

OVERVIEW & OUTLINE

2 Timothy

The evangel according to Paul

“To make known the secret of the evangel” (6:20)

BOB EVELY

2013.

“Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed
worker, correctly cutting the word of truth.”
2 Timothy 2:15

*All Scriptures taken from the Concordant Literal New Testament
and the Concordant Version of the Old Testament unless otherwise noted.
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About the Author

Paul begins by identifying himself as the writer of this letter (1:1) Let us recall the commission Paul received on the road to Damascus: *He is a choice instrument of Mine, to bear My name before both the nations and kings, besides the sons of Israel.* (Acts 9:15-16) And we know from Acts that Paul did go first to the synagogues to proclaim Christ to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. Peter, John, James and other New Testament writers had a commission to Israel only. Paul alone was commissioned to go to the Gentiles.

We cannot assume Paul's message to the Gentiles was the same as the message proclaimed by the others unto Israel. Paul stressed that the gospel he proclaimed was not received from man, *but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ.* (Galatians 1:11-12) If he preached the same gospel, why would he not have studied under the Twelve who had heard and observed Christ Himself during His earthly ministry? And why would Paul refer to his proclamation as "my evangel" instead of "the evangel?" (Romans 2:16; 16:25-26). Paul notes that he had been entrusted with the evangel of the Uncircumcision, and Peter had been trusted with the evangel of the Circumcision. (Galatians 2:7). He did not say that his was the evangel to the Uncircumcision; but of the Uncircumcision. It was a different message, and this can be clearly seen if we examine the details. Paul is the only one to have mentioned the rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, or the expectation of the body of Christ in the celestials in Ephesians 2:6. Israels' expectation was always upon the earth, not in the celestials or heavens.

Paul was abandoned by nearly all at the end of his ministry (see 2 Timothy 1:15; 4:16; Acts 21:20). Note in the Acts passage that when Paul returned to Jerusalem he was opposed not by unbelieving Jews, but by believing Jews who were zealous for the law - a clear signal that Paul's message was different than that of the Twelve, and as a result Paul was opposed by Jewish *believers*.

Paul, in his writings, refers to a mystery that had been previously concealed, but which he was now revealing as God had instructed him. ... *His body, which is the ecclesia of which I became a dispenser, in accord with the administration of God, which is granted to me for you, **to complete the word of God** ... the **secret** which has been **concealed** from the eons and from the generations, yet now was **made manifest** to His saints ... (Colossians 1:24-16) ... by revelation the secret is made known to me ... the secret of the Christ, which, in other generations, is not made known to the sons of humanity ... (Ephesians 3:3-5)*

Clearly Paul was commissioned to address a group not previously addressed by the Twelve (the Gentiles), with a different message that had been revealed to him not by man but by Christ Himself.

The address on the envelope (1:1)

<p>From: Paul</p> <p>To: Timothy</p>

This is a personal letter to one man (Timothy). Thus it differs from Paul's letters that were directed to the ecclesia in various places. We must take care to distinguish between general truths for the ecclesia, and those things intended specifically for Timothy in his unique position.

Introductory remarks to Timothy (1:3)

Be rekindling the gracious gift of God which is in you ... (1:6) God gave the gift. It is Timothy's responsibility to keep it kindled. God gives us, not a spirit of timidity, but of power and of love and of sanity. You may not be ashamed, then, of the testimony of our Lord ... (1:7-8)

Called in accord with God's purpose before times eonian (1:9)

[God] saves us and calls us with a holy calling, not in accord with our acts, but in accord with His own purpose and the grace which is given to us in Christ Jesus before times eonian, yet now is being manifested through the advent of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, Who, indeed, abolishes death, yet illuminates life and incorruption through the evangel of which I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher of the nations. (1:9-11) Note three things from this passage.

First; our position in the body of Christ, and even our salvation (the fact that we are *in* the body of Christ at all) is an appointment of God that has nothing to do with our acts or behavior. It is a selection made by God in accord with *His* purposes and *His* grace. Whatever gifts we may have, they come from God and we have nothing to boast about.

Second; God's purposes were formulated before the eonian times we read about in the Scriptures ... before the dawn of mankind. God is not developing His plans along the way.

Third; God's calling of the body of Christ, while purposed before times eonian, was not *revealed* or *manifested* until Paul's day, through the advent of Christ Jesus and the proclamation of Paul's evangel. This, then, is the

purpose of proclaiming the evangel (at least in part) ... to make manifest the calling of the ecclesia; the body of Christ.

Have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from me (1:13)

It is one thing to quote from or teach from the Scriptures. It is quite another to have a pattern of soundness when handling the Scriptures. We must take care in our handling of the Scriptures so as not to incorporate pre-conceived biases that might influence our understanding. Even orthodoxy and the organized church may be wrong in its understanding, so we must escape those biases and seek truth directly from a sound handling of the Scriptures. Perhaps Miles Coverdale said it best in the Preface to the 16th Century version of the Bible ... "It shall greatly help ye to understand Scripture if thou mark not only what is spoken or written but: To whom, and by whom; With what words, and at what time; Where, and to what intent; With what circumstance; Considering what goeth before and what followeth."

Guard the truth (1:14)

The ideal thing committed to you, guard through the holy spirit which is making its home in us. Timothy's charge is to guard the truth in the face of false teachings. And we see that the holy spirit ... God's spirit ... is making its home in "us."

All were turned away (1:15)

Of this you are aware, that all those in the province of Asia were turned from me, of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. This passage should shock us! Is not Paul considered the missionary apostle, who took Christianity to the nations ... planting and nurturing churches? Is it not the understanding of modern-day Christianity that Paul's work continued to flourish and grow into the churches of our day? Yet we see here that Paul's work took a huge step back near the end of his life and ministry. There was an apostasy ... a falling away. All in Asia had turned from him and from the truth he taught. Looking again at 1:13, when Paul said: *Have a pattern of sound words, which you hear from me ...* we see that as the majority turned away from Paul they were turning away from the sound words proclaimed by Paul.

At what point did the organized church recover from this setback? At what point following Paul's life did the majority of believers finally get it right, and stand for the truth. In Paul's day truth is apparently in the

hands of the minority, like Timothy and a select few ... with the majority having turned from the truth. I would contend that since Paul's day the organized church has continued in apostasy from the truth. Yes, there are believers that can be found in the pews of churches around the world ... but the preachers, teachers, scholars, authors and other leaders within the organized church cannot be trusted for understanding and teaching the truth. Brothers and sisters, we are on our own. We cannot trust the organized church that is in apostasy from the truth, regardless of the denomination. *All those in the province of Asia were turned from me.* We must seek truth from the Scriptures, properly and carefully handled, with a focus on having a pattern of sound words.

Paul is imprisoned in Rome (1:16)

Onesiphorus ... often refreshes me and was not ashamed of my chain, but, coming to be in Rome, he seeks me diligently and found me.

Commit teachings to faithful men (2:1)

Those within the majority of the churches had turned away from Paul. How, then, can the truth be preserved? *And what things you hear from me through many witnesses, these commit to faithful men, who shall be competent to teach others also.* (2:2) Here, late in Paul's ministry, we do not see an organized church structure comprised of elders and deacons, or the bishops and pastors of our present day. Truth was to be preserved by faithful men identified by Timothy who could then teach the truth to others.

Please the one who enlists you (2:3)

No one who is warring is involved in the business of a livelihood, that he should be pleasing the one who enlists him. (2:4) Timothy is advised to focus on his spiritual responsibilities, without being distracted by the business of a livelihood. Obviously, then, Timothy had the means to support himself. Still, we must remember that Paul himself was a tentmaker, and did not rely upon support for his ministry to survive. So this present passage cannot be taken as a carte blanche mandate for all in the ministry to fully support themselves by the ministry as a vocation. And whatever the means of Timothy's support, the point Paul is making is to avoid distractions from the world while focusing on the important spiritual work at hand.

Proclaiming the Evangel (2:8)

While Paul's evangel (good news) contains a variety of components, here we see the oft repeated heart of the evangel: *Remember Jesus Christ, Who has been roused from among the dead, is of the seed of David ...* And as Paul suffers evil to proclaim the evangel, *I am enduring all because of those who are chosen, that they also may be happening upon the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with glory eonian (2:10)*. Paul has been commissioned by Christ, and is Christ's instrument in proclaiming the good news to those gifted with faith (belief) in this present life.

Salvation and rewards (2:11)

*For if we died together, we shall be living together also;
If we are enduring, we shall be reigning together also;
If we are disowning, He also will be disowning us;
If we are disbelieving, He is remaining faithful - He cannot disown Himself.*

Salvation and rewards are two different things. The believer has died with Christ (Romans 6:2-11). This is a fact apart from works. So it follows that the believer will live in the eons to come. This is also a fact. Salvation cannot be earned; it is a free gift. Yet *enduring* will lead to *reigning*. There will be differing rewards that are based upon works. (see Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10)

Avoid controversy (2:14)

Of these things be reminding them ... not to engage in controversy for nothing useful, to the upsetting of those who are hearing. Finding ones-self in the midst of controversy may be unavoidable at times for the sake of the truth. Even Paul found this to be the case. But let us be sure these occasions are not *for nothing useful* (i.e. insignificant issues).

Correctly cut the word of truth (2:15)

Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth. This goes beyond memorizing Scripture and applying it in superficial ways, ignoring the context. It is to know in which situations a Scriptural reference applies, and when it does not. As an example, to correctly cut the word of truth means we cannot take a Scripture directed to Israel and assume that it applies to the body of Christ. It may have been a word intended for a particular group of people at a particular point in time.

Avoid profane prattling (2:16)

Yet from profane prattling stand aloof, for they will be progressing to more irreverence, and their word will spread as gangrene ... Profane prattling, or a centering of discussions on common things, will lead to irreverence ... a focus away from God. And this can lead to a distortion of truth, as the example provided displays. ... Hymeneus and Philetus, who swerve as to truth, saying the resurrection has already occurred, and are subverting the faith of some. A focus away from the truth and profane prattling has led these two believers to a misunderstanding, and they now lead others astray. When we hear speculation instead of a focus on what the Scriptures are actually saying, we should take heed of this warning.

Consider for a moment the specific error of Hymeneus and Philetus. They had reached the conclusion that the resurrection had already occurred. Has not much of the organized church fallen into the same error? The common teaching is that at the time of death the believer is immediately alive in the presence of the Lord. How, then, will that person (already living) be resurrected at some future time? Is this not the same as those in Paul's day who taught that the resurrection had already come?

Purge yourself from dishonorable things (2:20)

Just as a house may have some utensils of gold and silver and other utensils of wood and earthenware ... some things for honor and some for dishonor ... so do we. And we should purge ourselves of all dishonor so as to be useful to *the Owner* ... to be ready for *every good act*.

Become mature (2:22)

Now youthful desires flee: yet pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace ...

Refuse stupid and crude questionings (2:23)

Now stupid and crude questionings refuse, being aware that they are generating fightings. (2:23) Akin to the destructive profane prattling, we are to avoid stupid and crude questionings ... speculations on unimportant matters ... as they will lead to fightings.

Be gentle and meek (2:24-26)

Now a slave of the Lord must not be fighting, but be gentle toward all, apt to teach, bearing with evil, with meekness training those who are antagonizing, seeing whether God may be giving them repentance to come into a realization of the truth, and they will be sobering up out of the trap of the Adversary ...

Timothy is charged, then, to teach with gentleness and meekness those who are antagonizing ... to see if God will give them repentance. Timothy is God's instrument, but it is God who will *give them repentance*.

Wickedness will grow in the last days (3:1)

Now this know, that in the last days perilous periods will be present, for men will be selfish, fond of money, ostentatious, proud, calumniators, stubborn to parents, ungrateful, malign, without natural affection, implacable, adversaries, uncontrollable, fierce, averse to the good, traitors, rash, conceited, fond of their own gratification rather than fond of God; Are we in the last days today? This seems to be an apt description of our current society. But read on ... Having a form of devoutness, yet denying its power. (3:5) This, then, speaks not of society ... but of organized religion. There is a form of devoutness (reverence of God), but it is only form and not substance. It is the organized church (religion) that will grow in wickedness in the "last days" described by Paul.

Shun false teachers (3:6)

These false teachers slip into homes. They are led by lusts and gratifications. They are always *learning* but never come into a realization of the truth. They are like Jannes and Jambres who opposed Moses, withstanding the truth. *But they shall not be progressing more, for their folly shall be obvious to all ... (3:9) Just as Jannes and Jambres were exposed and thwarted, so also will every false teacher, as God is in control.*

Follow me (3:10)

Paul is to be followed in his:

- Teaching
- Motive
- Purpose
- Faith
- Patience
- Love
- Endurance
- Persecutions
- Sufferings

But Paul warns: *All who are wanting to live devoutly in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted. (3:12) There is little persecution of church-going Christians today. The organized church has become a comfortable part of society, at*

least in the USA. Considering Paul's words, does the absence of persecution point to a major problem within the church today? Is spiritual truth to be found within the organized church?

Wickedness will grow (3:13)

Wicked men will get worse ... deceiving and being deceived.

The sacred scriptures (3:14-17)

... are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God, and is beneficial for teaching, for exposure, for correction, for discipline in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, fitted out for every good act. While all Scripture is inspired by God and beneficial for these purposes, this does not mean that all Scripture can be applied to all situations in all eras. We remember Paul's words elsewhere in this same letter ... Have a pattern of sound words ... (1:13) Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth. (2:15)

Christ will be judging (4:1)

... Christ Jesus, Who is about to be judging the living and the dead, in accord with His advent and His kingdom ... About to be tells us that Paul saw Christ's advent, or coming, as imminent. This verse seems to speak not of the snatching away of the body of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13ff), but Christ's return to the earth when the great throne judgment will take place. We will see shortly that Paul knew his death was imminent, and he knows Christ will call the body of Christ heavenward (1 Thessalonians 4:13ff), and at some point after that Christ will return to the earth to establish His kingdom and judge. It appears that Paul saw the sequence of these events to be quite swift ... or at least he recognized the possibility that they could be swift. Paul's words here give urgency to Timothy in heralding the word.

Herald the word (4:2)

... opportunely, inopportunely, expose, rebuke, entreat, with all patience and teaching.

They will turn away from sound teaching (4:3-4)

For the era will be when they will not tolerate sound teaching, but, their hearing being tickled, they will heap up for themselves teachers in accord with their own

desires, and, indeed, they will be turning their hearing away from the truth, yet will be turned aside to myths. Could this be a description of Christianity today, with so many flocking to dumbed-down, easy-to-read Bible translations and popular authors and Bible teachers ... to have their hearing tickled?

Do the work of an evangelist (4:5)

Yet you be sober in all things; suffer evil as an ideal soldier of Christ Jesus; do the work of an evangelist; fully discharge your service. Paul charges Timothy with proclaiming the evangel. Since many will turn from the truth and not tolerate sound teaching, it is important for Timothy to carry on Paul's work ... to be the voice of truth at a time when *they* (the majority) will be turning from the truth.

Paul's death is imminent (4:6)

For I am already a libation, and the period of my dissolution is imminent. I have contended the ideal contest. I have finished my career. I have kept the faith. Here we see the reason Paul is preparing Timothy to carry on his work. His death is imminent. Note that at the end of Paul's life the "church" is turning away from the truth ... seeking teachers who teach in accord with their own desires. Does this not describe the organized church today? If one hears a word he does not like, he simply moves on to a different church preaching a message that is more appealing. Can we not see that many different churches preaching conflicting messages breeds confusion? How can one find the truth? Only through a study of the Scriptures, and not through the teachings and doctrines of the majority (i.e. the organized church).

Future rewards (4:8)

Furthermore, there is reserved for me the wreath of righteousness, which the Lord, the just Judge, will be paying to me in that day; yet not to me only, but also to all who love His advent. The believer will be rewarded for good works at the dais (platform) of Christ. (See Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10) Good works do not play a part in salvation, but they do play a part in rewards or loss of rewards at the dais, effectual in the eons to come.

Come quickly (4:9)

Paul pleads with Timothy to come to him quickly, for he has been forsaken and abandoned by Demas, Crescens and Titus ... and only Luke remains with him. Those forsaking Paul were *loving the current eon* more

than the evangel and the things of God. Timothy is asked to bring with him Mark ... and to *bring the travelling cloak which I left in Troas with Carpus, and the scrolls, especially the vellums*. (4:13) *Travelling cloak* could be a reference to a covering for the scrolls and vellums ... writings Paul wished to preserve knowing his death was imminent, and knowing that the majority were already turning away from correct doctrine. How could truth be preserved after Paul's death?

Ernest Martin, in his book, *The Original Bible Restored*, argues that when Paul wrote to Timothy his primary goal was that sound doctrine be preserved after his death. Therefore it was necessary for the apostles to leave behind an official documentation of truth. It would not make sense that the apostles would simply die and allow "church leaders" to set Scriptural standards. If they couldn't trust the doctrines of many in their midst while they still lived, how could they depend on them to preserve correct doctrine in the future?

We know that many in Paul's day were writing "gospels" (see Luke 1:1 and note the many publications in our present day that purport to be "lost scriptures"). There was a danger of losing the truth altogether if the apostles did not act to leave behind some official documentation.

Martin notes that Paul wanted John Mark, the author of the Gospel of Mark, to come with Timothy to perform a "service." John Mark was at times an associate of Paul, but he was more closely tied to Peter who refers to him as "my son" (1 Peter 5:13). When asking Timothy to bring Mark, he also asks him to *bring the traveling cloak which I left in Troas with Carpus, and the scrolls, especially the vellums* (4:13). *Cloak* could refer to a receptacle for the scrolls and vellums (or parchments), much like the cover for a book, or a case. Martin hypothesizes that knowing his death was approaching, Paul asks Timothy and Mark to come to Rome with certain specific writings (the scrolls and vellums), and the "service" Paul intended for Mark was perhaps to take Paul's inspired writings to Peter for inclusion in the Scriptural canon.

In light of the apostasy growing within the ecclesia, Paul's impending death, and his concern for the preservation of truth, Martin's hypothesis seems to make great sense. And while we cannot be sure that Martin is correct on all counts, one thing is certain ... Paul sees the preservation of correct doctrine as essential.

All forsook me (4:16)

At my first defense no one came along with me, but all forsook me. Again we see that near the end of Paul's life the majority had turned from him. This should cause us to question the "truth" being taught by the majority (i.e. the organized church in its variety of denominations and sects). At what point in history, following Paul's death, did the majority suddenly reverse its apostasy and error and find the truth?

Yet the Lord stood beside me, and He invigorates me, that through me the heralding may be fully discharged, and all the nations should hear ... (4:17) The apostasy will not be reversed. But the success of Paul's ministry is that all the nations would *hear* the evangel, even if they turned away from it.

His celestial kingdom (4:18)

The Lord will be rescuing me from every wicked work and will be saving me for His celestial kingdom ... It is not that Paul's life will be spared, for he has already indicated his *dissolution* (or death) is imminent. But instead Paul looks to the coming eons. No enemy in the present life can rob Paul of his life in the eons to come. *His celestial kingdom* refers to that aspect of the kingdom that is already in full force in the celestials (the heavens), even as the earth awaits the return of Christ to physically establish the kingdom here.

Final greetings (4:19)

Paul greets several by name ... Prisca, Aquila and the household of Onesiphorus. He asks Timothy to come before winter. Paul sends greetings from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and *all the brethren*. While many were abandoning Paul, he does have a small following.

It is interesting that here, near the end of Paul's life, he no longer sends greeting to or from *the ecclesia* at various places. Instead his greetings refer to individuals. This shows the growing informality of the ecclesia, or church, and the fact that the truth is in the hands of individuals who had not turned away.

Charles Welch (Christian theologian and writer 1888-1967) observed that 2 Timothy reveals a church in ruins, and the discipline that was possible when the church was intact was no longer effective. So Timothy is instructed to exercise discipline upon himself, not upon others. (See 2:19; 3:5) Beware of the organized church. Seeks truth from the Scriptures,

questioning doctrine being taught by the majority. Remember that even in Paul's day, near the end of his life, the majority had rejected the truth and were in apostasy.

SUMMARY.

Consider the change that has taken place between the writing of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. In 1 Timothy there were false teachers in the midst of the ecclesia (1:3-7), but Paul still emphasized the leadership of the body by supervisors and servants ... bishops and deacons in the Authorized Version (chapter 3). Paul warned that in latter times *some* would depart from the faith (4:1). But still, *elders* that ruled well were to be honored (5:17).

But in 2 Timothy we hear that *all* in Asia had turned away (1:15). Instead of mentioning supervisors, servants or elders within the ecclesia, Timothy was instructed to commit the truth to faithful men (2:2). Leaders such as Hymenaeus and Philetus were leading some astray, teaching that the resurrection had already occurred (2:18). Whereas 1 Timothy provided characteristics to be found within supervisor and servants who would lead the ecclesia, in 2 Timothy we simply read that a *servant of the Lord* was to be gentle and meek (2:24). Deceit and apostasy within the ecclesia were growing. In the last days, perilous times were to come (3:1). There would be a form of godliness that denied the power (3:5). Evil men would grow worse ... and this referred to men within the ecclesia who would be deceiving and being deceived (3:13). The time would come when "they" (those within the ecclesia) would not endure sound doctrine (4:3). Demas, Crescens and Titus forsook Paul, preferring the present world (4:10).

And so we note the transition between a somewhat organized structure within the ecclesia in 1 Timothy ... with an emphasis on supervisors and servants (bishops and deacons) ... and the absence of structure in 2 Timothy where we see an emphasis on the individual servant of the Lord, and committing the truth to faithful men. And in the midst of this growing apostasy within the ecclesia ... even within the leadership of the ecclesia ... Paul knew his death was drawing near (4:6). So he makes provision for Timothy and Mark to gather his writings and to bring them to him, where he would make arrangements for these writings to be preserved after his death, in order that the truth might be preserved in the midst of growing apostasy (4:12).

With all of this in mind, does it not cause us to question the teachings propagated by the leaders within the organized church today? At what point following Paul's death did the apostasy cease? At what point was spiritual truth, as proclaimed by Paul, finally recognized and taught by the majority within the church?

Appendix

Key Words & Phrases

All in All

It is God's plan to become *All in all*. All will be subjected to God and reconciled to God. We observe that currently God may be All in some, but He is not yet All in all.

Christ is *the One completing the all in all* (Ephesians 1:23). It is through Christ that all are being reconciled to God (Colossians 1:20). The body of Christ is the complement of Christ (Ephesians 4:14); *the complement of the One completing the all in all* (Ephesians 1:23). Our "Great Commission" is found in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. We are to proclaim the message of reconciliation to God.

We see God finally becoming All in all in 1 Corinthians 15:28; once Christ has accomplished His mission to bring all into subjection. In 1 Corinthians 15:22-28 there is no longer any need for sovereignties or authorities, and the final enemy (death) is abolished as God becomes All in all.

If the lake of fire (the second death) was still burning, all would not yet be reconciled to God, and God would not yet be All in all. In this world we see chaos and tribulation all around us, but things will not always be in this state. God is in the process of becoming All in all.

Believer

A "believer" is one who believes God. Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. We are not provided with an exhaustive list of exactly what Abraham believed, and some of his decisions seemed to display a degree of doubt or misunderstanding as to what God had in mind (e.g. fathering a son through Hagar, instead of waiting on God to deliver Isaac through Sarah). But whatever the specifics, we simply read that Abraham believed God and it was reckoned as righteousness.

Churches today like to create lists of what one must believe to be a Christian. These lists vary from one church to another, so that should tell us something. Some say we must believe in the concept of the Trinity. Others say we must believe that hell is eternal. Some say we must be water baptized. Some even specify the precise mode of water baptism.

The problem is that we are often driven by the fear of what God will do to us if we don't believe all of the right things. One slip, and we think that makes us a non-believer and destined for eternal torment. We are thinking in terms of what we must believe, at a minimum, to be "saved." We place no real trust in God and His grace. We think we must **do** something to be saved, even if this **doing** is simply mustering-up the right formula of belief.

But there is not really a formula or list of what one must believe. The fact is that through God's Word, and through the person of His Son, God has spoken. We are

asked to believe; period. We don't fully understand all details, and some understand more details than others, but we are not asked to fully understand all details of God's revelation; only to believe.

Here's something else to think about. If believing was something we could muster-up on our own, we could boast about that, couldn't we? I could say I am smarter than those who don't believe, since I have the intelligence to believe while they do not. But aren't we told that salvation is totally a gift from God, lest any should boast? (Ephesians 2:9)

I don't think *anyone* could be a believer, unless God enables that person to believe. Without God's help, the entire world would be non-believers destined for God's judgment. But rather than abandon this hopeless lot called humanity, God chooses **SOME** and enables them to believe, not because He loves them more but because He has a purpose for them that will ultimately lead to **ALL** being reconciled to God. That's God's method; to choose **SOME** to act as His instruments so that **ALL** will ultimately be reconciled to Him. After all it is God's will that all mankind be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), and God is operating all in accord with the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11).

If you think that every person has the ability, on his own, to become a believer by having enough intelligence to believe, consider the following:

- The apprehensions of the unbelievers are blinded by the god of this eon (Satan),² Cor 4:3
- To the Philippians belief on Christ was "graciously granted." Philippians 1:29
- Not one is just; not one is understanding; and not one is seeking out God.
Romans 3:10-11

With all of this being true, is it even possible for a single person to believe on their own? Or, like Lydia (Acts 16:14), are we dependent upon God to open up our heart to believe?

A "non-believer" is one who does not believe. Doubting Thomas is a good example. Thomas knew what Jesus had said about His approaching resurrection, just like the other apostles did. Upon hearing the testimony of those returning from the empty tomb, the others believed. But not Thomas. He would not believe until he could see for himself, and touch Jesus. But did Jesus cast him away for his failure to believe? No; He allowed Thomas to see and touch Him.

Some will believe in this current lifetime, by faith. Others will not believe until they can see for themselves. But one way or the other, there will come a day when every knee will bow before the Lord, and when all are reconciled to God the Father.

Believers, Purpose of

Why has God chosen a certain, select group from mankind (the body of Christ in this present age)?

- ✓ To make known the secret of His will ... to head up all in the Christ (1:9-10)
- ✓ To serve as the complement of the One completing the all in all ... i.e. Christ's complement (1:23)
- ✓ To be Christ's ambassadors, as if God were entreating through us (2 Corinthians 5:18-21) To assist in bringing about God's becoming all in all, through the faithful proclamation of the evangel in the capacity of ambassadors
- ✓ In the oncoming eons to be a display of the riches of God's grace and kindness (2:7)
- ✓ Created in Christ Jesus (as His body) for good works which God makes ready beforehand, that we should be walking in them (2:10)
- ✓ To make known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, the multifarious wisdom of God ... (3:8-11)
- ✓ To make all grow into Him, Who is the Head – Christ (4:15-16)

What makes this group different from the rest of mankind?

- ✓ All mankind may hear the word of God, but the word of God is *operating* in the believer. (1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- ✓ The believer has *expectation* ... a knowledge with certainty as to what will occur in the ages to come ... the *resurrection*. (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

Day of the Lord / Coming Indignation

The Day of the Lord is that period of time, following the removal of the Body of Christ unto the heavens (1 Thessalonians 4:13ff), when the events immediately preceding and culminating with the return of Christ to the earth will take place. Consider the sequence of events as revealed in the Scriptures. John the Baptist spoke of fleeing from the impending indignation, calling upon his audience (Israel) to produce fruit worthy of repentance. But when Paul introduced God's revelation for this present era, he announced that God was in Christ conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning mankind's offenses to them. Far from a message warning of impending indignation, Paul announced that God was conciliated to mankind. Our message, as Christ's ambassadors, is simply: *Be conciliated to God*. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Most certainly there will come a time when God's indignation will be coming (Romans 2:9), on the *day of indignation* that is set by God (Romans 2:5). But the believer is saved from this coming

indignation (Romans 5:9) ... by *our Rescuer out of the coming indignation* (1 Thessalonians 1:10). We within the Body of Christ are saved from the coming indignation not because we are better than others of humanity; but because God has elected to choose a subset of humanity ... giving them the ability to believe and perceive that which He has revealed ... and enabling them to serve as a complement of Christ in this age and in the ages to come; toward the end that God's will for mankind be accomplished; that all mankind be saved and come to a realization of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).

Prior to indignation coming upon the earth, Christ will descend from heaven and *snatch away* the body of Christ. This event, described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, is commonly referred to as the rapture. When Paul speaks of a *detainer* that must be removed before the man of lawlessness can be unveiled (2 Thessalonians 2:6-12), it would seem that this detainer is the body of Christ – or more probably the holy spirit that dwells within the body of Christ -- that is indeed removed on the day that Christ descends. Once the detainer is removed, the man of lawlessness is revealed and the day of indignation will arrive, as described in the book of Revelation.

Death

The Greek philosophers have us convinced that our souls are immortal. But we are told that only Christ is immortal (1 Timothy 6:16). When we die our body returns to the soil, and our spirit returns to God Who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). But our soul, which was generated when God animated the soil with His spirit, goes to an *unseen place*. The word in Greek is *hades*, and in the Hebrew it is *sheol*.

Convinced that we are immortal and that our soul must be accounted for, most Bible translators use *hell* for *hades* if the passage is referring to one who is wicked, or *grave* if the passage is referring to one who is righteous. But the fact is that every person, righteous and wicked alike, go to *hades*; the unseen place. Here we have no consciousness (see Ecclesiastes 9:5 and Psalm 6:5). This is why those who are dead are sometimes referred to as asleep, where we also have no consciousness. We are totally dependent upon God to resurrect us, as He has promised to do. At the time we are resurrected, we will *put on immortality* (1 Corinthians 15:53-54).

Some will object, pointing to passages such as Luke 23:43 when Jesus tells the thief on the cross beside Him, *I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise*. But all such passages are either mistranslated or misinterpreted, because the translator believes we are immortal and renders the translation with that bias. As for Luke 23:43, since there is no punctuation in the original Greek the placement of the comma in this sentence is an interpretation. Based on what we know from elsewhere in the Scriptures about death, the passage should have been translated: *I say to you today, you will be with Me in paradise*.

Others will object, saying: “Are you saying my loved one is not in heaven right now?” Personally I am comforted just as much knowing that my loved ones are asleep, and that the next conscious moment they will experience will be with the Lord. And furthermore, what becomes of us is not determined by our own wishes or desires, but by God Who created us and Who is in full control of our destinies.

Devoutness / Reverence

Devoutness is an important trait to be found in the believer, as we note the number of times Paul emphasizes it in 2 Timothy alone. If we examine every instance where the Greek root *seb* is found in the New Testament, we find it best translated as “revere” in the verb form, “reverence” in the noun form, and “devout” when used as a human characteristic. To be devout is to properly revere God. This notion is somewhat confused in most English translations where we see a variety of word choices such as devout, godly, godliness, worship, piety, and holiness. If the word is consistently translated “revere” or “devout” we will have a better understanding of the desired attitude of revering God.

Ecclesia

The Greek *ecclesia* is most always translated *church* in our Bible versions, except in those cases where the notion of *church* does not fit. This inconsistency in translation causes us to lose valuable insights provided by God, and requires that we place great faith in the translators and not in the word of God itself. *Ecclesia* means called-out-ones ... those whom God has called out of the larger group of humanity for some specific purpose. But just as there are different presidential administrations enforcing different policies in our political realm, so also there are different administrations in God’s workings in the world. In his letters, Paul speaks of the specific administration of God that was granted to him, in which the body of Christ is the specific ecclesia, or group of called-out-ones, for which he became a dispenser of good news. The Body of Christ was not introduced by any other person in the Scriptures, either before or after Paul. It was Paul’s specific commission. Peter and others within the Twelve addressed the believers among Israel ... that was the called-out-group (ecclesia) they addressed. Paul had a *different* commission, in a *different* administration, and the body of Christ was the called-out-group (*ecclesia*) that he addressed. Whenever you see the word *church* in your translation, remember the underlying Greek *ecclesia* simply means called-out-ones ... and the group of called-out-ones may vary from one passage to another.

Eon / Eonian

This is one of the most misunderstood words in the Bible. The Greek word *aion* and its Hebrew equivalent *olam* clearly do not mean endless or eternal, but refer to fixed periods of time with a beginning and an end. Thus the many variations we see in the Scriptures:

- ✓ Eon (singular)

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- ✓ Eons (plural)
 - ✓ Before the eons
 - ✓ End of the eon (singular)
 - ✓ End of the eons (plural)
 - ✓ Eon of the eons
 - ✓ Eons of the eons
 - ✓ The oncoming eons
 - ✓ The impending eon
 - ✓ This eon
 - ✓ The current eon

Most Bible translations treat this word very inconsistently, sometimes using *eternal* and other times *age* when eternal will not fit. But such inconsistent handling of the word causes much of what God has revealed to us to be lost or confused. The adjective form *eonian* refers to something that takes place during one eon, or during several eons.

Some believe that phrases acclaiming Christ as *King of the eons* (1 Timothy 1:17) prove that eons must mean eternal, since Christ is immortal. I have five children ... Cris, Dusty, Chad, Kari and Scott. When I find myself in the midst of Chad's friends, I may say, "I am the father of Chad." Does this mean I am not also the father of my other four children? No; but when in the context of Chad's friends I may identify myself as Chad's father. Likewise, within the context of the eons ... these finite periods of time in which man's history is recorded in the Scriptures ... Christ who is immortal may be described as the *King of the eons*.

Well known and respected preacher and author G. Campbell Morgan expressed it best, noting there is no word in the Greek that translates to our English word *eternal* and which means endless. When God is described as an *Eonian God* this does not mean He is not, in fact, eternal. It is just that the Bible talks about things as they exist or occur in this time period known as the eons. God is eonian, but He will also continue to exist after the eons are concluded.

Evangel

The Greek *evangel* is most always translated *gospel* in our Bible versions, except in cases where our notion of *gospel* does not fit. We place great faith in the translator, and in orthodox teachings, when we use our English Bibles to understand what the *gospel* is. The fact is that *evangel* simply means *good news* ... nothing more. We have a tendency to think there is a single *gospel* for all eras, and when we hear the word we immediately conjure the notion of "the gospel" that has indoctrinated us. But the good news can, and does, differ from one context to another. In 1 Thessalonians 3:6 for example, *evangel* simply refers to the good news that Paul received concerning the faith of the Thessalonian believers. Whenever we see the word *evangel* (or *gospel* in most English versions)

we should always ask ourselves what the good news consists of in that specific context.

Expectation (Resurrection)

There are a number of passages that refer to the resurrection of various groups of people at different times.

Resurrection event #1 (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18): The dead in Christ will be raised, along with those in Christ who are alive, when “the rapture” occurs. This event is not revealed elsewhere in the Scriptures, but only by Paul who was given the gospel of the Uncircumcision (Galatians 2:7-9). Paul writes that those in Christ will be *snatched away* to meet the Lord in the air. This is a different event from when Christ returns to the earth to reign. Israel awaits His return to the earth, to restore the kingdom unto Israel (see Acts 1:6-7). But the body of Christ awaits Him to snatch us away to meet Him in the air. Israel’s expectation is to serve God upon the earth when Christ reigns. Our expectation is to serve Him in the celestials (the heavens), where we will be a display of His grace in the oncoming eons (Ephesians 2:6-7).

After this resurrection of the body of Christ, the time of God’s indignation (The Great Tribulation) as foretold in the book of Revelation will occur. Note that the body of Christ is to be rescued out of the coming indignation (1 Thessalonians 1:10). God did not appoint us to indignation (1 Thessalonians 5:8-9). At the conclusion of this time of Tribulation, Christ will return to the earth (Revelation 19:11 and following). Thrones will be setup, and there will be a judgment of those living at the time of Christ’s return (Revelation 20:4 and Matthew 25:31).

Resurrection event #2 (Revelation 20:4-5): The passage tells us this is “the former resurrection” Those who have been executed because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and who do not worship the wild beast or its image, and who did not take the emblem (mark) of the beast will be resurrected. These will live and reign with Christ a thousand years (Revelation 20:5). While the body of Christ is reigning in service to God in the heavens, the group described here from among Israel will reign in service to God upon the earth.

After the thousand year reign, Satan will be loosed (Revelation 20:7) and will deceive the nations, mobilizing them for battle. The Adversary (Satan) will be cast into the lake of fire to be tormented for the eons of the eons (at least two eons, out of all the eons).

Resurrection event #3 (Revelation 20:11-15): The sea and hades give up their dead. They are resurrected and stand before the throne and are judged in accord with their acts. Those not found in the scroll of life are cast into the lake of fire. (Note that the duration of their time in the lake of fire ... the second death ... is not mentioned as it was for the Adversary.)

Then we see this present heaven and earth coming to an end, and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1). Some time after this, when all are subjected to God, will come the “consummation” (1 Corinthians 15:20-28). This is the climax of history. As in Adam all are dying, so also in Christ are all made alive. Christ reigns until all enemies are under His feet (subjected to Him), and the last enemy (death) is abolished. Christ is then subjected to God the Father, as God becomes All in all.

If the lake of fire is a *figurative* death, there is no need for a subsequent resurrection event, as all have previously been resurrected. And once the lake of fire has accomplished its purpose of bringing its inhabitants into subjection, it is eliminated. If the lake of fire is a second, *literal* death, there must be an implied resurrection of all those that were cast in ... if all are to ultimately become subjected and reconciled to God (as the Scriptures indicate) and if God is to become All in all.

Heaven

Sometimes the word heaven, or heavens, speaks of the atmosphere directly above the earth. Other times it speaks of somewhere well beyond, but its precise location is not revealed.

The Israelites never had any thoughts of “going to heaven.” Their hope and expectation was the coming of the Messiah to establish His kingdom upon the earth. This is what Jesus speaks of during His earthly ministry. “Repent, for the kingdom is near.” After His resurrection, when the apostles asked if this was the time He intended to restore the kingdom unto Israel, He did not tell them they had it all wrong. He simply said it was not theirs to know God’s timing (Acts 1:6-7). Israel is God’s instrument upon the earth. When He returns, born-again Israel will serve a purpose in Christ’s reign. Today Israel, which rejected the Messiah, is temporarily set aside as Christ now draws those of the nations into the body of Christ. But this “stubbornness” in Israel is temporary (Romans 11:25-26). When the events described in Revelation take place, Israel will once again play a part.

Paul speaks of things not previously revealed, and one of those things is “heaven.” Those of Israel look for Christ to come to earth, where their expectation lies in the ages to come. We within the body of Christ look for Christ to come and snatch us away to be with Him, where we will play a part in the heavens in the ages to come.

Sorry, but there are few details provided in the Bible. The notion of pearly gates and St. Peter admitting us are non-Biblical notions, not based on the Scriptures. The images we see in Revelation pertain to the earth; either this present earth or the new earth. The New Jerusalem with all of its splendor comes down out of heaven, but is not heaven itself.

Who goes to heaven? The body of Christ (believers) will be called up to meet the Lord in the air, and we will serve the Lord in the heavens. When all things are reconciled to God and He becomes All in all (1 Corinthians 15:28), the entire universe will be under the realm of God's kingdom. It has not been revealed to us exactly what this will look like; who will be in heaven and who will be upon the new earth. Without details being provided, we will need to trust God as to the place He has planned for each of us. But He is our Heavenly Father, filled with grace and love, and most certainly we can trust Him for what lies ahead!

Hell

When we see this word in an English translation, it comes from one of three Greek words; *Hades*, *Gehenna* or *Tartarus*. Hades simply means *unseen*. It is the temporary destination for everyone when they die, righteous and wicked alike. The flesh returns to the soil, the spirit returns to God, and the soul goes to *the unseen place* (hades). The Hebrew *sheol* in the Old Testament is the equivalent to *hades* in the Greek. Bible translators have tainted the pure Word of God with their opinions and theologies. When they find *hades* or *sheol* with reference to one who is wicked, they translate it "hell." But when they find the same word with reference to one who is righteous, they translate it "grave" or "death." If we look at *hades* and *sheol* in every instance where they occur, we will see they simply refer to the unseen place where the soul goes immediately upon death.

Gehenna refers to a physical location outside of Jerusalem; the Valley of Hinnom. Jesus makes reference to this place when He speaks of the disgraceful burial place for certain criminals executed in the age to come. But it is not a place where souls are cast "forever and ever" to be tormented.

Tartarus is a place where wicked spirits (demons) are imprisoned. No person is ever said to be cast into Tartarus.

Holy

If we examine the word *holy* or *hallowed* in every instance where we find it, we observe its meaning is to be *set apart* or *differentiated*. God is holy (set apart), and He designates certain people or things as holy; not because they have any special merit, but because God has chosen them to be used in some fashion for his purposes. The clothing to be used by the priests in the Old Testament were not necessarily *better* than other clothing, and the animals deemed to be *clean* were not necessarily *better* or more righteous than other animals. But God chose certain clothing and certain animals to be *set apart ... to differentiate* his people from other peoples of the earth. And when one is designated as holy, God defines certain behaviors for that individual that are acceptable, and that differentiate that one from others. So holy does not mean better or more righteous than others. Holy simply means set apart or differentiated from others. In the Old Testament God delivered to Israel (His set apart people) the Law; but Israel found it impossible to keep the Law. As it turns out, the Law was used to show the people

their helplessness to be righteous based on their works, and it led them to Christ. In Galatians, Paul would tell the believers that they were freed from the Law. The elements of the Law were no longer requirements for God's people, although Paul continues to encourage the believers to live a life that was worthy of God's grace that had been given to them freely. So in the Old Testament, God's people (Israel) were set apart, and they were expected to follow very detailed set-apart behaviors to be righteous. In the present era, through God's grace the set-apart people (body of Christ) are *holy* regardless of behavior. Certain behavior is described as acceptable and other behavior as unacceptable, but regardless of behavior those within the body of Christ are saved and continue to be God's holy people.

Kingdom

We must always examine the context to understand the aspect of God's kingdom that is being referred to. The kingdom is in full force in the heavens, but not yet upon the earth. Hence the prayer, *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*

Paul's reference to *His celestial kingdom* (2 Timothy 4:18) refers to the kingdom already fully realized in the celestials, or the heavens. But the many references Jesus makes to the kingdom in Matthew, for example, refer to the time when God's kingdom will become a reality upon the earth. Yes, in some aspects, the kingdom is already in place within the believer (the kingdom is within you). But in the fullest sense, the kingdom to come upon the earth will be realized once Christ physically returns and reigns (as we see in Revelation).

Lake of Fire

This comes the closest to the common notions concerning hell, with two primary differences. First, the lake of fire does not last "forever and ever," but only for the eons of the eons (several eons, which we recall are periods of time with a beginning and an end). Second, the purpose of the lake of fire is not to torture and torment, but to bring about a positive conclusion in accord with God's plans.

Matthew may be alluding to the lake of fire when he tells of the judgment to come when Christ returns and judges those living upon the earth based upon their works (Matthew 25:31-46). In verse 46, those who do not pass the test are not cast into eternal torment, but will experience "eonian chastening." Even the well respected William Barclay indicated that the Greek words used in this instance are never used to imply destruction, but constructive chastening.

Revelation 20:15 tells us what the lake of fire is ... "the second death." And in 1 Corinthians 15:27 we see that as all things are brought into subjection to Christ, the last enemy (death) is abolished. So there is a conclusion to the lake of fire.

Salvation / Saved

This is an interesting word. If you were raised in the church, you'll immediately think you know what "saved" means ... that you are saved from eternal torment.

The word *saved* is used many times in the Bible. It sometimes means one's life is saved from being killed by an enemy. It sometimes means saved from disease (equivalent to being healed). Most often in the New Testament it means saved from the indignation or tribulation that we read about in Revelation.

Whenever we encounter the word *saved* we should seek from the context to understand *saved from what?* The believer in this present age is saved from God's indignation that will come upon the earth following "the rapture" (1 Thessalonians 4:13ff). But it is important to remember that ultimately all will be saved from death, indignation, tribulation, etc. For it is God's will that *all* mankind be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), and God is operating *all* in accord with the counsel of His will (Ephesians 1:11).

Works, Rewards for

Those still living upon the earth when Christ returns will be gathered and judged based upon their works (Matthew 25:31-46). The "sheep" are given life eonian (25:46) in the kingdom (25:34) where Christ will now reign over upon the earth. The "goats" will be cast into the *fire eonian* (25:41) for eonian *chastening* (25:46)

The deceased non-believer will be judged "in accord with their acts" by Christ after His return to the earth at the great white throne (Revelation 20:12). Those not found written in the scroll of life will be cast into the lake of fire (20:15).

Note that the eonian chastening is not an eternal condition; but is eonian (for the eon or eons). And even the lake of fire, also referred to as the second death (Revelation 21:8) will one day be *abolished* (1 Corinthians 15:27), when all are finally subjected to God and He becomes All in all. For just as every creature is created in Him (Christ) and through Him ... so also through Him will all be reconciled (Colossians 1:15-20).

The believer is saved by grace apart from works, so there is no grounds for boasting (Romans 3:21-28). But the believer should beware as to how he builds upon the foundation laid with works (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). Those believers who exhibit worthwhile works will get *wages*. (3:14) Those with works that are not worthwhile will still be saved, yet as through fire (3:15).

Each of us (believers) will give account for our actions at the dais of God (Romans 14:10-13). In front of the dais each will be *requited* (paid) for that which he puts into practice through the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10).

A Word about Bible Translations

Today there are many different Bible translations to choose from. Many of the newer ones have been written for financial gain (to sell Bibles). And those written with the intent to provide an easy-to-read translation incorporate the translators'

opinions and theologies into the translation, making them *interpretations* instead of pure translations. Many different Hebrew or Greek words are often translated using a single English word, making it impossible to recognize distinctions without using laborious study helps. The translators have done this because they have determined there is no practical difference between the various Hebrew and Greek words; but what if they are wrong? Similarly, a single word in the Hebrew or Greek is often translated using different English words with drastically different meanings. Here the translators assume to know that God was using a single word to refer to very different ideas. Could the translators be wrong in their assumptions?

I appreciate the Concordant Version, not because I trust the translators more than other translators, but because of the methodology used. Great care was taken to allow the reader to distinguish between different Greek or Hebrew words. Whenever possible, an English word is only used for a single Greek or Hebrew word, and each Hebrew or Greek word is translated using the same consistent English word or idea. There is a keyword concordance in the back of the New Testament that allows the reader to look at all other instances where the same Greek word was used, thereby checking the translation. This methodology may make the translation more difficult to read, but it also preserves the distinctions made in God's Word in the original languages, and it prevents the bias of the translator from creeping into the translation as much as is humanly possible.

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