

WITNESSING

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Preface

Before you begin your Bible study, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be sure you have named your sins privately to God the Father.

If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all [unknown, or forgotten sins] unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

You will then be in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and ready to learn Bible doctrine from the Word of God.

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in [the filling of the] spirit and [biblical] truth.” (John 4:24)

If you have never personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the issue is not naming your sins. The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

THE WORD OF GOD is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God might be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

INTRODUCTION

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE for declaring the Gospel to the unbelieving world? Is the duty and privilege of proclaiming the good news of salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ reserved solely for the pastor, the missionary, and the evangelist? Definitely not! Presenting the Gospel to a lost and dying world is the responsibility of *every* believer.

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)¹

Witnessing means communicating God’s plan of salvation to unbelievers on a personal basis. Before His ascension to heaven (Acts 1:9–10), the Lord commissioned all born-again believers to carry the

1. All Scriptures in this book are quoted from the New American Standard Bible (NASB). Bracketed commentary reflects amplification of the NASB translation taught in Bible class lectures (available on MP3 CD from R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, Houston, Texas).

Gospel to the ends of the earth. His command is repeated in several of the New Testament epistles. The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians they were to be ambassadors for Christ.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us. (2 Cor. 5:20a)

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

An ambassador is a high-ranking minister of state, often a member of royalty or nobility, sent to a foreign country to represent his sovereign on official business. But ambassadorship exists in the spiritual realm as well as in the temporal realm. Like earthly ambassadors, we do not appoint ourselves. We are appointed by our Savior, the King of kings and Lord of lords, to represent Him on earth while He is seated at the right hand of God the Father (Col. 3:1). As children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we are born again into a high and noble position. We are citizens not only of our country, but also “fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household” (Eph. 2:19b).

As the heavenly King’s personal representatives on earth, each of us is in full-time Christian service, regardless of our human vocation or profession. We do not act in our own interest but in the interest of our Lord. Like ambassadors to a foreign country, we receive our instructions in written form—the Scriptures. Every provision is made for us by our Sovereign. Yet our effectiveness as ambassadors depends upon understanding our mission. We must remain on duty until the Lord recalls us. Like all activities in life, either secular or spiritual, ambassadorship requires proper motivation, preparation, and knowledge.

MASS EVANGELISM AND PERSONAL WITNESSING

Apart from the divine appointment of every individual believer as an ambassador, there exists the spiritual gift of evangelism to a few

believers (Eph. 4:11). This spiritual gift grants the evangelist the ability to gain the attention of large crowds of unbelievers. Both functions coexist in God's plan, but their simultaneous operation is often misunderstood. Personal witnessing is frequently distorted into a guilt-driven merit system or ignored entirely in favor of mass evangelism. Consequently, a nonbiblical pattern prevails in many churches today: An evangelist is invited to conduct a 'revival,' and members of a church bring unbelievers to hear him. If a few people are saved in this 'revival,' believers assume their personal obligation to witness is fulfilled.

This misconception is a real problem. First of all, a true revival in the biblical sense concerns believers responding to God's Word, not unbelievers responding to the Gospel. Second, the primary function of the local church is the communication of Bible doctrine by the pastor-teacher so believers might grow in grace and become spiritually self-sustaining, or spiritually mature. Third, when unbelievers come to church under pressure or coercion, in the wrong frame of mind, they are resentful and rarely give full attention to the Gospel. Instead of responding, unbelievers may react to the message.

Witnessing and mass evangelism are meant to function together to be most effective. Suppose an evangelist speaks for a week in a town, and fifty unbelievers receive Christ as Savior. How wonderful if even *one* person accepts Christ as Savior, but here are *fifty* who did! However, this mass evangelism method does not fulfill the biblical mandate for every believer to witness.

In another hypothetical case, let us suppose that one hundred members of a church begin to witness to unbelievers with whom they associate every day. This may occur with co-workers, friends, or neighbors. Personal witnessing may also happen on the campus or in the barracks—wherever we associate with unbelievers. If in a given week each church member leads one person to Jesus Christ, there are *one hundred* new believers in contrast to fifty. The cause of Christ would move forward rapidly if we followed the principle of mass and personal evangelism working side by side. Although every believer does not have the gift of evangelism, every believer is responsible for witnessing.

AGENCIES OF WITNESSING

The Family Plan

The Gospel was first declared in the Garden of Eden after the Fall. The Lord Himself was the first Evangelist and the man and his wife the first hearers of the good news of salvation (Gen. 3:15). After the regeneration of Adam and Eve, the Gospel became their sacred trust and witnessing operated on the ‘family plan.’² The first parents set the precedent for all future parents by witnessing to their own children.³

Before long, belief in or rejection of the Gospel divided the human race into two groups—believers and unbelievers. Abel responded to the offer of salvation and believed in the Son of God; Cain rebelled against the Gospel and became the first human to refuse eternal life. After Cain murdered Abel (Gen. 4:8) God restored the regenerate line of Christ through Seth, another son of Adam and Eve who had believed in the Lord (Gen. 4:25–26; cf. 15:6). The history and culture of the believing line of Seth and the unbelieving line of Cain are traced in Genesis chapters 4 and 5.

The family plan of evangelizing continued through Noah and his children until the time of the Flood (Gen. 7).⁴ Following the Flood, God commanded that the posterity of Noah’s sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth, be divided into separate nations (Gen. 10). As these new nations developed and expanded, evangelism was generally contained within each national entity.

With the passing of time, mankind became preoccupied with the details of life—material possessions, human relationships, pleasures,

2. Regeneration, often called the new birth or being “born again” (John 3:3), occurs at the moment of faith in Christ when a person passes from the state of spiritual death to the state of spiritual life (John 3:15; 10:28; Titus 3:5). See R. B. Thieme, Jr., *A Matter of Life and Death: The Gospel of Jesus Christ* (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1990). Hereafter, cross-references to my books will cite only author, title, date of publication (in the first reference), and page(s).

3. Witnessing to your children is the responsibility of all Christian parents in every dispensation of human history. See Thieme, *Children’s Bible Studies Volume Three: The Persons of the Godhead* (2005), 21–24, 138–40; *The Great Adventure* (1991); *Train Up a Child...Children’s Bible Studies Source Book* (1999), 66.

4. Thieme, *Victorious Proclamation* (2002), 12–14.

and achievements. Increasingly people turned a deaf ear to the Gospel. When a majority of the population rejects God's grace offer of salvation, and when believers neglect Bible doctrine, decadence and apostasy contaminate and dominate society. Such degeneracy existed when the Tower of Babel was constructed: evangelism was forgotten; man in his arrogance replaced the plan of God with his own grandiose scheme (Gen. 11:1–9).⁵ God pronounced judgment on this first universal government in order to perpetuate His grace message throughout the world.

The Nation of Israel

After God destroyed the Tower of Babel conspiracy and instituted different languages and races on the earth (Gen. 11:7–8), a specific missionary agency, the nation Israel, was needed to replace the family system of witnessing. Through Israel, God's Word would be preserved and His Son sent as the Savior of the world.

God called out one believing Gentile, Abram, to become the father of the Jewish race (Gen. 12:1–3). Over a period of four hundred years of slavery in Egypt, the nation of Israel was formed. Since Israel was appointed God's custodian of divine truth, the nation was given the responsibility for evangelizing the world (Rom. 3:1–2). Instead of fulfilling their assignment as God's missionary agency, the Israelites arrogantly came to regard salvation as a Jewish monopoly and ultimately failed to obey God and spread the Gospel.

In an exceptionally apostate period of Jewish history Israel came under severe divine discipline—the seventy years of Babylonian captivity (587–517 B.C.). Following this judgment God graciously promised His people an additional four hundred and ninety years for missionary activity (from 445 B.C.). But this period was shortened by seven years when Israel rejected the Messiah, culminating in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross (Dan. 9:24–27). Consequently, the Jews still 'owe' God seven years of witnessing, which they will 'pay back' in the Tribulation. Israel's failure to witness was so overwhelming that

5. Thieme, *Freedom through Military Victory* (2003), 11–12; *The Plan of God* (2003).

God set His client nation aside temporarily in favor of a new agency—the Church.⁶

Today, the Church

The Church does not mean any specific local church, but refers to all individuals throughout the world who have personally believed in Christ as Savior during the Church Age—from the day of Pentecost, A.D. 30, until the Rapture.⁷ So, if you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a member of the Church Universal and are responsible to God for spreading the Gospel.

Because of the confusion about personal evangelism, we may miss obvious opportunities to witness for Christ in our nation and to our generation. The United States should not be thought of as a ‘Christian nation.’⁸ Our citizens are as desperately in need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the rest of the world.⁹ How, then, can we be effective in world missions—evangelism conducted outside of our own country—when we do not witness in our own backyard?

In the Future, the Tribulation and Millennium

The Church Age ends with the removal of the Church from the earth at the Rapture. The remaining seven years of the original four

6. Always, among the nations of the earth, one country (or more) is a center of positive volition and serves as God’s specifically protected representative—the client nation. There, freedom is protected, Bible doctrine is preserved and taught, evangelism flourishes, missionaries are sent out to other areas of the world, and a haven is provided for the Jews. See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History: Dispensations and the Church* (1999), 34–36, 66–68.

7. The Rapture is the resurrection of all believers of the Church Age. At this time the dead and living believers will be caught up to meet Christ in the air to become the Bride of Christ (1 Thess. 4:14–17). *Ibid.*, 17–18.

8. The term “Christian nation” is a misnomer. Nations cannot be Christian; only individuals can become Christian. Based on their Judeo-Christian heritage, the founding fathers provided for religious freedom in the Constitution of the United States. Although many of the inhabitants of this country profess Christianity, the laws of divine establishment, upon which the Constitution was based, were set up to ensure the protection, survival, and blessing of Christians and non-Christians alike. Religious freedom depends upon the separation of church and state (Matt. 22:21; cf. Rom. 13:1–7). See Thieme, *Freedom through Military Victory*, 18–20; *The Divine Outline of History*, 68, 82.

9. Thieme, *Heathenism* (2001).

hundred and ninety years allotted to Israel for evangelism will then begin. In the Bible this period is called the Tribulation (Matt. 24:29; Rev. 7:14; cf. Dan. 9:27).¹⁰ Once again, the Jew will assume the primary role as the Lord's witness. In those seven devastating years, the world will be evangelized four times: by the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who are saved after the Rapture of the Church (Rev. 7:4–8), by the resuscitated Moses and Elijah (Rev. 11:3–12), by the testimony of angelic witnesses (Rev. 14:6–7), and by the testimony of the tribulational saints (Rev. 14:12–13). In God's plan grace always precedes judgment. God always allows the opportunity for people to accept Christ as Savior before they die and He imposes final judgment.

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment. (Heb. 9:27)

The Millennium follows the Tribulation.¹¹ This personal reign of Jesus Christ begins with believers only. During the Millennium the birth of children to believers will make witnessing necessary as each new generation needs to be evangelized. The responsibility of personal evangelism will rest with individual believers living in that era of history. So extensive will the saturation of the Gospel message be that Isaiah states,

The earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9b)

While the agencies responsible for witnessing in each dispensation change, the means of salvation is always the same—faith alone in Jesus Christ alone (Acts 4:12).¹²

10. The Tribulation, a period of seven literal years that completes the Age of Israel, immediately follows the Rapture of the Church and terminates with the Second Advent of Christ. See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 71–74; *Anti-Semitism* (2003), 96–114; *Armageddon* (2002).

11. The Millennium is the last one thousand years of human history beginning after the Second Advent of Jesus Christ in which He will fulfill all the unconditional covenants to Israel, reign on the throne of David, and establish worldwide peace and perfect environment on the earth. See Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 74–78.

12. A dispensation is a period of human history defined in terms of divine revelation; a sequence of divine administrations. *Ibid.*, 3–6.

PRINCIPLES OF WITNESSING

You cannot communicate what you do not understand! The more limited your grasp of the Gospel, the less effective your presentation. As a result, the person to whom you witness may get a distorted or inaccurate picture of the Gospel. Fervent but ignorant witnesses can mistakenly regard true conversion as giving up certain sins and changing wicked ways. Too much zeal and too little knowledge is a dangerous combination. So you do not obscure the true issue of salvation, an accurate description of the person and work of Jesus Christ must be presented. However, before examining pertinent doctrines necessary for reliable witnessing, note these principles in summary.

1. The responsibility for witnessing belongs to every believer.
2. The basic knowledge of witnessing involves the person of Jesus Christ and His accomplishments on the cross.
3. The challenge of witnessing comes from the doctrine of unlimited atonement (1 John 2:2)—Christ died for all mankind.
4. The method of witnessing is enhanced by your positive mental attitude related to your spiritual growth or maturity (John 15:2–16; 2 Pet. 3:18).
5. Confidence in witnessing comes from your own assurance of eternal security (John 10:28).
6. The effectiveness of witnessing depends on the ministry of God the Holy Spirit (John 16:7–11).
7. The communication of witnessing occurs in two ways—the example of your life (2 Cor. 3:3; 6:3) and the words of your lips (2 Cor. 5:18–21; 6:2).
8. The reward for witnessing is a part of your blessings in time and eternity (Dan. 12:3).

These principles reflect the practical aspects of fulfilling the believer's divine commission to personally witness to the unbeliever. The impetus for witnessing by the life and the lips is stated by Paul:

Knowing, brethren beloved by God, *His* choice of you; for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. (1 Thess. 1:4–5)

Believers are the agents of witnessing, but the power for witnessing and the convincing of the unbeliever come from God the Holy Spirit (John 16:7–11).

If you want to be an effective witness, you must witness in the power of the Holy Spirit and you must understand your subject—the Gospel of Jesus Christ.¹³ You need not understand the whole realm of doctrine to tell others of God’s plan for salvation. But you must be able to delineate grace and faith, who Christ is, what His work on the cross accomplished, and general knowledge of His plan after salvation.¹⁴ Most important, you need to be aware of the point where your responsibility ends and the convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit to the unbeliever begins.

Your life is also a witness to the benefits and blessings received from God after salvation through spiritual growth. When you possess a relaxed mental attitude, peace, contentment, and happiness, these qualities will be noticed by unbelievers searching for stability in life. As your spiritual maturity increases through the knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), the witness of your life becomes more effective.

Before you begin a presentation of the Gospel, keep in mind God has chosen you, a member of His royal family (believers in the Church Age), to be His ambassador on earth. Your life has a definitive meaning and purpose. The Lord has charged you with communicating reconciliation to an unbelieving world.

Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:18–19)

13. Witnessing in the power of the Holy Spirit means to fulfill the mandate of Ephesians 5:18b, “be filled with the Spirit.” The filling of the Holy Spirit is the Church Age believer’s absolute status of being in fellowship with God and the provision of the power of God to execute the Christian life. This condition is lost through sinning, but recovered through privately naming or acknowledging sins to God the Father. See Thieme, *Christian Integrity* (2002), 16–26; *Rebound and Keep Moving!* (1993), 10–13, 17–19.

14. Grace is the title of God’s plan for mankind. Grace is all that God is free to do for man on the basis of the cross.

At one time you, too, as an unbeliever were the enemy of God (Rom. 5:10); yet that enmity was removed by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Now you are a child of God and beloved by Him; you have something infinitely worthwhile to tell others. But how do you present this vital information?¹⁵ Your initial step is to learn the Bible doctrines that explain the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross.

CRITICAL DOCTRINES FOR WITNESSING

Every person in the human race is born a sinner and separated from God. Mankind is completely unacceptable to God. However, when Jesus Christ died on the cross, He paid the death penalty due every sinner. He was judged for the sins of the entire human race (1 Tim. 4:10).

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
(Rom. 3:23)

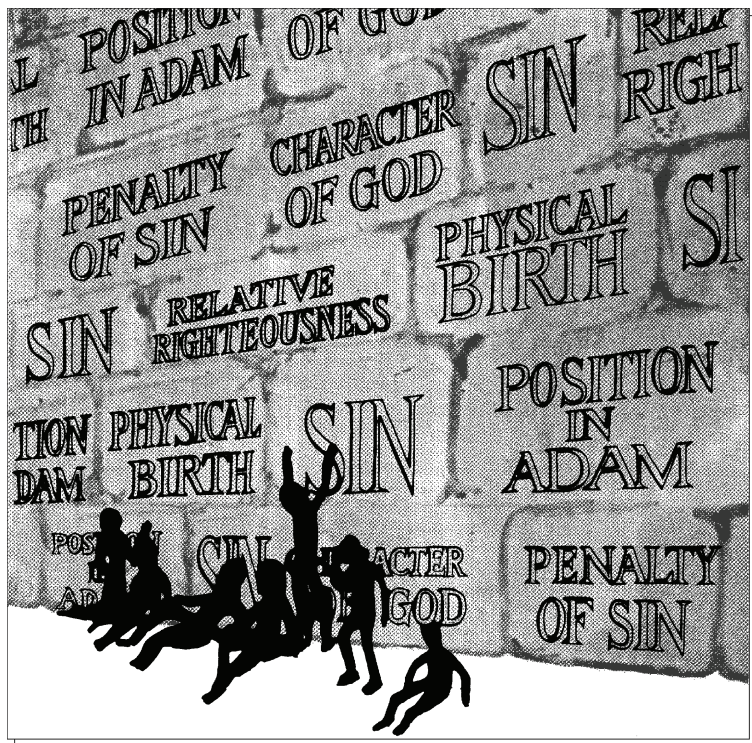
And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross,
that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by
His wounds you were healed. (1 Pet. 2:24)

As the only perfect person who ever lived, His sacrifice was wholly acceptable to God. One aspect of that sacrificial, substitutionary work is reconciliation—the removal of the antagonism between God and man (Eph. 2:12–16). Reconciliation is that work of Jesus Christ on the cross that removes the barrier between God and sinful man by replacing enmity with peace (Rom. 5:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:18–19). Until Jesus Christ reconciled man to God, man was separated by an insurmountable barrier.¹⁶ The barrier consists of six bricks: sin (Rom. 3:23), the penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23a), physical birth (Eph. 2:1), man's relative righteousness (Isa. 64:6a), the perfect righteousness and character of God (Isa. 46:9b), and man's position in Adam (1 Cor. 15:22a). No matter how good or religious a person might be, he will never have the ability to penetrate or scale this barrier.

To clearly present salvation, you must understand the pertinent doctrines regarding the removal of the barrier. On the cross, Jesus Christ

15. A presentation of the Gospel is contained in Thieme, *A Matter of Life and Death*.

16. Thieme, *The Barrier* (2003).



THE INSURMOUNTABLE BARRIER

propitiated, or satisfied, the Father's demand for righteousness (1 John 2:2). *Unlimited atonement* removes the sin problem for all humanity (Titus 2:11), *redemption* frees mankind from the slave market of sin (Rom. 3:23–24), and *regeneration* resolves the problem of physical birth (Titus 3:5). Through *imputation* and *justification* God credits His own righteousness to those who believe in Him and pronounces each believer vindicated in His sight (Rom. 4:3, 6–9; Gal. 2:16). The believer's new *position in Christ* guarantees his eternal relationship (1 John 5:11–12). In short, the entire barrier is removed through the saving work of Christ.¹⁷

17. For the doctrines of imputation, justification, position in Christ, propitiation, reconciliation, and regeneration, see Thieme, *The Barrier*, Appendices A through F.

Now no obstacle can prevent man from having an eternal relationship with God except his own attitude toward Jesus Christ. If you can communicate the doctrine of reconciliation, you may be able to correct misconceptions and you will have presented enough information for the individual to make a decision for or against the Savior.

The matter of sin is often used to obscure the message of grace. Some evangelists make sin a false issue. Sin is never an issue in presenting the Gospel or in receiving salvation. *Christ is the only issue*. If everyone in the world stopped sinning at this moment, not one person would be any closer to heaven. The objective in witnessing is never to get people to stop sinning—that is impossible. The objective is to present the one way to be saved: faith alone in Christ alone.

Many come away from an evangelistic meeting with the impression that in order to be saved you must give up bad habits, deliver a public confession of sins, offer a public, emotional display of repentance and dedication, or join a church and become involved in church programs. No wonder some unbelievers become hostile to the message of the Gospel!

There are always those who think they have to help God by adding human works to salvation—making Christ Lord, walking down an aisle, feeling sorry for sins, being baptized, or making a commitment. But God does not need any help! Only He can provide salvation. The principle of grace calls for no human participation. Fortunately, people are saved *in spite* of the emphasis on false issues.

In order to make the issue clear to the unbeliever, you must declare that the Lord Jesus Christ did *all* the work (Eph. 2:8–9; Titus 3:5). There is nothing anyone can do for salvation but *believe* in Him (John 1:12; Acts 16:31). Believing carries no merit; rather it is receiving a free gift. This is the crux of the Gospel.

The word Gospel means “good news.” While it is true we are all sinners, this is not part of the Gospel. The indictment, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), is bad news; the verdict is worse: “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). The good news begins with the fact that Christ died for our sins. He took our place so we might be saved. What good news of salvation do we need to give the world?

“Whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16b)

What about the Heathen?

When witnessing you may be asked, “What about those who live in isolation or who have never heard the Gospel?”¹⁸ This question may be just curiosity or a diversionary tactic to cover the unbeliever’s fear of death and discomfort with the subject of his eternal destiny. While the Bible addresses the issue of heathenism, remember your duty is to present and explain the Gospel, not to be diverted by peripheral questions. However, there are times when such objections or questions can be used to clarify the Gospel. Here are several approaches to help resolve the enigma of the heathen.

WHO ARE THE HEATHEN?

Heathen are heathen not because they have never heard the Gospel but because they have rejected the truth (Rom. 1:18–32). A heathen is anyone who does not believe in Christ. God makes truth apparent not just by the written and spoken word, but also through conscience (Rom. 1:19) and nature (Rom. 1:20). The universe manifests a design and beauty far beyond what nature could randomly generate. And within each of us is the notion of a standard of righteousness we cannot attain.

Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Rom. 1:19–20)

The realization of our insignificance compared to the absolute power and righteousness of the Creator of the universe occurs at the point of God-consciousness.

GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS

Sooner or later, all normal members of the human race will be either positive or negative toward God. This is the point of God-consciousness. Should anyone seek the truth and desire a relationship

18. Thieme, *Heathenism*.

with God, He has promised to provide the information and opportunity to hear the Gospel (John 7:17). When a person is negative at God-consciousness, then God need not provide further information. But anytime during the life of a person should he or she desire the truth, that person will be exposed to the Gospel message.

A member of the human race who dies before reaching God-consciousness, or the age of accountability, is saved by grace. Babies, young children, or the severely mentally handicapped are automatically saved and will go to heaven because they lack the faculties to reach God-consciousness and cannot be held accountable for their decisions (2 Sam. 12:18–23). All others “are without excuse.”

DIVINE ESSENCE GUARANTEES THE GOSPEL

God is *love*.¹⁹ God’s love is the absolute virtue and benevolence of His thinking and actions. Love is what God is as well as what He does. His love along with righteousness and justice is the cause of all His actions. The eternal love of God provides the solution to man’s sin problem through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. His love for mankind is manifested in every phase of His grace plan, from the matchless gift of His Son (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8) to the point of salvation, from total provision in time to endless blessings in eternity.

As the *Sovereign* of the universe, God possesses absolute volition and authority. With regard to mankind, “The Lord is . . . not wishing for any to perish” (2 Pet. 3:9); He desires that every human being be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). He provides the opportunity for *every* member of the human race to be saved and guarantees that the Gospel will be disseminated.

What keeps God’s sovereign will from being fulfilled in the matter of salvation? God decreed that man’s volition and divine authority would coexist in human history. However, God never interferes with man’s volition.²⁰ Man is able to express his free will by accepting or

19. Divine essence consists of these characteristics of deity: love, sovereignty, righteousness, justice, eternal life, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability, and veracity. See Thieme, *The Trinity* (2003).

20. Many events that occur are results of angelic or human free will acting contrary to God’s desires. God nevertheless decreed that human volition would function. Thus He makes our volition truly free. See Thieme, *Divine Guidance* (1999), 17.

rejecting the grace provision of the Savior. God's offer of salvation is free; whether or not His gift is accepted depends on human volition.

God is perfect *righteousness* and *justice*. God's standards are perfect and He is absolutely fair in all of His dealings with mankind, from His indictment and condemnation of the human race (Rom. 3:23; 6:23a) to His provision of the plan of grace (Rom. 6:23b).

Because God is *eternal life*, His essence is perpetuated forever. Furthermore, He gives of His eternal life to all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who reject the provision of His love choose eternal condemnation (John 3:18; Acts 13:46).

Through His *omniscience*, *omnipresence*, and *omnipotence* God's gracious offer of salvation is extended to every member of the human race regardless of geographical location, isolation, circumstances, or linguistic barriers. He knows exactly who seeks and who does not seek salvation; He knows how and where they can be reached with the Gospel. He is able to accomplish the salvation of all who want to be saved.

God's *immutability* guarantees His plan of salvation will never change. His offer will never be withdrawn as long as man lives on earth.

The *veracity* of God guarantees the truth of His promises. He will never go back on His word. God means what He says, be it the gracious offer of salvation on the one hand, or the warning of condemnation on the other. From generation to generation, God's plan of salvation includes *every human being* from the arctic wastes to the teeming tropics. If man chooses not to be saved, it is his own fault—never God's fault. God always honors His word.

THE DOCTRINE OF UNLIMITED ATONEMENT

Jesus Christ is the Savior of all in the sense that He died on the cross for *all mankind*. First John states

And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world.
(1 John 2:2)

Clearly, the solution to mankind's problem is universal in nature: All men are savable, yet some will reject Jesus Christ and refuse to receive eternal life. The heathen are heathen not because they live in

primitive conditions, or are too miserably sinful to be saved, but because they have not believed in Jesus Christ.

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

Minimal knowledge for witnessing should also include the judgment of human good at the Last Judgment that will occur at the end of time. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He was judged for the sins of the entire world. Once He paid the penalty for sin, it ceased to be an issue in salvation. At the same time, Christ rejected human good—man's effort to gain God's approval by his own good works (Eph. 2:8–9).

Therefore, a major issue in salvation is the work of Christ on the cross as opposed to human good works. All who rely on their own good deeds to enter heaven will be bitterly and eternally disappointed; there is no place for man's efforts in the salvation plan of God (Titus 3:5). Man's best endeavors never please God. The Last Judgment is God's time and place for the final verdict on man's futile struggle to reach heaven through his own merit.

And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it,
from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no
place was found for them. (Rev. 20:11)

Visualize our Lord seated on His throne, the bench of absolute justice (John 5:22). Before Him will be all unbelievers of the human race. No believers will be present at the Last Judgment because "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). If you have received Christ as your Savior, you are spared the Last Judgment.

And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing
before the throne, and books were opened; and another
book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead
were judged from the things which were written in the
books, according to their deeds. (Rev. 20:12)

Two sets of books are kept for the Last Judgment. First is the Book of Life, which records the names of everyone who has personally received Christ as Savior. Originally all members of the human race

were listed in the Book of Life. But when a person dies without believing in Jesus Christ, his name is *blotted out* of the Book of Life (Ps. 69:28; Rev. 3:5; 20:15). Second, the Book of Works contains the names of all unbelievers and a list of every good deed they have accomplished. When a person rejects Christ as Savior, he is saying in effect, “I can stand on my own good works; I have no need for Christ!” Man’s *works* versus God’s *works*! Energy-of-the-flesh works versus the perfect work of Christ—attempting salvation by good deeds versus salvation by grace!

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they [unbelievers] were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. (Rev. 20:13)

At the Last Judgment, every person who stands at the judgment bench is there because of unbelief. The judgment of “their deeds” demonstrates that human good is unacceptable for salvation. Unbelievers will then justly suffer eternal condemnation.

“He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten [uniquely born] Son of God.” (John 3:18)

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [believe] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

Sin Is Not the Issue

Sin is *not* the basis of the Last Judgment—in fact, sin will not even be mentioned. The basis for each indictment will be good deeds. No matter how many good works an unbeliever performs, they all add up to human righteousness. Man’s imperfect righteousness cannot have fellowship with God’s perfect righteousness.

For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.
(Isa. 64:6a)

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy [grace], by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5)

The *only* way to receive God's righteousness is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).

A perfect example of attempted salvation by works is found in Romans 9. This passage is the indictment against Old Testament Jews who failed to recognize the true purpose of the Mosaic Law.²¹

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith. (Rom. 9:30)

Many hundreds of thousands of Gentiles were saved in Old Testament times without any exposure to Israel or knowledge of the Mosaic Law.

But Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at *that* law. Why? Because *they did not pursue it* [righteousness] by faith, but as though *it were* by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone [Jesus], just as it is written,

“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE,
AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM [Jesus Christ] WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.” (Rom. 9:31–33)

What caused the unbelieving Jews to stumble was their effort to be saved by their good deeds—but their good deeds condemned them. They pursued a relative righteousness based on the Law.

This is a brief description of why certain Jews who had the Old Testament Scriptures and knew the Mosaic Law will be judged at the Last Judgment. They chose to misapply the Law and rely on their own good deeds rather than on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Human good deeds are never enough to please God or match the saving work of Christ on the cross.

Every member of the human race ultimately makes a choice either to accept the work of Jesus Christ on his behalf, or to reject it. Christ

21. Thieme, *The Divine Outline of History*, 56–57.

died for the sins of the world, so *sin is not the issue*! The issue is, What do you think about Christ? If you reject Him, you stand on your own good deeds, just like the unbelieving Jews of the Old Testament.

That brings us back to Revelation 20.

And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.
This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:14–15)

Since Jesus Christ paid the death penalty for the sins of the entire world, God cannot and will not prosecute the human race for personal sins. Therefore, the only reason for God to indict any member of the human race is the rejection of His solution—the Lord Jesus Christ. If you understand this concept, then in your own words and in the power of the Holy Spirit you can clearly present the all-important issues of the “good news” of Jesus Christ.

EFFECTIVE WITNESSING

Effective witnessing demands understanding several principles. Yet many Christians neglect to learn these principles and related doctrines. Consequently, effectiveness in witnessing is often erroneously measured by the number of people a believer contacts in a day or a week. Nothing could be further from the truth. Witnessing does not require a course in salesmanship. Witnessing is the fulfillment of a divine command in which the believer's role is secondary to the Holy Spirit. This brings us to our first principle.

The Sovereign Executive of Witnessing

“And He [Holy Spirit], when He comes, will convict [convince] the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me [Jesus Christ].” (John 16:8–9)

In these words, Jesus prophesied the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4), as well as His convincing ministry to the world concerning “sin, and righteousness, and judgment.”

Some evangelistic messages browbeat the audience about five or six overt sins that are obviously objectionable and shocking. Invariably, such sermons conclude that these must be the types of sins for which the Holy Spirit condemns mankind. But this does not follow the argument of John 16:8–9. Notice that Jesus Christ spoke of *sin* in the singular. When the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, it is specifically *one sin*: “because they do not believe in Me.” In dealing with the unbeliever, the Holy Spirit emphasizes the *unpardonable sin*—the sin of rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why is it necessary for God the Holy Spirit to play the major role in witnessing for Christ? The answer is found in 1 Corinthians.

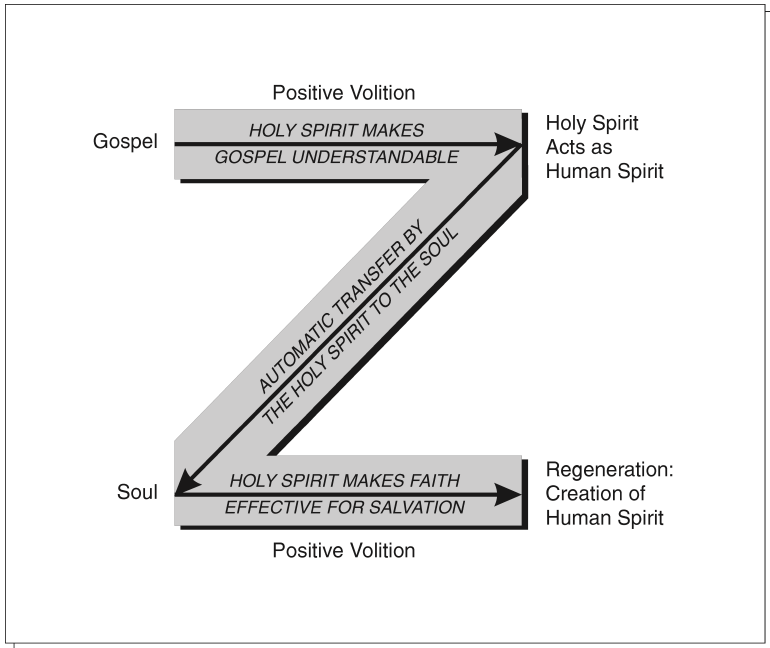
But a natural man [unbeliever] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them [the Gospel and Bible doctrine], because they are spiritually appraised [from the source of the human spirit]. (1 Cor. 2:14)

The unbeliever differs from the believer. Every human being born into this world possesses a body and a soul. However, no one is born with a human spirit. The human spirit is acquired only at the moment of regeneration.

First Corinthians 2:14 explains that spiritual phenomena—the Gospel and Bible doctrine—cannot be understood without a human spirit. How, then, can the Gospel even enter the soul of the “natural” man? The Holy Spirit *acts in place of* the human spirit to make the Gospel understandable to the unbeliever. The unbeliever then must use volition to express in private to God the Father faith or belief in Christ.

Although the only requirement of the unbeliever is faith, it does not accomplish salvation. The Holy Spirit must take that faith and make it effective for salvation. Once a person believes in Christ as Savior, he gains his own human spirit, as well as the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Now the believer is capable of learning and understanding the details of the Gospel and the entire realm of spiritual or doctrinal information. The Holy Spirit is the sovereign executive in witnessing.

The following “Z” diagram illustrates the Holy Spirit’s indispensable role in providing our salvation.



THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ROLE IN WITNESSING

The Weapon of Witnessing

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek [Gentile]. (Rom. 1:16)

For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor. 1:18)

God's Word is your powerful weapon of witnessing. This does not mean you are limited to the use of Scripture. You should present Gospel information from the frame of reference in your soul. But by using Gospel verses you do know, the Holy Spirit does the work by wielding

the Word of God to penetrate the soul of the unbeliever. Pertinent Scripture—divine truth—breaks through when nothing else works.

Any Christian who witnesses must believe that the Word of God has the power to reach the unbeliever. After all, we were formerly unbelievers who have seen the power of God's Word in our own lives.

For the word of God is living and active [powerful] and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

You have God's guarantee that His Word will never return without results but will succeed and accomplish His will (Isa. 55:11). It is wise, however, in witnessing to avoid argument or controversy about whether the Bible is indeed the Word of God. To the unbeliever's perception, the Bible cannot be the Word of God. But you must use the Bible regardless of what the unbeliever may think. *You* must realize the Word of God activates "the power of God for salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Your fearless and confident use of the Scripture will assure effective witnessing for Jesus Christ.

Motivation for Witnessing

One of the reasons we remain on this earth after salvation is to witness for the Lord Jesus Christ. This principle is stated in both the Old and the New Testaments:

He who is wise wins souls. (Prov. 11:30b)

You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses. (Acts 1:8a)

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ. (2 Cor. 5:20a)

Whether you witness by the example and impact of your life on unbelievers in your periphery, or by the opportunity to tell the Gospel "by the words from your lips," or both, your motivation in witnessing is of utmost importance. Does your attitude match that of Paul's in the Book of Romans?

I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. Thus, for my part, I am eager [ready] to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. For I am not ashamed of the gospel. (Rom. 1:14–16a)

“I am under obligation”! As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are mandated to speak about our Savior. We have a fantastic inheritance: a personal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, plus every spiritual blessing that accrues as a result of salvation. How can others know or receive this inheritance unless we fulfill our obligation and tell them about it (Rom. 10:14–15)?

“I am eager [ready]”! Readiness is our preparation and, consequently, our motivation. We must master the critical doctrinal knowledge for witnessing and present pertinent information to the unbeliever. But most important, we must be filled with the Holy Spirit through the use of 1 John 1:9, the rebound technique.²² If the above conditions are met we can say *“I am eager!”*

“I am not ashamed”! How could anyone be ashamed of the One who has saved them for all eternity? But countless people *are* ashamed of mentioning the Lord or of proclaiming the Gospel. Being ashamed is nothing more than fear of being ridiculed or fear of failure engendered by ignorance of doctrine. When we do not make learning doctrine our first priority in life, we get our priorities confused and lose perspective with regard to the importance of witnessing.

Many Christians cannot endure the pressure that accompanies witnessing. Easily intimidated, they say little to anyone about the way of salvation. However, pressures did not stop the Apostle Paul. Thessalonica was a large city in the ancient world, and thousands of its citizens were open to the Gospel. On his second missionary journey Paul traveled along the Egnatian Way—one of the famous highways of antiquity—and crossed Asia Minor (the area of present Turkey). Upon the apostle’s arrival at Philippi he encountered adverse circumstances

22. Rebound is the grace provision for the carnal believer to recover the filling of the Holy Spirit through naming personal sins privately to God the Father; the method of restoring the believer’s fellowship with God to resume the spiritual life (1 John 1:9). The rebound technique is the only means of recovering the filling of the Spirit after you sin. See Thieme, *Rebound and Keep Moving!*

and personal suffering, but he continued to preach the Gospel. He left Philippi and arrived at Thessalonica, where the Lord gave him a tremendous harvest of souls (Acts 17:1–4; 1 Thess.; cf. 2 Thess.). Paul's perseverance in personal and mass evangelism offers an excellent biblical pattern for your witnessing (1 Thess. 2).

Be a Fisher of Men

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain. (1 Thess. 2:1)

“Our coming to you” implies contact. Contact suggests approaching and communicating. You cannot witness without making contact.

Our Lord Himself cited the perfect analogy to making contact in witnessing when He said,

“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matt. 4:19b)

What did He mean? First of all, fishermen must have a desire to fish—be motivated. Second, fishermen must be equipped to fish—be prepared and ready. Third, fishermen must go where the fish are located—catch them where they are.

Travel to the locale for fishing may involve seasickness or a strenuous hike through difficult terrain. Once you arrive you cannot sit on the bank and wait for fish to come to you. You must use all your knowledge and skill in the pursuit. As one of the “fishers of men,” Paul stressed these very principles: when pursuing those who are positive toward Jesus Christ, correct motivation and preparation overcome hardships, fears, and pressures.

Once Paul reached his destination, he made certain his contact would not be “in vain.” In vain means “hollow, empty, fruitless, or ineffective.” He knew fishermen must use the right bait. His bait was the Gospel with the content clearly defined. Confident of his message, he witnessed in the power of the Spirit, never deviating from the real issue. His job done, he stayed out of the Holy Spirit's way and awaited the results.

Thus, Paul fulfilled another analogy to witnessing: fishermen must be patient. Even as fishermen will be rewarded for their efforts, so “fishers of men” can anticipate the fruits of their labor: the joy of

seeing souls saved in time to the everlasting glory of Jesus Christ throughout eternity.

Paul followed this pattern of making contact in detail and stated:

For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake. (1 Thess. 1:5)

Not only by word of mouth did Paul and his traveling companion, Silas, proclaim the Gospel, but also by the way they lived. “What kind of men” they were was well known—honorable ambassadors for Christ. Consequently, their message received a favorable hearing.

The old cliché “actions speak louder than words” is all too true when referring to personal evangelism. The unbeliever says, “Show me; then I’ll listen to what you have to say!” (James 2:14–16). If your lifestyle does not match your high calling in Christ, is it any wonder the unbeliever turns away and thinks: “If this is a sample of Christianity, I want no part of it!” To his detriment, the unbeliever judges a potential, eternal relationship with the Lord and the incomparable Christian way of life by the behavior of a poor representative. So as you encounter the unbelieving world, remember that you are the Lord’s emissary, His personal ambassador on earth with an honor code to uphold.

The Gospel Must Be Clearly Presented

But after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. (1 Thess. 2:2)

Even in the face of strong opposition, the Gospel must be presented with bold clarity. During their stay at Philippi, Paul and Silas were severely persecuted because of their stand for Jesus Christ. They had been dragged into the marketplace, the open court, where they were severely flogged and cast into prison (Acts 16:16–24). Although they suffered bitterly, they continued to confidently present the Gospel. Fear of additional punishment did not stop them. From the persistence of Paul and Silas a principle arises: opposition and obstacles to the Gospel are to be expected but should never discourage our resolve to witness.

Tragically, failure to understand the correct function of evangelism has often dispatched to the mission field ill-prepared people who never should have gone. Many missionaries who experience the rigors of the foreign field refuse a second term. The dropout rate is high. Simply deciding to face the hardship of crossing a mountain range or an ocean does not prepare a missionary. When a Christian will not cross the street to speak to a neighbor about Christ, assuredly he will do no better in a foreign land. The best test of the desire of a missionary or anyone else to proclaim the Gospel would be a positive response to these questions:

1. Do you understand and clearly communicate the Gospel and pertinent biblical doctrines?
2. Do you witness regularly at home?
3. Do you master the language of the land you seek to reach for Christ?
4. Do you manifest maturity and stability in your spiritual life and show concern for lost souls?

If a person is reticent about witnessing in his own neighborhood, he would soon become overwhelmed, discouraged, and wither under the fires of opposition elsewhere.

The Gospel Must Never Be Compromised or Diminished

For our exhortation does not *come* from error or impurity
or by way of deceit. (1 Thess. 2:3)

The word “exhortation” means “persuasive conversation” and signifies the bold, confident declaration of the Gospel. Everyone has been actively or passively involved in persuasive conversation. If you are married, no doubt you have been either the recipient or the initiator of friendly persuasion. If you own insurance, an automobile, or a house, when you made your purchase persuasion was probably involved. Life is filled with persuasive interactions.

In this verse, Paul cites three cautions to bear in mind when presenting the Gospel. The first is that a Gospel exposition “does not *come* from error.” Witnessing demands that the content of the Gospel

be correct. Whether Paul wrote or verbalized the Gospel, he always clearly proclaimed that Christ solved the sin problem and removed the barrier between God and man. He did not add to the Gospel of grace, nor did he sacrifice accuracy by introducing false issues. The Gospel is salvation by faith alone in Christ alone.

A Gospel presentation should not come from “impurity.” Paul certifies the use of 1 John 1:9. He made sure he utilized rebound before he witnessed, as should you. The Holy Spirit provides the believer with doctrinal wisdom and sensitivity for Gospel presentation to the unbeliever. And only when the Holy Spirit empowers you and communicates through you is your witnessing truly service for the Lord.

“Not . . . by way of deceit” means the Gospel must never be diminished or watered down. The Greek word for “deceit” (δόλος, *dolos*) means “huckster.” This term originally described a tavern keeper in the ancient world who diluted the alcoholic beverages he served with water. When his customers first arrived, they were served full-strength wine. After a few rounds of drinks, when the guests were a little inebriated, the tavern keeper began to water down the drinks. Although he increasingly thinned down the wine, the price remained constant. This, then, is the word Paul chose to define what should never happen in the presentation of the Gospel—huckstering.

The Gospel should not be watered down or changed to benefit any human agenda of the witness. Under no circumstance should the Gospel be diluted or polluted with additions to faith, such as commitments, feeling sorry for your sins, joining a church, walking an aisle, social activism, brotherhood, do-goodism, philosophy, or legalism.²³ Only faith alone in Christ alone is salvation.

The Assets for Witnessing

But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. (1 Thess. 2:4)

23. Legalism is mankind's futile attempt to gain salvation, spirituality, or the approbation of God through human effort.

The Greek word for “approved” is the verb δοκιμάζω (*dokimazo*), which means “to test” someone or something for the purpose of approval. God approved Paul through hardship and testing. Paul realized God had allowed every trial, adversity, frustration, and heartache in his life so the importance of the Gospel might be paramount to him. With God’s sanction, Paul and Silas had been entrusted with the Gospel.

The Greek verb, “to be entrusted” (πιστεύω, *pisteuo*), denotes a deposit. In the ancient world there were no banks. Instead, depositories were located in the heathen temples, chosen because the gods supposedly guarded against thieves. Certainly, no mortal would dare incur the anger of the gods and the money would be safe. The customer deposited his wealth with a temple priest and obtained a receipt. The money could be withdrawn at any time upon payment of a service charge for safekeeping.

Pisteuo was also used in the sense of making an investment for profit. If a person had money to invest, he could deposit it with a successful merchant. A contract was drawn up, and if the business venture prospered the investor received interest on his deposit. Eventually, “to be entrusted with” came to mean to deposit or to invest capital with the intent of making a profit.

The Gospel is also capital. God has deposited the Gospel with each believer so it might bear interest and pay dividends—profit for the unbelieving world (2 Cor. 4:4–7). Since we are “entrusted with” this valuable resource, our personal responsibility in declaring the Gospel cannot be overemphasized. God made a deposit with you and with me and He expects a return on His investment.

We neither earned nor deserved this deposit; we received it in grace. Thus, the deposit of the Gospel bestows on us a unique honor and responsibility. Now we have the privilege of passing on the message to others—disseminating the good news and watching grace in action. What are the dividends God expects? People who receive Christ and become members of the royal family of God as a result of your witness to them!

Witnessing is not a matter of “pleasing men.” It is a matter of glorifying God. If you live your life trying to please people, you will be frustrated and miserable. This is especially true in the spiritual realm. If any part of your Christian life is lived to gain attention or approval from others, then your allegiance is misdirected. You may be lauded

as the hardest worker in your congregation, but you cannot please God by having the approbation of men. Your motivation is false.

The central issue in the Christian life is not *what* you do but *why* you do it. If you witness simply to please others, only an old army term can adequately describe the mess—SNAFU: Situation Normal; All Fouled Up. This is not the way God intends for us to function in His plan. In order to glorify God *your witnessing must be as unto the Lord, accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit.*

The Gospel Is Not for Sale

For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others.
(1 Thess. 2:5–6a)

High pressure salesmen may resort to flattery or trickery in order to sell a product, but this must never be done in witnessing. If you declare Christ by employing subterfuge, you are doing a right thing in the wrong way. The Gospel will stand on its own; you never need gimmicks to communicate the good news.

Paul never witnessed to raise money. This is what is meant by the phrase “nor with a pretext for greed.” From this statement emerges an important principle: never knowingly accept money from unbelievers for the Lord’s work. The only issue to an unbeliever is the work of Christ on his behalf. To use the Gospel to raise money only introduces the false issue of buying salvation. Salvation is a *gift* from God.

The Motivation of Genuine Concern

Even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children.
(1 Thess. 2:6b–7)

As a model witness, Paul compares his method of operation among the Thessalonians to that of a nurturing mother. Everyone knows what constitutes a mother’s loving care for her newborn child: she gives

warmth, nourishment, and comfort. So the Thessalonians would respond to Paul and Silas “as a nursing *mother* tenderly cares for her own children.”

Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us. (1 Thess. 2:8)

“Fond affection” (ἡμεῖρομαι, *himeiromai*) is a word used in the Greek especially for parents who lost a child and now grieve for their loss. The word denotes the strongest kind of love that can be experienced for an absent loved one and indicates a continuing state of mind. By relating the concept of “fond affection” to witnessing, we understand there should always be a certain ache in our souls for the unbeliever. This affectionate longing depicts a genuine desire for unbelievers to come to know Christ as Savior. Because Paul experienced this ache for the people of Thessalonica, he was eager to share the Gospel with them.

For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. (1 Thess. 2:9)

“For you recall” is an order (μνημονεύω, *mnemoneuo*; present tense, imperative mood). The epistle is addressed to those who had responded to the Gospel and were now “brethren”—members of the royal family of God. They were to consider in retrospect the great sacrifice Paul and Silas had made. The two men had labored at Paul’s trade of tent making to supply their daily needs rather than become a financial burden to the Thessalonians. Although they had worked to the point of exhaustion, they kept on announcing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Consequently, their witness of life and words bore dividends for God.

You are witnesses, and *so is* God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers. (1 Thess. 2:10)

Follow-up Must Supplement Witnessing

When a person accepts Christ as Savior, he immediately becomes a newborn child of God. Just as you would not cast a baby out on the street and expect him to look after himself, the same principle applies to the newly born-again Christian. Witnessing must be supplemented by follow-up. Basic doctrine is necessary for any newborn spiritual baby. If there is no follow-up with Bible doctrine, the new believer may become a casualty in the Christian life.

For example, a person may receive Christ in a church where all new Christians are asked to come forward and be recognized. Some well-meaning saint congratulates him saying, "Now, brother, if your life is to truly count for God, you must stop your sinning!" This is as ridiculous as telling a baby in his cradle, "Now, son, stop wetting your diaper!"

Babies need food—not advice! They need love and comfort, not nit-picking and nagging. You don't feed an infant steak; you start him on a liquid formula and eventually on foods that are easily digested. The same applies to baby believers; you don't misinform them or feed them advanced doctrines and principles designed for the mature believer. You feed them the basic spiritual concepts of the "pure milk of the word" (1 Pet. 2:2), which they can digest and "grow in respect to salvation." Even the Lord Jesus Christ is said to have taught His audience "as they were able to hear it" (Mark 4:33). Paul was like a father to the Thessalonian believers; he treated them as he would his own children. He reminds them of this:

Just as you know how we *were* exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father *would* his own children. (1 Thess. 2:11)

Notice the perfection of Paul's threefold follow-up: (1) "exhorting," (2) "encouraging," (3) "imploring." When Paul addressed his converts he spoke persuasively from a doctrinal frame of reference and also provided comfort, encouragement, and cheer. To implore means "to teach"; Paul taught the new Christians doctrine in a simple, straightforward manner. They received spiritual nourishment, as well as aid and solace.

THE REASON FOR FOLLOW-UP

The importance of follow-up is threefold: doctrinal, personal, and collective. First, the new believer must learn Bible doctrine. No believer can advance to spiritual maturity on his own. Were it true that all a Christian needed to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Savior was to read a chapter or two of the Bible daily, the Lord would not have given certain men the gift of pastor-teacher (Eph. 4:11). The pastor-teacher studies and teaches the flock of God, edifying and equipping the saints (Eph. 4:12). God designed the local church to be the believer's classroom.

The second reason for follow-up is personal: encourage the new believer. During the period of adjustment and orientation to God's plan for the believer in time, the immature Christian often needs encouragement to learn Bible doctrine consistently. He has not yet developed sufficient inner resources of soul with which to recognize the importance of doctrine in every facet of life. Until the believer realizes his first priority and learns doctrine on a regular basis, he will flounder and is in danger of falling by the wayside. Be prepared to offer encouragement during this initial spiritual growth period.

The third reason for follow-up is collective: assisting the new believer in finding a Christ-centered church where the Bible is taught. If that is not possible in your locale, point the new believer in the right direction toward Bible doctrine taught in taped or written form. God's intention for every saved person is to become spiritually self-sustaining—able to handle his own problems before the Lord.

So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. (1 Thess. 2:12)

A worthy walk depicts the function of the individual member of the royal family of God—his *modus vivendi* in the power of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:16*b* states "walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

The Thessalonians' response to Paul's follow-up was tremendous. Before, many had become hostile or indifferent to the Word of God because they had been victims of legalism. Now, they readily accepted

the message of grace. Paul and Silas were thankful they could witness and serve the Lord and see such response to the message.

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. (1 Thess. 2:13)

Witnessing Generates Persecution

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men, hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they might be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost. (1 Thess. 2:14–16)

Soon after the Thessalonians accepted Christ and organized as a church, they began to experience pressure. Opposition came from the Roman Empire, legalistic Jews, and the local heathen fraternities. They suffered intense persecution from these antagonistic groups. However, because the Thessalonians were doctrinally oriented, they stabilized their attitude while suffering and received blessing from God.²⁴

While it is true the Christian life is one of extraordinary privilege and blessing, the Lord warned us that sooner or later we would face pressures from the world (John 16:33). Yet He also promised us victory and ultimate triumph. There is no pressure or difficulty greater than the plan of God. Bible doctrine learned and applied as the standard for Christian living results in stability for every circumstance of life.

24. Thieme, *Christian, at Ease!* (1993); *Christian Suffering* (2002).

PITFALLS IN WITNESSING

While there are no set rules for effective witnessing, there are a number of pitfalls or postulates for witnessing. These should be noted and avoided.

- *Do not argue.* You may present a logical argument but lose the unbeliever's attention. Your responsibility is to provide information, not win a debate. Present the Gospel, but do not argue its validity. Leave convincing to the Holy Spirit, who makes the Gospel real.
- *Do not be sidetracked by false issues.* Stick to the subject! Don't be diverted into a long debate concerning the authenticity of the Word of God, heathenism, living a good life, or social problems. When faced with such a diversion use your best judgment. You may be forced to give an explanation about a peripheral issue to continue your Gospel presentation. If so, make the answer short, then gracefully return to the Gospel message.
- *Do not get into a rut.* Different approaches to the subject of the Gospel are necessary to reach different people. Be flexible! What may be effective with one person may be a total failure with another. Your own IQ or that of your listener is not an issue, nor is it vital for you to understand Judaism to witness to a Jew, or physics to speak to a scientist about Christ. Remember, when you are in fellowship the Holy Spirit will guide your presentation; knowledge of Bible doctrine is the paramount factor. Your ability to recognize the correct approach will increase as you gain spiritual maturity and experience in witnessing.
- *Do not embarrass people.* Deal with the individual alone whenever possible. Witnessing in public may produce embarrassment, annoyance, and sometimes hostility. If this is the case, the people you seek to reach for Christ may ignore you and you may never have another opportunity to reach them. Remember, personal evangelism is exactly that—*personal*!
- *Do not set quotas.* The quota concept requires a commitment to witness to a certain number of people daily. Quotas may originate from the

insistence of a well-meaning but immature believer or a church program that equates witnessing with spirituality. Both cases reflect a false standard of spirituality.²⁵ Evangelizing is not indicative of spirituality; it is a result of Bible doctrine motivating your soul. If God insisted on quotas, He would mandate such measures in His Word. Simply witness whenever the Lord provides the opportunity.

- *Do not measure your spiritual life by your witnessing.* A person is not spiritual because he speaks to a certain number of people every day. Spirituality is the absolute status of the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit and thereby in fellowship with God. Even an ignorant or a carnal believer who uses the Scripture can lead an unbeliever to Christ, although there will be no reward in heaven for Christian service while in carnality.²⁶ Effectiveness resides in the convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

“So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding *in the matter* for which I sent it.”
(Isa. 55:11)

- *Do not judge others for apparent failure to witness.* Whether or not a believer witnesses is between him and the Lord. Each of us is accountable for our own life, not for the lives of others. If you judge or malign others, *you* are out of line. Judging only brings divine discipline upon you. Besides, you have no way of actually knowing whether someone witnesses for Christ unless they brag; then *they* are out of line.

- *Do not brag about your witnessing.* Testimonies about personal witnessing efforts often reflect pride and constitute a hazard to the

25. See Thieme, *God the Holy Spirit vs. The Sin Nature* (2013), 4–6.

26. In carnality the sin nature controls the life of the believer, “grieving” and “quenched” the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). Good deeds done in carnality fall under the category of “wood, hay, straw” that will be consumed by fire at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–14). Christian service cannot be performed in carnality. Only in the state of spirituality does a believer receive eternal rewards for Christian service.

Christian life. Avoid bragging! The Lord knows what you are doing, and that is all that is necessary. He will reward you accordingly.

- *Do not forget to use prayer in witnessing.* Prayer does have a bona fide function in witnessing. Paul expressed his concern for the unsaved Jews of his era in writing and in prayer: “My heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for *their* salvation” (Rom. 10:1b).

Since the sovereignty of God and the free will of man coexist by decree of God, and He does not coerce man’s volition, how do you pray intelligently for the salvation of an unbeliever?

Pray that God will bring about circumstances that would be most advantageous for the Gospel to be presented to the unbeliever. Pray that unbelievers whom you have been unable to reach may be contacted by mature believers who will present the true issue of salvation clearly and graciously. Pray in accordance with 1 Timothy 2:1–4 that the Gospel will be presented to the leaders in governmental office, and that the Gospel will continue to be spread freely in our nation. Pray that our leaders may begin to recognize their own inadequacies (Ps. 9:20) and that they might look beyond themselves to see their need of the Savior. Your prayers on behalf of evangelists and missionaries allow you to enter into their ministry and help smooth their way. While you cannot coerce the volition of a person making a decision for Christ, never underestimate the power of prayer in witnessing.

REWARDS OF WITNESSING

For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward. (1 Cor. 9:16–17a)

Witnessing is your responsibility, one of the reasons God left you here on earth. If you witness “voluntarily” with the proper motivation, there is reward. If you fail to witness there is loss of reward.

The rewards of witnessing are both temporal and eternal in nature. Our temporal rewards are twofold: the joy of Christian fellowship and the blessing of inner happiness. Eternal reward centers around the

word “voluntarily.” Bible doctrine in the believer’s soul is the motivation to witness. This doctrine—the mind of Christ resident in our souls—along with the filling of the Holy Spirit is the means for maturing us. As part of our Christian service, witnessing is a *result* of spiritual growth, not the cause. Witnessing done in the power of the Holy Spirit and from the correct motivation guarantees reward for you in heaven.

The Joy of Christian Fellowship

But we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. (1 Thess. 2:17)

When I first accepted Christ as my Savior, I wondered whether there were any other Christians in the school I attended. I began to witness and had the privilege of seeing several students believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, wonderful fellowship developed between these converts and myself. Since then, I have had other opportunities to lead people to the Lord, always with the same enjoyable results. Christian fellowship has provided marvelous, warm friendships through the years. These associations are particularly rewarding when they are based on love expressed by your personal witnessing for Christ; furthermore, they leave behind a wonderful fragrance of memories.

Paul, too, experienced the joy of Christian fellowship. Although he had to leave Thessalonica, he was most eager to return there. Why? Because of the pleasant time spent with those people who responded to the Gospel. Even when Satan hindered Paul’s journey to visit his Christian friends at Thessalonica, he could not deprive the Apostle of his fond memories, nor of the rewards he would receive at the judgment seat of Christ.

The Blessing of Inner Happiness

For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy. (1 Thess. 2:19–20)

What a tremendous responsibility rests on each of us who have trusted in Christ—we represent our Lord in the devil's world (1 Pet. 5:8) and we can expect opposition. Satan is as intent on obscuring the Gospel as God is on revealing it (2 Cor. 4:3–4). Satan knows the Gospel breaks through the darkness of unbelief (2 Cor. 4:5–7). Therefore, it is more than our rightful obligation; it is our privilege to tell others of the Savior. Motivated by His love (2 Cor. 5:14), we are to make known the One who loved us and gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20).

The task appears so straightforward and glorious. What could be more exciting and satisfying than to spread the Gospel to the unsaved? But to challenge Satan's dominion armed only with emotion and zeal may end in quick defeat. Facing unbelievers who react to the message with hostility, ridicule, or persecution requires more than human dedication. You must possess a soul established in Bible doctrine. Victory depends on your positive volition and devotion to Bible doctrine, your correct motivation from the filling of the Holy Spirit, and execution of the plan of God.²⁷

In the anticipation of his “crown of exultation,” Paul expressed the blessing of inner happiness. Though he might never see the Thessalonians again on this earth, he was perfectly content in spite of the separation. Paul knew he would meet them all in the presence of the Lord, so he referred to them as his “glory and joy.” What was true of Paul is true of every believer: the privilege of witnessing for our Lord is a source of blessing, inner happiness, and contentment.

FULFILL YOUR ROLE AS A WITNESS

The fruit of the righteous [spiritually mature believer] is a
tree of life,
And he who is wise wins souls. (Prov. 11:30)

The foremost impression an individual unbeliever in your periphery has of Christianity is you. All the rational and apologetical arguments unbelievers have heard in defense of Christianity will never have as much impact as the witness of your life and lips. You are a bridge, a

27. Thieme, *The Plan of God*.

point of contact in the unbeliever's search to escape futility and despair and to find meaning and purpose in life.

Without faith in Jesus Christ and an eternal future, life is ultimately incomprehensible. Although many may reject Christ and possibly even you because of your witness, the tremendous pleasure and satisfaction of seeing others actually believe in Christ will more than compensate for any rejection. When a loved one, friend, or even a stranger receives Jesus Christ as Savior as a result of your presentation of the Gospel, you will experience the inexpressible rewards of serving our Lord through witnessing.

Appendix

THE DOCTRINE OF WITNESSING

I. Definition

- A. Witnessing is the responsibility of every believer to communicate God's plan of salvation to unbelievers on a personal basis; that is, personal evangelism.
- B. Witnessing is the extension of the believer's ambassadorship.
 - 1. As an ambassador the believer is the personal representative of Jesus Christ on earth (2 Cor. 5:20).
 - 2. Ambassadorship requires proper motivation, preparation, and knowledge.
- C. Witnessing, or personal evangelism, functions in addition to mass evangelism, church evangelism, or the believer who has the gift of evangelism or pastor-teacher.

II. The agents of witnessing

- A. The family plan—Adam and Eve as the first parents set the precedent for all future parents by witnessing to their children.

- B. The national entity—The client nation Israel was responsible for evangelizing the world (Rom. 3:1–2), and will be again during the Tribulation.
 - C. The Church—All believers throughout the world are responsible for spreading the Gospel by:
 - 1. Witness of life (2 Cor. 3:3; 6:3),
 - 2. Witness of lips (2 Cor. 5:14–21; 6:2).
 - D. The convincing ministry of God the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:5).
- III. Knowledge of pertinent doctrines necessary for witnessing
- A. Christology and soteriology: The person and saving work of Christ.
 - B. Faith alone in Christ alone is salvation.
 - C. Grace: All that God is free to do for man on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.
 - D. Heathenism: The rejection of truth at God-consciousness or Gospel-hearing. If at any time an unbeliever should desire to know God, the Gospel will be made available.
 - E. Reconciliation: The barrier between man and God is removed by the work of Christ on the cross.
 - F. Redemption: We are freed from the slave market of sin.
 - G. Expiation: The aspect of Christ's work on the cross that canceled the debt for the penalty of sin (Col. 2:14).
 - H. Propitiation: The sacrifice of Jesus Christ satisfied the demand of God the Father for righteousness (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2).
 - I. Regeneration: Being "born again" at the moment anyone believes in Jesus Christ for eternal salvation.
 - J. Imputation: The crediting of God's perfect righteousness to the believer at salvation.
 - K. Justification: God declares the believer to be justified because he possesses the righteousness of God.
 - L. Unlimited atonement: Jesus Christ died for all mankind (2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 John 2:2).
 - M. Position in Christ: At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit places the believer in union with Christ by means of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13).
 - N. The judgment of human good:
 - 1. Human good was rejected at the cross; only sin was judged.

2. Human good produced by the believer will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–16).
 3. Human good produced by the unbeliever will be judged and becomes the basis for the indictment at the Last Judgment (Rev. 20:12–15).
 - O. The Last Judgment: The sentencing of those who reject the gracious saving work of Jesus Christ to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15).
- IV. The Bible, the powerful weapon for witnessing
- A. The source of the Gospel (Luke 16:28–31; 1 Cor. 15:3–4)
 - B. The Gospel, the power of God for salvation (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18)
 - C. The absolute standard for truth (2 Pet. 1:19–21)
 - D. The mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16)
 - E. Divine power (Heb. 4:12)
 - F. Never ineffective (Isa. 55:11)
 - G. Endures forever (Luke 21:33; 1 Pet. 1:25)
- V. The Holy Spirit, the sovereign executive of witnessing
- A. The unbeliever has no human spirit; therefore, on his own he cannot understand the spiritual content of the Gospel (1 Cor. 2:14).
 - B. The Holy Spirit acts in place of the human spirit to make the Gospel comprehensible (John 16:8–11).
 - C. Effectiveness of witnessing depends on the ministry of God the Holy Spirit:
 1. Directed toward the believer—spirituality or control of the believer's soul (Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 3:3),
 2. Directed toward the unbeliever—convincing (John 16:8–11; 1 Cor. 2:14).
- VI. The analogy to witnessing, Matthew 4:19: “fishers of men”
- A. Fishermen must have a desire to fish.
 - B. Fishermen must be equipped to fish.
 - C. Fishermen must go where the fish are.
 - D. Fishermen must use the right bait.
 - E. Fishermen must be patient.
 - F. Fishermen will be rewarded.

VII. Clear presentation of the Gospel (John 3:18, 36)

- A. Give the unbeliever pertinent information regarding salvation. Christ is the issue; the unbeliever's attitude toward Him is the determining factor in salvation.
- B. Note the boundaries of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. The Gospel is good news. That man is a sinner is the bad news. Christ did something about sin on the cross. Declare the Gospel so the unbeliever is in a position to make a decision for Christ.
- C. Do not make additions to the Gospel of grace. Salvation is not accomplished by persuading the unbeliever to give up, feel sorry for or stop his sins, improve his personality or behavior, join a church, make Jesus Lord of his life, be baptized, give money, or make a 'one-time' commitment. Salvation comes by grace through faith, not by works (Eph. 2:8–9).
- D. Never force a decision for Christ; this is the work of the convincing ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- E. The unbeliever should have both freedom and privacy of decision. After you provide Gospel information, leave the results with the Lord. The Gospel is designed to persuade, not to compel or force the unbeliever to accept Christ.
- F. Avoid gimmicks! Emotional begging and public harangues constitute false issues and are not a bona fide part of witnessing.

VIII. Follow-up supplements witnessing (1 Thess. 2)

- A. A new convert should immediately receive basic doctrine (1 Thess. 2:11).
- B. Encourage the new believer to consistently learn and apply Bible doctrine.
- C. The new believer needs Christ-centered teaching from a church where the Bible is taught (if such a church is not available then in written, audio, or video form).

IX. The pitfalls of witnessing

- A. Do not argue.
- B. Do not be sidetracked by false issues.
- C. Do not get into a rut.

- D. Do not embarrass people.
 - E. Do not set quotas.
 - F. Do not measure your spiritual life by your witnessing.
 - G. Do not judge others for apparent failure to witness.
 - H. Do not brag about your witnessing.
- X. The principle of prayer in witnessing (Rom. 10:1)
- A. God does not coerce man's volition in responding to the Gospel.
 - B. Pray that God will bring about circumstances that would be most advantageous for the Gospel to be presented to the unbeliever.
 - C. Pray that the Gospel may continue to be disseminated in our nation.
- XI. Rewards for witnessing (1 Cor. 9:16–17a)
- A. Witnessing done in the power of the Holy Spirit (filling of the Spirit) and from correct motivation (doctrine in the soul) guarantees rewards in heaven.
 - B. Witnessing guarantees rewards in time:
 - 1. The joy of Christian fellowship (1 Thess. 2:17)
 - 2. The blessing of inner happiness (1 Thess. 2:19–20)

Glossary

age of accountability The point at which a person becomes conscious of God and able to understand the Gospel. From this moment each individual is responsible for his own positive or negative volition toward God. See **God-consciousness**.

ambassador for Christ The believer is a personal representative for the Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

carnality The absolute status of being out of fellowship with God because of unconfessed sin in the life. In carnality the believer loses the filling of the Holy Spirit and the sin nature controls the life. Antonym: **spirituality**.

eternal security A secure status bestowed by God to every believer in every dispensation at the moment of salvation. Based on God's immutable Word and perfect integrity, eternal life is secure, irreversible, and cannot be lost regardless of what the believer does or fails to do (John 10:28; Rom. 8:38–39).

God-consciousness The point at which a person becomes aware of the existence of a Supreme Being and becomes accountable for his choice for or against God (Rom. 1:19–20).

heathen Anyone, in any part of the world, who has reached God-consciousness and refuses to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation (John 12:37).

human good Good deeds produced under the control of the sin nature. The believer with unconfessed sin in his life is not spiritual but carnal (controlled by the sin nature). The good deeds of a carnal Christian are indistinguishable from good deeds performed by an unbeliever and have no spiritual value. Antonym: divine good.

human spirit The immaterial part of mankind designed by God to understand, to store, and to utilize Bible doctrine or spiritual phenomena. The human spirit, acquired at the moment of salvation, is the home for eternal life.

lake of fire The final abode for unbelievers and fallen angels who are eternally condemned and separated from God. Unbelievers are sentenced by the Lord Jesus Christ at the Last Judgment (Matt. 25:41; cf. Rev. 20:14–15).

Last Judgment The unbeliever's separation from God for all eternity; also called the second death (Rev. 20:11–15).

legalism Mankind's futile attempt through human effort to earn salvation, spirituality, or the approbation of God by strict conformity to a code of ethics, religion, or morality and results in the production of sin, human good, and evil.

Mosaic Law A legal system that established policy for ethical, spiritual, and civil life within the Old Testament nation of Israel.

rebound The grace provision for the carnal believer to recover the filling of the Holy Spirit through the naming of personal sins privately to God the Father; the method of restoring the believer's fellowship with God to resume the spiritual life (1 John 1:9; 1 Cor. 11:28).

reconciliation The removal of the natural antagonism between God and man through the work of Christ on the cross. Reconciliation removes the insurmountable barrier of personal sin, the penalty of sin, physical birth, man's relative righteousness, God's perfect character, and man's position in Adam (Rom. 5:11).

regeneration The theological term for spiritual birth, or being "born again" (John 3:3); the imputation of eternal life at the moment anyone believes in Jesus Christ for eternal salvation. A regenerate person passes from spiritual death to spiritual life.

sin nature An integral part of every human being that resides in the cell structure of the human body. The sin nature was originally acquired by Adam at his fall and is subsequently passed down genetically through the male to all mankind through procreation. The result is both spiritual death and total depravity of all humanity, except Jesus Christ. The sin nature is composed of an area of strength, an area of weakness, trends toward legalism or antinomianism, and lust patterns.

slave market of sin The spiritually dead human race born in bondage to sin.

soteriology The theological discipline of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

spirituality The absolute status of being in fellowship with God by the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit. Antonym: **carnality**.

unlimited atonement The judgment of Christ on the cross for the sins of the entire human race (2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 John 2:2).

unpardonable sin The sin of rejecting the work of Jesus Christ on the cross; the only sin to be judged at the Last Judgment.

volition The decision-maker of the soul.

witnessing Fulfilling the divine commandment for believers to communicate God's plan of salvation to unbelievers on a personal basis.

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