

## KNOWING CHRIST

Tonight I would like to talk *knowing* the Lord, as it's defined in the Scripture, because this aspect of our salvation is misunderstood, especially by Fundamentalist's. A long time ago, a verse of Scripture jumped out at me, which began to open my eyes to just how deformed and twisted our view of salvation is. It's the one in Hebrews, where it says Jesus is: "*the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*" (Heb. 5:9). Did you ever read that verse? It doesn't say Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to those who "believe" in Him, or who "trust" in Him, or who "repent" of their sins, or who "accept" His atonement. It says He's the author of eternal salvation to those who OBEY Him.

If you are a typical Evangelical Christian, whenever you read this it has to confuse you because the whole idea of salvation being *dependant upon* your obedience—that's something YOU do—directly contradicts the very foundation of the Reformation gospel, which is today's "gospel of grace". It especially contradicts the idea that Christianity is a "package deal".

The only possible meaning the typical Christian can get out of that statement is that we have to "obey" God in the sense of obeying His command to "believe" and "accept" the gospel when it's presented to us. And of course, the *ability* to believe and accept that gospel must come from God to begin with. Anything else would instantly fall into the category of "works". We can't obey God in order to earn salvation and according to them, we can't obey God in order to maintain our salvation. If we do, we are trying to be saved by works.

The only problem is, the writer of Hebrews is *not* talking about our initial acceptance of the gospel! He's talking about our walk with the Lord, after we have been regenerated, after we have become a child of God. The Lord Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all who obey (present tense) Him.

There are several ways to understand this passage (other than thinking it means initially accepting the gospel). One way we can view it is that after we are forgiven and justified, we can *end up* unsaved, or cut off from Christ, through consistent and perpetual disobedience. Another way to look at it is to view the term "eternal salvation" in the sense of "full salvation" (as opposed to partial salvation or initial salvation).

Of course, I realize the concept of full and partial salvation are non-existent in today's "all or nothing/package deal" view of salvation. For most of today's Christians, salvation includes the *whole* package. Either you get the whole package or you don't get anything. You can't possibly receive *half* the package. You can't possibly receive *partial* salvation. But this idea becomes hard to defend when you read certain passages in the New Testament. That's why pastors never produce sermons on these particular passages.

*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which **we have wrought**, but that **we receive a full reward**.*

*II. John 1:8*

*Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, **which is able to save your souls**.*

*James 1:21*

Receiving the end [goal] of your faith, even the **salvation of your souls**.

I. Peter 1:9

Wherefore he **is able** also to save them **to the uttermost** that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 7:25

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that **believe to the saving of the soul**.

Hebrews 10:39

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, **that I may win Christ**,

Philippians 3:8

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit **reap life everlasting**.

Galatians 6:8

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling.

Philippians 2:12

Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses...Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they [believers] may **lay hold on eternal life**.

I. Timothy 6:12,19

If salvation is an “all or nothing” proposition, based solely on our belief and trust in God’s Messiah, then why does the apostle John warn those who are *already* saved, that they need to be careful to not lose any of the things they “have wrought”—which means any of the things they have labored for or worked for—so that they receive a *full* reward? Is it possible to only receive a *partial* reward? Some people, when push comes to shove, will admit that Christians *can* lose some of their rewards. But have you *ever* heard anyone actually describe or list what rewards can be lost? Have you ever heard anyone actually list or describe the “rewards” of a Christian?

I already know how you will answer that question. The answer is No. You never hear religious leaders list or describe which “rewards” can be lost because they are *lying* when they say they believe we can lose our rewards. They know they have to *say* they believe we can lose them because the Bible *clearly says* we can lose them. But they can’t tell you which “rewards” can be lost because all the rewards listed in the Scripture are *already part of the package* in their minds—and they absolutely do not believe it’s possible to lose part of that package. According to them, either you get the whole package or you don’t get any of it.

Well, if salvation is a “package deal” that is given to us by grace and we don’t have to do anything but believe the gospel in order to get it, then why is the apostle James telling people who have *already* been saved (who have *already* gotten the whole package), that their “souls” still need to be saved?” Even worse, why is James telling these Christians that their souls need to be saved, not by faith, nor by belief, or even by trust in Jesus; but by the receiving of the “engrafted word” (ie: Christian teaching) after you are saved?

If salvation is an “all or nothing” proposition, based solely on our belief, then why is the apostle Peter telling those who are *already* saved that the “goal” of their faith is the salvation of their “souls”? Weren’t their souls saved as a result of believing the gospel? Weren’t their souls saved as soon as they were forgiven, justified and received the imputed righteousness of Christ? I thought having our soul saved was part of the package?

If we get the whole package by “grace plus nothing”, then why did the writer of Hebrews tell Jewish believers that they must believe “to the saving of the soul”? Didn’t believing the gospel save their souls? If it did, then the writer of Hebrews is terribly confused.

Why did this same writer tell Jewish believers that God *is able* to save them “to the uttermost”? The phrase “to the uttermost” strongly implies that it’s possible to be saved, but not to the uttermost. It implies *degrees* of salvation. People blow over the implications of this passage all the time because of their package deal mentality. But we need to consider what’s being said here. Speaking to those who were already forgiven, who were already justified, who already had the imputed righteousness of Christ credited to their account; the writer says: God “is able” to save them to the “uttermost”. That means, they are not yet saved to the uttermost. However, the writer is informing them that God *is able* to save them to the uttermost, if they *obey* Him..

Is it possible that our souls—which is our mind, our emotions, our wills, our desires, and in general, our personality—is not fully redeemed when we first believe? Is it possible that we must believe *to its saving*? Is it possible for a person to be partially redeemed or not saved “to the uttermost”? Is it possible that “believing” the gospel isn’t enough to transform the soul from the image of Adam to the image of Christ? Could it be that we also have to *obey* Jesus in order to have our souls or personalities conformed to His image?

If attaining the full image of Jesus is part of the package; and if we all get that image automatically when we die or when we enter Paradise, then why was the apostle Paul trying to “win” Christ *before* he died? I mean, what in the world was he talking about when he said he wanted to “win Christ”? What does it mean to “win” Christ? How do you “win” Christ? I thought it was all by grace—a free gift that can’t be gained or lost by anything we do or fail to do? Doesn’t the very term “win” *imply* a contest? Doesn’t the very term “win” *imply* labor and effort on our part? Doesn’t that term carry the very opposite idea of a “free gift” which you can do nothing to gain or lose? Contemporary Christians who read that passage can’t possibly have any idea what Paul is talking about there because his words go against *everything* they have ever been taught about salvation. They oppose the whole package deal concept. They oppose the “all or nothing” view of redemption.

We know that when Paul said he was trying to win Christ”, he wasn’t talking about winning the *forgiveness* of Christ because he already had the forgiveness of Christ. Nor was he talking about winning the *justification* of Christ because he was already justified by faith. Nor was he talking about winning the imputed righteousness of Christ because he was already covered legally with that righteousness. The only way to understand that passage, the only thing that makes sense, is that Paul was trying to *win* the full image of Christ. He was seeking full transformation into the Lord’s image before he died.

“*Oh no!*”—says the grace plus nothing crowd—“*that can’t be true. We’re all going to bear the full image of Jesus when we get to heaven because that’s part of the package; that’s what salvation is! And besides, you can’t win something like that anyway. To say that you must win the image of Christ implies ‘works’ on our part. It implies that personal effort is necessary; and that means we are trying to earn salvation*”.

Sorry, but that’s precisely what it means! We must labor to win Christ, and we do, we will be rewarded with His full image! Time to wake up and smell the coffee. Just because “package deal” Christianity is the message that’s being presented universally right now, that doesn’t make it true. The Scripture never teaches “all or nothing” salvation. It never offers anyone a package deal. The reason Paul was trying to “win” Christ is precisely because he didn’t believe (or teach) the trash the “grace plus nothing crowd” believes and teaches. If he believed what they believed, he would never have been trying to win Christ before he died. He would be doing the same things they are doing, living the same way they are living, and teaching the same lies they are teaching.

The cry of Paul’s heart and the thing that motivated him in all his work was, that I might *know* Him. That is the goal of the Christian life; that is the goal God has set before you. Paul’s race, your race, my race, and the race of every believer is to fulfill God’s plan for our *personal transformation* into His image—not later (in heaven) but in *this* life. But because the Scriptural doctrine of “grace” has been so perverted, very few of today’s Christians realize that transformation into the image of Jesus is something that has to be *apprehended*, and that it must be apprehended through much personal effort and struggle against sin, self and Satan.

Being born again and baptized in the Spirit *does not* win us Christ. Being endowed with gifts and ministries *does not* gain us Christ. Acquiring all knowledge and learning all spiritual mysteries *will not* make us like Jesus. Memorizing the Bible *will not* win us Christ. Being the world’s greatest soul winner *will not* win us Christ. It’s very clear in that passage that Paul believed he had to *attain* what he was after. He had to *labor* to win Christ. He never taught that he (or any one else) would win Christ automatically by grace.

Paul did not preach what is today called “the gospel of grace”. Indeed, Paul’s gospel was a far cry from the perversion that’s being taught all over this planet right now. These two gospels are not only vastly different, they are utterly opposed. One of them is a Satanic counterfeit. One of them is the gospel of Antichrist, and the other one is the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you want to know which one is which, just compare what’s being said by today’s preachers of grace with some of the things Paul said.

For example, you’ll never hear any of today’s ministers tell you that if you “*sow to the spirit*” you will “*reap eternal life*” because that’s a direct contradiction of today’s “grace” message. You can’t reap eternal life by what you sow. Such an idea means salvation “by works” (at least it does in the minds of 99% of today’s Christians). They’ve been taught that we are given eternal life freely because of what we BELIEVE, not because of anything we DO (or fail to do). How can you reap something you have already been given as a free gift by grace? You see, the very terms “sowing” and “reaping” imply WORKS and REWARD. You are rewarded with (ie: you reap) eternal life because of what you sow (ie: what you do). The phrase “sow and reap” clearly implies being rewarded or punished for what you do, not getting a free gift because of what you believe. Today’s ministers of Satan’s false gospel reject the whole idea of sowing and reaping with regards to gaining eternal life because it does not, and it never will, fit into their theology.

Another thing you’ll never hear any of today’s “grace” peddlers tell you is that you must “work out” your salvation “with fear and trembling”. Such a statement makes no sense at all to them. Why is it necessary to work out a

salvation which has already been worked out for us by Jesus? Why would Paul tell us to work out our salvation when salvation is a free gift that requires *no* work? Why would Paul tell us it's necessary to "obtain" eternal life if we *already* possess eternal life simply by believing the gospel? The very term "obtain" implies personal effort or spiritual labor on our part—and that means "works" to those preaching Satan's version of grace. Indeed, there are quite a few passages in the New Testament which teach very clearly that salvation (eternal life) is the result of our own labor and effort!

What are we to make of them. How are we to understand them? Were the apostles really teaching salvation by works? Were they really teaching a works-righteousness redemption? No, they weren't. They were talking about the salvation of the soul or the personality. The salvation of the soul is the transformation of that soul from one image to completely different image. The salvation of the soul, or the transformation of the soul, from one image to another, is accomplished *neither* instantly or automatically. We are responsible to "sow" and "work out" and "lay hold of" soul salvation, which is *full* redemption. We are responsible to "receive with meekness the engrafted word". We are responsible to "obey" God. We are responsible to "win" Christ. We are responsible to interact with, and yield to, our Savior, so He can work in our lives to transform us into His image.

Of course, we can't do all this alone and God doesn't ask us to try and do it alone. We need the Lord's guidance and power to go through the process of radical transformation. But by the same token, the Lord won't do everything *for* us either. He requires our co-operation and effort. It's the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon. We have a part to play, and God does the rest. There are certain things only God can do for us. But there are other things we *can* do, and we must do. We are totally responsible to do them. If we don't do them, God will never do them *for* us. He'll let us paddle around in circles, in our own little religious lagoon forever, if we don't do our part. The transformation of the soul from the image of Adam to the image of Christ is a co-effort and a co-laboring between the individual and his/her Savior.

Actual transformation in Christ's image can never be imputed. It will never be experienced simply by believing correct doctrine or by attending a fellowship or by obeying any number of religious rules or regulations. It will never be attained by dying and going to heaven. Transformation takes personal interaction with the God who has saved us. This is why the writer of Hebrews warned believers not to "neglect" their salvation (*Heb. 2:1-3*). What sense does that make? How can a person who is already "saved by grace" neglect his salvation? Is the writer talking about to backsliding or apostasy?

You see, such a statement makes no sense if our simplistic view of salvation is true. We need to understand that even though we have been saved by grace, we can still neglect our redemption by neglecting *this process* of transformation from the image of Adam to the image of Christ. That transformation is not automatic. It requires our full concentration, participation and co-operation. Unfortunately, the sad fact is, multitudes of today's Christians are doing precisely what the writer of Hebrews warned against—they are *neglecting* the transformation of the soul, which is a vital part of their salvation. The reason they are neglecting it is because they are being taught that they will possess the Lord's image when they fly off into the spirit realm, at the Pe-tribulation Rapture! This is a very simple and effective trick of the enemy. If you believe you already have something, or that you will automatically get that something later, when you enter Paradise, then you will not spend very much time or energy trying to obtain it.

Since becoming like Jesus is presented as part of the "package deal" called salvation, people don't worry about becoming like Him in this life. Why should they? Satan pulls this same trick on Christians regarding the first

marriage. They are told by deluded religious leaders that they are already prepared to enter the first marriage, simply because they are a child of God. They are told they are already prepared to participate in the wedding because they are in Christ, and being in Christ automatically makes them ready. They are told they are already prepared for the marriage because they are covered with the righteousness of Christ, and that's *all* that's required to partake of the marriage. Since they are convinced that they are already ready, they don't bother to even think about what *it might take* to actually be ready for that wedding.

When you tell people being like Jesus is part of the “package” and that everyone will get that package sooner or later, why should you expect them to strive and labor to become like Jesus now, in *this* life? I mean, hey, coming forth in the full image of Jesus is a shoe in, right? It's gonna happen to all real Christians, sooner or later, right? Why worry about it now. Relax and enjoy the ride! In the end, we're all gonna get the *whole* package.

The “grace plus nothing” crowd doesn't really understand salvation. They don't really understand the gospel they preach. They are blind fools, obsessed with defending an indefensible theology. Some of them may be sincere, but the majority of them are self-righteous, pontificating, wind bags who love to hear themselves talk. They are completely blind to the spiritual vision laid out in the Scripture, and anyone who listens to them will *neglect* their salvation because they will neglect that part of their salvation which deals with becoming like Jesus and being made ready for the marriage. They will walk around believing that becoming like Jesus is part of the package, and that participation in the first marriage is part of the package.

They do not understand that the whole purpose of salvation is to *make us compatible* with our future husband—the Lord Jesus Christ. They do not understand that the whole purpose of redemption is to *change us* from one image to another image. That's why the concept of marriage is so central in the teachings of Jesus, of the apostle Paul, and in the book of Revelation. There's going to be a marriage or union at the end of this present age. Part of the Godhead, part of the One who lives outside the realm of time and space, who created everything from nothing, is going to marry a people who have been made just like Him.

The wonder of this union is not a reality to most of us. This kind of thing has never happened before, not in all the eon's of time. God, the Son, is going to take a wife and be joined to her *forever*. He and that wife will enter into a spiritual union that cannot and will never be broken. It will be a union like no one has ever seen or imagined. What we're talking about here is much deeper and much greater than simply “going to heaven” and living forever in a place called Paradise! God, the Son is going to be joined forever to a people who have been changed from an image that is totally incompatible with Him, to an image that is 100% compatible with Him.

What Christians today don't understand is that the change from incompatibility to compatibility must take place in *this* life. We need to be alive in the flesh, in these physical bodies, for that work to be done. Once you lose your physical body with all it's lusts and passions; once you are removed from physical life on this planet; that portion of the work of transformation comes to an end. It's over. God can't “take you on” in the spirit realm, like some people teach because most of the situations God uses to actually change us from Adam's image to the image of Christ can only be arranged and experienced while we're in these fallen bodies of flesh. Once we lose our bodies and we pass into the spirit realm, school is over. Whatever grade we were in when we died, that's the grade we will be in when we are resurrected.

The grace plus nothing crowd is oblivious to this reality because of all the false doctrine they are taught from the minute they become Christians. They have no idea that we must be made compatible with Jesus in *this* life.

Instead, they live in a religious fantasy world, assuming that our transformation is going to happen automatically at the mythical Pre-tribulation Rapture, or after we die. They have no idea that such a radical transformation requires labor and effort on our part because they are taught just the opposite! They are taught that true faith requires *no* effort or labor. They are taught that the “package” comes to us simply by believing. All that is required to get the whole package at the end of the road is that we go through life *believing* that God will give the package in the end. As long as we keep believing we will get the package, we will get it because we (supposedly) get it by faith, not by works.

The reality of just how much work it takes to be changed from our own image into the image of God doesn’t even enter the thought process of the grace plus nothing crowd because they assume this transformation is going to take place automatically, either as we go through life *believing*, or when we enter Paradise. That’s the kind of religious fantasy world they walk in. They are convinced that they are not required to put forth any personal effort or labor in the whole process because all personal effort and labor equals “works” in their minds.

I would like to suggest to you that not only must we be conformed to the image of Jesus in this life, if we are going to be united to Him forever at the first marriage; and not only will this change require a lot of effort and labor on our part; the success or failure of this transformation will rest to a great degree on how well we come to “know” the Lord in this life.

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. **If ye had known me**, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

*John 14:6-7*

There is a false assumption that gets deeply ingrained in many Christians, as soon as they get saved and start attending a church; and that assumption is that they “know” Jesus. In fact, many of them, when they are witnessing to someone who is not saved, will say something like the following: “*Do you know the Lord?*” Even though we all assume we “know” the Lord, the fact is, there is a sense in which it can be said we don’t know Him, until certain things take place in our lives.

This is why Jesus said what He did to the disciples who were asking Him to show them the Father. He said: “if you had “known” me, you would have also “known” the Father. Here you have a case where people who “believed” Jesus was Israel’s Messiah, and “followed” Him as Israel’s Messiah, didn’t really “know” Him. After 3 years of living with Him day and night; after 3 years of and traveling the length and breadth of the country with Him; after 3 years of watching Him minister and being taught by Him, they didn’t really know Him.

“Well”, someone might say, “they didn’t know Him because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, and it’s only through the Holy Spirit that we come to know Him”. But that’s not the case, as can be seen by the answer Jesus gave Phillip. He didn’t say: “You don’t know me yet Phillip; but that’s okay because you can’t possibly know me until I go back to heaven and send you the Holy Spirit”. Instead, the Lord gave Phillip a mild rebuke. He said: “*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip*” (John 14:9)? Phillip and the rest of the disciples should have known Jesus in a way they did not yet know Him. So it’s possible to believe in Jesus, follow Jesus, serve Jesus, and even hear His teaching, yet not really “know” Him the way we should.

And *this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

John 17:3

Did you ever read the above passage and wonder why Jesus said “eternal life” is “knowing” God and Jesus? Why didn’t He say eternal life is “believing” in God or in Jesus? Why didn’t He say eternal life is “trusting” in God or in Jesus? Why didn’t He say eternal life is living in Paradise forever or “making it” to heaven? This is another one of those passages that really doesn’t fit today’s gospel. The Lord was trying to make a point. Eternal life only comes from *union with* God and the Son. It doesn’t come from belief in God, or trust in God, or holding correct doctrine, or learning the Bible inside and out—except as these things lead us into a spiritual union with God whereby we know Him. That’s where eternal life is, and nowhere else.

*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

Philippians 3:10-11

Didn’t you ever wonder why Paul, near the end of his life, would say that he wanted to “know” the Lord? Are we to understand from this statement that Paul didn’t really “know” the Lord all those years? Of course not. The context of his statement is clear. Paul wanted to walk in *deep spiritual union* with the Lord. That’s what the term “know” means in this instance. He wanted to know the Lord’s resurrection life, which comes as a result of suffering. You see, there is always a deeper level of “knowing” God that is possible as we walk with Him. Our relationship with Him is not a static one. It should grow and deepen as the years roll by.

How well we “know” the Lord will make the difference in how much transformation we experience. How well we know the Lord will also make a difference between partaking or not partaking of the reward of the first resurrection. That’s what I was trying to bring out the other week, when we looked at the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. The issue with the virgins was not the amount of oil they had. The issue was, how *well* did they know their Lord?

A lot of people confuse the parable of the virgins with other parables Jesus taught, where he told the people who thought they were saved that He *never* knew them. People read that same statement into the parable of the virgins, but that’s *not* what Jesus said. He said I don’t (presently) know you. That’s not the same as saying I never knew you. Jesus said I “never” knew you to people who “worked iniquity”. He’s talking to people who name of name of Christ, but who never stop *practicing* iniquity.

In the case of the wise and foolish virgins, the issue wasn’t sin. They weren’t accused of practicing iniquity. Nothing is said to them about them sinning. It wasn’t iniquity that kept the foolish virgins from entering the marriage. The issue was a lack of preparation—and *the reason* they were not properly prepared is because they did not “know” the Lord the way they needed to know Him. They were not being “led by the Spirit”. When the Lord said He didn’t (presently) know them, He was not saying He “never” knew them. He wasn’t saying they were never genuine believers. He was saying He didn’t presently know them *the way He needed to know them* in order for them to be led by the Spirit, like the five wise virgins were being led by the Spirit, so they were properly prepared to meet Him.

The wedding doesn't represent going to heaven and the "oil" isn't really the issue. If you view the wedding as salvation in the traditional sense, then nothing you come up with regarding the oil represents, actually fits the parable. If the oil represents spiritual light, then the foolish virgins went and got more spiritual light but they still missed salvation? If you see the oil as the Holy Spirit, then the foolish virgins went and got more of the Holy Spirit, or got re-filled with the Holy Spirit, but they still missed salvation? If you see the oil as eternal life, then the foolish virgins went and got more eternal life but they still missed salvation?

None of these things make sense because the oil is not the issue! The issue is *why* the wise virgins knew to take extra oil, and *why* the foolish ones didn't know to take extra oil. The wise virgins knew the Lord in a deeper way than the foolish virgins did. Taking extra oil was just a test God used to see who had ears to hear. It was just a test to see who was walking in a *close* relationship with Him. It was just a test to see who was really being led by the Spirit.

The wise virgins took extra oil *before* it became evident that they would need extra oil because they *knew* the Bridegroom the way they needed to know Him in order to hear His voice. The foolish virgins went out to buy extra oil, only *after* it became evident that they would need it. At that point, it didn't take any spiritual discernment or a deep relationship with the bridegroom to realize they needed more oil. Anyone could have recognized the situation by that point. This is why buying more oil didn't change anything.

The reason they were buying extra oil wasn't because they were suddenly being led by the Spirit, or because they had suddenly developed a deeper union with the bridegroom. They were buying extra oil because *external circumstances* (which anyone could see) now demanded it. The wise virgins were being led by the Spirit, so they knew to take extra oil *before* external circumstances revealed the need for extra oil. The foolish virgins were Christians, but they were not walking as close to the Lord as the wise virgins were. Their relationship with the bridegroom was not deep enough to hear Him tell them to take extra oil. It was deep enough to hear Him *call them* to the wedding, but it wasn't deep enough to *actually enter* the wedding.

I'm highlighting this parable again because it's message is important. There are many genuine believers right now who are waiting to enter the first marriage. They assume they are prepared to enter that marriage and they are *resting* in that assumption. But the *level of union* they are now experiencing with the Lord is not sufficient to get them into the marriage. They may know the Lord at a certain level and to a certain degree; but they don't know Him the way they need to know Him in order to go into the marriage when the time comes. They don't know Him enough that they are being transformed into His image. They don't know Him enough that they are receiving the kind of training that is necessary to rule the nations with Him in the next age. They know Him enough that they will be able to hear the call to go out and meet Him, when it comes, but they will not be able to meet Him.

People are used to getting things done at the last minute, or arriving someplace at the last second, or getting ready for an occasion at the last minute; but that's not the way it's going to be with the Sons of God. The work will be done in that company of saints *before* the call goes out, and when the call goes forth, that's it. Those who have been prepared will enter in. Those who haven't been prepared will not enter in. God's not going to let people run around like a bunch of nut-cases, trying to get prepared at the last minute. Either you will be ready when the call comes or you won't be ready and at that point, it will be too late to try and get ready.

It's like Noah and the flood. You know Jesus said the coming of the Son of man will be "as it was in the days of Noah" (*Matt. 24:37*). Well, there are a lot of important truths that can be gleaned from that statement, and many

ministers have done so. But one truth I want to highlighted at this point is the fact that Noah finished that Ark and everyone was settled and locked inside of it for seven days *before* the rain finally started. The Scriptural version isn't like the Hollywood version of the story, where as soon a Noah finishes the Ark it starts to rain and he's loading the animals and all the supplies into the Ark as it rains.

Not so. The Ark had been completely finished; the animals had all been brought aboard and they were all fed and settled down in their places; the supplies had all been brought aboard and safely stored away; Noah and his family had entered the Ark and were patiently resting in their quarters; and God had shut the door and locked them inside the Ark Himself. Then, seven days later, the rain started. Those who were to be saved had been prepared and were in their place for a whole week *before* the judgment started. There would be no last minute preparations; no last minute conversions. That's the way our God works.

So you can see how important *really* knowing the Lord is. You can see how important it is to develop a deep intimacy and spiritual union with Him. There are many ways the enemy tries to hinder us from developing that deep union with the Lord, but one of the most *insidious* devices he has ever come up with to prevent us from knowing the Lord in a deep and intimate way was the doctrine of "Sola Scriptura". I have no doubt that the motives and the intentions of the Reformers were good when they came up with this damnable doctrine. But the fact is, the road to Hell is paved with good intentions.

Satan took what was intended for good and turned it into one of the slickest types of religious bondage imaginable. Sola Scriptura was the Reformer's answer to Roman Catholicism's way of doing business. The Roman Catholic organization was run on three pillars: the Scripture, the Magisterium, and Church traditions. The Magisterium was the church's leadership, including the Pope. The traditions were a combination of teachings including the Church Fathers and all the various Roman bishops over the centuries. Luther and the reformers said the only thing that is valid out of these three is the Scripture, and thus, everything we believe, teach and do from now on, will be *only* according to what is written in the text of the Scripture. Sola Scripture—the Scripture alone—is the *final* authority in all matters of faith and practice.

That was fine as long as you were only dealing with the specific issue of the three pillars of Roman Catholicism. It was *right* to reject the Magisterium and Church tradition as the basis of our faith and practice. The problem is, the concept of *Sola Scriptura* wasn't kept within the framework of the error of Roman Catholicism. It quickly turned into a rejection of the *Scriptural* command to be led by the Holy Spirit. It degenerated into a doctrine of Pharisees whereby believers were forbidden to hear God *outside* of the Scripture. From that point on, it was taught that if you want to know God, you can only know Him through the Bible. If you want to hear God speak, you can only hear Him speak through the Bible. People who promote this error are filled with religious pride and they are as deceived as any Roman Catholic is.

I happened to visit a chat forum the other day and the discussion was about whether or not God still speaks to people. It's amazing to see the number of people who are utterly convince that God does speak to us, but only through the Bible. I know a lot of people who think Charismania is taking over the Visible Church, but from what I can see, it just the opposite. I've never seen so many people denying that God can speak to us outside of the Bible. It starting to feel very creepy.

Anyway, there wasn't a lot of "theological" exposition in the posts of these guys because it was a bunch of young people. It was mostly a few key versus and regurgitated clichés. The gist of the comments from whose who said

you can only hear God speak through the Bible was that the Scripture has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. This, of course, is a mis-interpretation of what the apostle Peter said. The fact that so many people mis-apply this particular passage to defend their *Sola Scriptura* error, shows just how prone we are to read just what we want to read and not what the Scripture actually says. This is what Peter said:

*Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*

*II. Peter 1:2-4*

Peter begins by blessing the people: “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you”. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you—how? Through reading the Bible? No! Through the *knowledge of God* and the knowledge of Jesus. Then he says: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue”. Look carefully at what he just said. What is it that gives “unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness”? It is God’s power; and it comes through our knowledge of Him! Not our knowledge of the Bible. Our knowledge of HIM. Our knowledge of the PERSON. It’s Jesus *the Person*, who gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness; not the Bible!

And let me tell you something my friends: you can know the Bible from cover to cover and *not* know Jesus the person! You can memorize and quote that book verbatim, from beginning to end, and *not* know Jesus, the Person. Just because you know what the Bible teaches, that doesn’t necessarily mean you know Jesus the Person. Neither does it mean you know Him *enough* to enter the first marriage.

As a matter of fact, I know quite a few people who are filled with religious spirits, yet they know the Bible inside and out. They have memorized large sections of the Bible and they can pull Scriptures together faster than you can blink and eye. Their ability with the Scripture is not natural. It came from religious spirits. That’s right. It’s like they get a counterfeit “gift” of the Spirit—a supernatural knowledge of the Bible and a supernatural ability to learn it, quote it, and teach it. But that gift didn’t come from God; it came from the spirit of Antichrist.

If and when you run up against one of these kinds of people, if you *know* Jesus Christ in a deep way, you will be deceived by them in a heartbeat. Your Bible won’t help you in that kind of a situation because they are teaching the Bible better than you ever could. Their doctrine is basically sound. Comparing doctrine won’t help you. Only the “knowledge of Jesus” will help you in that kind of a situation. One of the comments made in that forum was the following:

“God speaks, but He is not speaking today as so many claim. **He is not telling us what car to buy or who to marry. Rather God is speaking to us through His word.** What is He saying? Many things! **He desires for us to love Him**, not in just in words but in DEEDS. It is through our living that others will see God’s love, and it is through our words that others will come to know our Savior. It’s not receiving from God that is the issue. **It’s not hearing from God for directions that’s important.** Rather, it is us as believers, becoming conformed in His image. Freely, freely, you have received. Freely, freely give. Go in my name and because you BELIEVE, others will know that I live...’

This is the confusion that results from being under the Fundamentalist, Phariseical spell of today's Orthodoxy. God doesn't give us directions, like what kind of car to buy or who to marry. This is why this guy will *never* be conformed to the image of Christ, even though he talks a good talk. In order to be conformed to the image of Christ, you must submit every area of your life to Him so you can do His will in those areas. I can hardly believe any one with an ounce of common sense would say God doesn't want to direct us who to marry. We are stuck with the person we marry the rest of our lives, and this guy doesn't think God would have us seek his direction on who we should be joined to?

And Yes, you better believe God would like to direct you in choosing a car. He knows which cars are lemons and which ones aren't. You go out and buy what you think is best, or what strikes your fancy, and you're liable to end up with auto repair bills coming out your ear. Buying a lemon can make life utterly miserable for a young married couple who are living from pay check to pay check.

Yes, God does speak to us through the Scripture. But that only about 20% of the totality of the ways He talks to us, and lead and guides us. So if you are saying we can only hear God through the Bible or know God through the Bible, the fact is, you are cutting yourself off from the other 80% of the life that is available to you. Sola Scriptura may sound pious; but the truth is, it's a *doctrine of demons* and it's being used to keep multitudes of believers from really knowing the Lord in a deep and intimate way. That's right—Sola Scriptura will be the cause of multitudes *missing* the wedding. I have no doubt that the Sola Scriptura crowd will still be waving their Bibles in the air and quoting chapter and verse long after the door is slammed in their face—that's how utterly blind and deceived they are.

There was another guy on that forum who wrote the follow comments. It was a blessing for me to read it, so I'll share it with you. His name was Wesely:

Hello all!

I am a born again Christian who has been saved for the past 3 years & 8 months. For the first 3 years & 4 months of my Christian life my prayer life was sort of all one sided, me speaking to God. Sometimes I would receive a Scripture dealing with what was going on in my life & I would believe it was God communicating with me; & **I still do believe that He does speak to us through the Scriptures.**

About four months ago **I started to receive answers to my questions I had for God.** When I refer to a voice, I am not talking about an audible voice, but **an inner voice deep in the heart.** Please do not misunderstand me. I'm not saying I hear an audible voice because I do not. But I am aware of a voice **deep in my spirit.**

God had told me not to believe every voice or thought that I hear! I try all my thoughts by the Word of God. I use the KJV & I would never put direction from my spiritual communion **above** the word of God. The word of God is concrete, solid, pure & without error.

Nevertheless, my prayer life has been really enriched by my present communion with God, whereas before, prayer was so hard. But now I spend hours alone with God. I do not believe I have a higher anointing than anyone else. **I believe God wants to have a real relationship with every one of His children.** I mean, God is a personality & His human creation are personalities. **Personalities interact with each other through various means & one is conversation.** Believe me, I was initially shocked when I started to hear his voice & did not believe it was God straight away. But my prayer life has gotten so much stronger in the past four months, & I am closer to God than I've ever been.

I have so much to learn about God, & I am excited because of what God is doing in my life. My advice is this: honor the word of God above everything else! Do not believe anything that contradicts it & when you go to prayer, make sure your no.1 goal is not to receive blessing, or even to intercede for people, but make your no.1 goal Him—to meet with Him, just make Him, His personality everything. Just set your heart solely on connecting with the Jesus Christ the Almighty & worshiping & adoring Him for who He is.

Praise the Lord! Now there's a candidate for the marriage! I don't even know this young man, but I will be praying that God continues to lead him and guide him into the fulness of salvation. He's learning to know the Bridegroom the way he needs to know Him.

At the same time, it's *tragic* that this young man was in such a state that when God actually started speaking to him directly, he was "shocked" and he couldn't even believe it was God at first. Can you begin to see how damnable this *Sola Scriptura* thing is yet? Being led directly by the Spirit; hearing that "inner voice" of the Spirit; receiving the checkings of the Spirit; following the peace of God; exercising the gifts of the Spirit that we have been given; communicating with God directly in prayer—all these things are *the inheritance* of the saints! It's our birth-right, people! It's not something that just a few "special" people can enjoy. These things are ours by divine right. Dear God! why do we let Satan steal what is *rightfully* ours? Why do we let arrogant, deceived *Pharisees* rob of us of our inheritance—and we do nothing?

Listen, if you have believed the *Sola Scriptura* error, or you have endorsed it, you need to get down on your knees tonight and beg God's forgiveness because you have been part of Satan's scheme to not only rob God's people of their inheritance in this life, but in the next life as well. You have been part of a demonic plot to make the saints *unfit* for the marriage and *unfit* to rule with Jesus in the coming kingdom. Ask God to deliver you, once and for all, from the influence of this *Sola Scriptura* lie.

Jesus said: "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me*" (Jn. 10:27). The Lord is talking about a direct, personal relationship. He's not talking about an indirect relationship with Him through the Bible. If you can't be led by Him directly, and hear His voice directly, then you will never be fit to be His wife. So, if we want to be part of the first marriage; if we want to be fully transformed into His image in this life; then our relationship with Him is going to have to go a lot deeper than just reading and studying and being led by the Bible. We're going to have to come to know Jesus *outside* the Bible, and learn to hear His voice *outside* the Bible.

If that sounds like heresy, it's because you are still under the influence of Satan's *Sola Scriptura* lie.