

Content from:

**He gave Himself as a Ransom
For All (1 Timothy 2:6)**

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**Be Diligent Until the End
(Hebrews 6:11)**

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Ransom for All (1Tim 2:6)

Seeks the Lost

Why does Christ seek the lost? He says, "Here am I, here am I" (Isa 65:1). "The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God" (Ps 14:2). "There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God" (Ro 3:10). No one tries to find out because "every one of them has turned aside; together they have become corrupt" (53:3). They "walk in the way which is not good, following their own thoughts" (Isa 65:2). They "became futile in their speculations, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Ro 1:21). Therefore God took the initiative saying, "I have spread out My hands all day long to a rebellious people" (Isa 65:2). "Not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Ro 10:3). Consequently "I permitted Myself to be sought by those who did not ask for Me; I permitted Myself to be found by those who did not seek me" (Isa 65:1). Today we see "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk 19:10).

When I was younger I tried to figure things out because it was a matter of survival. Just accepting was inadequate since only being fat, dumb and happy wasn't the answer. Someone once told me that his secret was just not worrying about it. However, I grew up during the cold war where a capitalist was good and a communist

bad. But they're both people, though if you don't know what makes them tick, you might be taken advantage of and not survive. It could be how society programs you. So once I attempted to neutralize thoughts to prevent being programmed. I mentioned it to someone and her response was "people don't do that." Then I concluded that the more you knew the more successful you'd be. Instead of just accepting what you observed you'd have to comprehend it. Scientifically things are composed of atoms and molecules. Electrons, protons and neutrons are in everything and objects only differ by their arrangement and resulting characteristics. I thought of a glass, soft drink container and concluded that it was just my brain, senses, and experiences telling me what it was. Then I would have to accept my decision. That container could be a glass to hold liquid to drink. But what if it contained dirt to hold a flower? At that point you'd pretty much have it figured out. However, the store clerk where you were purchasing it had the right answer. You set it upside down with the rim on the table. Then little objects they also sold could be placed on the top for display. One teacher explained that you can't understand everything that the Bible says so you just have to accept it. But how do you know what you decide is true or not? "A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1Co 2:14). If you need the Spirit to comprehend scripture, but don't have the Spirit because you haven't experienced salvation, then it is a "catch-22" and you need a way to comprehend the gospel initially.

It is revelation by "faith which comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). The Greek word *rhema* defines it as the Living Word of God himself speaking. Jesus told Peter "flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Mt 1:17).

Evident Within

"Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen" (Ro 1:20). Truth is reality being "understood through what has been made" (:20). The process of observation requires that the five senses be used. It means you can look up at the stars and understand about God. Paul phrases it as knowing about God as opposed to personally knowing God. Thinking predicates reasoning which includes deciding if something is true or false. Then with an open mind you choose by believing in the best alternative. It involves wrestling with various possibilities until the one with the highest probability of being true wins out. But when "that which is known about God is evident within them" (:19) it was God who "made it evident to them" (:19). Jesus told Pilate "for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth" (Jn 18:37) for which Pilate asked, "What is truth?" (:38). At that level it is absolute certainty and a revelation to their conscious understanding. "With the heart man believes" (Ro 10:10). Nonetheless "they exchanged the truth of God for a lie" (1:25) and "their foolish heart was darkened" (:21).

Mankind has been given a general revelation or moral sense. They "do instinctively the things of the Law, these not having the Law to themselves" (Ro 2:14). "They show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness" (:15). However the people did not conduct themselves correctly. But "in the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways" (Ac 14:16). "In the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed" (Ro 3:25). Nevertheless they are sins. The "Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind being darkened in their understanding" (Eph 4:17-18) having "given themselves over to sensuality" (:19). But the message of general revelation does not spell out a plan of salvation. "Having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring that all people everywhere should repent" (Ac 17:30). He "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Ti 2:4). Paul said, "I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief" (1:13). The Gentiles sinned "because of the ignorance that is in them because of the hardness of their heart" (Eph 4:18). But he is "patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?" (Ge 18:25). "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already" (Jn 3:18). "The one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging will receive but few" (Lk 12:48). "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Eze 33:11). "When we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so

that we will not be condemned along with the world" (1Co 11:32).

Worldview

There's a popular interview show on TV where I heard the host say the most common consideration of his intelligent, well-informed guests was "What is consciousness?" Consciousness can be equated to thinking, but at a deeper level it relates to existence. People have questions about life pertaining to asking the who, what, when, why and how of existence. If God "made it evident" (Ro 1:19) then it is an undeniable objective standard. It is composed of a priori, self-evident axioms. These are self-authenticating first principles from a primary source which are logically universal, foundational and determinative. Instincts have foundations as God gave them to all creatures in order to survive. It can be said that they exist at the subconscious, psychological and subjective level. But there is a higher level of thinking involved with making decisions. They "exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image" (:23) and "did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer" (:28). "They are without excuse" (:20). Therefore "choose for yourselves today whom you will serve" (Jos 24:15).

Consciousness is awareness. In one respect there is a constant link with the unknown as if querying to discover answers. In a sense it is instinctual as a survival mechanism. But it is not continuous cerebral questioning. Deists believe that reality can be determined by human reasoning. Philosophically a

person develops a worldview that is perceived as reality. Consciously and unconsciously a coherent and consistent framework is created in building a worldview. Presuppositions and assumptions are applied. However, normative customs can become truisms and tradition. But feelings, intuition and common sense do not necessarily arrive at truth. Also, personal opinion and experience must be substantiated. Therefore, in order for a worldview to be valid it must inherently adhere to the laws of logic. In addition, it must externally agree with the laws of history and science. Furthermore, it must satisfy human emotional and spiritual needs on a universal level.

In the age of reason, Descarte was suspicious of reason itself. What is a cognitive thought? Does it need specific content to qualify? However, when that mechanism isn't generating certain thoughts it is still self-aware. Therefore if we are conscious of our thoughts then consciousness is at a higher level than thinking. He said that if thinking could doubt the veracity of something, the reasoning was in the context of the existence of a higher entity responsible for the faculty of thinking in the first place. The well-known quote of his conclusion is "I am, I exist" for which a cognito has been created saying "I think, therefore I am." Apparently with that he was satisfied with who he was. Moses asked God for a name and he said, "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex 3:14). God isn't like Descarte whose identity was in his thought. He says "I am the first and I am the last, and there is no god besides Me" (Is 44:6).

Objectivity

Worldviews can be mutually exclusive if not diametrically opposed. Which one represents the truth? In our society it is not politically correct to criticize one worldview at the expense of another. Pluralism recognizes many worldviews as being valid at the same time wherein each is relative to its source (relativism) and tolerance enables all to be successfully globally (globalism) combined. But what if a belief leads to a false reality and it becomes self-destructive? How, then, do you judge a religion on its correctness when basically it is a belief in a set of ideas? How do you evaluate something which is subjective or psychological or simply based on hearsay? You can study their holy books but it all depends on how they're interpreted, and in many cases, the doctrine is based on the testimony of a founder which is comprised of a personal experience. Usually adherents don't attempt to prove the doctrine and you are just supposed to accept it because it is a spiritual and emotional matter. There are approaches one can take. Rationalists believe there is a starting point that everything else becomes relative to. Humanists believe that man is supreme and whatever someone believes his starting point is works for him. However, this method is subjective and opinions easily conflict with each other such that there is no agreement and there is chaos. Then if society itself sets a standard it is no longer relative and becomes an absolute itself. Religious pluralism attempts to keep everyone happy by proposing that each religion represents a piece of the

puzzle and together they all comprise the whole truth. But how do you reconcile monotheism which believes in one God and polytheism's many gods? Also, how does Christianity's personal God fit with the New Age's universal consciousness?

One person counted 1,200 operating religions in this country alone. They all can't be right. Is it man's imagination that directs him? You would think that a human being's thinking would usually lead in a logical direction. "Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (1Co 2:11). "God made it evident to them" (Ro 1:19) but I suppose you then have to think about it to decide. If they reject the revelation then "professing to be wise, they became fools" (:22). "As he thinks within himself, so he is" (Pr 23:7). "They are without excuse" (Ro 1:20). "Just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind" (:28). We've received "the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God" (1Co 2:12).

Word of Truth

Paul asks, "How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?" (Ro 10:14). He's concerned that "surely they have never heard, have they?" (:17). Isaiah even asks, "Who has believed our message?" (Isa 19:4). However, in Romans 10 Paul quotes "their line has gone out through all the earth, and their utterances to the end of the world" (Isa 19:4). An old question in church circles is "can the heathen be saved?" It's based on what happens to far-flung peoples

who have never had the chance to hear the gospel. But Paul's reference seems to say that one way or another everyone gets the message. Paul said he was "not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes" (Ro 1:16). "In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth" (Ja 1:18). Scriptures "have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" (Jn 20:31). It is "the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13) and the "living and enduring word of God" (1Pe 1:23). "All scripture is inspired by God" (2Ti 3:16) and "if any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching whether it is of God" (Jn 7:17).

Disobeyed Directive

God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done" (Ge 2:2). "The works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb 4:3). "The first man Adam became a living being" (1Co 15:45). "The first man is from the earth . . . [and] so also are those who are earthy" (:47-48). "It was Adam who was first created then Eve" (1Ti 2:13). The Lord God told Adam, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Ge 2:17). "But the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression" (1Ti 2:14). When Adam disobeyed God he demonstrated that he didn't trust what God had done and believed the serpent who said, "You will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Ge 3:5). Afterwards "God sent them out of the garden of Eden" (:23). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

(Ro 3:23). Every human knows that occasionally he will sin. There is no excuse, for Paul reminds that "we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are under sin" (Ro 3:9). Some believe that Adam and Eve's existence is figurative and that the Bible's explanation of sin is allegorical. But the consequences are imposed "even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense" (15:14). Due to a solidarity with Adam and "not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own" (10:3) Jesus warned the Pharisees, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men" (Lk 16:15). It is because "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Ro 5:19). "Sin entered into the world . . . [and] death spread to all men" (:12). "The wages of sin is death" (6:23).

God was the only one who could restore the relationship with man. He told the serpent he would "put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed" (Ge 3:15). Her seed (future offspring) was Christ which is why the word is capitalized. There was enmity because "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Ro 5:10). God said, "He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Ge 3:15). God developed his plan through Abraham and told him "because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son" (22:16) "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (:18). Then "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise" (Heb 6:15). God told Abram,

"Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years" (Ge 15:13). God has everything in control and cites that "when Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son" (Hos 11:1). Jesus remained in Egypt "until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 'Out of Egypt I called My Son'" (Mt 2:15).

God led Israel out of Egypt. Even then Hebrews explains that "the gospel was preached to us as well as to them" (Heb 4:2). Unfortunately God explains, "It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest" (Ps 95:10). "There remains a rest for the people of God" (Heb 4:9). "But the word which they [Israel] heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (:2). "He who entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (:10). God's plan was implemented via Israel. Paul reminds "that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2Co 5:19). His purpose was "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20) which "put to death the enmity" (Eph 2:16). "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy

and blameless and beyond reproach" (Col 1:22). He reconciled "both [Jew and Gentile] in one body to God through the cross" (Eph 2:16). Paul encourages "on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20). "Having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Ro 5:10).

Certain Probability

A responsible person should at least evaluate all the possibilities. If its not possible then why even consider it? It comes down to proving that it is true, but how do you do that with absolute certainty? God "furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Ac 17:31). Proof is an adequate degree of certainty about something arrived at by accumulating an amount of evidence which would satisfy a competent, unprejudiced mind. Reasonable people in ordinary situations would judge this. To call it true the results would have to be reliable beyond a reasonable doubt. Even though the conclusion might not be mathematically certain it will have a high chance of probability. It will be predictable and the result can be regularly demonstrated. Finally, faith is required to substantiate the premise.

The author of a Christian apologetics book believes that Christianity can be substantiated by relying on internal laws of logic and external laws of history and science. The scientific method starts with a hypothesis or premise of what is believed to be true. It can be tested and the results observed. Natural phenomena produce responses and natural laws are descriptions of them

which results in a tentative acceptance based upon a predicted result reliably occurring. Active certainty is not claimed but the chance of the premise being correct is strengthened by the preponderance of the evidence supporting it. Inductive reasoning organizes the evidence such that the accuracy of the historical record can be determined and facts can be verified. Archaeology has continued to support Biblical descriptions and history has documented fulfillment of prophecies. Consequently the external inconsistencies of some religions create false realities.

Firsthand Witness

Firsthand witnesses in the Bible minimize questionability by primary source material being cited in the New Testament. Also the time between the events themselves and when they were recorded was very short leaving negligible chance for error. Peter cites "we are witnesses of all the things He did . . . [and] they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross" (Ac 10:39) whereby we were "witness of the sufferings of Christ" (1Pe 5:1). A witness testifies in court. Jesus substantiated his responsibility saying "the very works that I do testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me" (Jn 5:36). Furthermore, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works" (10:37). They were "signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples" (20:30). Peter witnessed that it was "Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed

through Him in your midst" (Ac 2:22). John "is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things" (21:24). "These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ" (20:31) and to know "that his testimony is true" (:24).

It was so convincing that they "convened a council, and were saying, 'What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go like this, all men will believe in Him!'" (Jn 11:47-48). Even John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus asking, "'Are You the Expected One?'" (Lk 7:20). One's faith is challenged because it was the same John where "the next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" (Jn 1:29). Jesus answered, "'The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them'" (:22). "God raised Him up on the third day" (Ac 10:40) and he "was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead" (Ro 1:4). It was granted that He become visible not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand" (Ac 10:41). "We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2Pe 1:16). John testifies "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life" (1Jn 1:1). "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One"

(Ac 10:42). "After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now" (1Co 15:6).

Practical Worldview

What is our so-called "world view?" Jesus told the Jews, "You are of this world" (Jn 8:23). There are the facts of life. Paul says "if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either" (1Th 3:10). It is a matter of survival. However, Jesus told his disciples "you are not of the world . . . [because] I chose you out of the world" (Jn 15:19). Which side then are you on? Is it just survival of the fittest, or is there another way? It is a matter of perspective. "Whatever you do, do all for the glory of God" (1Co 15:31). "Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth" (Col 2:3). But you still have to exist. However, "your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things" (Mt 6:32). The most common translation of the word "prayer" in the Bible is to make requests of God. Jesus taught regarding prayer to ask, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Mt 6:11). Paul refers to God's promise to provide for our needs by saying "my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Php 4:19). "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above" (Ja 1:17). So "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (:33). Paul instructed "be anxious for nothing, but . . . let your requests be made known to God" (Php 4:6). Jesus said, "Do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself" (Mt 6:33). He

said, "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it" (Jn 14:14) because "everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds" (Lk 11:10). The promise is for believers who "trust in the Lord . . . and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps 37:3-4).

Is an unbeliever justified in saying, "I didn't get the message so how can I be held responsible?" It's as if they are answering, "Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty . . . [etc.]" (Mt 25:44). This is at The Judgment so it isn't an incidental matter. "When" is the crux of the situation. How is the knowledge received? To Paul it was "not according to man" (Gal 1:11) but "through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (:12). He even "went away to Arabia" (:17) where he learned. "They are without excuse" (Ro 1:19). At the judgment Christ will explain that if you were not righteous to others in your normal life "you did not do it to Me [and] these will go away into eternal punishment" (Mt 25:45-46). Therefore "the wrath of god is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Ro 1:18). God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1Ti 2:4). The wrath is against the sin in man because they "suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Ro 1:19). The truth "known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them" (:19). It is evident because it was made clear and visible. "His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen" (:20). It is clearly discerned so as to have come to be mentally recognized and known. Having been "understood through what has been made" (:20)

affirms that a person's awareness, thinking and perception confirms that truth. Therefore "they knew God" (:21). But "they did not honor Him as God or give thanks" (:21). "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Ge 18:25). Just because the unbeliever might not have read these scriptures does not mean that in the same way that Paul was taught God has not reached him by revelation.

Raised from the Dead

Jesus' life is a historical record and its historicity is hardly ever questioned. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory" (Jn 1:14). One day Jesus "asked his disciples, 'Who do you say I am?'" (Mt 16:15). Even "the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, 'Teacher'" (12:38). But "Peter responded, 'You are the Christ'" (16:16). "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit" (Ro 10:9). "Every tongue will confess that Jesus us Lord" (Php 2:11). "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Ro 10:13).

Fulfilled prophecy from the Bible establishes who Jesus is. He initiated and witnessed it saying, "I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes" (Mt 23:34). It pointed towards his purpose and he said, "Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Lk 24:26). He said the scriptures "'testify about Me'" (Jn 5:39) and "'all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets" (Mt 26:56). But they were "'slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!'" (Lk 24:25) so "He

explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (:27).

At a certain time "Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and raised up the third day" (Mt 16:21). He then explained, "'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up'" (Jn 2:19). The Jews then wanted a sign and Jesus responded, "'Just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth'" (Mt 13:40).

When Luke wrote his gospel he cited that "many have undertaken to compile an account . . . and they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses" (Lk1:1-2). He "investigated everything carefully" (:3) in order "that you may know the exact truth" (:4). After the resurrection "He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" (1Co 15:5). "When the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace be with you'" (Jn 20:19). "He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now" (1Co 15:6). He visited with two disciples and when he ate with them "their eyes were opened and they recognized Him . . . [and said] 'were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?'" (Lk

24:31-32). There was a "third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples" (Jn 21:14). "When the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus" (:4). Then John "said to Peter, 'It is the Lord'" (:7). He met them on the beach but "none of the disciples ventured to question Him, 'Who are You?' knowing that it was the Lord" (:12).

Risen from the Dead

"When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had become a disciple of Jesus" (Mt 27:57) who was "a prominent member of the Council" (Mk 15:43) and a "good and righteous man" (Lk 23:50). "He gathered up courage and went in before Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus" (Mk 15:43). "Pilate wondered if He was dead by this time, and summoned the centurion, he questioned him as to whether He was already dead. And ascertaining this from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph" (:44-45). Then he "took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away" (Mt 27:59-60). "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid" (Mk 15:47). "Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment" (Lk 23:56).

The next day the chief priests and Pharisees asked Pilate, "'Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise

again.' Therefore give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away" (Mt 27:63-64). Pilate approved and "they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone" (:66). The stone "was extremely large" (Mk 16:4). Also there were a number of "guards" (Mt 28:4) and afterwards "some of the guard came into the city" (:11). Then on the "first day of the week" (Mk 16:2) the women "bought spices, so that they might come and anoint Him" (:1) and they wondered, "Who will roll away the stone?" (:3). Next, "a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it" (Mt 28:2).

The angel's "appearance was like lightning and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men" (Mt 28:3-4). Similarly, when the women entered the tomb "they did not find the body" (Lk 24:3) but "two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing" (:4). They said, "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come see the place where He was lying" (Mt 28:6). Then some of the guards "reported to the chief priests all that had happened and . . . they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, 'You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.' and if this should come to the governor's ears, we will win him over and keep you out of trouble" (:11-13). The "story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day" (:15).

Some of the scribes and Pharisees once asked Jesus, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." (Mt 12:38). He replied, "For just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (:40). He was put in the tomb at the beginning of the Sabbath and then on the first day of the week the women came to the tomb. There were three days to account for when Jesus was in the tomb "in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison" (1Pe 3:19) which has been interpreted as going to Paradise to preach the gospel to people who had died. He had not yet visited or been transported to heaven and the Bible does not explain what form he had taken. He had not rolled away the stone by himself and escaped, and his disciples had not returned to break him out. However, most people think of existence in the spirit according to "who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (1Co 2:11). Furthermore, the angel had not arrived yet synonymously with the earthquake at the end of the Sabbath to roll away the stone, so there was no reported activity during those days. Of course, Pilate or the Jews would not have secretly removed the body either because it would have defeated their own purposes.

Purchased Redemption

To redeem means to get possession of something you don't own by paying for it. Perhaps ownership of something was lost and you want to regain

it. There is the case where a man was "so poor . . . as to sell himself" (Lev 25:47) as a slave. Fortunately "one of his brothers may redeem him" (:48) or "if he prospers, he may redeem himself" (:49). "If a ransom is demanded of him, then he shall give for the redemption of his life whatever is demanded of him" (Ex 21:30). In man's case we had been "severed from Christ" (Gal 5:4) and "alienated and hostile in mind" (Col 1:21). "God created man in His own image" (Ge 1:27). But now Adam had "a son in his own likeness" (5:3), and due to the fall of man, this image was not equivalent to the original likeness because man's relationship with God had deteriorated. Unfortunately man was caught in a "yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1) and "through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives" (Heb 2:15). "We are slaves; yet in our bondage, [and] our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us" (Ez 9:9). "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Ro 5:8). Christ had to accomplish this because "no man can by any means redeem his brother or give God a ransom for him--for the redemption of his soul is costly, and he should cease trying forever" (Ps 4:7-8). Redemption means to buy back by making payment, and in man's predicament, it pertains to freeing him from his bondage to sin. Therefore Jesus explained, "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45). The payment of a ransom applies to a loosing or setting someone free, and by this, the Father through Christ is regaining possession of something that originally was his as a

"redemption of God's own possession" (Eph 1:14). It is "the church of God which He purchases with His own blood" (Ac 20:28). "Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (Heb 9:22). Christ "gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1Ti 2:5) since "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2Co 5:19). Someone once told me that it means everyone automatically goes to heaven. But you must appropriate what Christ has done to make it personally official.

"He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people" (Lk 1:68). Christ "cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us; and . . . nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14). However, "the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness" (1Co 1:18). But it is serious and not just academic. Christ "redeemed us . . . having become a curse for us" (Gal 3:13) by his crucifixion. It was from "the curse of the Law" (:13) for "forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph 1:7). It is "redemption [for] the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:14) and "transgressions that were committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15). It was to redeem us "from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers" (1Pe 1:18) and "from every lawless deed . . . [to be] zealous for good deeds" (Titus 2:14). He "rescued us from the domain of darkness" (:13) and "from the hand of our enemies" (Lk 1:74). It was a "testimony given at the proper time" (1Ti 2:6) and "displayed publicly as an atonement in His blood through faith" (Ro 3:25). "Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood"" (1Co 11:25) "poured out for many" (Mk 14:24). Redemption

has numerous important objectives. One result is that we are "justified as a gift by His grace" (Ro 3:24). It is so "we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal 4:5) and to "receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:15). We have "the first fruits of the Spirit" (Ro 8:23) and are "sealed" (Eph 4:30) by the Holy Spirit. Christ to us becomes "wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification" (1Co 1:30). Through Christ we "are believers in God . . . so that your faith and hope are in God" (1Pe 1:21). "Through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all" (Heb 9:12) having "purchased for God . . . men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev 5:9). "Do you not know . . . that you are not your own?" (1Co 6:19,20). "You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men" (7:23).

Have Eternal Life

"He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (Jn 3:36). The first message that John the Baptist and Jesus preached was "'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Mt 4:17). Then early in Jesus' ministry he had a conversation with "Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews" (Jn 3:1). Jesus revealed, "'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'" (:5). Some people say that unless you aren't water baptized you don't qualify, but Jesus is stating a principle and not creating a checklist based upon works. Nicodemus didn't understand so Jesus responded, "'Are you a teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?'" (:10). The Jews had the Old Testament scriptures and were supposed to understand

spiritual things. Jesus observed, "You do not believe [earthly things] so how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (:11). Then he proceeded to say "whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (:16). I've heard people say that its difficult to grasp the concept of eternity much less living forever. The translation of Melchizedik's name is "king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem" (Heb 7:2). "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest perpetually" (:3). "His name will be called . . . Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8).

To understand Biblical doctrine you must comprehend what the Bible says. It may sound like a circular argument but its possible to be "handling accurately the word of truth" (2Ti 2:15). God gave the Bible's authors accurate information because "men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2Pe 1:21). How do you understand the concept of eternal life? Eternity depends on God. God says, "I am God. Even from eternity I am He" (Isa 43:12-13). "His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Mic 5:2). "You are from everlasting" (Ps 93:2). "Are You not from everlasting?" (Hab 1:12). Furthermore, "I live forever" (Dt 32:40). "From everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Ps 90:2). "Your years will not come to an end" (Ps 102:27). "The Lord shall reign forever and ever" (Ex 15:18). He saved Israel "with an everlasting

salvation . . . to all eternity" (Isa 45:17). "His ways are everlasting" (Hab 3:6). This "momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison" (2Co 4:17). It depends upon your perspective. "Things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Co 4:18). "The one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal 6:8). "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2Co 5:1). The "free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ro 6:23). "This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life" (1Jn 2:25). "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (5:11). "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3). Christ "died for sins once for all" (1Pe 3:18). "Having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Heb 5:9). Therefore "he who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life" (Jn 3:36). Jesus cautioned the Jews, "You think that in [the Scriptures] you have eternal life . . . [but] you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (5:39-40).

Enter that Rest

The writer of Hebrews was encouraging Jews to keep the faith. Many of them had been indoctrinated into Judaism and there was undoubtedly pressure on them to return. They were warned not to "drift away" (Heb 2:1) and not to "neglect so great a salvation" (:3). The gospel

is "the power of God for salvation to every one who believes" (Ro 1:16) because "in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith" (:17). "It was at the first spoken through the Lord" (Heb 2:3) and "God [was] also bearing witness with them" (:4). Then "it was confirmed to us by those who heard" (:3). The author reminds them to "pay much closer attention to what we have heard" (2:1). He asks "how shall we escape?" (:3) if we ignore what we have heard. He warns about "falling away from the living God" (3:12) "whose house we are" (:6). Not "any one of you should seem to have come short of [the promise]" (4:1). We are "partakers of a heavenly calling" (3:1) and "partakers of Christ" (:14). It is because "we have had good news preached to us" (4:2). But it is necessary to "hold fast our confidence" (3:6) and "the beginning of our assurance" (:14). We are to cling to "the boast of our hope firm until the end" (:6). The author goes as far as to say "let us fear while the promise remains" (4:1). The danger is that "you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (3:13). "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Ps 95:7-8). "Take care, brethren, lest there should be any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart" (Heb 3:12).

God led Israel out of Egypt. Even then Hebrews explains that "the gospel was preached to us as well as to them" (Heb 4:2). Unfortunately God explains, "'It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest" (Ps 95:10). "There remains a rest for the people of God" (Heb 4:9). "But the word which they

[Israel] heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it" (:2). "He who entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His" (:10). God's plan was implemented via Israel. Paul reminds "that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2Co 5:19). His purpose was "through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col 1:20) which "put to death the enmity" (Eph 2:16). "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (Col 1:22). He reconciled "both [Jew and Gentile] in one body to God through the cross" (Eph 2:16). Paul encourages "on behalf of Christ, to be reconciled to God" (2Co 5:20). "Having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Ro 5:10).

The author of Hebrews links his message to "'the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years'" (Heb 3:8-9). They hardened their hearts (:8) and "were disobedient" (:18). "They are a people who err in their heart and they do not know My ways" (Ps 95:10). They heard the word but it "did not profit them, because it was not united by faith" (Heb 4:2). God had told them to survey Canaan and "send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, every one a leader among them" (Num

13:2). Caleb reported, "We should by all means go up" (13:30) for "if the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us" (14:8). But the majority "gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report" (13:32) and caused the congregation to respond, "Why is the Lord bringing us into this land to fall by the sword" (14:3). They then said "to stone them [Joshua and Caleb] with stones" (:10). They were "not able to enter because of unbelief" (Heb 3:19). God then declared, "They shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it" (Num 14:23). God cited "all the men who have seen My glory and My signs, which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness" (:22). But they did not unite their observations with faith (Heb 4:2), "have not listened to My voice" (Num 14:22) and therefore "they do not know My ways" (Ps 95:10). God said they "yet have put me to the test ten times" (Num 14:22). Of the twelve spies, ten of them were negative.

Nonetheless, God had a plan. "Indeed, as I live, all the earth will be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num 14:21). "My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it" (:24). The unbelieving ones "failed to enter because of disobedience" (Heb 4:6). Therefore "be diligent to enter that rest lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience" (:11). "We who have believed enter that rest" (:3). "One who has entered His rest has also rested from his works" (:10).

Jesus leads the way where he "has entered as a forerunner for us" (6:20) "who has passed through the heavens" (4:14). He is "one who has been tempted in all things as we are yet without sin" (:15). Therefore "let us hold fast our confession" (:14) and "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (:16).

Anchor of Hope

God told Abraham, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants" (Heb 6:13). This was God's oath so that we would "inherit what has been promised" (:12). It was "an oath through the One" (7:21) who spoke to Jesus. God wanted to make his purpose very clear to the heirs" (:17). Therefore Jesus "became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him" (5:9). The author of Hebrews tells them that he is "confident of better things that accompany salvation" (6:9). Jesus accomplished this "when He offered up Himself" (7:27) and "has become the guarantee of a better covenant" (:22). Accordingly "the Lord has sworn [by an oath, saying] . . . 'Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Ps 110:4). "The word of the oath, which came after the Law, appoints a Son, made perfect forever" (Heb 7:28). The author of Hebrews was concerned about those "who are ignorant and going astray" (Heb 5:2) and those who were "slow to learn" (:11). He wanted to encourage the recipients of his letter. He cites that "God wanted to make the unchanging nature of His purpose very clear" (6:17) so that they "may be greatly encouraged" (:18). "He is able

to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (7:25). The author acknowledges they have "fled to take hold of the hope offered to us" (6:18). There is a "better hope, through which we draw near to God" (:19). "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (:19). Therefore "in order to make your hope sure" (:11) "we want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end" (:11). Also, "imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (:12). "If that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for the second" (Heb 8:7). It would be "not like the covenant which I made with their fathers . . . which they broke, although I was a husband to them" (Jer 31:32). "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel" (:31). "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (:33). There is the "setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness" (Heb 7:18). It is by way of "another priest" (:11) "according to the power of an indestructible life" (:16). It brings in "a change of law also" (:12). "He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (8:6). He is a "high priest" (:1) "exalted above the heavens" (7:26) who is a "minister in the sanctuary in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man" (8:2). "He abides forever [and] holds His priesthood permanently" (7:24). "Has He said, and will not do it?"

Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?" (Nu 23:19).

Draw Near

There is a legal saying that possession is nine-tenths of the law. So if you "have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift" (Heb 6:4) you have an entitlement. Also, if you "have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (:5) you demonstrate ownership. These are heavenly, not worldly, characteristics. "Ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God" (:7). However, if they "then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance" (:6). "They have escaped the defilements of the world by knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2Pe 2:20). "It would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them" (:21). Therefore, be mature and train yourselves to put the use of your spiritual senses into practice "to discern good and evil" (Heb 5:14).

Tabernacle worship signified that "the way into the holy place [had] not yet been disclosed" (Heb 9:8). It meant that sacrifices were "offered which [could] not make the worshipper perfect in conscience" (:9). But then "through His own blood, [Christ] entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (:12). He will now "cleanse your conscience from dead

works" (:14) to serve God. A new covenant is therefore created "since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions" (:15). "All things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" (:22). "Where a covenant is, there must be the death of the one who makes it" (:16). A covenant is a legal agreement whereby a testator writes a will making a bequest of what belongs to him to the heirs of the inheritance. Consequently "He is a mediator of a new covenant" (:15). "He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises" (8:6) "It is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Heb 9:27). "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10). "He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (:14). "You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). "I am the Lord who sanctifies you" (Lev 22:32). "You were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1Co 6:11). Therefore "we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus" (Heb 10:19). "Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith" (:22). "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (:23). "We are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preservation of the soul" (:39).

Abide in Him

Early in his writing to the Corinthians Paul cited that he heard "there are quarrels among you" (1Co 1:11) some saying "'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos' . . . [etc.]" (:12). Later he stated "you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me" (2Co 13:3). Then as if to return the question he replied, "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!" (:5). "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1Jn 4:15). When the jailer asked Paul, "'What must I do to be saved?'" (Ac 16:30) he replied, "'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved'" (:31). When you give your testimony as a witness in court they ask you to promise that it will be "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Paul challenged them asking "do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-unless you indeed fail the test?" (2Co 13:5). What does it mean if you are "in the faith" (:5)? The preposition "in" gramatically can mean indicatng a belief such as with "the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Ro 4:5). Therefore "God abides in him" (1Jn 4:15) because he "believes in Him" (Ro 4:5). Paul continued saying "I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test" (2Co 13:6). This is how someone would determine if a person was a Christian or not. "We know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit" (1Jn 4:13). To abide means to stay or remain in a permanent relationship. It

is not the type of question you would ask a stranger but it would be useful "in the defense and confirmation of the gospel" (Php 1:7).

Paul's question to them was if "Christ is in you?" (2Co 13:5). The preposition "in" denotes a location or place. His teaching is based on "if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus" (Eph 4:21). "Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning . . . [and] you also will abide in the Son and in the Father" (1Jn 2:24). "You know Him who has been from the beginning . . . [because] the word of God abides in you" (:14). We "abide in the teaching of Christ" (2Jn 1:9). Jesus expressed that "My words abide in you" (Jn 15:7) and that you "abide in Me, and I in you" (:4). "Just as it has taught you, you abide in Him" (1Jn 2:27). He has "given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true" (5:20). "After listening to the message of truth . . . having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph 1:13). "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you . . . [and] His anointing teaches you about all things" (1Jn 2:27). "His seed abides in him . . . because he is born of God" (3:9). "In Him we live and move and exist" (Ac 17:28). "In Him you have been made complete" (Col 2:10). The anointing is from the "Spirit of truth . . . [and] you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you" (Jn 14:17). It is "for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever" (2Jn 11:2). "The one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the

Son" (1:9). Paul directed the Corinthians to spiritually and experientially prove themselves. They did not possess the completed New Testament as we have today but they had "no need for anyone to teach you" (1Jn 2:27).

Testimonial Evidence

No one disputes that Jesus was a real person. He asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (Mt 16:13). The antichrist denies that he is the Son of God. They answered, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah" (:14). But Peter responded, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God" (:16). They were going by what they had observed. He "rebuked the wind . . . and it became perfectly calm" (Mk 4:39) and they asked, "Who then is this?" (:41). Later Jesus cleared things up and they replied, "now You are speaking plainly . . . and we have no need to question You; by this we believe that you came from God" (Jn 16:29-30). God makes it plain to you. When they "saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, they became very frightened and said "Truly this was the Son of God!" (27:54). The demonstrations had a purpose but many were skeptical. Jesus explained, "If I do them, though you do not believe on Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father" (Jn 10:37-38). Later he exclaimed, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me" (12:44). They had heard his teaching and seen his miracles. Jesus said, "He who sees Me sees the One

who sent Me" (:45). "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him" (Jn 14:7). But the people didn't have faith and he told them, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also" (8:19). "He who hates Me hates My Father also" (15:23). Jesus had said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24). But they "did not recognize the time of [their] visitation" (Lk 19:44).

Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I am" (Jn 8:58). The high priest asked Jesus, "Are You the Christ" . . . and Jesus said, 'I am'" (Mk 14:61-62). Jesus told them, "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and . . . I and the Father are one" (Jn 10:29-30). He later told Philip, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (14:9). "The Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He . . . was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (5:18). Also, they "were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath" (:16). "He answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working'" (:17) plus "the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing" (:19). He had just healed a sick man at the pool of Bethesda telling him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk" (:8). Later he told him in the temple, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you" (:14). Another time they brought him a paralytic and "Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven'" (Mk 2:5). But he didn't heal him

immediately as at Bethseda. The scribes who were present reasoned, "Why does this man speak this way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?" (:7). That is why another time they accused "we know that this man is a sinner" (Jn 9:24). But it was "so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mk 2:10). He explained "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Mt 12:8). Also "All authority has been given Me in heaven and on earth" (27:18). Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, pick up your pallet and go home" (Mk 2:10). "On another Sabbath . . . there was a man whose right hand was withered" (Lk 6:6). He told him, "Stretch out your hand! And he did so and his hand was restored" (:10). Then there was a blind man who cited that "it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind" (Jn 9:32). Jesus "applied the clay to his eyes" (:6) and "he went away and washed, and came back seeing" (:7). The Pharisees accused Jesus of being a sinner and the man replied, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know . . . [but] now I see" (:25). Jesus' reponse is, "Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?" (Jn 8:46).

Faith Saves You

"Having gained approval through their faith, they did not receive what was promised" (Heb 11:39). You are "enlightened" (Heb 10:32) "after receiving the knowledge of the truth" (:26). "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Ro 10:17). Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you" (Lk 7:50). "Faith

is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1). "In hope we have been saved" (Ro 8:24). Faith is "the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11:1) which is "your confidence" (10:35). It produces "endurance, so that . . . you may receive what was promised" (:36) and be able to "run with endurance the race that is set before us" (12:1). "The righteous will live by his faith" (Hab 2:4). Noah became "an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Heb 11:7). Abraham received faith "when he was called" (:8) "from hearing" (Ro 10:17) by the Lord saying "Go forth from your country . . . to the land which I will show you" (Ge 12:1). "He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" (Heb 11:6). "In hope against hope he believed" (Ro 4:18) and "did not waver in unbelief, but grew strong in faith" (:20) "being fully assured that what He had promised, He was also able to perform" (:21). "Sarah herself received ability to conceive . . . since she considered Him faithful who had promised" (Heb 11:11). "Consider Him . . . so that you may not grow weary and lose heart" (12:3) by fixing [your] eyes upon Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith" (:2).

"Make every effort to live in peace with all men" (Heb 12:14). The author of Hebrews said that at the start they "endured a great conflict of sufferings, partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations" (Heb 10:32). Jesus said, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (Jn 16:33). Does that mean we'll always be

prosperous and healthy? Paul asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine" (Ro 8:35)? He answers "in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him" (:37). He also states that God "always leads us in His triumph in Christ" (2Co 2:14). The author encourages them to "remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body" (Heb 13:3). He cites "you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one" (10:34). "See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking" (12:25). The author of Hebrews warns them about "thinking of that country from which they went out" (11:15). He replies that there is a better "heavenly one" (:16) namely "a city for them" (:16). God "warned them on earth" (12:25) and "warns from heaven" (:25). There's a tendency to treat intangible things as unrealistic because you have to put food on the table and take care of your family. However, the author wants heavenly things to be meaningful. He invites them to come to "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (:22). "Angels . . . and the church of the first-born" (:23) are there. Plus "God, the Judge of all" (:23) is there as well as "Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant" (:24). "Much less shall we escape who turn away from Him" (:25).

Diligent Until End (Heb 6:11)

Don't Drift Away

"God" (Heb 1:1) "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son" (:2). "After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard" (2:3). It is "what we have heard" (:1). "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard" (:1). "We must pay more careful attention therefore" (:1 NIV). It was "the word spoken through angels" (:2) and "are they not . . . sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?" (1:14). It was salvation "spoken through the Lord, [and] it was confirmed to us" (2:3). "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard" (:2 KJV). What was heard? It was the Gospel. But we must be careful "that we do not drift away from it" (:2 NIV) which is "what we have heard" (:2). We can forget if we are careless and ignore it. The author therefore says to them "it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing" (5:11). The process is illustrated by drifting away which is being swept along by a water current or washed away. The Gospel can be seen as a boat dock which you grab on to for safety, security and to have the truth. But if you're not attentive you can lose your handhold and drift away. Worse yet you can refuse to accept it and deliberately push off from the dock back into the current. Rejecting it represents unbelief. "Therefore do not throw away your confidence" (10:35). Prolonging that process results in apostasy because that person has neglected to "pay more careful

attention" (2:2 NIV) or "pay much closer attention" (:2 NASB). The Gospel represents "the things which we have heard [and not] at any time . . . should [we] let them slip" (:2 KJV). It represents salvation and heaven to the believer.

You are Partakers

You might respond that this warning doesn't apply to me because I am saved. But the author addresses the "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling" (Heb 3:1). "He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him" (7:25). You have "been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (6:4). "Beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation" (:9). Therefore they are Jewish believers. So why warn them about backsliding? Perhaps they are vulnerable because the New Covenant requires a different kind of faith than the Old Covenant.

Scripture should have been clear enough to them. "He who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life" (Jn 6:40). "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (10:28). You would think that without science fiction sources to distract them they would take eternal life literally. Jesus promised, "He who believes in Me will never thirst" (6:32). It is a matter of trust, and when Hebrews was written, a number of people were still alive who had heard Jesus. He said "the one who comes to Me, I will certainly not cast out" (:37). "All that

[the Father] He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day" (:39).

Maybe they missed the security of the religious routines of Tabernacle worship. But Jesus has become the New Covenant. "Christ was faithful as a Son over His house-whose house we are" (Heb 3:6). "Through Him we both have our access in the Spirit to the Father . . . and are of God's household" (Eph 2:18-19). Paul asks "who will separate us from the love of Christ?" (Ro 8:35). "For I am convinced that . . . [nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (:38-39).

Danger of Apostasy

Bible teachers explain that our position in Christ is based upon the foundation of the scriptures. However, each believer didn't have his own personal Bible like we do today. But the author of Hebrews reminded them "to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard" (Heb 2:2 KJV). Those Jews had been taught weekly on the Sabbath about the Old Covenant. Those "things" included "the man who finds wisdom and the man who finds understanding" (Proverbs 3:13). "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens. By His knowledge the deeps were broken up" (:19-20). Hebrews was warning them not to "drift away" but to keep focused. "Let them not vanish from your sight; keep sound wisdom and knowledge" (:21).

Hebrews urges them to persevere. "Solid food is for

the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained" (Heb 5:14). "Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about Christ, let us press on to maturity" (6:1). They must have known "in Him you have been made complete" (Col 2:10) and that "He made you alive together with "Him" (:13). "Having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance (Eph 11:13-14) and "by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (4:30). They should have put their eyes on the future and not be returning to the past which would represent apostasy. "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb 10:10). "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (:14). Hebrews is warning them not to reject the Gospel. "In later times some will fall away from the faith" (1Ti 4:1) but the day of the Lord "will not come unless the apostasy comes first" (2Ti 2:3). "How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God . . . by which he was sanctified?" (Heb 10:29).

Salvation is Escape

The author predicates asking, "For if . . . every transgression and disobedience received a just penalty, how will we escape?" (Heb 2:2-3). It is a cause and effect. God told Moses, "'When you enter the land . . . when you eat of the food of the land, you shall lift up an offering to the Lord'" (Nu 15:19). "But when you unwittingly fail" (:22) you "shall offer one bull for a burnt

offering . . . with its grain offering and its drink offering . . . and one male goat for a sin offering" (:24). This was to illustrate "how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb 2:3). To escape is to avoid the consequences. "If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!" (Pr 11:31). Salvation means that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1Ti 1:15) and "having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Ro 5:10). The Lord is "not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). The result of not escaping is to perish. It is an either-or proposition. Unfortunately "the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing" (1Co 1:18). But the author of Hebrews is addressing "those who are sanctified . . . [and Jesus] is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb 2:11) because they are "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling" (3:1). They are referred to in the same way in Hebrews 3:12, 10:19 and 13:22. Therefore believers are being addressed with the question "how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (2:3). The cross is "to us who are being saved . . . the power of God" (1Co 1:18). Why had Israel "turned away in continual apostasy? They hold fast to deceit, they refuse to return" (Jer 8:5). Peter advised to "repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away" (Ac 3:19) and Jesus preached "repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1:15).

Signs and Miracles

The author is concerned about those who may disregard salvation. He first makes it clear that it isn't

because there wasn't enough evidence. "It was confirmed to us by those who heard" (Heb 2:3). Luke cites that "they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word" (Lk 1:2). It was "Jesus, because of the suffering of death . . . that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:9) whereby "bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings" (:10). This is not just a generalization for posterity's sake in accordance with "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'?" (Jn 10:34). "You have appointed him over the works of Your hands; you have put all things in subjection under His feet" (Heb 2:6). It is in accordance with the brethren because "beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation" (6:9). For this "reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (2:11). "I will proclaim Your name to My brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise" (:12).

At first glance Hebrews 2:1-4 could be looked at as a brief mention of importance. Verse one is apostasy, two the Law, three the gospel and four miracles. The Hebrews being addressed would remember when reminded. One would think a subject of such importance would require more emphasis. Peter's sermon reiterates Jesus' "miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know" (Ac 2:22). "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking

place through the apostles" (:43). Hebrews then repeats that it was "God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will" (Heb 2:4). Paul thought it important to ask the Galatians "does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it . . . by faith?" (Gal 3:5). Revelation came "to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven" (1Pe 1:12). But even today cessationists believe that miracles ceased when the apostles died. The author of Hebrews is reminding them of the applicability of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus highlighted the tendency of "unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe" (Jn 4:48). Also, "'You seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled'" (6:26). The Hebrews should have been challenged by this message.

A Firm Root

It is "His house-whose house we are" (Heb 3:6). But there is a contingency because the next phrase starts with "if." "If we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (:6). There is a parallel regarding the sower of seed where some "'fell on the rocky ground . . . [but] it had no depth of soil'" (Mk 4:5). It represents people who "when they hear the word immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away" (:16-17). If they receive the

word joyfully you would assume it had been understood. "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1Co 2:14). However, it is predicated on whether they have a "firm root in themselves" (Mk 4:16). You are motivated "with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37). It is more than just your mind saying to itself that something is true. If that was the only criteria then if you drink in this way you "will thirst again" (Jn 4:13). "Whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Mt 16:25). He who "drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (6:54). They are to then hold on to it firmly "until the end" (:6). But for these it is only "temporary" (:17) and they "fall away" (:17) which is defined as apostasy.

In Hope Believed

Christ was "a Son over His house whose house we are if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope" (Heb 3:6). The word "hope" is used several times in the book of Hebrews. Having hope means that you have an expectation that something will come to pass. It can be based on justification or reasonableness, otherwise it would be hopeless. You can even have hope in a person who you feel can accomplish what you expect. Hope can have a connotation of doubt because if what you expect seems impossible, you wouldn't say "I hope so" questioning it. Therefore "hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?"

(Ro 8:24). "But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (:25). There is an eager anticipation not normally there as we are "looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). To Paul it was "according to my earnest expectation and hope" (Php 1:20).

One piece of the armor of God is the "helmet, the hope of salvation" (1Th 5:8). It protects the mind. When you get an understanding of something you reply, "I see what you mean." Seeing is a physical experience and a metaphor for mentally comprehending something. When it is established "our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing" (2Co 1:7). It is a deliberate decision. Paul advised "instruct those who are rich in this present world not . . . to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches" (1Ti 6:17). It shows you can misplace your hope as the Jews were told it is "'Moses, in whom you have set your hope'" (Jn 5:45). The proper focus is that "we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men" (1Ti 4:10) and it is "He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us" (2Co 1:10).

There are attributes which include "believes all things, hopes all things" (1Co 13:7). The two are separated. Also "now faith, hope, love, abide these three" (:13). Separate words have individual meanings which sometimes need careful interpretation. Abraham is said that "in hope against hope he believed" (Ro 4:18). Both hope and believing are cited incorporating two

meanings. Hope is fixing or setting your mind on a probable future result. "Against hope" (:18) means you wouldn't logically expect something to happen because the chance of it is almost zero. Abraham nonetheless hoped in it anyway and "in hope . . . he believed" (:18). These two words must have different uses or else they'd be redundant together. For instance, "we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:5). "We have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and exalt in hope of the glory of God" (Ro 5:2). Paul prayed that "the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (15:13). We "through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God" (1Pe 1:21). Abraham "believed in hope" (Ro 4:18 KJV) because he trusted in the promise "that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken" (:18).

Hope in God

The "hope of Israel" (Ac 28:20) is "the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain" (26:7). It is the "hope of the promise made by God to our fathers" (:6) regarding "the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago" (Titus 1:2). God has "given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace" (2Th 2:16) and we are "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7). "There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling" (Eph 4:4). Paul prayed "that the eyes of your

heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling" (2:12).

How do you have hope? Hoping must be directed properly. It is necessary to "hope in God" (Ac 24:15) and to "hope in Christ" (Eph 1:12) because it is "Christ Jesus, who is our hope" (1Ti 1:1). Next we are to "take hold of the hope set before us" (Heb 3:18) and then your "flesh also will live in hope" (Ac 2:26). Where is the source of hope? "In earlier times [it] was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Ro 15:4). "Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts" (5:5). "In His name the Gentiles will hope" (Mt 12:21). It is "this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). There is a "hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel" (:5). "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil" (Heb 6:19).

What is our position? "His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1Pe 1:3). "Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself" (1Jn 3:3). "Show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end" (Heb 6:11). "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1Pe 1:13). "If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are

of all men most to be pitied" (1Co 15:19). Therefore be "steadfast in hope" (1Th 1:3) and "continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation" (Col 1:23). "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1Pe 3:15).

Confess your Hope

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful" (Heb 10:23). The Greek word for confession means to say the same thing or to agree with. Another way to look at it is to speak out of as with a public declaration. Since it is confessing your hope it is agreeing with the expectation which you have identified. That is what you "hold fast . . . without wavering" (:23). Your faith depends on that "He who promised is faithful" (:23). "The promise was approaching which God had assured Abraham" (Ac 7:17). But make sure you aren't a "double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (Ja 1:8). If you waver you're not holding fast and you can drift away. The most important aspect of this is when "you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord" (Ro 10:9). There's a saying that you should put your mind in motion before setting your mouth in gear. But with the engine running in neutral you'll never get anywhere if you don't engage the transmission. So when you "believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (:9) and "with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation"

(:10). The first part of the verse says "with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness" (:10). Its as if without the second half of the verse the process is incomplete. Some have pointed out that even though doctrine itself is truth, if its only treated mentally, it isn't alive and has to be activated before it can be used.

Jesus said that "everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My father who is in heaven" (Mt 10:32) and "also before the angels of God" (Lk 12:8). Its as if it was a requirement to speak it out openly "before men" (Mt 10:32). But the Pharisees said "if anyone confessed Him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue" (Jn 9:22) so "they were not confessing him" (12:42). Paul advised to "fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called" (1Ti 6:12). He recognized that "you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (:12). So as "partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus" (Heb 3:1) who is the "great high priest who has passed through the heavens" (4:14) and the "High Priest of our confession" (3:1).

The author of Hebrews warns to hold on to the "confession of our hope" (Heb 10:23). Should the word's use be limited to just declaring, agreeing and praising? Or should its understanding be expanded to the larger context to where it is also used? If it means to audibly profess before men then when they were baptized in the Jordan River "they confessed their sins" (Mt 3:6) applies. Doctrinally "if we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins" (1Jn 1:9). The big

picture is "your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ" (2Co 9:13). "The one who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1Jn 2:23) and "whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (4:15). "Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Php 2:11) and "every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (1Jn 4:2). In the longer perspective "all these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance" (Heb 11:13). They had "confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (:13).

Assurance of Hope

It is "whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (Heb 3:6). "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1). We can have confidence if we're assured in our faith and have a conviction of what we're convinced of. When you are assured about something you know enough of the facts about it so that you can predict its behavior. It must be logical so that you can depend on its performance. You must feel good about it to place your faith in it. In fact, "faith is the assurance of things hoped for" (Heb 11:1). If your hope in something is well-founded based on evidence and how confident you feel about it then assurance is produced which represents faith in something. It is "the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding" (Col 2:2). To understand is to know. But there is the starting point where "we were

dead in our transgressions" (Eph 2:5). Then there is "the beginning of our assurance" (Heb 3:14). Next, God makes "known to us the mystery of His will" (Eph 1:9) "resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery that is, Christ Himself" (Col 2:2). It is so "you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (4:12). Then "we will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him" (1Jn 3:19). In their desperation "men's hearts were failing them for fear . . . [of what was] coming on the earth" (Lk 21:26 KJV) and God's solution is, "Cease striving and know that I am God" (Ps 46:10). Scripture has been written "so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1Jn 5:13). "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (Jn 17:3).

God "gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). "I give eternal life to them" (Jn 10:28). I've heard many people ask how does one comprehend eternal life? The Father sent Christ "into the world so that we might live through Him" (1Jn 4:9). "He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him" (Heb 7:25). "The testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son" (1Jn 5:9) and "that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son" (:11). "The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself" (:10) and "he who has the Son has the life" (:12). Your confidence is predicated on "that you may stand perfect and fully assured" (Col 4:12). But you don't stand on what you have personally figured out all

by yourself. It is "He who began a good work in you" (Php 1:6) by way of "His calling and choosing you" (2Pe 1:10). His "great mercy has caused us to be born again" (1Pe 1:3). There is deliberation to it because "whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Ro 10:13). It is "what I have entrusted to Him" (2Ti 1:12). "After listening to the message of the truth, the gospel" (Eph 1:13) "everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me" (Jn 6:45). Paul states "you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you unless you believed in vain" (1Co 15:2). It is "on the basis of faith in His name" (Ac 3:16) and a choice to "repent and return" (Ac 3:19) in "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (20:21).

Guaranty of Salvation

How do you know you possess salvation? "Believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you will be saved" (Ro 10:9). "The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself" (1Jn 5:10) for "he who has the Son has the life" (:12). "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed" (Ro 10:11) for "as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (Jn 1:12). "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Ro 8:16). "We have obtained an inheritance" (Eph 1:11) and are "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Ro 8:17) "with a view of the redemption of God's own possession" (Eph 1:14). He "gave us the Spirit in our hearts" (2Co 1:22) "as a pledge of our inheritance" (Eph 1:14).

How do you experientially know that you are a "new creation in Christ" (2Co 5:17). "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that it is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). It is "bestowed on us" (1:6) and "He has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing" (:3). "The love of God was manifested in us" (1Jn 4:9) and "God is for us" (Ro 8:31) and "intercedes for us" (:34). It is "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you" (1Pe 1:4). "He is able to guard" (2Ti 1:12) and "perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus" (Php 1:6). You are "protected by the power of God through faith" (1Pe 1:5).

Is there a guaranty that what you believe in will be fulfilled? Abraham was "fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform" (Ro 4:21). "The one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mk 13:13) "if we hold fast . . . until the end" (Heb 3:14). Some have commented that if there wasn't any ongoing responsibility of the believer to continue in faith then maybe God would rapture each one at the point of salvation. Calvinists believe that those "He foreknew, He also predestined" (Ro 8:29) takes away the threat of backsliding. But why would Peter warn "brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you" (2Pe 1:10). He answers "as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble" (:10). There are many scriptures you can rely on but they must experientially become a part of you. Therefore make sure you are "building yourselves up on your most holy

faith, praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20). It requires your effort to "keep yourselves in the love of God (:21). Furthermore, you must be "waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord" (:21). Anxiously means with anticipation and diligence.

Hold Confidence Fast

"Christ was faithful as a Son over His house whose house we are if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope" (Heb 3:5-6). We are "Christ's body, and individually members of it" (1Co 12:27). "You are a temple of God" (3:16) "of the Holy Spirit who is in you" (6:19). This is contingent "if we hold fast our confidence" (Heb 3:6). The phrase "hold fast" doesn't sound modern but it does have the connotation of to fasten something which is to firmly attach securely in place. The NIV translates it to "hold on to our courage" (:6) which means it is highly recommended. The word "courage" seems to denote positive thinking, and "holding on" self effort. The NASB uses the word "confidence." But the spiritual interpretation is, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" (Zec 4:6). The author of Hebrews warns "do not throw away your confidence, which has great reward" (10:35). That shows at least that it is a matter of will power. The NIV expresses that "we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first" (3:14). To hold connotes grasping with your hand, and if you don't have a firm handhold, you might drop it. Does it imply that you might get tired of holding it and set it down? The starting point is marked as "the beginning of" (:14 NASB) or "at first" (:14 NIV). Then you are to "show this same

diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure" (6:11 NIV) "so as to realize the full assurance of hope" (:11 NASB). We are to "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess" (10:23 NIV) "without wavering" (:23 NASB). You will receive "God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off" (Ro 11:22).

Another facet of perseverance is to "hold fast the word which I preached to you" (1Co 15:2). The understanding is in your mind, memory and comprehension. Paul applied this telling Timothy "continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them" (2Ti 3:14). Becoming convinced shows that it is not instantaneous but a process of study. "They observed the confidence of Peter and John . . . and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus" (Ac 4:13). Paul stated "we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him" (Eph 3:12) and "before Him" (1Jn 5:14). "Such confidence we have through Christ toward God" (2Co 3:4) and "great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus" (1Ti 3:13). "We have confidence in the Lord concerning you" (2Th 3:4), "in you in the Lord" (Gal 5:10) and "am convinced in the Lord Jesus" (Ro 14:14). There is always an object associated with confidence. You are "convinced of this" (Php 1:25) and your "confidence is this" (2Co 1:12). Also you "confidently say" (Ac 2:29), "speak confidently" (Titus 3:8), and "make confident assertions" (1Ti 1:7). Furthermore, servants are to "speak Your word with

confidence" (Ac 4:29) and you are to "speak to him [the king] also with confidence" (26:26). "By this, love is perfected with us, so we may have confidence in the day of judgment" (1Jn 4:17). "Abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence" (2:28) "because as He is, so also are we in this world" (4:17).

Don't Harden Heart

"Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Heb 11:1 NIV). "I know whom I have believed" (2Ti 1:12). "Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind" (Ro 14:5). "Our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience . . . not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God" (2Co 1:12). "We are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh" (Php 3:3). "If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we" (2Co 10:7). "If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God" (1Jn 3:21). We are composed of body, soul and spirit and the heart is, spiritually speaking, connected with the last two whereby each person is "convinced in his own mind" (Ro 14:5). Accordingly Paul warns, "Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness" (Heb 3:8). "They rebelled against Me and were not willing to listen to Me" (Eze 20:8). "Today, if you would hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Heb 3:7) "as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness" (Ps 95:8). This can result in apostasy which

is to reset your position by standing away from where you had previously associated yourself. "The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith" (1Ti 4:1) when "apostasy comes" (2Th 2:3). "In time of temptation [they] fall away" (Lk 8:13). "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord knows those who are His'" (2Ti 2:19).

The author then quotes Psalm 95:7-11. In the first two chapters he quoted the Old Testament logically because he was appealing to Jews. He precedes this quote with, "Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says" (Heb 3:7). "Therefore" signifies a conclusion. Also he is specifying God as this speaker as well as having written the psalm. Unbelief and rebellion are the subject. Consequences of this are emphasized with the parallel that "'they shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who spurned Me see it'" (Nu 14:23). The wording of the Psalm 95:8-9 quote is a little different than Hebrews 3:8-9 but the content is the same. "Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness'" (Heb 3:8). The psalm specifies "at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness" (Ps 95:8). The Greek word for "provoked" is dokimazo meaning to test with a view toward approval. It is associated with the geographical location Meribah which is called the place of strife. In the wilderness Israel stayed at Kadesh. "There was no water for the congregation . . . [and] the people thus contended with Moses" (Nu 20:2-3). God told Moses, "Take the rod . . . and speak to the rock

before their eyes, that it may yield its water" (:8). "Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and the water came forth abundantly" (:11). "He split the rocks in the wilderness and gave them abundant drink" (Ps 78:15). "Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the Lord, and He proved Himself holy among them" (Nu 20:13).

Tried and Tested

Then they "camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink" (Ex 17:1). "The people quarreled with Moses . . . [and he] "said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord" (:2). The Greek word for "test" is *peirazo* meaning to test with a view toward destruction. It is associated with the geographical location Massah which is called temptation. Moses said, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me" (:4). God told Moses, "I will stand before you on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock [with your staff], and water will come out of it" (:6). Moses "named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us, or not?'" (:7). The author quotes, "Your fathers tried Me by testing Me, and saw My works for forty years" (Heb 3:9). The psalm phrased it, "When your fathers tested Me, they tried Me, though they had seen My work" (Ps 95:9). The words 'try' and 'test' are reversed but synonymous in context. "Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the

test these ten times and have not listened to My voice" (Nu 14:22).

"The Lord said to Moses, 'How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?' (:11). "Yet they still continued to sin against Him, to rebel against the Most High in the desert, and in their heart they put God to the test by asking food according to their desire. Then they spoke against God; they said, 'Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?'" (Ps 78:17-19). "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me" (Nu 14:27). "'I, the Lord, have spoken, surely this I will do to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be destroyed, and there they will die'" (:35). It is the result of a people who "always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways" (Heb 3:10). A rule was later made official when Moses said, "This is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you" (Dt 6:1). "'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah'" (:16).

Result of Disobedience

"Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me" (Heb 3:15). "Who provoked Him when they heard?" (:16). "Was it not those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness" (:17) and "who were disobedient?" (:18). "They were not able to enter because of unbelief"

(:19). Therefore, be careful "that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (:12). Make sure that "none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (:13). Disobedience results in sin due to hardness and unbelief. It leads to falling away from God. But why would the author of Hebrews bring this up to Jews who were now living under a New Covenant where the old one had been superseded? They would know not to make those same mistakes again. However, the reason is that "these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they craved" (1Co 10:6). They were not to "be idolaters" (:7). They said to Aaron, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses . . . we do not know what has become of him" (Ex 32:1). "They were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ" (1Co 10:4). The lesson is "that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe" (Jude 5).

One event in the wilderness was when they didn't have any water. God told Moses, "Take the rod . . . and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water" (Nu 20:8). "Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his hand" (:11). But he was told to only speak to it. God then responded, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (:12). Later Moses recounted, "The Lord was angry with me

also on your account, saying 'Not even you shall enter there'" (Dt 1:37). The decision was that they "shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers . . . but My servant Caleb, because he had a different spirit and followed Me fully" (Nu 14:23-24). Entering the promised land is a picture of God's plan. "His works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb 4:3). "By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done" (Ge 2:2). The land God was giving Israel is symbolic of the result of the work he had finished which he was now resting from. However, "to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief" (Heb 3:18-19). "Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to come short of it" (4:1). "We who have believed enter that rest" (:3).

Enter that Rest

"Just as has been said before, 'Today . . . hear His voice'" (Heb 4:7) such that "we have had good news preached to us, just as they also" (:2) because they "had good news preached to them" (:6). Therefore ignorance isn't an excuse. "The word they heard did not profit them" (:2) "because of disobedience" (:6). They ignored the advice to "'not harden your hearts'" (:7) and "unbelief" (3:19) interfered "because it was not united by faith in those who heard" (4:2). "There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (:9) and "it remains

for some to enter it" (:6). "We who have believed enter that rest" (:3) "for the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest" (:10-11). "Since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus" (10:19) "let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith" (:22). "We through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness" (Gal 5:5). But there is the other side of the coin. "The Lord said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book'" (Ex 32:33). No one "who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph 5:5).

The author of Hebrews addresses them as "beloved" (6:9) and "holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling" (3:1). He recognizes they "have become dull of hearing" (5:11) and warns accordingly "do not drift away" (2:1). He is not concerned about unbelievers because they would not need to "hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end" (3:6). They have been "enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift" (6:4) and also of "the good word of God and the powers of the age to come" (:5). But he warns again for those who have "fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance" (:6). He is concerned about "better things" (:9) for them and to "press on to maturity" (:1). It is your "confidence, which has a great reward" (10:35) that "when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (:36). "He is able also to save forever those

who draw near" (7:25) and "has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (10:14). To many this means eternal security as with the Calvinists who believe in eternal salvation. "Everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (Jn 6:40). "I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand" (10:28). Is this an automatic passport to heaven no matter what happens? Or is it possible to completely, irreconcilably "drift away"? (Heb 2:1). One qualification is to "be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (6:12). "We are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul" (10:39). Don't be like Esau who "even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance" (12:17).

Falling Away

There are warnings to the Jews in Hebrews about falling away. One theological premise is that it can be apostasy representing loss of salvation. That would have to be determined based on the definition of the words used and the context they are in. We have "a great high priest" (Heb 4:14) who David prophesied about saying, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (:7). We are to "draw near" (:16) to him to "find grace to help in time of need" (:16). "The one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works" (:10). So we are to be "diligent to enter

that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience" (:11). The example was when Israel failed to enter the promised land. If you don't enter that rest you will fall, and that generation "fell" in the wilderness. They died, so does that mean that if you do not believe, you will not enter in to heaven? These Hebrews were told they had "need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God" (5:12) because they were "not accustomed to the word of righteousness" (:13). What does it mean that you can "fall" (4:11)? Apparently these Hebrew believers were jeopardizing their position because they were being warned. Their immaturity (:12) was eroding their standing and the solution was to "press on to maturity" (6:1). Without perseverance it is possible to become like them who "have fallen away" (:6).

Answering a particular question without addressing the overall theme it is a part of is almost taking it out of context. But compensating by explaining everything can be overkill. You could begin by citing the introductory statement of God that "in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things" (Heb 1:2). It follows that if we don't listen and "neglect" (2:3) it we can "drift away from it" (:1). It is "salvation" (:3) marked by "the beginning of our assurance" (3:14). This is tied to having "once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift" (6:4). They had shared and had become "partakers of a heavenly calling: (3:1) and "partakers of Christ" (:14). Furthermore God had testified "by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy

Spirit: (2:4) and they "have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (6:4). The message necessitates that "for this reason we must pay much closer attention" (2:2) to be one "who partakes" (5:13) "therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ" (6:1).

Falls Away

Continuity is an important ingredient in comprehending the meaning of a treatise. The author mentions that they must "hold fast . . . firm until the end" (Heb 3:6,14). In previous sections of this paper the subjects addressed were assurance, hope, confidence and confession. The author cautions there must not be "an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God" (3:12 NASB) since "they were not able to enter because of unbelief" (:19). It is also translated a "sinful" (:12 NIV) "heart of unbelief" (:12 KJV). "Falls away" (:12) is also phrased as "in falling away." It is a "heart that turns away" (:12 NIV) and one "in departing from the living God" (:12 KJV). The Greek word for "falls away" is *aphistemi* meaning to lead away or to depart from being composed of *apo* meaning away from and *histemi* meaning to make a stand. The connotation is that it is a wilful, irretrievable act in the sense of a deliberate repudiation. If it were just a temporary decision without permanent ramifications it would be so non-consequential that being mentioned in the first place would be questionable.

They will "press on to maturity" (Heb 6:1) "if God permits" (:3). They are "those who" (:4) have experienced God's provision and "then have fallen

away" (:6 NASB). The KJV translates it "if they shall fall away" and the NIV "if they fall away." That Greek word is parapito meaning to fall in, into or away and even to fail. It is composed of pipto meaning to fall and para designating from beside, by the side of, by or beside. But it does not define what has been rejected or disconnected from. However the five substantival participles are grouped together by the article tous which means "those who" (:4). The first four speak of spiritual characteristics so it is the environment that those people are experiencing. How serious is this "falling away?" The Old Testament equivalent is the word mahal meaning to act unfaithfully. It is used in Ezekiel 14:13 referencing, "'If a country sins against Me by committing unfaithfulness'" and in Numbers 5:12 by, "'If any man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him.'" In the latter it is a conscious turning her back on her husband which is why the word is translated "trespass." The word inherits the meaning of "completely turning away from" which qualifies it as defined as "apostasy." This would designate "fallen away" as more serious because the context is that "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame" (Heb 6:6). "It is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned" (:8). The act of the crucifixion "cancelled . . . the decrees against us . . . having nailed it to the cross" (Col 2:14). He gave "His life a ransom" (Mt 20:28) because that sacrifice was payment for our debt. Therefore he who recognizes and accepts this "'he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me'"

(Lk 9:23). That takes repentance. But those who "have fallen away" (Heb 6:6) repudiate that by unbelief. However, God will not permit certain things (:3). That is why it is not possible "to renew them again" (:6) because "they again crucify" (:6) Christ. God told Moses to "strike the rock" (Lev 17:6) but then he "struck the rock twice" (Nu 20:11) and because of this, he was not able to bring them "into the land" (:12). "If we go on sinning willfully . . . there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (Heb 10:26). We know it isn't just being "caught in any trespass" (Gal 6:1) because there is forgiveness. However, anyone "who does *anything* defiantly" (Nu 15:30) and "who has set aside the Law of Moses" (Heb 10:28) "shall be cut off from among his people" (Nu 15:30) and "you shall not pity him" (Dt 19:13) because treating the cross as just a common death is to repudiate that sacrifice. "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall" (1Co 10:12).