

## **Introduction**

You have been given this booklet because you've just made a decision to invite Jesus into your life, or because you're investigating what becoming a Christian and following Jesus is all about. One thing you'll quickly discover is that Christianity isn't about *becoming religious*; it's about *entering a relationship*.

Though Christians will indeed do things that people call "religious", it comes as a natural outworking of a new and loving relationship with the Lord on the inside – not because they've bought into a new code of ethics. It's that honest relationship that is at the heart of us learning to be disciples.

That's the purpose of this booklet – to help you understand the basics of what being a Christian is all about, as well as a description of how we enter that relationship. Think of it as a quick-start guide to understanding the "gospel", which is at the heart of the Christian faith.

May God bless you as you take the first steps to the most awesome journey in life!

## **The Basics of the Gospel**

### **Some Good News and Some Bad News ...**

"Gospel" is a Bible word that simply means, "good news." Sometimes we need to understand some news that's not-so-good, before the good news really sounds like it's that good. It's then that the "good news" becomes "great news!"

That's how it is with the "gospel". So what's the not-so-good news? In a word, it's called "sin" and will take a brief history lesson to explain.

Way back in the Garden of Eden, the Lord God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and the Creator and Sustainer of all life, made man and gave him the spiritual capacity to enjoy a relationship with his Creator. And he initially did. That was because both Creation and Created were pure and holy.<sup>1</sup>

But then came "sin." The man, Adam, chose to overtly and intentionally disobey the Lord (remember the forbidden fruit?). The result was his loss of purity and holiness. The man had "sinned".

"Sin" actually means "to miss the mark". It's an ancient archery term. The "mark" Adam had missed was the bull's eye of always fully obeying, loving, and honoring the Lord. In a moment, he became a "mark-misser" – a "sinner." That instant, the relationship was broken with no way for Adam to do anything to win it back again.

Not only that, but that tendency to sin was imprinted on Adam's genetic code, so that the human race he was about to father became infected with this tendency toward "missing the mark" of complete and perfect love and obedience toward God; the tendency to go after their own way and desire.<sup>2</sup> That's what the Bible calls "the sin nature." When we give in to that tendency, we commit "sin," which we have all done; some worse than others – but the truth is we have all missed the mark! All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God<sup>3</sup>!

On a grander scale, introduction of sin into God's perfect creation brought pain, suffering, and death into the world<sup>4</sup>. It also resulted in a relinquishment of man's God-given task of ruling over the

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 3

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 5:12, 18

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 3:23

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 6:23

world. According to the Bible, when Adam sinned, he forfeited that control to Satan who had tempted him in the first place. Satan became the “god of this world”<sup>5</sup> and along with his evil lordship, brought suffering, pain, and death.<sup>6</sup> But that’s another topic. The “gospel” deals most directly with the broken relationship we’re now stuck with.

So the *first* part of the **BAD NEWS** is that we are all sinners<sup>7</sup>. The *second* part is that sin brings a break in the relationship between us and God.

### **Only Perfect People Can Go To Heaven**

Here’s where the bad news gets worse before it gets better. After we live our relatively short time on this planet – our *physical life* – God has prepared a place called “Heaven” which He has designed as a perfect place for us to spend forever with Him – *an eternal spiritual life*.

But there’s a problem. This perfect God created this perfect Heaven, but, because of our sin, there aren’t any perfect people who are qualified to get in!

Having said that, I can almost hear the objection erupting in the minds of some: “*Now wait just a minute there preacher! God wouldn’t shut me out – I’m a good person. He’d let me in.*” Logical emotional response, but unfortunately, a very illogical rational conclusion.

As a matter of fact, even those who are *really, really* good people in comparison to others won’t make it because they still fall short of God’s perfect requirement. God’s Word indicates that falling short even in just one thing is just like falling short in everything.<sup>8</sup> That’s how it is with “perfect”. Anything less is simply not. It’s not graded on a curve, it’s pass or fail. Period.

That’s why He gave us His Law – the *Ten Commandments*, as well as our own built-in moral conscience. They’re not there to show us how we can actually be good enough and thus eventually make it to heaven, but rather to point out that, big or little, we’ve failed to attain perfection, and thus we aren’t able to make it to heaven on our own.

The goal is that we’d recognize we can’t make it and thus cry out in desperation for a “plan B”!<sup>9</sup> Essentially, God’s Law brings indisputable evidence that we need another way. If God judged us all on our own merit for keeping His Perfect Law, we’d all be shut out. For we all fall short. That is, all except one man – Jesus!

### **A Perfect Solution To A Perfectly Hopeless Problem**

In valiant effort, man has come up with schemes to try to tip the proverbial scales in his favor and overcome his “not perfect” status. Being religious, doing good and even sacrificial deeds, giving time and money to good causes – these are some of the ways man tries to get good enough.

But the problem is still the problem. Even “pretty-good-but-not-quite-perfect” is still not perfect. Not perfect is still not perfect, no matter how good we can dress it up to look. It always falls short.

So we’ve got a BIG PROBLEM! But, what is a BIG problem for us really isn’t a big problem for God. One thing about being God is that you know everything. And He knew, even before He created life, that mankind would end up with this very problem. The Bible says He designed a solution even “before the foundation of the world.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Cor. 4:4

<sup>6</sup> Rom. 5:17

<sup>7</sup> Rom. 3:10; 3:23

<sup>8</sup> James 2:10

<sup>9</sup> Gal. 3:22-24

<sup>10</sup> Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 Cor. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:9

The solution, in a word, is JESUS. God came into the world of His troubled creation. He took upon Himself human flesh as He was born as “Jesus” in a miraculous virgin birth<sup>11</sup>. He grew up, but was different from everyone else in a very important way.

Remember that “sin nature” that was passed from Adam to those he fathered and to their children, and their children’s children, etc., all the way to us? Well, because Jesus wasn’t born of a human father<sup>12</sup>, He didn’t inherit that sin nature, and thus, unlike all other humans ever born, He was not born a “sinner.”

Not only that, but though Jesus was tempted in all the ways of mankind, He never sinned in thought or behavior.<sup>13</sup> He never missed the mark. He never fell short. Never, ever! Of all those that ever lived or will live, Jesus is the only perfect one. And as such, He is the *only one ever* qualified to enter the perfect Heaven and relate perfectly with the perfect and holy God.

In this we see the makings for the most incredible God-type solution of the problem. Not a man-made solution that depends on man’s effort and accomplishments, but one that is wholly based on God and His love.

### **A Holy Switch**

Here’s where the **Good News** part really comes in for us. This is precisely how God planned to solve our “*I’ve sinned, I’m not perfect, and I can never get into Heaven*” problem. He planned a switch. The perfect and sinless Jesus offers to take our sin off of us and place it on Himself, AND then to credit us with His absolutely perfect and holy score in life.<sup>14</sup>

In essence, He took our “sinner” status upon Himself, and gave us His “righteous” (or perfect) status in its place.<sup>15</sup> During the hours He hung on the cross He took upon Himself the spiritual agony of an eternity of separation from God, compressed into a few hours of our time.

He took upon Himself what every one of us deserved as sinners – separation from God. Remember His cry on the cross ... “*My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?*”<sup>16</sup> Jesus was forsaken because your sin was on Him! *The Father abandoned Jesus ... so He wouldn’t have to eternally abandon you!* This is what the Bible means when it says, “He tasted death (spiritually) for every man.”<sup>17</sup>

That’s what it means when someone says, “Jesus died for you!” Of course we’ll still die physically one day, but when that happens, instead of our spirit being separated from God forever, we’ll be ushered into His *perfect* Heaven to enjoy *perfect* fellowship forever with the *perfect* Him. Why? Because He now sees us as *perfect* – that is, my “sin” is gone and I’m “clothed” in the *perfection* of Jesus Christ.<sup>18</sup> My “sin” for His “perfect!” What a switch!

Then after His death, just like prophecies indicated, He rose from the dead to prove that He forever has power over life and death – both physically and spiritually!<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Phil. 2:1-5; John 1:1-14

<sup>12</sup> Matt. 1:20-25

<sup>13</sup> Heb. 4:14-15; 1 Pet. 2:22

<sup>14</sup> 1 Pet. 2:24

<sup>15</sup> 2 Cor. 5:21

<sup>16</sup> Matt. 27:46

<sup>17</sup> Heb. 2:9

<sup>18</sup> Gal. 3:27

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor. 15:3-4

## **OK, So What Do I Have To Do??**

That's the question many people in the New Testament asked when the gospel was explained to them. The answer is shocking. For something this grand, there must be some grand thing I have to do to get it - some mountain to climb, some majestic deed to do, some dragon to slay, right? No, not really. The answer actually has two parts – a “don't part” and a “do part.”

Part One – you don't *do* anything to earn this. You can't. It's a gift that can never be earned; it's a gift offered from *love* and nothing else.<sup>20</sup> Though it might stroke our pride to think we can *do* something to earn it, that thinking is actually an insult to the Giver. Responding with appreciation is a good and right thing ... but as a way of saying “thanks!” – not as a means of earning anything!

Part Two – the only thing you need to do is to *receive* the gift that is offered you. You don't deserve it. If you did, it wouldn't be a gift!! Just like when someone offers you a gift, you, believing their offer is indeed valid and not a joke, extend your hand and take it.

God's gift is something you receive by faith – that is, you believe that what Jesus did, He did for *you*.<sup>21</sup> You believe that He “died for you” to take away your sin and punishment and then you simply accept His gift of forever life that He is offering you. Believe and receive! Then keep believing! That's it!

## **How Do I Receive?**

One thing about true faith (or “belief”) is that it will always have a release point – that is, an expression of some sort. If not, it's probably not real faith.

There really isn't a Biblical formula for *how* to receive. But what we do have is the promise that “*whoever will call upon the Name of the Lord will be saved*”<sup>22</sup> and “*if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*”<sup>23</sup>

For many, the faith expression of “calling upon Him” takes the form of an initial prayer of invitation spoken to the Lord Jesus – a prayer that acknowledges belief in what Jesus did for you, and a call upon Him to come into your life and take His rightful place as the Lord (or “Boss”) of you. Some call that the “sinners prayer.”

It's like opening the door to your life to Jesus. It's like He is knocking on the door of your heart, and you hear it, and invite Him in, and then begin a new life of incredible fellowship with Him.<sup>24</sup>

## **I Just “Accepted Christ”**

You'll sometimes hear someone say something like, “I just accepted Christ into my life.” That's exactly what they feel like they just did. They “accepted” Him. And that's wonderful. But in the bigger picture something even more astounding has occurred.

**God accepted them!** They came to God as a sinner deserving eternal separation from Him. But they came on His terms, unable in themselves to fix the problem, and acknowledging and honoring Him, and expressing faith in the work of Jesus personally for them. And God accepted them, removed their sin, credited them with the perfection of Jesus, and gave them eternal life. Now that's amazing!

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<sup>20</sup> Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6

<sup>21</sup> John 1:12; 3:16

<sup>22</sup> Rom. 10:13

<sup>23</sup> Rom. 10:9-10

<sup>24</sup> Rev. 3:20

## Welcome To God's Forever Family

### What Just Happened To Me?

When you open your life to Christ, lots of awesome things happen to you. Following are just a few of them:

***You are born again.*** The first time you were born, you came alive to a whole new physical world. Coming to Christ makes you alive spiritually and awakens you to a whole new world of spiritual and eternal purpose. The first time you were born into the family of man – this time you are born into the family of God!<sup>25</sup>

***You get a Heavenly Dad.*** There is a sense in which we're all God's family because of creation. But sin broke the connection. The Bible says when you come to Christ, you are "adopted" into God's family and have the right to approach Him as your loving "Daddy" – with the confidence that He cares deeply for you.<sup>26</sup> The relationship that sin destroyed is restored! You have become part of an eternal relationship as a son (or daughter) of the living, loving God. As such, His promises and help are extended to YOU!

***You get Jesus*** ... along with all that Jesus is and does on your behalf. It's Jesus who is the Conquering Lord over everything, everywhere. It's He who redeemed you to God by His blood,<sup>27</sup> and it's He who holds and protects you spiritually for eternity.<sup>28</sup> It's He who continues to cover you with forgiveness with righteousness (His perfection). It's He who leads and cares for you as a Good Shepherd. It's He who is preparing a heavenly place just for you one day.<sup>29</sup> And it's He who will return to earth one day to reclaim the right to rule as well as the hands-on rulership of our world!

***You get God's Holy Spirit*** to actually live in you! The Bible explains that we are temples of the Holy Spirit who is *in* us.<sup>30</sup> He is always there to comfort us and to encourage us to honor our Lord Jesus in thought, word, and deed. He is there to lead us to be more and more "holy" (seems like something the HOLY Spirit would do, eh?) – i.e., set apart for God's purposes and glory. He is there to empower us for ministry, and to give us special gifts and abilities to better serve God's purposes.

***You get a new spiritual family.*** You become identified and connected with what the Bible calls "the body of Christ",<sup>31</sup> made up of all true Christians of all time – people of various denominations who truly believe in Christ and have trusted Him, and have embraced the Biblical gospel. Though we have a new family, God's plan is certainly not that we abandon our physical families, but rather that we draw spiritual encouragement and strength from our new spiritual family to walk godly in a less-than-godly world.

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<sup>25</sup> 1 Pet. 1:3; John 3:3

<sup>26</sup> Rom. 8:15

<sup>27</sup> 1 Pet. 1:18-19

<sup>28</sup> John 10:27-29

<sup>29</sup> John 14:3

<sup>30</sup> 1 Cor. 6:19

<sup>31</sup> 1 Cor. 12:13

## Relationship and Fellowship

### In Relationship

Relationship and fellowship are different. They are related, but different. “Relationship” is commonly defined as “*a legally established and recognized connection between persons, usually by blood, marriage, adoption, or other legal decree.*”

In the spiritual realm, when we “accept” Christ, we enter an unshakable relationship with God. According to the Word, we are adopted into God’s family.<sup>32</sup> We become “the sheep of His pasture” – *HIS FLOCK!* – whom He holds in His hand, from which no one can snatch us.<sup>33</sup> We become “co-heirs” with Jesus of every spiritual blessing in Christ.<sup>34</sup> We’re connected, and we’re protected in that connection by His power and grace. Now that’s what I call a great *relationship!*

All we did to enter this relationship was believe, and that’s what we do to keep it. The Bible calls it “abiding in Christ.”<sup>35</sup> Of course our belief is proven (mostly to ourselves) by our obedience to God and His Word, but we must keep things in right order. Our obedience is the *fruit* of the relationship, not the cause. We obey Him because we want to honor Him, in appreciation for what He’s done for us. It’s a “*thank you God*” kind of lifestyle.

### In Fellowship

Fellowship is different. Though our relationship is securely established, our enjoyment of it can vary. When we’re walking with Christ, following as the Holy Spirit leads us to obedience, to godliness, and to effectiveness in ministry, we’re said to be “in fellowship with God.” We are filled with His joy and His power. We feel full.

Conversely, those moments when we’re ignoring His leading and walking our own path, we’re said to be “out of fellowship with God.” We miss out on His joy and His power. We feel empty.

When we’re *in fellowship*, we feel secure and confident in our *relationship* with Him. When we’re *out of fellowship*, we can get confused and might even think we’ve lost our *relationship*.

But not so!! What we really lose is the *enjoyment* of the relationship, not the relationship itself! We’re still His kids ... His sheep ... but because we’re not walking closely with Him, we *feel* distant and separated. We don’t feel full.

It’s like this in families. I have two wonderful children whom my wife and I love dearly and deeply. Though they both have known our house rules and the right behaviors to honor their parents and their home, believe it or not, they haven’t always followed them. It’s in those times that they have lost the *enjoyment* of being in relationship with Mom and me. They may be, for a time, *out of fellowship* with us, but they haven’t lost the relationship!

As a matter of fact, it’s precisely because we parents are *in real relationship* with them that we bring in the disciplines, consequences, lectures, etc. There is nothing they could ever do to lose our relationship with them. Nothing ... ever. But there are many things that can be done that result in fractured fellowship.

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<sup>32</sup> Rom. 8:15

<sup>33</sup> John 10:27-28

<sup>34</sup> Rom. 8:17

<sup>35</sup> John 15:1-7

It's precisely because they are OUR kids, that we are committed to loving and helping mold them, even through discipline when necessary, to be responsible and respectful young adults. That's how it is in God's family.

### **Falling Out Of Fellowship**

How does falling out of fellowship with God happen? As born again, indwelt by the Holy Spirit Christians, shouldn't we *always* be devoted disciples following every lead of the Lord with willing sacrifice, love, and great joy?!

Sure, that would be awesome – and that's what we strive to grow toward. But the truth is, while we still live in these fleshly shells with that old sin nature,<sup>36</sup> and while we still live in a world corrupted by sin,<sup>37</sup> and while the devil is still prowling around with temptations toward our spiritual immobilization<sup>38</sup> ... we sometimes mess up and fall out of fellowship.

Sometimes we give in to a temptation and sin, causing fellowship to be broken. Sometimes it happens just because we're spoiled, self-centered beings who don't like where God is trying to take us, or how He's trying to grow us through trials, or maybe just because things didn't go our way. Sometimes we get spiritually grumpy because we're tired and stressed. Sometimes, other Christians let us down (they sometimes will) and we mistakenly think it's God who has let us down and we become disheartened.

However it happens – the truth is, it happens. But here's the plan – the more we walk with God, the less it happens. But it can still happen. So what do we do then?

### **Condemnation Or Conviction??**

When we fall out of fellowship there are two similar, but opposing spiritual forces at work. Essentially, God wants to restore us to fellowship and the devil wants us to stay out of fellowship. There are invisible spiritual forces at work and you ought to know what the battle is that's making you feel the way you do.<sup>39</sup>

Dark spiritual forces try to *condemn* while the Holy Spirit brings *conviction*. Both bring a sense of guilt but the incited responses are very different.

*Condemnation* seeks to keep you away from God, while *conviction* is designed to bring you back to Him. *Condemnation* says you're unworthy and don't deserve any more of God's love and grace, and only a hypocrite would think he does. *Condemnation* brings defeat and despair.

*Conviction* says even though you fell, you can get back up and walk forward again because God still loves you and wants to forgive you and restore you to fellowship. *Conviction* of the Holy Spirit always brings hope.

*Condemnation* can also be very sneaky. It often smoke-screens the real issue. It looks as though the issue is really us and our failure and unworthiness. We can even deceive ourselves to feeling noble about feeling condemned (as in the "at least I'm not a hypocrite" response).

But the real issue behind that whole feeling is different. It's really a sneaky and hidden assault on God. Essentially, we unwittingly put God's grace on trial and deem it insufficient to reach out and cover a sinner like me who's done a sin like *that*. The real deal is that the heart of *condemnation* attacks God's goodness, grace, and love, as well as our own failure.

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<sup>36</sup> Rom. 7:18-24

<sup>37</sup> Rom. 8:19-21

<sup>38</sup> 1 Pet. 5:8

<sup>39</sup> Eph. 6:10-12; 1 Pet. 5:8

On the other hand, true *conviction* brings us to God to confess the sin, repent of it, and renounce it. As we do, we are restored to fellowship, and again brought to bask in the truth of God's love and forgiveness and cleansing – based not on how we feel, but on the promise of scripture.<sup>40</sup> True Holy Spirit induced *conviction* is designed to draw us TO God for cleansing and restoration of fellowship. It's NEVER to push us away.

### **Two Awesome Bible Words Made Simple**

As we consider the difference of relationship and fellowship, I am drawn to two more New Testament words: *Justified* and *Sanctified*. “*Justified*” speaks of the moment-in-time judicial proclamation. “*Sanctified*” refers to the process of growth that a “justified” one will go through.

***Justification.*** When we are born again, God makes a proclamation that echoes through the heavens – we are proclaimed “justified”.<sup>41</sup> It's the formal decree of what happened when Jesus credited His perfection and righteousness to us. “Justified” carries two very practical ideas.

First (note the play on words here), it means “*just-if-I'd*” never, ever done anything wrong or ever missed God's target. “*Just-if-I'd*” never, ever sinned.

Second, it means “*just-if-I'd*” always in every situation completely done right, always hitting the center of the bull's eye of everything God ever wanted me to do ... always.

That's what happens when we enter the relationship with God through Jesus Christ. He sees us completely “justified” because that's what He's made us when He covered us with the righteousness of Jesus.

***Sanctification.*** This second word speaks of a process. To “sanctify” means to purify and to set apart. God accepts all who will come to Him, no matter how sinful or dirty they had become. He then begins a work of cleaning and purifying them from the inside out.

As this clean up happens in the heart, the lifestyle goes through changes. It's God's way of setting apart someone so that His holy love and power might be seen strongly in them, and His eternal purpose accomplished both in, and through them.

“*Sanctification,*” to a large degree, is a process with which we cooperate. Our choices and loving obedience toward God can move ahead our sanctification, whereas self-centered living and lack of spiritual discipline can slow it greatly. As Christians, we still go through all the inherent joys and difficulties of life. We'll still experience moments that will try our faith and put it to the test. And God will use it all in His design to mold us to reflect more and more of Jesus. That's what “sanctification” is all about.

***A Little Reality Therapy.*** I'm thinking it important at this point to also address a false idea that I've heard from some. Some think (or at least hope) that becoming a Christian will mean life gets really smooth with no big bumps – a problem free life. After all, if the “perfect Jesus” made me “perfect” in the eyes of the “perfect God”, shouldn't this new life in Him be, well ...perfect?

Nice try, but the answer is *no*. Not as long as we live in a sin-infected world where *unfairness, sickness, trials, struggles, etc.*, can come to all who live here – both Christians and non-Christians alike. And in reality, as a Christian, there can additionally come *persecution*, because the evil ruler (or “god”) of this world doesn't appreciate the delivering truth and power of the gospel for which you stand.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> 1 John 1:9

<sup>41</sup> Rom. 3:24; 5:1, 9; Titus 3:7

<sup>42</sup> 2 Tim. 3:12

In a nutshell, here's how it works. Jesus doesn't promise to "fix" all your problems. Rather, He promises to go through them with you, and to never leave you or forsake you,<sup>43</sup> and whatever Satan intends for evil against you, to turn around for ultimate good<sup>44</sup> – that is, your sanctification and His glory.

In the old days, when things got tough, whereas we may have turned to drugs, alcohol, work, sex, and all kinds of things of this world to try to deal with problems and pressures, we now turn to Jesus. We turn to a relationship with the One strong enough to change things, and/or to change us as we walk together through the hard times. He told us to expect difficulties in this world, but also comfort and peace as we turn to Him.<sup>45</sup> It works. It really does.

## It's A Package Deal

### Jesus Christ The Savior

As sinners, we were spiritually and eternally stuck with no way on our own to get ourselves out. We needed a Savior to rescue us. That's exactly what Jesus did when He switched our sin for His perfection – when He "became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God."<sup>46</sup>

Jesus isn't just *a* savior, He's *the* Savior! He's *the only* Savior. He isn't *a* way, He's *the only* way. He claimed that no one can come into true fellowship with God except through Him.<sup>47</sup>

According to the Bible, He draws us and then awakens our spirit to the truth of the gospel. We accept Him, and we are "saved." We're delivered from eternal darkness and separation and transferred to His kingdom of light.<sup>48</sup> We have found the Savior!

### Jesus Christ The Lord

But He isn't *just* the Savior. He's the Lord. He's not "*a*" lord. He's "*the*" Lord. The one and only.

In our modern world, we don't use the term "lord" much. In the Bible, "Lord" denotes the one to whom we offer our complete allegiance, who, in mind and heart and action, is to be followed and revered without reservation or hesitation. "Lord" means the director – the boss!

Jesus isn't just the Savior, He's the Lord. When we invite Him into our life, we accept Him as He is. "Lord" is part of that. Yes, He is the Lord. But the real question is, "Is He *your* Lord?" Truly being born again into His eternal family means, by right, He is your Lord. It's His rightful title and place in your life – the only question is whether He is treated as the Lord.

You could say that our new life quest is to continually crown Him as the undisputed Lord of every portion of our lives. Here's the simple plan: the more we walk the Christian life, the more we give Him "lordship" over areas of life that He shows us are not yet surrendered. And believe me, He will reveal those areas to us. That's how the "sanctification" process works.

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<sup>43</sup> Heb. 13:5

<sup>44</sup> Rom. 8:28

<sup>45</sup> John 16:33

<sup>46</sup> 2 Cor. 5:21

<sup>47</sup> John 14:6

<sup>48</sup> Col. 1:13-14

Unfortunately, many who claim to be Christians want a Savior, but aren't interested in having a Lord. The sad truth is that they can deceive themselves into thinking they are true Christians because they can understand, and even explain the gospel. But to be honest, even Satan and his demons can do that.<sup>49</sup>

Jesus even warned that there would be many in the judgment that would be eternally shocked since, by their actions they had done some very Christian-looking things – *including calling Him "Lord"* – but had never really submitted to Him as Lord.<sup>50</sup> That's a very sobering thought.

The Biblical pattern and warning is clear. When you come to Jesus, you come to the One who is both *the Savior* and *the Lord*. It's a package deal. He doesn't become one to you without you desiring Him to become the other as well. That's the Biblical arrangement.

## A Concluding Thought

So there you have it – an overview of the "gospel" or "good news". It's exciting news because in it we find the heavenly power to bring us new life! It doesn't just clean us up some on the outside – it makes us new on the inside.<sup>51</sup>

We echo what the Apostle Paul wrote, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes ...*"<sup>52</sup> **Ashamed** ... we most certainly are not. **Powerful** ... it most certainly is.

Over and over I've seen God miraculously transform those who've come to Him. I've seen Him bring healing and hope to broken and defeated people. I've seen Him do what He said He'd do when we open our lives to Him!!

But you know, coming to Jesus and being "born again" is just the beginning of a new life filled with new satisfaction, peace, power, and purpose. It's just the start of a fulfilling journey as a modern day disciple of Christ.

May God bless you as you begin this journey. Look for our "First Steps" booklet, and our "New Believer Discipleship Manual" to continue to assist you as you grow in your Christian walk.

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<sup>49</sup> James 2:19

<sup>50</sup> Matt. 7:21

<sup>51</sup> 2 Cor. 5:17

<sup>52</sup> Rom. 1:16