

Many are Called but Few are Chosen
A Challenge to Serious Faith

What is the procedure by which salvation is achieved? Of course we know salvation is a free gift, given by the grace of God through faith. However, what must precede this momentous event whereby salvation takes place? Because God would have none perish but all be saved (2Peter 3:9), He calls out to all mankind to first recognize that He exists, second to know His Word, and third to respond and thereby to accept His divine gift of salvation. Thus He calls everyone who is willing to come to Him through this 3-layered veil, which He gladly peels away if we, through our own free will, become receptive to these callings. Few will deny that there is an invisible force or power somewhere in the universe, which calls out to be recognized. The awesome rolling out of the universe with its sun, moon and stars, and the exquisitely woven tapestry of life around us, all call out and irrefutably expose the infinite glory, power, knowledge and wisdom of a Master Planner, our Creator God. That our eyes can see, our minds comprehend and our souls appreciate the immensity of this creation, and the omnipotence and omniscience of the Creator, is what we might say is the first calling, the peeling away of the first veil. In providing us with this capacity, He has called us all first to recognize His existence. Some choose to reject even this first calling, that is, to admit that there is a creator, for to admit this would be to accept the fact that the created have a responsibility or accountability to the Creator. But those who do acknowledge this first calling find that regardless of all its grandeur, power and incredible complexity, His creation reveals to us little about His nature and nothing about His, or our purpose. This by itself leaves it open for the fertile mind to conjure up any number of theories and fantasies and false religions regarding what or who God is, or who we are, and what life is all about. These too often become terminally serious obstacles to further progress toward the real and the whole truth.

Thus it was, in our Creators infinite wisdom that He, through His Spirit as Author, commissioned some 40 writers over thousands of years to pen His Book, wherein He

reveals Himself, His ways and His purpose as the only One and true God. It is this Book, the Holy bible, which we can refer to as the second calling. Here is the ultimate Answer Book. It answers the how, when, and why, of His creation. It provides explicit instructions on the very best way to live. It gives us insight as to His nature, His methods, His purpose, and His plan for our eternal destiny.

These two callings can rightly be referred as outward or external callings. They call on ones intellect, and on ones capability to understand in the physical and mental sense to whatever extent one chooses to let ones mind examine and accept this information.

Much of the world, however, dismisses its supernatural origin and regards His book as merely a quaint history of a minor ancient tribe put forth in a mythological setting which was later embellished through the advent and workings of a great spiritual teacher of that tribe whom some of His friends tried to deify. Nevertheless, the Holy Bible is many times over the most read, most studied, most debated Book, yet much of the world has never understood or accepted its supernatural origin as the inspired Word of God. Others have recognized its origin, yet have been inclined to only pick and choose and believe only certain portions while dismissing other parts as merely figurative, allegorical or otherwise questionable in their accuracy. It's as if God, the source of all truth and love, would choose to weave fiction, deception, lies, and irrelevance into His precious Book, the one and only source Book for those recognizing the existence of, and seeking to attain eternal life. Thus it might be said of this second calling, that it is to the Word but not really into it.

Finally, there is the third calling. It is the inner calling, the calling through which God draws His own, the remnant, the ones who are born again and who become His eternal sons and daughters. This I believe is the calling Jesus refers to in Matthew 20:16, 22:14) wherein He says, "Many are called but few are chosen." It's the calling through which spring forth many who call themselves Christians, some truly, many falsely. It is the calling, which is either effectual or ineffectual depending on the richness of the soil (the heart) of the one called. This is the essence of the message repeated over and over again

by the Holy Spirit somewhat subtly throughout the Old Testament, and most specifically in many epistles, parables and other direct quotes of Jesus in the Gospels, all found in the New Testament. To those who will study diligently, they clearly illustrate and identify the differences between the true and the false Christians. As here defined, the true Christian is one who has been redeemed while the false Christian is one who has not, but may believe he or she has.

The parable of the Sower, or of the Four Soils (Matthew 13,1-15, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:4-15) is a prime example of this message, and the key to an understanding of the several other parables, which provide variations on the same message. The seed (the Word) is sown many places, that is throughout the world. In some places it falls on deaf ears, that is onto the trodden path where there is hard soil; that is a hard heart or spirit which is easily, and sometimes even preferably, deceived and seduced by Satan and his tempting ways. Scripture tells us this seed was trodden down and the birds of the air devoured it. Jesus explains that these "...are they that hear, then comes the devil and takes away the Word out of their hearts lest they should believe and be saved." Here we see clearly one category of those called but not chosen. These heard the truth but only superficially and were therefore easy prey for Satan and his birds (evil spirits) who turned these minds and hearts to false gods, that is to whatever false beliefs or religions are represented by the individual evil spirits who plucked out the seed. Religion, not atheism, is Satan's best weapon. For behind every false faith or religion there is an evil spirit, an agent of Satan promoting, guiding, orchestrating and recruiting; Satan cares not what you believe as long as it isn't in salvation by grace through faith in the sufficiency of the blood of Christ Jesus.

Next the parable speaks of the Word falling on stony ground. These are the people "...who when they have heard the Word receive it with gladness and have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time; afterward when affliction or persecution arise for the Word sake, immediately they are offended." (Mark) or "...have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away." (Luke) Here again we find another example of those who are called but not chosen. Doesn't this sound like the reported 80

to 90 percent of those who answer the altar call or some other inducement, voice acceptance of Jesus into their hearts, and “after a time” are never again heard from or seen in any faith-expressing context? Perhaps they continue to call themselves Christians, but are more likely false Christians. The Holy Spirit never really entered their hearts, because their actions were not symbolic of real faith but mere expressions of superficial emotions. But how long is “for a time”? Is it a few days, months, or even years? It’s likely that it is until they are tested by severe trials and temptations. On a short-term basis it is difficult for mortal man to discern the differences between a strong emotion and real faith, especially in himself. This part of the parable is telling us that we should not rely entirely on that initial blush of “belief” which first manifests from an exposure to the truth, but should be ever watchful of its strength in times of adversity and temptation. If someone has made a profession of faith and then falls away, it is very likely that the person was not saved in the first place. This we learn can be the case from 1 John 2:19 “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us; they would have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be plain that they are not of us.” Yet many will maintain the façade of Christianity without having its inward substances, all the time fooling themselves. In 2Corinthians 13:5 Paul warns us to “examine yourselves whether ye be in faith. Prove your own selves”

Now let us revisit the “root” analogy for a moment in order to glean a little more from it “...they have no root, (faith) which for a while believe and in time of temptation, fall away.” A tree without roots is structurally unstable. It cannot stand against much wind (temptation) before it will fall away (topple over). Also a tree without root (faith) is not well nourished, no matter how deep, rich and well watered the soil. If it is not so nourished, it cannot bear fruit and will fall away by being cursed, cut down, as it was in the parable of the fig tree (Matthew 21:19) Just as the shallow weak-rooted tree cannot withstand the winds of nature, neither can the man poorly rooted in faith, resist the sultry tempting whispers of Satan or the turbulent waters of adversity. A true saving faith is a faith, which commits, resists, and perseveres to the end!

The third category who received the calling, Jesus described as “they which when they have heard go forth and are choked by cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” (Luke) or “to maturity” (NIV) or “becometh unfruitful” (Mark). Matthew reports it most simply “some fell away among the thorns; and the thorns sprang up and choked them.” This perhaps is the most prevalent of the called but not chosen. It is the nominal Christian of the visible (flesh and blood) church rather than of the invisible (spiritual) church in which are only the regenerated. These nominal Christians you might say, are the worlds “weed garden type.” They are found everywhere, often in the visible church doing good Christian type works. But, for the most part, because of the poor soil and lack of sufficient “Son Light” the world has captured their hearts either through success, pleasure, temptations or stressful circumstances. They find little solace in His Word or in prayer which, if expressed at all, is often rote, perfunctory or half-hearted, and they find obedience subjective and prone to rationalizations rather than as a vital, absolute defined requirement. Real joy and peace which “passeth all understanding” is not in them because they have not received the Holy Spirit. In these examples Jesus is clearly warning us that some would only seem to receive the Word (the Gospel) but would not become among the chosen. Paying lip service, and often going through all the right motions, saying the right things, and using the appropriate words may fool even the elect, for only God knows the heart. That possibility should send chills down the spine of everyone who believes he believes, and should cause one to reflect with the utmost care and concern as to the true basis of ones own belief that one is saved. Again 2Corinthians 15:15 comes to mind. Consider Mark 7:6-7 Where Jesus says, “this people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship my teaching for doctrines and commandments of men.” Henry Allen (H.A.) Ironsides had an insightful commentary on this point. He observes that, “It is always a great mistake for those who profess to be servants of God to observe forms and ceremonial rites and traditions that have no Scriptural basis. Such traditions may seem innocent enough to begin with, but little by little they will usurp the place of the Word of God over the consciences of those who follow them; this is most dangerous.”

Perhaps most numerous and most tragic of all, are those belonging to so-called Christian faiths which are not Christian faiths at all; they either deny the sufficiency of Jesus on the cross as the sole means of salvation, or they have chosen to add to or remove something from the whole and only Word of God, the Holy Bible. These may be very moral, devout, sincere, and faithful to preachings. However those attributes do not make a redeemed Christian unless they are attributed to Jesus and Him alone and to His infallible Word, and His sufficiency. This then in total, is the principal category, perhaps referred to by our Lord in Matthew 7:22 and in Luke 13:25, where on the day of our Lord, the judgment day, as they stand complacent and confident of their salvation, they will instead hear our Lord say “I never knew you.” Nothing on this earth, in Heaven or Hell could be more devastating than to hear those too-late-to-do-anything-about-it words. Yet, many will, for again we know that many are called but few are chosen.

Now we come to the fourth part of the parable, representing what we all want to be, where the seed (the Word) falls into deep rich soil of the “honest and good heart.” There it will bring forth fruit in great quantities. In this analogy of the seed, we can also visualize the life giving water (God, Jesus) adding enrichment and life to the soil where strong, deep nurturing roots give unyielding support to the soul and also properly feed it. One might call into this picture the bright rays of the sun (God Jesus the Son as the light and energy source of the world). To the well-watered deep-rooted soul in the rich soil, the sun is a blessed friend for it provides the energy, essential for life and growth. However, as noted in Matthew 13:6 where the Word falls on the stony soil, where there was not an “honest and good heart” the sun scorched the soul and it withered away. In the end, the sun will also “scorch” the unregenerate heart unto death. Similarly, when “choked” and shadowed by the weeds, the soul cannot receive enough “Son” and also dies. It is this rich well-watered soil where the Word is fully received and where that glorious, healing, nurturing, light of the Son bathed soul, that regeneration (salvation) will bloom. These are the born-again Christians, those who are called and chosen.

Notice that in all three Gospels, at the end of this parable, Jesus issues His highest-level alert, “He who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Notice also that this is how Jesus ends

each of His seven Epistles to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. From this we must recognize that this is a message of utmost importance, which if we have an ear, and most of us do, we must listen intensely and fully apprehend the message for it is profound. Therefore we must chew it well, swallow and digest, and thoroughly assimilate it into our souls. For to fully understand the difference between the saved and unsaved is a matter of eternal life or death.

The message in the parable can be summarized as simply a clarification or explanation of our Lords statement that “many are called and few are chosen.” There must be a true conversion of the heart, not just a decision for Christ. This is the key to understanding many of the other parables, which express the difference between true conversion and false faith. The message of Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13: 36-43) the Wedding Feast (Matthew 22), the 10 Virgins (Matthew 25:1-14) the Great Supper (Luke 14:15-33), the Net (Matthew 13:42-5) and the Sheep with the Goats (Mat 25:38-46) each expresses the difference between the saved and the unsaved.

The principal problem expressed in these parables is a faulty root system, (faith) and the lack of an honest and good heart, (the new heart). This prevents the nourishing of the soul and fostering of real saving faith. Without this, the heat of the sun soon betrays any falseness of faith because the false facade collapses. In real life, the sun’s rays are the tribulations, temptations and persecutions to which one is almost certain to be subjected. Without these trials, these tests, one cannot know the sufficiency of ones roots, (faith) to be certain that one is redeemed. Many will deny this and say that their commitment to Jesus was sufficient and that their salvation is a certainty. But faith by its very nature and definition must be tested before it can even be called by that name. To conclude that one has a saving faith without having been severely and successfully tested perhaps over and over again is profoundly dangerous and self-deceiving. Scripture tells us in many places that a true believer must be subject to testing of his faith. In 2Corinthians 13: 5, Paul urges, “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith.” Why would He urge this if saving faith was so easy and obvious? In 1Corinthians 1:23 we are told that we are saved “if ye continue in faith grounded and settled and not moved away from the hope of the

Gospel...” In 1Corinthians 15:1,2, Paul says, “...I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you which also ye have received and wherein ye stand by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you unless ye have believed in vain.” Believed in vain, means believed without benefit of salvation, or without benefit of a true and saving faith. This is the same message as in the parable of the Sower. Hebrews 3: 6 says, “but Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. There is no doubt that this means that faith and its evidences continue through to the end in spite of all the adversities which will necessarily come along to test us as we proceed through life to the end. Matthew 7: 21 “Say not everyone that hath said unto the me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of the father which is in heaven.” Jesus says here that only the ones who do the will of the Father, that is obey, are saved. Jesus then proceeds to hammer this home in Matthew7: 24, where He says “Therefore, whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken them to a wise man which built his house (his faith) on a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house and it fell not (tribulation did not undermine faith); for it was founded upon rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth (obey) them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, (weakness of faith, trial, tribulations, temptations) and beat upon that house, and the house fell; and great was the fall of it.” Throughout the Scriptures Jesus is the rock. Here we are to build our lives, our faith, on the rock, that means to hear and obey Him. That is the principal theme of the entire Bible. Hear and obey, believe and obey. The Greek word for obeying not, apitheho, also means believing not. Those who do not obey are not believers! How else can you interpret all of the admonitions to perseverance and obedience without accepting the fact that they are all time dependant components of the evidence of a saving faith? You cannot obey once and call it obedience. Obedience by definition is an on-going condition. Hearing His Words and doing them is not a one shot deal. It must be on-going in order to be meaningful and effectual.

This mandatory call to obedience does not mean that any subsequent sin will result in a forfeiture of our inheritance. We are by nature infected incurably by a propensity to sin. However once saved, we can never lose our salvation. Obedience, and therefore true belief, must for starters, be accompanied by:

- A. Full acknowledgment of our sinful nature,
- B. Recognition of the true vileness of everyone of our sins, even little “white ones”
- C. The necessity of removing from our lives all on-going sin,
- D. Praying for the strength to refrain from sin.
- E. Struggling moment by moment to eliminate sin from our lives.

No matter how much we try, we are bound to sin at times. However, those who are redeemed will, as part of their obedience (belief, faith), be extremely sensitive to sin. They will recognize it, acknowledge it, hate it, confess it, repent of it, and renew their resolve to not repeat it. These then are some of the evidences of a true saving faith.

For most of 1900 years, the Christian “church” has had what must be called an obsession with legalism. It has been true of the Roman Catholic as well as the Eastern Orthodox churches. This is legalism in the sense of the many rituals and procedure, which are mandated and preached of as conditions of salvation. It is also this legalism which has caused these and many other “Christian” religions to drift away from the principal truth, that it is the sufficiency of Christ Jesus, and from the whole teachings of the Scripture, and thus into serious apostasy. As a result, those who chose to follow the true Biblical teachings were branded heretics and were slaughtered by the millions by the “church” in the “name” of Christianity. Finally, with the reformation, beginning in the 16th century, a glimmer of light began to shine and to develop a sufficient following in the west so as to make a small dent in this highly distorted and corrupt religious structure.

It was Luther who rediscovered Habakkuk 2:4 “The just shall live by faith.” It further became clear that the Books of Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews are a trilogy, which expands and explains that profound truth. Romans tells us who are the just; Galatians

shows us how the just shall live; and Hebrews reveals what faith really is. The centerpiece of the reformation was Ephesians 2: 8,9, which finally restored some of what the early church had known and lived; that we are saved by grace alone through faith, and not by anything we can do, not rituals, works or any other applications of legalisms. However, it has become evident that, in many respects the pendulum has swung too far the other way, in that there seems to be considerable confusion regarding the theological basis of our salvation, with its fervent calling to obedience as evidenced where there is a more complete understanding of whole Scripture. Many have become so fearful of the pitfalls of legalism as a heresy, that they fail in their personal walk to recognize this call to obedience. Obedience is faith in Action! Faith equals obedience! They find it difficult to distinguish between obedience and legalism. We are not called to legalism but to holiness and obedience; not to works as obligations or payment, but to works of obedience as loving gifts to our Lord and Savior. What is obedience? Again, it is faith in action! It's a continuous forward expression of our quest for holiness. It is attempting with all our hearts to live the 10 Commandments as evidence of our saving faith. (They are commands, not suggestions.) It is trying to live them as Jesus refined their meanings in His sermon on the mount. We are to live by this law of Jesus through love, respect and gratitude to Him. Of course, we cannot possibly live it fully. No one ever could except for Jesus. God never intended that we could. The law was given to identify what would be a goal, a state of perfection. Those who are His children are to strive to be like Jesus. The unsaved obey out of fear, but fear can never do anything but restrain. But for the true believer, the motive is love. Love, the love commitment incorporated in a saving faith, constrains, compels, and brings one into holiness.

So, how can one know that he or she is really walking the narrow path, the path of the saved? Evidence of salvation may manifest in many ways. What greater testimony is there to the power of saving grace than the hopeless addict who has sunk to the lowest depth of depravity due to alcohol, drugs, illicit and deviant sex, kleptomania, etc, who finally gets on his knees, confesses to Jesus and is thereby healed? Many of the "great men of God," such as John Wesley, have found salvation only after having reached such depths. Yet even in this realm of clear-cut miracles, recidivism, or falling away, still

occurs. How many miracles did it take to bring the children of Israel to a sustaining faith? Though they witnessed the miracle of the plagues, the Passover, the parting of the Red sea, the manna, the delivery of the 10 Commandments, the healing by merely looking at the brass serpent, water from the rock etc, etc... they believed for a while but still failed to sustain a belief, and thus wandered unsaved for 40 years and died never reaching the "promised land." So will the unbelieving and false believers of this age, and all generations, fail to reach the "promised land." How many miracles did it take our Lord Jesus to perform in the 3 years of His ministry to convince the Pharisees who were of all people, the most Biblically, learned and seemingly obedient to the Word? These couldn't believe even while witnessing miracles. Obviously it would have taken more than the many thousands He performed, for they never did believe. Miracles just don't do it, as Scripture makes so very clear. Only true sustaining faith can bring about the acceptance of saving grace. But that faith must be in the real Jesus, the one conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, who died on the cross, was buried, rose again, and ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father. That faith must be in that Jesus the Eternal One, who is our Lord and Savior as well as the Creator of everything (John1:1-10.) In the so-called, but false "Christian faiths," there are many Jesuses. There is the Jesus who depends on Mary to help Him save souls; or the Jesus who is a great teacher and man of God but not really God; or the Jesus who is one of several who comes to earth periodically to teach; or perhaps He is God, but He has changed His views; after all, we live in different times than when He was here, and surely the real Jesus does not expect us to live now by the old fashioned rules He put out for a previous era. In this context it is well to remember 1Timothy 4:1 where the Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. These times have arrived!

How much falling away from the faith, from the apparent evidence of salvation must one witness or experience before it must be concluded that one never was saved at all. Who knows? Only God knows. We cannot ever be certain, but surely we should become alarmed, and not remain complacent as to the certainty of salvation if, after some time, the falling away is not reversed. It was Calvin who said, "we are saved by grace through

faith, but faith is never alone.” Thus I believe that there must be a continuing evidence that our Lord is working in us (Philippians 1:6) before there can be a certainty of salvation. Again, it is obedience. Obedience is a necessary condition existing in those who are justified, although it is not the basis or prerequisite of justification. True faith will by necessity yield the fruit of obedience. When no growing evidence of obedience follows a confession of faith it must be concluded that there never was a true faith and thus no salvation. How long? How much testing? Only God knows. Many cast their lot with the thief on the cross who obviously had no time of testing, yet was surely saved. But he had the Son of God next to him in the flesh, the God Himself who knew his heart and personally revealed its sincerity to us. Who among us can claim that same perceptive quality regarding his own heart, much less the heart of another?

Careful and loving study of Scripture can reveal a number of ways in which one may discern in himself whether or not one is a real or counterfeit Christian. Actually love is the principal litmus test. First a Christian must know and profess that Jesus was sent from God the Father and is our Lord and Savior according to the Scriptures (1 John 4:14, 15, 5:1-5) Second, a Christian must love above all our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (1 John 4:2), for this love is a commandment. But genuine love begins in the will, not in the emotion. This love manifests also in righteousness and in fellowship, faith, trust and commitment to Him. Of course, we know that He cannot make us love Him no matter how much He commands it. Being able to love Him is a fruit of our salvation, not its cause. Third, a Christian must love his/her fellow Christian in spite of any differences. (1 John 4:7) This love manifests in caring, compassion, cooperation and fellowship. These then are the essence of true Christianity, however, as with the essence of anything, there is much more to be known in order to understand its richness and fullness and its intimate application in one's life.

There are many great Christian writers who have addressed this concern. One who characterizes the nature of saving faith most beautifully, and has identified the principal Scripture verses, which provided God's words in this regard, was Jonathan Edwards. In “A Treatise Concerning the Religious Affection” written by Edwards around 1746, we

find what he called “holy affections” or a zeal for holy things and for God. Edwards also noted that whereas the principal evidence of life is motion, so the principal evidence of a saving faith is holy practice; true salvation always produces a continuing change in the nature of the convert. Therefore, whenever holiness of life does not accompany a confession of conversion, it means that the person is not a redeemed Christian. Thus he further notes that “Assurance is never to be enjoyed on the basis of a past experience. “There is need of present and continuing work of the holy Spirit...”

Edwards set down eleven evidences of a true born-again Christian as can be learned from the Scriptures. These are presented as questions and are here simply listed for further study along with the relevant Scriptural verses from where they are derived.

1. Do you enjoy fellowship with Christ and the Father? (1 John 1:2,3)
2. Are you sensitive to sin? (1 John 1:8-10, Romans 7:14-25)
3. Do you obey God’s Word? (1 John 2:3-5)
4. Do you reject this evil world? (1 John 2:15-17, 5:19; John 17:14-16;
5. 2Corinthians 4:4)
6. Do you eagerly await Christ’s return? (1 John 3:2, 3:1; 1Corinthians 15:49, Titus 2:11-13, Philippians 3:20,21)
7. Do you see decreasing patterns of sin in your life? (1 John 3:4-10, Ro 6:14, 17,18)
8. Do you love other Christians? (1 John 2:9-11, 3:10, 16, John 13:35; 1 Peter 1:22, John 8:44)
9. Do you experience answered prayer? (1 John 3:22-24, 5:13-15, Psalm 37:3-7)
10. Do you experience the ministry of the Holy Spirit illuminating Scriptures? (1 John 4:13, 2:27; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 12, Galatians 4:6, 5:22-23, Ephesians 5:19)
11. Can you discern between spiritual truth and error? (1 John 4:1-6, 5:1; Romans 4:25, Acts 17:11)
12. Have you suffered rejection because of your faith? (1 John 3:13, Peter 2:20, 4:4, 5:13, Philippians 1:28; 1Corinthians 4:13)

It is evident that these questions and Scriptural references can be helpful in assessing the reality of one's own salvation and eternal security. However, they are all suggestive of an on-going process, a day-to-day moment-by-moment continuing condition of the heart. It must be acknowledged that none of these questions can be answered yes in a completed sense, but only in terms of whether there is an "upward" movement, a progression no matter how small, in the "yes" direction.

Also there is another major point, which is often overlooked or under appreciated. John speaks of our Lord and Savior. The Savior aspect of Jesus is easy to accept and understand, and it is gratifying to embrace. Through His death and resurrection, He became our Savior, but in our acceptance of the grace of salvation through faith in Him, He also became our Lord. In so doing He purchased us and we agreed to be His. Thus, He, as our Lord, and because in that manner we belong to Him, we are obligated to obey Him. The sacred currency of the heavenly realm is a coin with Jesus our Savior on one side and Jesus our Lord on the other. It is the Lord side of the coin that is most difficult to accept. However, this is and will be the currency of our Spiritual economy now and throughout eternity. But in that economy as in any other, there are no one sided coins. There are no transactions possible for the Spirit led Christian other than by means of Jesus Christ our Lord as well as our Savior. Our proper relationship with Him is one of reverence, worship, and obedience.

Of particular concern in the context of this paper are questions three and ten of Edwards' eleven points. Do you obey God's word, and can you discern between spiritual truth and error. Over one hundred and fifty years ago in some of his sermons the great Pastor Charles Spurgeon lamented over the lack of spiritual knowledge among the "brethren." At that time, the Bible was taught in the schools, and Scripture was recited daily in every Christian home. What would he say today regarding Biblical understanding, when Scripture illiteracy is pandemic, and where false doctrine is spewed from not only books, journals, radio, and television, but even from many of the Christian Pulpits. But who even notices when it is so cleverly cloaked in pious Scriptural references, expressed in faulty but persuasive and logical, worldly reasoning. When it is thereby made to sound

authentic, it is accepted by all but the well-informed literate few who can detect the falsehood because they have earnestly studied the word and are capable of sufficient discernment. Subtle deception is both a science and an art, which has grown exceedingly well in modern times and in every aspect of society. The Christian body has in no way been spared its deadly fruits. Under these conditions, how can one even hope to recognize the difference between Spiritual truth and error, and even obey God's word, unless one is very strongly grounded in Scriptural knowledge. ONE CANNOT!!! The widespread apostasy within the so-called "Christian" body as it pertains to ecumenicalism, and acceptance of perverted sexual behavior are but two of the more obvious examples of the many evidences of a crumbling spiritual structure. Most of this can be traced to Biblical illiteracy in concert with the compelling nature of false teachers and false doctrines. How simple it was for Satan to twist a couple of words, which then compelled Eve to violate God's command. Satan has since had six thousand years to hone his skills of seduction and deception on countless generations. It's doubtful that many of us are less gullible than Eve, and the only additional defense we have is prayer and God's Holy Word, with which to resist Satan's fatal influence. Under these circumstances, if we are serious Christians, seriously seeking, or hoping to confirm our salvation, how can we justify doing less than acquiring a strong working knowledge of His Book?

In summary, there is a vast eternal, and uncrossable gulf between those who are saved and the unsaved. The greatest of all tragedies is that many who won't make it are among those who believe they will. They heard the call, sought the Word, but took one of the many wrong paths through apathy, ignorance or the following of false teachers. There is only one path to eternal life. It is available to all who accept God's grace of salvation through faith in Jesus as our Lord and our Savior. But that faith must grow to be genuine, lasting, uncompromising and unconditional. It must manifest as a wholly committed love and obedience to Him and to His commandments. Nothing less can be assured of being a saving faith. The powers of the earth are continually striving to confuse, undermine, discredit, and twist God's Word to make it say what is comfortable, pleasing, easy and subject to any interpretation, which is convenient for the occasion. Saving faith must

contain love, obedience, prayer, and perseverance under all circumstances, well as well as bad. Again, and I am not ashamed to repeat it over and over again...2Corinthians 13:5 “examine yourselves whether ye be in faith. Prove your ownelves.” Finally, as Jesus Himself said at least 9 times in the Scripture, “He that has an ear let him hear.”