

**The Truth
The Whole Truth
And Nothing but the Truth**

The Court of Eternal Judgement

YOU have been found GUILTY of

Envy
Greed
Malice
Lust
Gossip
Hatred
Bigotry
& other sins

Penalty: DEATH

HOW TO BELIEVE GOD'S WORD

**By
Robert L. Hartman, Evangelist
3479 Early Avenue
Lima, Ohio 45801
419-222-8691**

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

INTRODUCTION

Please consider the following scenarios:

THE TRUTH

You are in a court of law, called as a witness to testify in a case. The judge or his bailiff swears you in. You are asked, "Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" You say, "I do." The prosecutor stands before you and he asks you a question. If you answer honestly, you will incriminate yourself, a friend or family member in some wrong-doing. So, you lie. The prosecutor then introduces evidence which proves you are a liar. You have committed perjury. What happens then? You are found by the judge to be in contempt of court and then you are punished. The judge either throws you in jail, or fines you, or he does both.

THE WHOLE TRUTH

You are in a court of law, called as a witness to tell what you know about the case. Again, you are asked: "Do you swear or affirm that the testimony which you are about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" You say, "I do." The prosecutor asks what you saw on the night in question. You tell him in part what you saw, but you don't tell the whole story because if you do, you might again incriminate yourself, a friend or family member in wrong-doing. You have failed to tell the whole truth. You have broken your oath. You lied. The prosecutor then introduces evidence which proves that you have withheld a part of the truth. The judge finds you to be in contempt of court and he throws you in jail, or fines you or he does both.

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

You are in a court of law, appearing as the key witness. Again, the judge asks you, "Do you swear or affirm that the testimony which you are about to give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" You take the oath and the prosecutor proceeds with his line of questioning. As you are answering the prosecutor's questions you realize that this time you have incriminated yourself, a family member, or a friend in wrong-doing. You then begin to interject your own thoughts on the matter. The prosecutor naturally objects and the judge instructs you to answer only the questions which are asked by the prosecutor. However, you disregard the judge's instruction and you continue to babble. You just cannot be quiet because you feel you must cloud the truth that has now incriminated you. By this time the judge is infuriated. He slams his gavel down and barks out an order to his bailiff: "Bailiff, remove this man from my courtroom!" You are found to be in contempt of court

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

and you are punished.

In a court of law you are expected to tell "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God." The reason for this should be obvious. The only way we can arrive at a righteous judgment - serve justice - is if we first possess the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Jesus Christ said "... you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32, NKJV throughout).

The greatest truth in existence is the truth contained in the sacred pages of God's holy word. Yet if all the professors, philosophers, teachers, preachers, so-called "Christian" writers, commentary authors and other professing Christians were summoned to stand before the judgement seat of God Almighty, the overwhelming majority would be found to be in contempt of His court! Many such "witnesses" just plain lie about the truth of God's word because His truth will incriminate them, their family members or friends as being guilty of some sin. They profess and proclaim the portions of God's word that support what they want to believe (their comfort zone), and they leave out the part of God's truth that will incriminate themselves or their family in sin. Still others may blurt out the truth - "as they see it" - but they will immediately justify their stand (usually a liberal stand), with an ocean of subjective, opinionated white wash. Since what they are saying is exactly what most folk want to believe anyway, people just suck it up as the truth and blindly follow along. They in turn go out and preach the same message to families, friends, and coworkers who want to believe the same thing, thus becoming themselves teachers of a watered-down, false doctrine.

If the truth of God's word is going to set us free then we must seek to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'. Recall the final statement in the oath the witness takes before he testifies in a court of law: "... so help me God!" Now according to God's truth Christians are not to swear an oath by God or anything else (Matthew 5:33-37). But this statement serves as a reminder to all, that if you do not tell the truth, the Judge of this world, the almighty God, will know it, even if nobody else does!

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

CHAPTER I: INFLUENCES ON WHAT WE BELIEVE

Many times when we seek to establish our systems of beliefs, we are bombarded with obstacles that stand between us and God's truth and hinder our ability to see and understand **THAT** truth, the whole truth, and nothing but **THAT** truth. Such obstructions come from two secondary sources, keeping in mind that the primary source of temptation is still Satan. The obstructions that hinder us are either intrinsic influences or environmental influences.

INTRINSIC INFLUENCES:

Our intrinsic influences come from within us. From birth we all have basic desires and instincts. Babies have a natural instinct to suck. We did not have to be taught to seek nourishment. We did not have to be taught to cry when we were in pain or discomfort as a baby. Ask parents and they will confirm this. We also have a natural understanding of a higher deity. Anthropology and archaeology are both credible witnesses to the fact that all cultures of people, no matter how primitive or sophisticated we might think they are, have sought and pursued their need to believe in a god if not the one living God.

In Acts chapter 17 we find the evidence in Paul's words to the Athenians that God has given each of us this intrinsic understanding. Paul had gone to the city of Athens. In his conviction for God, after seeing the many idols in the city, he went to a place called the Areopagus - a place where people normally went to discuss philosophies, religions and other contemporary issues of the day. When Paul appealed to them he appealed to their natural understanding of a theistic spirit:

"For as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship I even found an altar with the inscription 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore the One you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim unto you." (Acts 17:23).

Paul's appeal to those folks was about a God they worshipped but they did not know. He was not a god of wood, or stone, or of human flesh, but an unseen spirit they sensed was present. Paul even quoted their own poets in this same message:

"For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring. 'Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.'" (Acts 17:28-29).

We also have intrinsic influences that are bad influences. James refers to them as the lusts or desires of the flesh:

"But each one of us is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

Then when desire has conceived it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death." (James 1:14-15).

We have both good and evil intrinsic influences inside of us. Even though we have the same basic desires and instincts within ourselves the intensity of these desires and instincts varies. This variation is part of what makes each one of us unique. Even twins, from the time they are born, have separate and distinct personalities. When we see an abnormally high intrinsic influence in a child we often call him a "child prodigy." In Genesis we are shown that certain people were given abilities to be craftsmen or musicians. (Genesis 1:21-22). When Jesus taught the parable of the talents He told us that each of the three had a different measure of ability:

"And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability," (Matthew 25:15).

Once again we will use children for our example. You may have one child that would never tell a lie and another that has a great propensity to lie. They may have the same parents and the same environment but they are different. Some people may have a greater tendency to become an alcoholic, or to be homosexual than others. Even though this may be true, none of us is tempted above that which we are able to bear. (I Corinthians 10:13). Each one of us has the ability to overcome the lusts of the flesh with the goodness that dwells somewhere within us. God has given to each of us a conscience to guide us. The apostle Paul stated,

"Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." (Acts 23:1)

Each of us makes the choice of whether to follow good or evil. We are told in Hebrews 11:6 that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. The Ethiopian eunuch was seeking God when the Lord sent Philip to preach to him. After Philip preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to the eunuch, God led them to water in the desert so Philip could baptize him into the body of Christ. (Acts 8:26-40). In Acts chapter 10 we read how Cornelius was seeking God when God sent the apostle Peter to preach the gospel to him and baptize him into the body of Christ. If anyone overcomes the evil in them with good and seeks the theistic spirit that they intrinsically know exists, God will send them a preacher and He will supply the water for baptism even in the most remote part of the world. The choice belongs to each of us.

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES:

The second influence that affects our lives is the environmental influence. We store things in our brain all of our lives that influence our beliefs. Many of the things that are stored are not even subject to conscious and deliberate recall but they are still there affecting our beliefs.

To give you some idea of how early these things begin to take affect: I was told once by a

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

psychologist, concerning one of her patients (the psychologist did not name the patient) who had nightmares about seeing a young child whose head was all but severed from her body, save a small amount of skin which prevented the head from becoming completely severed. After much research of her patient's life history the psychologist found that her patient had been adopted when she was only a few months old. The patient's adoptive parents did not know anything about her biological family nor did they know the circumstances leading to the adoption. As it sadly turned out, at the very tender age of about three months the patient been removed by the authorities from the home of an abusive mother. The biological mother, in a fit of rage over the patient's toddler-aged sibling, had thrown the sibling into a television set. When the sibling's head hit the picture tube, the picture tube broke and the child's head was nearly severed from her body, except for one tiny piece of skin which prevented the head from being completely severed. This all happened in the presence of the then-infant-aged patient. The patient had lived with that memory from infancy and through her adult life.

So you see, beginning in infancy our environment and the actions of those around us begin to profoundly affect and influence our lives. The actions and speech of our parents, family members and friends, the television, radio, books and other publications we read all influence us - especially when our minds are young and easily impressionable.

It is important to understand the unavoidable cause-and-affect relationship between environmental and intrinsic influences. Environmental influences can nurture and enhance good intrinsic values or they can allure the desires and lusts of the flesh. The reason there will be no sin and sorrow in heaven is because there will be no temptation - no desires of the flesh in heaven. Only the good will remain.

There are many environmental influences that affect our lives. Parents can either be a good or a bad influence. Television can be a good or a bad influence. I must add at this point, school teachers can be a good or a bad influence. Religions and all their teachers can be either good or bad influences. Nevertheless, we each make the choice of doing good or evil. No matter what the conditions of our environments are or have been, the intrinsic values of good and the undeniable environmental influences of God have been present for all to see, so that we all are without excuse if we turn from God:

The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. (Psalm 19:14).

Paul reiterated these same thoughts in Romans Chapter One in order to qualify his statement in Romans 1:20:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

understood by the things that are made even His eternal power and Godhead so that they are without excuse.

The influences of God far outweigh the influences of the devil. The Devil can not erase the witness of creation, nor can he take away the intrinsic understanding that there is a supreme being. However Satan does entice us to follow our lusts and fleshly desires. The Word of God teaches us that the devil's greatest tool of destruction is deceit:

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the devil and satan, who deceives the whole world; ... (Revelation 12:9).

Satan's deceit however, is harnessed by God. He cannot deceive us unless the fleshly desire within us grasps his deceit. Our natural tendency is to seek after the deceit of Satan because we seek to fulfill our lusts and to relieve our guilt with some justification. The devil just gives us a pacifier.

The humanists choose to believe evolution because it fulfills the lust of the flesh even though it is a far-fetched lie with no concrete evidence. It is based on theory and conjecture yet many people grasp for that story because it satisfies the flesh. They do not want to believe that they will one day stand before an almighty God and answer for their sins. They just reach out to grasp the lies of Satan no matter how far-fetched they might be.

A Princeton University biology professor once said, "The probability of life originating from an accident is comparable to the probability of the unabridged dictionary resulting from an explosion in a printing shop." (Reader's Digest, January, 1963, p.92 citing "Evolution vs. Science and the Bible," Bob West Productions, 1974).

There are many laws of science and other scientific evidences that could be brought forth to show the ignorance of the theory of evolution - which theory is fast losing credibility even among scientists who once believed in evolution. I personally recommend two excellent books wherein qualified experts expound on this: Beyond a Reasonable Doubt, authored by retired judge Herbert C. Casteel (College Press Publishing Company); and The Genesis Flood, authored by John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1961). I am sure there are many other books written by qualified scientists which further prove that evolution is nothing more than a fairy tale.

The theory that there is no God represents the far end of the spectrum. It is like the granddaddy pacifier. The devil knows that not everybody is going to reach out and grab this granddaddy lie so he has many other pacifiers of various shapes and sizes. Every denominational church is a pacifier. The reason we have so many churches today - created by men - instead of the one Church of Jesus Christ is because of men's desire to fulfill their fleshly desires. Thus we become willing to be deceived and relieve our guilt rather than to simply take

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

God's word as it is written, as the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

CHAPTER 2: HOW INFLUENCES AFFECT OUR BELIEF IN GOD'S WORD

THE TRUTH

When we read God's word we are constantly faced with choices. Hebrews 4:12 says:

For the word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of the soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

The word of God is alive and when we read that word it either convicts us or uplifts us. Whether we are convicted or uplifted depends upon where we stand in the light of what it says. Each person may be convicted by different parts of the Bible in various degrees but we are all nevertheless convicted by what it has to say.

The reason we are convicted in various degrees and by different parts of the Bible is because we are all different from one another. Our intrinsic influences are different and our environmental influences are varied. One person might have been raised in a home where mama ruled the roost instead of papa, whereas someone else may have had a strong father figure who ruled the house. If that is so, then the two will probably be convicted in different degrees by what the scriptures have to say about the relationship between a husband and a wife. We may have had a bad experience with a religion, or a religious person in the past that has caused us to hold a prejudice against religious people. A man once told me that his fourth grade Sunday School teacher had run off with the preacher. That would leave a bad taste in anyone's mouth for religion. We may have been abused when you were young, or neglected or perhaps we lost one or both of our parents at a young age. Perhaps we lived a life without discipline while growing up, or we had a life of discipline but no love. All of these circumstances can have a profound influence on our thoughts and our feelings whether we consciously realize it or not.

Thus far we have studied past influences. However there are also present influences which impact our lives. We may read a scripture that convicts us, but when we realize its affect, which is usually an instantaneous occurrence reacting from either the conscious or the subconscious mind, our defenses begin to reject what we have read. For example, when we are confronted with the necessity of water baptism as taught by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:38,

Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

we might immediately be convicted by what we have been taught but we will instantaneously reject it because mom or dad or grandpa or grandma was never baptized and to admit baptism is necessary for the remission of sins is to say they were wrong.

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

For some of us the influence that affects us would be admitting we are wrong, or that we have been wrong for a long period of time. I personally have heard preachers say they would not change their thoughts on a subject because they have taught a different interpretation for so long a time. It would be humiliating for them to change what they have taught, recorded and written. When something is written or recorded it becomes much more binding and incriminating because it can not be simply skirted away. It would be more difficult to erase. It will require more effort to erase. This could prove humiliating for a publisher.

A second favorite environmentally influential tool that the devil uses against us is persecution. The most common form of persecution today is peer pressure. (The devil's most noted form of persecution historically is physical violence.) Some of us who are convicted by the word of God to change our lives may begin to lament over the thoughts of being rejected by our worldly friends, classmates or workmates. I spoke to a backsliding brother once about the effect his workmates were having on him -dragging him down in the faith. I told him that he had to make a stand for God and let it be known to them. Making a stand like that for God will plant our feet on the Rock and it will obligate us to live that stand we have made or to be humiliated as a hypocrites. This man's response to me was "You don't know what it's like out there!" He told me of how there were a few other religious people in the shop where he worked and how the other workers made fun of them for their stand and talked about them behind their backs. He did not want to suffer and endure that kind of treatment.

We do not face much physical persecution in America today but there are parts of this world that do! If we look at the direction of America from an historical evaluation we will see that physical persecution is on the horizon. America needs a revival of morality and ethics. America needs Jesus Christ!.

The influence of physical persecution is the most direct environmental influence the devil uses. We can only imagine the fortitude it must have taken for people of centuries past to become Christians and make a stand for Jesus Christ in the shadow of such tyranny. Try to imagine going through the tortures that many Christians in the past have had to endure - being burned to death; eaten by lions; or physically mutilated, one body part at a time, until death. Worse yet, Christians of past centuries were forced to watch their parents, children and other family members and loved ones suffer such atrocities for their refusal to deny the faith and the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. These are humbling thoughts. They are thoughts that should embarrass us when we allow the devil to buffalo us through peer pressure.

Of course, there are always the influences of our desires that work in the present to draw us away from God's word. The desire for booze will cause people to want to reject the scriptures concerning consumption of fermented wine and strong drink. (See Proverbs 23:29-35.) The desire for success may cause people to resist the Bible's teachings on ethical behavior. (See I Peter 2:13-25). Women who desire leadership roles may resist the teachings of God's

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

word about the male's authority in the church. (See I Timothy 2:11-15). Materialism may cause people to resist the teachings of God's word on giving by faith. (See Genesis 14:20, 28:22 and Luke 19:8).

Many of these influences are not just past and present in nature, but they are future as well - for example, the preacher who resists the truth because of what it will do to his "career" as a preacher. People are too often worried about what they will have to endure later in a materialistic world because of future persecution concerns.

Any time we read the word of God or hear the word of God these influences are present. It is a natural occurrence for people to seek self justification, just like the witness in court did in our opening scenario. In the courtroom it is not the defendant's justification that is being sought by the court, but rather it is justice that is being sought, according to the rules and laws of our society. Those who seek self justification begin to lie, even to themselves. I have known many liars in my life time, some that you might call habitual liars. I have been such a one myself. I can assert by experience that after so many times of telling a lie the lines between reality and falsehood begin to fade. Liars soon begin to actually believe their own lies. There were things I had lied about so often that I could no longer separate the true facts from the false facts in my own mind.

God has warned us of this same danger in our own spiritual lives if we refuse to believe His truth and choose rather to believe the lies of false religions, false teachers and a misguided and ungodly worldly perspective:

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Sa tan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God will send them strong delusion, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (II Thessalonians 2:9-12).

Herein lies the grave danger of allowing ourselves to be allured by bad influences and desires – "hellfire." This is the sentence for those who perjure the word of God, even if they believe their own lie. How sincere we are in our beliefs makes no difference, "that they all might be condemned who did not believe the truth..."

It is important that we notice what the apostle Paul has warned us about in II Thessalonians 2:9-10. He warned us that the lying and the belief in the lies would be assisted by Satan with power, signs, lying wonders and unrighteous deception. When someone reads or hears God's word and it meets the resistance of his carnal influences, the average individual begins to search for a way to justify what he already believes or wants to believe. When he does this, the devil is there with a pacifier. No matter how ridiculous an idea a person may come up with, or how far fetched it may be from the truth of God's word, it is not difficult to

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

find a preacher that will preach it, a commentator who will comment on it, a college professor who will profess it and a congregation that will condone and believe it. It may be a preacher or a teacher that has been grounded in the faith for years and is standing firm on almost everything else contained in God's word, except one specific scripture that he wants to be pacified on. The preacher or teacher may have stumbled on the same scripture years ago and be already grounded in a lie. We must remember that the devil comes at us like a wolf in sheep's clothing. The devil does not approach us in the form of a serpent, or a dragon or in the form of some wicked-looking dude in red pajamas, complete with the horns and armed with a pitch fork, and ask, "Can I interest you in a little heresy? Or how about a few damnable lies to patronize you so you can get those scriptures out of your mind?" The devil works through people that we think we should be able to trust, or somebody we like and want to believe, or somebody we respect.

The devil does not just flat out reject the Bible either. In fact the devil likes to use the Bible to pacify those who do not want to believe all the scriptures. Remember when the devil used scripture to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. Satan quoted Psalm 91:11-12:

He shall give His angels charge concerning you... In their hands they shall bear You up, lest you dash Your foot against a stone. (Matthew 4:6).

THE WHOLE TRUTH

Let us now consider our second courtroom scenario, The Whole Truth. There are many people who justify false doctrine in the same way as the devil does today. They do it with half truths. I remember, before I became a Christian, sitting with a friend of mine drinking some "buddumbers," and the subject of religion somehow entered into the conversation. My friend said, "Even the Bible says to eat, drink, and be merry." He cited Luke 12:19 and I Corinthians 15:32. What he failed to notice was the fact that this was a description of the attitude of someone who was going to hell and had no hope in the resurrection. These scriptures were used out of context to pacify a desire to sin and feel justified about it.

A false teacher may quote Ephesians 2:8-9 - which reads, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast..." - in order to justify his belief that good works has nothing to do with faith and he will leave out the scriptures that teach the whole truth. James wrote:

Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

also. (James 2:21-26).

The whole truth is that when the apostle Paul was addressing the concept of earning salvation through meritorious works he stressed the point that works could not earn us our salvation but we must have faith. James was addressing the false concept that faith was merely saying "I believe" and not doing anything for God. Therefore he stressed that works were a necessary part of faith. Both points are true. We cannot be saved without faith and we can not have faith apart from works and obedience to God. "No one scripture says everything there is to be said about any one subject in the word of God." (Evangelist Dick Chambers: All for Christ Weekend, 1994).

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

There is one more scenario from our introduction yet to be considered: "Nothing but the Truth." When someone is convicted by the word of God and confronted by the influences of their life the devil likes to cloud the issue with opinion, conjecture and speculation. The devil has developed a special breed to enhance his work in the field. We call them "scholars." Jesus called them "vipers." Did you ever wonder why Jesus called them vipers? It is because their doctrine was poison. Today we have a lot of poison doctrine coming from "scholars." The teaching coming out of most Bible colleges today is poison. Do you think I am being too hard on them? I read an article in the January 10, 1994 issue of time magazine titled *Jesus Christ Plain and Simple*. The article pertained to a gathering that occurs twice a year - of what are supposed to be the top biblical "scholars" of the day - called the "Jesus Seminar." These scholars have created a Bible that is color coded. They vote on what is written and they color code it as to its authenticity. There were four categories:

1. "Jesus undoubtedly said something like this;"
2. "Probably from Jesus;"
3. "Doubtful;"
4. "Jesus never said this."

The "scholars" concluded that "precisely eighty-two per cent (82%) of words attributed to Jesus are judged unauthentic." The writer gave an example of the Lord's prayer. The only words that received the highest mark of "Jesus undoubtedly said something like this" were "Our Father."

The article speaks for itself quoting many of the statements made by these so-called "scholars:"

While Jesus may have been a carpenter, that probably meant he was illiterate and belonged to a low caste of artisans. He did not preach salvation from sin through sacrifice; he never said, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God"; neither did he say "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." For

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

that matter he probably never delivered the sermon on the mount. As for the question posed to Peter and the disciples, ("Who do you say that I am?") Jesus never asked it. And he never cured any diseases. As for other miracles? No loaves and fishes, no water into wine, no raising of Lazarus, and certainly no resurrection. What happened to his body then? Most likely it was consumed by wild dogs... The Romans had him crucified. Jesus - a peasant nobody - was never buried, never taken by his friends to a rich man's sepulcher. Rather, according to John Dominic Crossan (a theology professor at De Paul University), the tales of entombment and resurrection were latter-day wishful thinking. Instead, Jesus' corpse went the way of all abandoned criminals' bodies; it was probably barely covered with dirt, vulnerable to the wild dogs that roamed the wastelands of the execution grounds. ("Jesus Plain and Simple," Richard Ostling, *Time Magazine*, January, 1994, Vol.143 No.2).

Ostling also quotes author Burton Mack as stating that "the gospels are imaginative creations."

In another part of the article Ostling quoted John Dominic Crossan as saying "The scholars are coming out of the closet." Ostling goes on to say "...demanding public attention for the way *they think*."

There is a lot to be said about this statement. They want attention of men for what they THINK. What they think would not be permitted in a court of law, and it Will not be permitted in the court of the Almighty. Many people who consider themselves conservative would never follow such an extreme view of the Bible, yet many follow various concepts of this same liberalism. They read commentaries that explain away scriptures with conjecture and opinion. They may throw in a Greek word-meaning here and there as garnish, but the rest of what they say is filled with "I think..." or "I feel..." and "I believe..." and "probablies..." They believe what commentaries represent because that is what they want to hear.

If not a commentary then perhaps a preacher - a preacher that has attended a Bible college and has learned from some of the best "Bible scholars." They will take a scripture and bury it in "I think...", "I feel...", "I believe..." and "probably..." The average churchgoer will suck it up because it is just what he wants to hear. As the poem so clearly expresses:

Preach a sermon, preacher; make it short and sweet;
Our stomachs are hungering at 11:00 to eat.
Preach a sermon, preacher; make it round or flat;
We love to play at hide and seek and guess just where you're at.
Preach a sermon, preacher; and tell it with some jokes;
Tell us a few anecdotes to entertain us folks.
Preach a sermon, preacher; don't get too specific;
As long as you will generalize we'll think you are terrific.

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

Preach a sermon preacher; make it smooth and fair;
For theory we are thirsty; for scripture we don't care.
Preach a sermon, preacher; tell us what we like to hear;
And we'll pat your spineless back as you scratch our itching ear.
(Author unknown to me).

Cross an said they are coming out of the closet. Their doctrine did not come from inside the closet. It was hatched in the incubators of hell.

Do you still think I am being too hard on them? I am not being near as hard on them as the Almighty will be when they kneel before that "illiterate carpenter!"

And the kings of the earth and the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" For the great day of His wrath is come, and who is able to stand? (Revelation 6:15-17).

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

CHAPTER III: OVERCOMING OUR INFLUENCES

As a people diligently seeking God we must realize that the influences of our lives that have formed our ideas and our perception of how things should be, are not necessarily God's precept or God's way:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; And to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts..." (Isaiah 55:7-9).

FACING OUR ADDICTION

Separation from God's word is like an addiction. When a person is addicted to drugs or to alcohol he craves what he knows will satisfy his desire. It is the same with those who crave the teachings that separate them from God's word. They are seeking to satisfy their desires. This is not an exaggeration. Many people will desperately cling to false teaching and idealism with great emotional fervor no matter how much concrete scriptural evidence is stacked up against them.

Like any addiction the first step to recovery is to realize that an addiction exists. For the most part, this book has been aimed at making the reader aware that everyone is addicted in some way to his or her own desires which have been enhanced by environmental influences. We must all face up to the fact that our thoughts are not God's thoughts, and our ways are not His ways.

HUMBLING OURSELVES

Many times we are confronted by those who trust in their feelings over God's word. All too often their response is "I know what I feel in my heart." What people feel in their heart is not the determining factor of right or wrong. The attitude that man determines right or wrong by his standard is the basis of secular humanism. We can never have unity if everybody simply seeks what feels right to him.

Jeremiah said "The heart is deceitful above all things." (Jeremiah 17:9). Solomon said "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool." (Proverbs 28:26). Solomon also said "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes." (Proverbs 12:15). Before we can believe God's word as truth we must understand that our emotions have no bearing on the standard of right or wrong of God's word. There are many people today who believe that a good feeling equates with spiritual correctness. Truly emotion is an essential part of Christianity but Christianity is not an essential part of emotion. Christians experience great joy. Nehemiah told Israel "the joy of the Lord is your strength..." (Nehemiah 8:10). But not all emotional experiences are Christian. We may experience the lifting of a great emotional burden and never become Christians. I have

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

counseled people through emotional problems and marital problems who have been greatly relieved and rejoiced over their progress, and even though I told them the message of salvation they never became Christians. Their emotional release and joy may feel good but they are only temporal, and if they do not obey the gospel in their lifetime my counseling is of no real profit or value.

Our emotions may carry us to do a one-and-a-half gainer off the back of a pew and tumble down the aisle into a triple twist somersault. This may prove that we are ready for the Olympics, or perhaps the funny farm, but it has no bearing on whether or not we have received the Holy Spirit. Ray Stevens wrote a song, entitled "Mississippi Squirrel Revival", about a squirrel that got loose in "The First Self-Righteous Church of Paskagoola." As the squirrel scrambles up pant legs and dresses, desperately trying to get out of the building, its victims throw up their hands, scream and run forward confessing a multitude of sins because, (as the song goes) "something got a hold of them!" They thought it was the Holy Ghost. The result was the biggest revival that church ever witnessed. Like the squirrel in the song, something gets a hold of people that causes them to slip into an emotional frenzy. Don't blame God for this 'cause it ain't the Holy Ghost!

If we are going to freely believe God's word we must humble ourselves to the understanding that our thoughts and our emotions have no bearing over the authority of God's word. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17).

EXALTING GOD AND HIS WORD

By the same token if we are going to humble ourselves we must exalt God and His word. We cannot allow anybody else to be exalted above God by believing what men say over what God's word says. The spiritual graveyard is littered with the souls of those who have put their confidence and their faith in man rather than in God.

The reasons for people's tendency to follow men over God are many and varied. Some people lack spiritual faith. They do not have the faith to follow a God that does not activate one of the five senses - sight, touch, hearing, smell or taste. Like those who made idols they want a god they can see, touch and manipulate.

Still others may follow men (or women) because they are attracted to their personality. We often call these charismatic personalities. Some follow men because they are complacent in their religion. It is easier to let someone else do all the thinking and studying while they follow like blind sheep under the banner of ignorance. They wrongfully think that they are not smart enough to understand the Bible, so they leave all the studying to the "reverend." Solomon issued God's warning from wisdom:

For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

fear of evil. (Proverbs 1:32-33)

Many people, however, follow men simply because they have been told the gospel the way they want to hear it. Men, like idols, can be manipulated to the belief that is desired by the worshipper. Peter warned the Church about these false teachers: "By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words ... " (II Peter 2:3). The word "deceptive" is translated "feigned" in the King James version of the Bible. The Greek word is "plastos" wherefrom we derive the word "plastic" in modern English. It means formed or molded. The words of the false teachers have been formed and molded to the image the people desire.

Some people are influenced simply by the thoughts of the majority. (They have a "majority rules" complex). Jesus teaches us, through the parable of the wide road and the narrow road, that the "majority" are going to hell. (Matthew 7:13-14). The history of Noah is a reminder to all of a time when the "majority" was wrong - DEAD WRONG!

God's authority must supersede all others. If this is going to be realized in our own lives we must heighten two aspects of our spiritual lives to their maximum potential. We must grow in the fear and in the love of God.

Solomon wrote in Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." We must fear God to the point of extreme reverence in order to properly discern His word. There are some doctrines that I deliberated on for long periods of time as a young Christian because they cut against my grain. I had a conflict in my soul between what God's word said and what I felt because of the influences of my life. However, two things prevented me from going the way of most of my contemporaries; a great fear of God and a belief that there really is a hell for sinners! The devil has pacified many in the religious world with the erroneous concept that there is no hell. Satan does this in order to take away their fear of God and of hell. By believing this lie people show their lack of belief ii) Jesus Christ, who taught explicitly of a place of everlasting punishment. The scriptures describe hell as a place of eternal punishment, eternal fire, and torment. (Matthew 25:46, Mark 9:43-44, Luke 16:23, Revelation 20:10-15). To disbelieve in hell is to disbelieve in the living God who created it and proclaimed it.

Another scripture that enhances my fear of God when it comes to the following of the scriptures is Romans 14:23. The context of this scripture addresses the eating of certain meats and whether it is sinful: "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin." Paul's point here is not that the eating of the meat was wrong but that our willingness to do something that might be wrong in our minds condemns us. If we are willing to take a chance of offending God in our minds we have not acted upon faith. This thought alone should compel us to seek and obey that which the strongest evidence of God's word supports, even if it is established by example rather than by direct command.

Fear is the beginning of knowledge but love is the perfection of knowledge. John wrote in I

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

John 4:18. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear..." Because fear involves torment, fear will get us into the knowledge and truth of God's word. However, if we do not grow in the love of God fear alone will not sustain us in the faith. When our love has been truly perfected we will not fear death or hell because we will know we are safe in the Master's arms. We will then obey and serve God because we love Him more than the world, more than ourselves, and more than life. It is like the story of the two children who were discussing what would happen if they disobeyed their father. One boy said "I would never do that because of what my dad would do to me." The other boy said "I would never do that because of what it would do to my dad," Even in this scenario the believer understands that stepping out of that perfect love and disobeying God's command once again brings reason to fear. God reminds us in Hebrews 10:29 that when we disobey God we trample under foot the Son of God. True love for Christ will compel the mature believer not to do that to the Son of God. If we disobey God, the Hebrew writer warns "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31).

Jesus made it clear to us that "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word." (John 14:23).

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

CHAPTER IV: GETTING TO THE TRUTH

By now it should be realized how vulnerable we are to the things that influence us to disregard parts of God's word. If we are going to find the truth we must look at God's word objectively. We must overcome our influences and face the reality of truth. Many people who wholeheartedly agree with this in theory do not practice it in reality. They practice it until it gets to their sacred cow and then it stops. This can be seen all around us in the religious division of this world.

In this chapter we will look at several guidelines to help us comprehend God's truth when studying the scriptures.

ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY THE INSPIRATION OF GOD.

All scripture is God-inspired and we must realize that the men who wrote the old testament were severely tested by what they said and prophesied. If a prophet was found to be wrong just once he was killed. (Deuteronomy 18:20-22). The New Testament apostles and prophets were also approved of God by great signs and wonders. (Acts chapter 2).

Since the days of the apostle John and the writing of the book of Revelation there have been no other men so approved. Many have claimed to perform miraculous signs but none have proved infallible as Jesus and His apostles.

THE WORD OF GOD NEVER CONTRADICTS ITSELF.

Many people try to claim that the Bible contradicts itself. They do this in order to convince themselves the Bible is fallible and therefore unbelievable. The source of such confusion will be discussed as we continue this chapter, but if we are going to have unity on the truth we must understand that there is no contradiction in God's word and if there seems to be one in our minds we must study until we have reached the understanding of the truth.

WE LIVE UNDER THE NEW COVENANT.

The Hebrew writer tells us in Hebrews 9:15-28 that we became bound under the new covenant after the death of Jesus Christ. When the new covenant was brought in many of the old laws were fulfilled and were not brought into the new covenant. (Colossians 2:11-17). This is not a contradiction because the old covenant predicted it's fulfillment into a new covenant. (Deuteronomy 18:17-19, Jeremiah 31:31-40, Isaiah 62:1-2, Matthew 5:17).

Even though we do not live under the Old Testament law, the scriptures contained in it are to be used as an example of Godly living. Paul used the Old Testament as an example in I Corinthians chapter 10, and stated in verse 11 that these things (of the Old Testament) were written for our example. Peter used the Old Testament character of Sarah as an example to New Testament women in I Peter chapter 3. The Old Testament laws were taken away at Calvary, not the godly examples. When we need clarification on a subject the Old Testament examples do not take precedence over New Testament commands but they do take

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

precedence over everything else including modern opinion and secular history writings. This is not an opinion but it is a New Testament teaching of Paul and Peter.

WE MUST TAKE IN ALL OF WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ON A SUBJECT

Some of us like to study scripture like they play checkers - we like to take our scripture and jump all the other scriptures, knocking them out of the game. The problem is they are all God's checkers and the rule is "You cannot jump your own man." No New Testament scripture eliminates another new testament scripture. We can **TRY** to jump it with another scripture all we want but it will still be there and we must do SOMETHING with it.

Remember the statement made in chapter 2: "No one scripture says everything there is to be said about any one subject in the word of God." Jesus said in Luke 13:3 "...unless you repent you will all likewise perish." That is a true statement but is it all the truth? Jesus also said "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16). We cannot take the Luke 13:3 checker and say we can jump over the John 3:16 checker. We must obey both.

Peter said in Acts 2:38 "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Romans 10:9 says "...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." We cannot take our Romans 10:9 checker and jump our Luke 13:3 checker and say there is no need for repentance because it does not say so in Romans 10:9; neither can we take our Romans 10:9 checker and jump our Acts 2:38 checker to say there is no need for repentance or baptism. All of these are new testament scriptures that must be obeyed. We must truly believe in Jesus Christ with all our heart, repent of our sins, confess with our mouth the salvation that comes when our sins are taken away in the waters of baptism, and we must indeed be baptized (immersed) in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. After that we must remain faithful to Jesus for the rest of our lives and then we will receive a crown of life (Revelation 2:10).

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE DOES NOT OVERRULE BIBLICAL COMMAND.

When we seek all the scriptures on a given subject there may appear to be a contradiction between example and command. For example: We are told in Leviticus 18:6 that incest is a sin. We are also told in Proverbs 23:30-32 that we are not to drink wine (the juice of grapes) when it becomes fermented; and yet in Genesis 19:31-38 we read where Lot's daughters got him drunk and committed incest with him. The Bible merely states its occurrence, but nowhere does the Bible state that God condoned it. In many other parts of the Bible we are told that what they did was sin and thus cannot be justified as an example that committing incest and drinking booze are all right with God.

SPECULATION IS NOT SOUND DOCTRINE

One of the greatest hindrances to finding the truth is speculation. Speculation was the

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

basis for the article previously quoted in Chapter 2 depicting Christ as an "illiterate carpenter." It is mentioned in Romans 16:1-2 by Paul, that Phoebe, a sister in Christ, was en route to Rome and that the church was to assist her in whatever business she had need of because she had been a helper of many, including Paul himself. People will often speculate that Phoebe was a woman preacher even though this speculation contradicts what Paul said in I Timothy 2:11-12 when he commanded that women are to learn in quietness with all submission and that women cannot teach or have authority over a man. These same people will often speculate why Paul made such a rule and try to contend that it should no longer apply in the church today. Speculation is not fact but fiction, and is not valid for doctrine in the Lord's church, especially when the Bible clearly contradicts the speculative view.

CONSIDER WHO IS SPEAKING WHEN READING THE BIBLE.

One thing we must watch when we are studying the scriptures is whether the person speaking is inspired by God. There were many things said in the book of Job by uninspired people while Job was enduring his trials that are presumed to be inspired, when in fact they are not. For example, Job's wife told him to curse God and die. (Job 2:9). Not all statements appearing in the Bible are inspired. We must therefore consider who was speaking.

CONSIDER WHO IS BEING SPOKEN TO.

It is also necessary that we consider who was being addressed when we read the scriptures. I cautiously mention this with the understanding that the thought of a scripture can be easily misunderstood if we do not recognize who is being addressed in any given scripture. For example in Matthew 16:19 Jesus said "... I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." If we were to consider this to be for all Christians then we would have to consider all Christians inspired to write scripture and make their writings as binding as the doctrine of the Lord. If we note Matthew 16:18 however, we clearly see that this authority was given to Peter and exercised by him on the day of Pentecost when he preached the first gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ, and which Peter continued thereafter to exercise as an apostle of the Lord.

Much misunderstanding occurs when people assume the things written to the church at Corinth were only for the Corinthian Christians, or when people assume that the terms of pardon given on the day of Pentecost were only for Jewish converts to Christianity. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 4:17 that he teaches to all churches the same things that are contained in the Corinthian letter. Peter contended in Acts 2:39 that his message was to everybody that the Lord calls.

DO NOT ADD TO OR TAKE AWAY FROM GOD'S WORD.

We are warned throughout the word of God to neither add to nor take away from what God has said. It is written in Deuteronomy 4:2 that "you shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it, that you may keep the Commandments of the Lord

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

your God which I command you". John warned of the impending doom to those who would add to or take away from God's revelation in Revelation 22:18-19.

We can take away from God's word by simply not doing or teaching what God's word has said. We can simply ignore the teaching of God's word to repent and tell people that God overlooks their sin in spite of their unrepentant heart. We can ignore God's command to be immersed for the forgiveness of sins and teach others to do the same. But, by so doing we will reap the wrath of God for what we have sown. We will be guilty of not telling the whole truth.

It is just as dangerous to add to the word of God things which do not appear therein. This is often overlooked. The apostles did not overlook it. In Acts chapter 15 there was a dispute in the church over the necessity of obedience to the Old Testament law of circumcision. The turning point of the dispute came in a statement by Peter in Acts 15:10: "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we are able to bear?"

There are many who attach conditions to worship which God did not ordain. Some have added to God's word by saying you cannot drink from separate cups during the Lord's Supper, citing that Jesus and his disciples drank from the same cup on the eve of Jesus' arrest. It is impossible to conceive that the thousands in the church at Jerusalem could have all drank from the same cup. If they did, it would have had to have been refilled several times, which would also be unscriptural -if utilizing that same reasoning because we have no record of Jesus refilling the cup halfway through the meal on the night He instituted the Lord's supper.

It is proclaimed by some that we must all break bread from the same loaf because they assume that is how Jesus did it. Once again, we see that impossibility at Jerusalem where thousands would have had to all eat from the same loaf.

Those who adhere to such unscriptural extremes do so, in most cases, because they have a genuine and sincere desire to serve God by not taking away from all that God's word teaches even in the most remote examples. The problem is that they often become guilty of adding burdens to others that God did not command. In other words, they add to the word of God.

Paul gave us a rule of thumb on this subject in Romans chapter 14. Roman Christians being addressed by Paul in this letter were divided over the observance of certain "holy days" and over the consumption of certain meats which were considered by some to be unfit for Christian consumption. Paul's instruction was that they were not to argue over doubtful things. Doubtful things are things to which there is no "thus saith the Lord" attached, or to which we do not have a certain biblical command.

The eaters of unclean meats could have easily cited as command the example of Peter being told by an angel of the Lord in his dream (recorded in Acts chapter 10) to "arise, kill and

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

eat" the animals which were considered by the Jewish population of that day to be unclean. However, Paul did not do that. Paul simply told them to do what each one considered to be right regarding the observance of holy days or the eating of meat. He could only do this because God did not command that we must observe the Old Testament holy days or eat certain meats and abstain from others. God's command regarding those two issues is that in doing such things, we do it as unto the Lord.

Paul does tell us that we are not to cast a stumbling block before our brethren. Unfortunately, many stumbling blocks continue to be cast. Doubtful matters founded on example rather than on command have become stumbling blocks to many Christians.

As did the Scribes and Pharisees, many churches go beyond what is commanded and bind yokes upon the people that God did not bind. Like those of Paul's day, many Christians today become judgmental of those who do not follow all the examples that they follow, or that follow **more** examples than they do. Their attitude is "if you do not follow every example that we follow, then you are a liberal, and if you follow more examples than we do you are a legalist or a radical."

THE EXTREMISTS

For the sake of clarity, those who are referred to by most as "legalists", I will refer to as extremists. To be a legalist simply implies obeying the law. Those who go beyond the law are extremists.

I have looked down the extremist road and I could picture no end short of hypocrisy for the ultimate extremist. I pictured the ultimate extremist's religion in this manner: The ultimate extremist would go to the synagogue on Saturday, (the "Sabbath") and dispute with the Jews. He would consider the new day to start at sun down, as is the example contained in the Bible. He would assemble that evening at the only "ekklesia" or officially called-out assembly of the week. He would be sure that the service ran past midnight and that the Lord's Supper was observed after 12:00 midnight conventional time in order to be absolutely sure it was the first day of the week by all standards. The services would be held in an upper room of a residence or a borrowed building, not a rented building because we have no example that the Christians ever rented or purchased a building for the assembly. The only room mentioned where the first Christians met was an upper room and more specifically, we know that it was the third story from which Eutychus fell. (Acts 20:9). Therefore the ultimate extremist would meet on the third story of a house or borrowed building, with open windows - just like the building in Acts 20:9 - preferably with people sitting in the windows and somebody sleeping in at least one of them. There would be no baptistry, but all converts would be taken to a river, preferably the Jordan river, since we have mention of no other by name. There would be no pews, no microphones, no offering plates, no carpets and no pulpits since the Bible mentions none of these in the new testament church.

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

I am sure many other things could be mentioned, but you see the point now. To stop anywhere in between and say, "up to this point the examples are binding, but beyond they are not" would make us hypocrites. Jesus said in Matthew 7:1-2 "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged " If you harshly judge someone for not pursuing and achieving the extreme limit of biblical example you have chosen and you fall short of the ultimate extremist example, you - by your own judgment - will be condemned.

THE LIBERAL

In Christianity we have a great amount of liberty given to us by God. The apostle Paul was considered a liberal by many in his day because he would not make certain disputable matters binding. When Paul was addressing the problem of eating meats sacrificed to idols he wrote these words: "For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience?" (I Corinthians 10:29). Paul was of a spiritual mind and therefore he understood that this meat that had been sacrificed to an idol was still just meat. He was not taking part in a sacrificial worship but simply eating meat.

The problem with liberalism comes when the liberal does not seek after the spirit but rather his own carnal mind. The spiritually minded Christian knows that he has the liberty to enter into the homes of unbelievers and associate with them to show them the light of Christianity in his life and to convert them to Christianity. The carnal minded person uses his liberty as an excuse to fellowship with the world because of the allure of worldly ways. The spiritually minded person comes to the ekklesia (called-out assembly) upon the first day of the week and partakes of the Lord's Supper because he celebrates the Lord's resurrection that occurred on the first day of the week. The carnal minded person sees the assembly as an inconvenience. The carnal minded often seeks excuses not to assemble.

Even more so, the carnal mind-set of liberalism begins to cross over the lines of command with liberalism. Denominationalism begins to become acceptable as they blur the lines of God's command that there should be no divisions in the church, (I Corinthians 1:10), and that there is only one faith (Ephesians 4:4-6). The carnal mind set of liberalism tends to distort commands that separate them from other churches. They begin to reason away God's commands such as being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins, in order to have a religious utopia.

CONCLUSION

You may be more confused now than ever in some ways. You may be asking yourself "how far is too far?" and "how far is not far enough?" When it comes to New Testament commands there can be no variance. If we love the Lord we must and will keep His commandments and those of his apostles. When it comes to example we must pray in faith and be led by the spirit of God, while we keep ourselves from making harsh judgments on others in the area of disputable matters and strive not to cast stumbling blocks before others.

The Truth, The Whole Truth, and Nothing But the Truth

We are not to bicker and make waves but rather we are to accept the decisions of the church leadership regarding disputable matters (to the extent that they do not contradict the commands of God's word so that there might be peace and tranquillity in the church). We find these words in Hebrews 13:17: "Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you." In so doing, you will know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, and then the truth shall set you free!