 4:11-13.

A STONE

Stone has always been used by man for many purposes because of its hard and durable qualities. Some types of stone such as marble or granite are often shipped thousands of miles to be used in beautiful and elaborate buildings. In addition to all types of buildings it is used in monuments, grave stones, boundary lines and great engineering projects such as huge dams and fortresses. The ancient Egyptians used it in the entombment of their kings and building the pyramids that even today are a scientific wonder of the world.

There are many different types of stones as there are different types of trees. Because of this variation they are used for many different purposes. Some stones are dense and very hard and some are porous and soft. Some are drab and dull and some are colorful and beautiful.

ALPHA AND OMEGA

Some stones are said by scientists to be billions of years old. As the Alpha and Omega Jesus was present when the first stone was created.

Before going to the cross Jesus prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John 17:5.

Before his incarnation he was that rock that followed the children of Israel in the wilderness. I Cor. 10:4.

He was the fourth man that King Nebuchadnezzar saw walking around in the fiery furnace with the Hebrew children. Dan. 3:24-25.

He was the captain of the Lord's host that met Joshua just before the conquest of Jericho. Josh. 5:13-15. In fact he has watched over, protected and delivered his people since the Garden of Eden.

A TRIED STONE

Jesus is not just any stone. He is a tried stone. The first man, Adam, failed and plunged the world into great darkness. Hatred, violence, bloodshed, sorrow, pain and death have been man's lot throughout the course of the world's history. Conceivably Jesus too could have failed but he didn't. As the tried stone he became a man that he might be tempted in all points like as we are. Heb. 4:15.

As man he ran the gauntlet of suffering, shame and death itself. He knows what we have to face in this earth from the cradle to the grave. This is also why he is a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God. Heb. 2:16-18.

The angel's announcement to Joseph was, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1:21.

A PRECIOUS CORNER STONE

A corner stone is unique in that there is only one of its kind in a building. Jesus was the only begotten Son of God.

In addition to certain information inscribed on a corner stone it usually has a hollow place inside which serves as a receptacle for important information pertaining to the building.

Beyond doubt one aspect or attribute of this precious corner stone has reference to the glorious wisdom and knowledge available to God's people in Christ. Isa. 40:28 says, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, and Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding."

When we as individuals or a church find ourselves in need of a sense of direction we have the unlimited resources of divine wisdom and knowledge. James 1:5 says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him."

The only way God the Father can be seen and understood is in the Son. God in his infinite greatness is beyond man's finite comprehension. The incarnation was necessary because flesh and blood man could not relate to God who is universal Spirit. We learn about the Father as we behold the Son. All we need to know about God is in the Son. John 14:9. He is the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

Jesus wasn't just a corner stone but a precious corner stone. This is significant because it sets him apart as the corner stone of all corner stones. We would have to say that all corner stones serve a purpose but they are limited in the extent of that purpose.

The fullness of the Godhead bodily dwelled in Christ, "... who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Col. 2:9-10, I Cor. 1:30.

In addition to this he is the head of all principality and power with all things under his feet. This is another reason why we are complete in him. Col. 2:8-10, I Cor. 15:27. The more I study the Bible and the more I consider the great question of salvation the more I realize that Jesus indeed is the way, the truth and the life. John 14:6.

GLORIOUS GOSPEL

Jesus and the glorious gospel that was made possible through his atoning death was God's ultimate in his plan to save man. This is why Satan works unceasingly to corrupt the gospel from the simplicity we have in Christ. II Cor. 11:3. I'm afraid it has not yet dawned upon us just how complete we are in him. The word salvation would be meaningless if it didn't give the believers a rest of faith that ended all strife and anxiety concerning his eternal destiny.

The use of the adjective "precious" in describing this corner stone gives us an insight into something that goes far beyond the ordinary. The revelation of what is meant here will enable us to enter into a dimension of faith, hope and glory that will strengthen the weak and give hope to the hopeless.

This revelation will also give the minister of the gospel a positive message that cannot be refuted or resisted by those who are in any wise receptive to truth. This was the Spirit that motivated Paul to say in Rom. 1:16 & 17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith."

This adjective along with others that are used puts this corner stone in the category of a priceless treasure. The reason lost sinners do not sell all and buy the field containing this treasure is because they have never found the treasure. Matt. 13:44. Once discovered the seeker will say with Peter, "... Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." John 6:68.

The purpose of the gospel is to help men find this treasure. The word gospel means good news or glad tidings. This is also why Satan corrupts the word and blinds men's minds to the truth of the gospel.

This is why II Cor. 3:3 & 4 says, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

When the light of the glorious gospel of Christ shines into men’s hearts they can no longer remain neutral. The greatest single factor that keeps sinners from Christ is the false concept that they must, in some way, measure up and earn their salvation. Being inherently evil and weak of mind and body they dread the thought of trying to be a christian.

This basically is the way Satan blinds their minds to keep the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ from shining unto them. This is why this tried stone is called a precious corner stone. Like a treasured jewel cut by a master craftsman, the gospel causes the gem to reflect many beautiful and precious facets of truth that begets faith and hope in those who hear.

The gospel is God’s means of causing men to see the complete sufficiency of Christ rather than the dismal despair of his own hopelessness. Like the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among thieves who stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, leaving him half dead, the lost sinner is in need of a good Samaritan. He needs someone to come to where he is and bind up his wounds pouring in oil and wine.

But the good Samaritan, a type of Christ, didn’t just minister to him and then go on his way leaving him to his own resources. He set him on his beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him. He also provided for the future of the poor man by charging the innkeeper to look after him until he returned. Luke 10:30-35.

One day while I was praying it occurred to me that I had no tangible evidence that I was saved. Feelings and emotions rise and fall with the tide of circumstances. Good works, however faithful, never measure up to the demands of God’s law. Without thinking I said, “How can anyone know they are saved?” Quick as a flash the Lord spoke to me and said, “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” Rom. 4:5.

This precious corner stone represents Christ in his atoning death and his compassion for the sinful, the weak, the down-trodden and the hopeless. Needless to say, he is merciful, faithful and longsuffering. This is why Heb. 7:25 says, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” The good news of the gospel is God’s ordained way of telling sinners this story of love. When this glorious gospel shines into sin-benighted hearts they will leap with faith, hope and love.

Although Satan and his many thieves have destroyed man's will and desire to believe in God, there is power in the gospel to resurrect man's dead spirit and give him grace to believe. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved is the power of God." I Cor. 1:18.

Is it any wonder Jesus is called "a precious corner stone"?

Chapter 4

CHOSEN IN HIM

In considering the various aspects of truth that relate to the hope we have through Jesus Christ it is difficult to differentiate or make one more important than another. This is because they so complement each other that the end result is one. Many scriptures come to mind as I think of the oneness of God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

This oneness is perhaps set forth best in Eph. 4:4-6. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in the hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through you all, and in you all.”

Getting back to our text in Isa. 28:16, let’s note that it is the Lord who is responsible for the stone being laid in Zion for a foundation. From eternity to eternity God is the author and finisher of our faith. Heb. 12:2.

Although Nebuchadnezzar believed in many gods (Dan. 4:8), he learned the hard way that there is only one truly sovereign God whose dominion is everlasting. After seven years of chastening it was this revelation that caused Nebuchadnezzar to confess: “And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation:

“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand or say unto him, What doest thou?” Dan. 4:34-35.

When Jesus died on the cross there was a great earthquake and the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom thus signifying that salvation was from God to man. Matt. 27:51, Heb. 10: 19-20.

Until we see that salvation begins with God and ends with God we will never have rest. This is the sure foundation that he would have us to build

our hope on. Anything less is subject to the assault of Satan and unbelief. The so-called gospel that puts more emphasis on what man must do or not do to be saved will never bring us rest.

It is not a matter of what man does, but what God has done for us through his Son Jesus Christ that enables us to cease from our own labors and enter into his rest. John 9:14-16, Heb. 4:1-11. Apart from a knowledge of this truth all we can do is struggle and strive in our own strength. How beautiful and wonderful when we see we can do nothing but accept what he has done for us!

HIS SHEEP

God's sheep were known and chosen from the foundation of the world. Eph. 1:3-5 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

Let's note the positive statements in this passage of scripture that point to the sovereignty of God in our salvation: "... who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Note the past tense expression: "... **hath** blessed us — **hath** chosen us in him before the foundation of the world — **having** predestinated us — according to the good pleasure of his will."

This is why Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." John 10:27.

There are no "ifs", "ands" or "buts" about it, his sheep hear his voice. There is a distinct difference in sheep and goats. Goats never become sheep and sheep never become goats. Lost sheep are not goats and never will be. Although lost and not aware of their bearings, they are still sheep. It is through the gospel that the great shepherd seeks and finds these lost sheep. Matt. 18:11-14. Every single one will be found and brought into the fold.

The Father gave the sheep to Jesus from the foundation of the world. Everyone of these will hear the voice of the shepherd through the gospel, and will come.

John 6:37 says, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

RELIGIOUS DELUSION

So often we have heard evangelistic invitations telling the sinner to come to Jesus because the scripture says, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise

cast out.” They actually cause the sinner to think that their salvation is all up to them — the decision is theirs. They fail to quote the first part of the verse which says, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.”

Thy psychology of this type of preaching and half truth is designed to get decisions whether the person is ready or not. The end result is many professions of faith by people who do not count the cost and are not ready.

Although they may have a head knowledge of Christ they are not truly born again. They will either fall by the wayside in process of time or be deluded by their religion. This is the wide gate and broad way that many enter and travel to eternal destruction. Matt. 7:13.

Jesus warned us of this religious type when he said, “Strive to enter in at the straight gate: for many I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able.” Luke 13:24.

It will be noticed that these referred to here are actually trying to be saved. They are the ones that are struggling and striving and yet never entering into the rest of faith.

Many of these superficial believers enter the prison of damnation through strong delusion. II Thess. 2:11 & 12. They are often religious and diligent to maintain good works and think that they will be saved by what they do. Jesus said, “Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Matt. 7:22 & 23.

However, regardless of the potency and measure of truth people are exposed to, goats cannot be changed into sheep. Jesus said in John 10:26, “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”

In my earlier years as a minister this was a grievous thing for me to accept. I thought I had to convert everyone and if I failed some would go to hell because of my failure. But the truth is, the word will not profit most people that hear it.

Most of the people who heard Jesus, the prophets and the apostles never came to saving faith. This was the burden that Jesus carried when he said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” Matt. 23:37.

Paul likewise shared this burden when he said that he had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart and that he would be willing to be accursed to save his brethren according to the flesh.

But the conclusion of the matter was that the word would not help most of them because they were not true Israelites. They were Israelites of the flesh but not of the Spirit. Rom. 9:1-8.

This premise is not an isolated text but is taught throughout the Bible. Rom. 2:28-29, Rom. 8:28-39, 10:1-4, 11:1-6, Gal 4:22-31, Heb. 4:2-3.

Regardless of the religious myth that exists today in the professing christian world concerning the Jews as God's chosen people most of them, like the Gentiles, will be lost. John 1:11-13, 6:53-66, 8:43-47, 10:26.

Out of all the people born into the world, Jew and Gentile, only a remnant will be saved. Were it not for the election of grace everyone of Adam's descendants would be lost. Isa. 1:9, Rom. 11:5 & 6, Matt. 7:13-14.

These are the sheep that Jesus speaks of so often. Only the sheep will hear the word and believe it. "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." John 8:47.

They were given to the Son by the Father. These are the ones the Son is concerned about. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." John 17:9-12.

It will be noticed in verse 9 of John 17 that it is those given to the Son by the Father that the Son is praying for. In fact he emphatically states that he does not pray for the world. Why should he? It is cursed and all that are a part of it including unbelieving mankind.

Those given to the Son by the Father are going to come. John 6:37. These are the ones the Father draws through the gospel by his sovereign grace. Jesus said in John 6:44. "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

Let me hasten to add that from our vantage point we do not know who these lost sheep are. This is the purpose of preaching the gospel. His sheep will hear his voice and none of them will be lost.

I fear much time and effort has been spent on trying to make sheep out of goats. This is casting our pearls before swine. Matt. 7:6. We need to simply preach the gospel in the power of his Holy Spirit and leave the saving to our Lord.

GOD CANNOT FAIL

Regardless of our zeal, misconception, inertia and other failures God will not fail. What he purposed to do back in eternity will be done. Although we are privileged and honored to have a part in this great work, our own personal failure will not defeat nor delay his plan and purpose.

He has graciously and condescendingly chosen us to work together with him but it is his church, his kingdom, his work and his battle. He is still saying to us, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you.” John 15:16.

If these things were not so we wouldn't have a sure foundation. It would be shaky and uncertain. His plan was drawn and set in motion before our substance was made in the earth. Psa. 139:15-16.

Nothing is taking God by surprise or being done on the spur of the moment. To Jeremiah the Lord said, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” Jer. 1:5.

THE TWO SEEDS

To better understand why we have a sure foundation we need to know something about the two seeds — the seed of God and the seed of man, or the spiritual seed and the natural seed.

The seed of man is natural or created seed. This seed can be and was corrupted by the fall. This is why in Adam we inherit a depraved nature. Our nature is according to the seed we come from. In fact everything brings forth after its own kind.

All created life is cursed with death, therefore it is temporal. The only life Adam had before the fall was created life. However he could have conceivably lived forever had he not sinned. The day that he sinned death possessed him and it was just a matter of time. Gen. 2:17.

As a result of Adam's sin he was banished from the garden of Eden lest he partake of the tree of life and live forever in his corrupt condition. From that day on Adam's descendants were also cursed with sin and death. Rom. 5:12. When Adam sinned everything about him was corrupted including his seed. In fact the ground, the world and the whole created universe was cursed because of sin. Gen. 3:17-19, Rom. 8:18-23, Job 25:5.

This is why all of this original creation must be destroyed with God's unquenchable fire and new heavens and a new earth will take their place. II

Peter 3:10-13, Rev. 21:1-5. This new creation including man himself will never again be subject to the curse of sin and death.

The new man that will inhabit this new creation will be born of God's incorruptible seed and become one of the family of God. Eph. 3:14-15. He will partake of the divine nature and have a kinship with God's only begotten Son. II Peter 1:4, Gal. 4:6-7, Heb. 2:11-12.

The seed of God was not created, therefore it is eternal and incorruptible as is God himself. In fact, it comes forth and is part of God. Peter speaks of us "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." I Peter 1:23.

Through the new birth man partakes of this seed which is incapable of sin. It is this new man that John has reference to in I John 3:9. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

But let us not be confused as some are that this also has reference to the old or Adam man which we must put off literally at death or the coming of Christ. Although the new or inward man is the product of God's incorruptible seed which cannot sin, the old or outward man is the product of Adam's corrupt seed.

This old man will give us trouble as long as we are in these bodies of flesh. As Paul says we must keep him under and die daily. This is the greatest cross we have to carry as we learn to live and walk by faith. The greatest enemy we have is the one we see when we look in the mirror. I Cor. 9:27, 15:31, II Cor. 5:7, Heb. 10:38.

As a part of God himself his seed will endure forever. Psalms 89:29. Only those born of this seed can and will overcome the world. I John 5:4 says, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

Even as a human infant cannot beget himself neither does a spiritual babe or child of God beget himself. Although a natural infant is born with a capability of partaking of its mother's milk and crying when hungry, it has nothing to do with its conception and birth. John 1:11-13 says, "He came unto his own and his own knew him not. But as many as received him, to them he gave the 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."

Please note that this birth is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. This is a positive statement of fact that man and human resources have absolutely nothing to do with the new birth. Actually man in his unregenerate condition is in rebellion and opposition to God and

righteousness. No human being would ever be saved if left to himself. John 6:44.

Man's will is to hate the light and flee from the presence of God like Adam and Eve did after they had sinned in the garden. Rom. 3:11 says, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."

This is why it is necessary for the shepherd to seek the lost sheep and bring them into the kingdom through the new birth. John 3:3-7, Luke 19:10. This is accomplished by the gospel. James 1:18 says, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

NO ABORTIONS

There are no abortions or miscarries in those God chooses to bring to the new birth. Of course we are fully aware of those who profess to be saved and then lose it. And it's true that many are affected or influenced by the gospel and actually make an effort to be a christian. Like Jesus said, "Strive to enter in at the straight gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Luke 13:24.

The many who try and fail are the result of many factors. Some are trying to merit their own salvation by good works. Still others base their hope on false doctrines or dutiful obedience to their church system. And some have demon-inspired religious experiences that delude them into thinking they are saved.

Of all of these that try and fail there are a few that are truly saved later on. Some get so close and experience so much light that they become reprobate when they fall away. Like Esau they could not be saved if they wanted to. Heb. 6:4-9, 12:16-17.

All of these failures lack one vital and essential ingredient. That ingredient is faith. Heb. 11:6 says, "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."

When one thinks of faith or a lack of it he immediately considers it to be a personal problem in which the individual is solely responsible for his condition. It's like telling a man to lift himself by his boot straps. Although faith comes by hearing the word of God, Rom. 10:17, it is impossible for the person to believe apart from a supernatural intervention by the Holy Spirit. The word must be quickened to man's heart before he can come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This is the spiritual birth in which the person receives the Spirit of Jesus Christ. No gimmick, prayer, crying, seeking or religious exercise can accomplish this. It is a sovereign impartation of the Holy Spirit in which the individual receives the Spirit and faith of Jesus Christ. It is the same Spirit

that raised Jesus from the dead. Rom. 8:8-11. It is the same faith that enabled Jesus to overcome the world. John 16:33, I John 5:4-5.

It is not our life or faith that enables us to overcome the world but his. I John 4:4. It is Christ in us the hope of glory. Col. 1:27. In Gal. 2:20, Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

It is by Christ's life in us that we are able to overcome. This is the faith that many come so close to and then fall back. They are like the children of Israel who came to the threshold of the promised land and then fell back because of their unbelief. Heb. 3:18-19. They simply do not come to faith or believe to the saving of the soul.

Heb. 10:38-39 says, "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition: but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

It will be noticed that there are two types, distinctly different from each other, in verse 39. One group draws back unto perdition and the other believes to the saving of the soul. The group that draws back unto perdition are not saved people and never will be.

TO THE UTTERMOST

It is truly wonderful when we see that salvation is eternal and not conditional upon anything we do or fail to do. The real key to this revelation is when we see that Jesus is indeed "...the way, the truth and the life..." John 14:6.

Too many are trying to get to God some other way than Christ. There is no other way. This is the reason so many fail in process of time. Regardless of church membership, good works and religious experiences, Jesus alone is the door to God and heaven. John 10:9.

Only those who come to God by Jesus Christ have everlasting life. This is because our salvation is the result of what he did for us and not what we do. As our intercessor at the right hand of the Father he points to our sin debt that he paid on the cross.

In confirmation of these thoughts, Heb. 7:25 says, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Often there is fear and anxiety that people will be lost if we don't use evangelistic gimmicks and unusual measures to get people saved. Instead of preaching the simple gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit and trusting God to work in hearts we trust in the arm of flesh to get the work done.

Although this type of ministry will not frustrate the grace of God nor keep one elect soul from being saved it does beget Ishmaels that can never inherit the promises. Sarah's effort to have children by Hagar did not keep God from keeping his promise and giving them a true heir but it did create unnecessary problems. Gen. 16:1-5, Gal. 4:22-31.

May we realize that God will bless and honor us as we honor the divine principles embodied in his word. He will not break his covenant to his people. Our only concern should be to find the will of God and move in it. Like an irresistible river God's prophetic plan is active and moving according to schedule.

Paul said, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Phil. 1:6.

The above scripture is not only true from an individual's standpoint but it is true in regards to the Jew, the Gentile, the church and the whole creation. A lack of knowledge of these things ministers doubt, unbelief and fear. And this scripture is fulfilled which says, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge." Hosea 4:6.

This is certainly not the sure foundation that Isaiah is speaking of in Isa. 28:16. Discovery of this foundation will dispell our fears and anxiety. This is the anchor both sure and steadfast for our soul. Heb. 6:19. Someone has said, "Those on the rock may tremble and shake because of ignorance and unbelief, but the rock itself remains solid and eternally safe."

Is it any wonder that Isaiah said, "He that believeth shall not make haste?"

WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD

Perhaps the most powerful scripture in the Bible that shows us the sovereignty of God and the security of the elect is found in Rom. 8:28-39:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

“As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep, for the slaughter.

“Nay in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

“For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come.

“Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What more can be added to this scripture? If we can't believe these positive statements anything I could say would be meaningless. It was an understanding of these great truths that inspired the great old hymn:

HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

Fear not I am with thee, O be not dismayed,
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my gracious, omnipotent hand.

When thro' the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow:
For I will be with thee thy trials to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

When thro' fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply:
The flames shall not hurt thee, I only design,
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.