



## Superficial Salvation, PART 2

by Jeremy Cagle

In 1914, B. B. Warfield wrote that the term *Christian* was being stretched to the point that it no longer had any specific meaning. Instead of being used with a religious nuance, the term was being used more and more to mean something like “respectable” or “dignified.” Here are Warfield’s words,

Clearly, the name “Christianity” has become an honorable one . . . and has acquired secondary implications . . . Mr. G. K. Chesterson has lately called our attention in his serio-comic way to the extent to which such secondary implications have attached themselves to it in the speech of the common people. The apple-women and charwomen, the draymen and dustmen, it seems, are accustomed to employ it in a sense of which we can only say that it lies somewhere between “sane” and “civilized” . . . “Where can I get Christian food?” “Where can I find a Christian bed?” These are natural forms of popular speech with which we are all familiar.<sup>1</sup>

Today, almost 100 years later, we could say the exact same thing (except for the reference to the apple-women and the dustmen). In 2010, the word *Christian* usually refers to nothing more than a respectable or dignified person. It rarely means a person or group of people who believe in the depravity of man and the atonement of Jesus Christ. Think about it: we have gay and lesbian *Christians*. We have conservative and liberal *Christians*. We have evangelical and non-evangelical *Christians*. We have *Christian* activists. We have *Christian*

musicians and *Christian* television stations. We have born-again *Christians* (as opposed to what?). We even have *Christian* video games. But what does the term *Christian* mean?<sup>2</sup> And how can you tell if you are one?

This article is designed to help you answer that second question. How can you tell if you are a Christian? How can you tell if you are a genuine follower of Jesus Christ? How do you know if you are a true disciple or if you are a false one?

To answer those questions, here are the rest of the 10 categories of false conversions.<sup>3</sup> Here are six ways to tell if your salvation is superficial.

## V. SOCIAL CHRISTIAN

Several years ago, *Christianity Today* published an article entitled “Live Longer, Healthier, & Better: The untold benefits of becoming a Christian in the ancient world.” It was written by a Sociology Professor at the University of Washington. Here is what he said:

Constantine, the first Christian to rule Rome, governed for 31 years and died in bed of natural causes at a time when the average imperial reign was short and emperor’s lives usually came to violent ends. That he lived to old age illustrates a more general, if not widely known, early Christian achievement: Christians in the ancient world had longer life expectancies than did their pagan neighbors. Modern demographers regard life expectancy as the best indicator of quality of life, so in all likelihood, Christians simply lived better lives than just about everyone else. In fact, many pagans were attracted to the Christian faith because the church produced tangible (not only “spiritual”) blessings for its adherents.<sup>4</sup>

That last sentence is a good description of Social Christianity: “many pagans were attracted to the Christian faith because the church produced tangible

blessings for its adherents.” A Social Christian is a Christian by *tangibility* . . . by an interest in earthly things. A Social Christian is not interested in Christianity for its spiritual benefits but for its physical ones. He is not a believer for the fellowship but for the company;<sup>5</sup> for the society but not the religion. He is not interested in Christian growth but in the social atmosphere that Christianity provides. He comes to church because it is a good place for his kids to learn moral lessons. He teaches Sunday School to help make the community a better place. But repentance and faith and obedience to the commands in the Scriptures are nowhere on his radar.

What does the Bible say about someone like that? How would it respond to a Social Christian?

John 6 tells the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000. After the feeding, Jesus leaves the large crowd to go to Capernaum and when the crowd catches up with Him, Jesus tells them this:

Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will

give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.

Jesus told the crowd that they should come to Him because they were interested in spiritual things, not because they were interested in feeding their stomachs.

The Lord goes on to tell them more about those spiritual things in verses 53-56:

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.”

This was so offensive that verse 66 says that, “As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.”

Jesus did everything He could to discourage people from following Him for physical comforts. In Matthew 8:20, He said “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” In Matthew 10:22, He said

“You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.” In Luke 9:24, He said “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

Any man who comes to church just to add to his material prosperity will be disappointed because “the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.” Any man who follows Jesus Christ for earthly comforts will find that all men will hate the true followers of Jesus. Any man who attends church just to increase his physical blessings will go away empty-handed because the hope of a Christian is in the next life, not in this one. As the Apostle Paul put it, “If we have hoped in Christ for this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied” (1 Cor 15:19).

A Christian is one who has been resurrected from a spiritual death to a spiritual life.<sup>6</sup> He is one who has been taken from an enslavement to sin to an enslavement to righteousness.<sup>7</sup> His life has changed from a life that angers God to a life that pleases Him. And all of this is possible because of the perfect sacrifice of Jesus that has been credited to the Christian’s account.<sup>8</sup>

Christianity is not about you going from rags to riches or from loneliness to community. It is about you going to Jesus and only to Jesus. Jesus is your reward. Jesus is what saves you. Jesus is what you will get for following Jesus.

Christianity is not about tangible things. It is not about gaining the riches of this world but about gaining the riches of the next world. And, consequently, there is no such thing as a Social Christian.

## VI. ATHEIST CHRISTIAN

Christian Atheism is a philosophical movement, begun in the last century or so, to try to separate Christianity's morals from Christianity's religion. In its own words, "Christian atheists are secular humanists who follow the teachings and moral philosophies of Jesus of Nazareth for their moral guidance."<sup>9</sup> Christian Atheists hold to Jesus' high ethical standards but ignore everything else about His teachings. They do not believe that God is real or that Jesus is God's Son or that man is inherently evil or that Heaven is only attainable through Jesus' death on the cross. In fact, Christian Atheists do not believe in the after-life at all. They do not even believe in God.

But they do try to hold to Christianity's ethical teachings. They try to love as Jesus loved. They try to serve others as Jesus served others. They try to follow the Sermon on the Mount and the Golden Rule and the principles in Jesus' parables (the non-religious principles). A Christian Atheist, then, would be a Christian by *morality*. He tries to follow Jesus' standard of behavior as long as it does not cross over into the spiritual realm.

And while most professing Christians understand that atheism and Christianity are incompatible, there are many today who believe that they are Christians simply because they have high morals. They think that they are Christians because they are "good people." Their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds and that is their salvation. As the thinking goes, they haven't hurt anybody. They haven't stolen anything. They haven't told any really bad lies or committed any really horrible sins. Therefore, God should let them into Heaven.

Their Christianity is based on their morality. Jesus' blood is not needed because their virtues take its place. The crucifixion of the Son of God, while it may have saved others, does not need

to save them because God was never angry with them. In fact, whether God exists or not makes little difference to them because their life would not be all that different either way. That is the mentality of an Atheist Christian. They live as if God was not there. One author eloquently summed up their mentality this way,

Nobody will raise a fuss if you find Jesus helpful for your personal well-being and relationships, or even if you think he was the greatest person in history - a model worthy of devotion and emulation. But start talking about the real crisis - where our best efforts are filthy rags and Jesus came to bear the condemnation of helpless sinners who place their confidence in him rather than in themselves - and people begin shifting in their seats, even in churches.<sup>10</sup>

What's wrong with this? Why is it wrong to believe that our morality saves us?

It is wrong because it is a lie. Listen to what the Apostle Paul says about man's morality in Romans 3:10-20.

As it is written,  
 "There is none righteous, not even one;  
 There is none who understands,  
 There is none who seeks for God;  
 All have turned aside, together they  
 have become useless;

There is none who does good,  
 There is not even one."

"Their throat is an open grave,  
 with their tongues they keep deceiving,"  
 "The poison of asps is under their lips;"  
 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and  
 bitterness;"

"Their feet are swift to shed blood,  
 Destruction and misery are in their  
 paths,  
 And the path of peace they have not  
 known."  
 "There is no fear of God before their  
 eyes."

Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

If you trust in your morality to save you, then you are lost because no one will be justified in God's sight by keeping the law. King David said that if you trust in your good deeds to save you, then you are lost from birth because you were born in sin.<sup>11</sup> You were born with an immoral nature. As A. W. Pink put it,

The natural man has not one iota of holiness in him, rather is he born with the seeds of every form of evil, radically inclined to sin. In our nature we are vileness itself, black as Hell, and unless

a miracle of grace be wrought upon us we must inevitably be damned for all eternity.<sup>12</sup>

No one is saved by his own goodness because no one is good. Strictly speaking, we were all stillborn . . . we were all born dead to God. First Corinthians 15:22 says, “For as in Adam all die.” The first man sinned and his sin plunged the whole human race into sin and into a nature that is both sinful and wicked.<sup>13</sup> And if it were not for the work of the Holy Spirit in our souls, making us alive to God,<sup>14</sup> we would die in this condition. None of us would be saved if left to our own devices because “there is none righteous, not even one” and “because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight.”

You cannot save yourself. Your salvation is all of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross or your salvation is nothing. There is no such thing as an Atheist Christian.

## VII. PRODIGAL CHRISTIAN

A Prodigal Christian is someone who “got saved” at a revival or a church service and attended church for a period of time but left and never came back. He was interested in Christianity for

awhile but now the interest is gone. In theological terms, he is an apostate. He is “one who departs from the faith.”<sup>15</sup> In layman terms, he is a prodigal.

In many cases like this, if you ask the prodigal about the state of his soul, he will tell you that he is saved. If you ask him why he thinks that, he will point back to some event or moment in the past when the Lord “touched” him . . . when he walked down an aisle and prayed a prayer to ask Jesus into his heart.

A Prodigal Christian is a Christian by *history*. Something happened in the past but nothing is happening in the present. As the thinking goes, a Prodigal Christian’s future salvation is certain not because of spiritual fruit in the present but because of a spiritual event in the past. His salvation was taken care of 20 years ago, so he doesn’t have to worry about his church involvement today. He can live however he wants to now. There is a theological term for this way of thinking, too: Antinomianism. Antinomianism is “a rejection of the idea that the Christian’s life needs to be governed by laws or rules.”<sup>16</sup>

Why is this a category of false

conversions? What is wrong with someone who bases his Christianity on an event in the past?

Fortunately for us, this kind of behavior is nothing new. People did the same kind of thing in the First Century. Writing about false teachers and antichrists in First John 2, the Apostle John gave his readers a way to identify them. In verses 18-19, he wrote,

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

The word for “antichrist” in verse 18 is *antikristos* which literally means “against the Messiah.”<sup>17</sup> John says that you can tell those who are against the Messiah by their behavior: “They went out from us . . . for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us . . .” If someone leaves the church and never returns to it, John says they are *antikristos*. They are against Christ.

In his sermon, “Why Some Leave Christ,” Charles Spurgeon gave several

reasons for leaving the church. He said,

Some there are in these days, as there were in our Lord’s own day, who depart from Christ because they cannot bear His doctrine . . . Others there are who desert the Savior for the sake of gain . . . Some leave Christ and go away terrified by persecution . . . From time to time, there are people who forsake true religion out of sheer instability . . . And, oh! How many leave Christ for the sake of sensual enjoyment.<sup>18</sup>

Whatever the case may be, if someone leaves the church, they leave Jesus’ body. And if they leave the church for a considerable amount of time, it is very likely that they have left Jesus Himself. They have become *antikristos*: against Christ. As Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.”

A friend of mine once said that you can hold your breathe for three minutes and still be alive, but if you hold your breath for three years, you are dead. It is the same way with leaving the church. The longer you stay away, the deader you become. And if you are not with Jesus, you are against Him. And, consequently, there are no Prodigal Christians.

## VIII. JELLYFISH CHRISTIAN

I got the title of this category from J. C. Ryle's book, *Holiness*. In this book, Bishop Ryle said this about the state of many Christians in his day:

about religion, has no intuitive sense of truth and really *needs* instruction and illumination. Beside this, the natural heart in most men hates exertion in religion and cordially dislikes patient painstaking inquiry. Above all, the natural heart generally likes the praise of others.<sup>19</sup>

That was originally printed in 1879 but it could have been written yesterday. Myriads of professing Christians today have a boneless, nerveless, jellyfish condition of the soul. They cannot distinguish things that differ. They live in a kind of fog. They can swallow anything in the name of Christ and they can even digest it. Just like a jellyfish.

For a shocking example of this, here is the transcript of a 2005 interview on Larry King Live with a best-selling Christian author and the pastor of one the largest churches in America.

**Larry King:** We've had ministers on the show who said "Your record doesn't count." You either believe in Christ or you don't. If you believe in Christ, you are going to Heaven. And if you don't, no matter what you've done in your life, you ain't.

**Pastor:** Yeah, I don't know. There's probably a balance between. I believe you have to know Christ. But I think if you know Christ, if you're a believer

in God, you're going to have some good works. I think it's a cop-out to say I'm a Christian but I don't ever do anything . . .

**Larry King:** What if you're Jewish or Muslim, you don't accept Christ at all?

**Pastor:** You know, I'm very careful about saying who would and wouldn't go to heaven. I don't know . . .

**Larry King:** You believe you have to believe in Christ. They're wrong, aren't they?

**Guest:** Well, I don't know if I believe they're wrong. I believe here's what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I think that only God will judge a person's heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know a lot about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don't know. I've seen their sincerity. So I don't know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

That nationally recognized pastor said the phrase "I don't know" six times in this portion of the interview. That is a Jellyfish Christian. No spine. No backbone. No convictions.

A Jellyfish Christian is a Christian by *congeniality*. He is nice and polite and that is what his Christianity consists of: niceness and politeness. As far as his beliefs go, he believes nothing

and everything all at the same time. You could call this Blob Christianity. Everything good and bad; orthodox and heretical; goes in and stays in. As J. C. Ryle put it, "They can swallow all, if they cannot digest it!"

What's wrong with this? What is wrong with basing your Christianity around your niceness?

There are numerous times in the Bible when God told Israel and the church to be discerning . . . to recognize truth from error. Even to take action against error. Consider the following passages.

Deuteronomy 18:19-22, "It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die. You may say in your heart, 'How will we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken "

Jeremiah 29:8, "For thus says the Lord

of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Do not let your prophets who are in your midst and your diviners deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream.’”

Matthew 18:17, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

First Corinthians 5:13, “Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.”

First Thessalonians 5:19-22, “Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil.”

First John 4:1 says, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

The Bible is abundantly clear that we are to test and discern and even take action against teachings that are not from God. Why? Because everything that claims to be Christian is not Christian.

Everything that glitters is not gold. And part of a being a Christian is realizing that. Part of being a child of God is noticing and avoiding the teachings of Satan. Part of being saved is distinguishing the truth from the lies - the light from the darkness. As First Peter 2:9 says, “[For God] has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”

If you cannot recognize truth from error or if you do not care, you are not a Christian.<sup>21</sup> No one is a Christian just because they are nice. There are lots of nice people in Hell. You can only be saved from God’s wrath if you love His Son.<sup>22</sup> And you can only love His Son if you love the truth.<sup>23</sup> No one is a Christian who loves lies. And there are no Jellyfish Christians.

## IX. BUBBA CHRISTIAN

A Bubba Christian is a Christian by *geography*. A person in this category thinks he is a Christian because he grew up in a place where there are lots of Christians. He is a follower of Christ, not because he has had a conversion experience, but because he lives in a community with lots of churches. He is a believer because his neighbors are believers.

Many professing Christians in the South fall into this category (hence the name “Bubba”). They think that because they grew up in the Bible-Belt, they must be saved. They think that their culture has saved them. They think that their land of origin is enough to grant them entrance into Heaven. Because they live in neighborhoods where there is little crime, no bars, and few divorces, they must be converted.

If you ask a Bubba Christian if they are a Christian, they will give you a funny look and say, “Well of course I’m a Christian, I’m from Tennessee!” “What do you mean, ‘Am I a Christian?’ Everyone from Texas is a Christian!”

What would the Bible say to a Bubba Christian? What does it say about the relationship between Christianity and *geography*?

If anyone could have been saved by their geographical orientation, it would have been the Jews. During most of the Old and New Testaments, they lived in the Promised Land. God had promised Abraham that his descendants would live in Palestine<sup>24</sup> and God kept that promise. You can add to this the fact that the Jews had the Scriptures when no one else did. Their ancestors

talked face-to-face when no one else had that privilege. God’s Prophets and Apostles lived among them. As a matter of fact, Jewish males were even circumcised to remind them of God’s covenant with them.<sup>25</sup> You cannot get any more geographically and racially blessed than that.

But what does God say about all of this? Were the Jews granted entrance into Heaven because of all these things? Did the importance of their land and their nation save them individually? Romans 2:28-29 answers that question this way:

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Paul told the Jews that they were not saved because they were Jewish. They were not saved just because they grew up in the Land of the Promise. He goes on to say in Romans 3:9, “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin.” In Romans 3:23, he says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory

of God.” All of mankind is born in sin: Jew and Gentile; Southerner and Northerner. All are born in a state of rebellion against God. And, because of that, your place of birth cannot save you. Your place of birth does not change the sinfulness of your heart.

You are not a Christian just because you grew up in Alabama. Your family and friends are not Christians just because their ancestors have lived in Kentucky for 200 years. Wherever you were born, and wherever you have lived, you were born and you have lived in a condition of spiritual revolt against God. There is no location on this planet that can help you escape that.

And because of this, you must be reborn to become a Christian. You must be made a new creature in Christ.<sup>26</sup> As Martyn Lloyd-Jones put it, “There is nobody born a Christian into this world. We have to born again to become Christians.”<sup>27</sup> John 3:3 says, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Geography cannot get you into Heaven. There are no Bubba Christians. Salvation is not achieved by your place of birth but by the fact of your rebirth

and that can only happen when you believe on Jesus’ work on the cross.<sup>28</sup> To quote Marty Lloyd-Jones again, “Man is a guilty sinner. God is a holy God. How can the two be brought together? The answer is the cross of Christ.”<sup>29</sup>

## X. FAMILY CHRISTIAN

Recent studies have shown that home-schooling has increased 75 percent in the last 10 years in the United States. 1.5 million children in America are now learning at home and statistics show that that number will probably increase as the years roll on. There are many reasons for this increase but one is “a desire to provide moral or religious instruction to children.”<sup>30</sup>

I grew up in church in the 1990’s and I can honestly say that I did not know one family who home-schooled in my community. Today, I know at least 50. Many of them provide an excellent education for their children and they evangelize/disciple them regularly. They are a wonderful example to me and my wife of how Christian parents should raise their kids.

But I know some families who are struggling with home-schooling. They

just cannot seem to make it work. The harder they try; the more miserable their children become and the more Godless they seem to be. And I think the reason for that problem is often this: some professing Christians think that because they are believers, their children must be believers. They think that because they are saved, their children must also be saved. And, instead of evangelizing their kids, they try to disciple them. Instead of engaging their children’s heart and talking to them about their sin and God’s grace, they just try to modify their behavior. As the thinking goes, because their children are already Christians, they just need to act like it.

That is the mentality of a Family Christian. Jesus saved me; therefore, Jesus must have saved my family. Jesus made me alive when I was dead in my sins, therefore Jesus must have made my children alive when they were dead in their sins.

A Family Christian is a Christian by *ancestry*. He thinks that his family is saved because he is saved or, to look at it another way, he thinks that he is saved because his family is saved. Salvation is inherited. It is passed down from one family member to another, just

like a piece of furniture or a strand of DNA. My father was a Christian. My grandfather was a Christian. My great-grandfather was a Christian. Therefore, by default, I must be a Christian.

Is this way of thinking wrong? Is it wrong to think that you are saved because your parents are saved? Is it wrong to think that your children are saved because you are saved?

Jesus would say so. In Matthew 10:34-39, He said this about a believer’s relationship to his family,

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.

This teaching of Jesus was not said to do away with the responsibilities or affections that we are to have for our earthly families. Children are still

to honor their parents.<sup>31</sup> Parents are still to train their children in the fear and instruction of the Lord.<sup>32</sup> Fathers are still to provide for their families.<sup>33</sup> Husbands are to still honor and serve their wives<sup>34</sup> and wives are to submit to their husbands.<sup>35</sup>

So why did Jesus say this? Why did He speak in such strong terms in Matthew 10? Jesus used hyperbole in this passage.<sup>36</sup> He was over-emphasizing something to make a point. As James Montgomery Boice describes it, “He means only that the interests of God’s kingdom must be paramount among His followers.”<sup>37</sup> Jesus was telling His followers that He did not come to the earth for the purpose of bringing earthly families closer together, He came to give His followers eternal life (v. 39).

And not everyone in an earthly family will accept that. Some will reject Christ. Some will reject their family members because they have embraced Christ. And, because of that, Jesus Christ says, “For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man’s enemies will be the members

of his household.” While family unity is often a by-product of Christianity, it is not the main product. The main product is the salvation of souls. And, since everyone in an earthly family will not accept that, there is often division. One family member is often set against another one.

Salvation is not based on *ancestry*. Romans 14:12 says, “So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.” Your salvation is not enough to save your children any more than your parents salvation was enough to save you. Each of us will give an account to God for our own lives. You will give an account to God for your life. Your parents and your children will give an account to God for their lives.

As hard as it is to accept, you are not born into salvation and neither is anyone else in your earthly family. As we said earlier, we must be reborn for that. And, because of this, there are no Family Christians.

## CONCLUSION

We are not saved by *tangibility, morality, history, congeniality, geography, or ancestry*. Social Christians, Atheist Christians, Prodigal Christians,

Jellyfish Christians, Bubba Christians, and Family Christians are all oxymorons. They are categories of false conversions. And while it is helpful to understand that, it still leaves us with the all-important question: “What does it mean to be saved?” “If our material possessions and our good behavior and our past and our politeness and our physical location and our family background is not enough to get us into Heaven, what is?” “How can someone be rescued from God’s wrath?”

The answer is found in two words: believe and repent. To believe something is to place your confidence in it; to entrust it.<sup>38</sup> To be saved from God’s wrath, you must place your confidence in Jesus Christ to save you from your sins. You must believe that His work on the cross and His rising from the dead is enough to deliver you from the punishment that your wicked deeds deserve.

Romans 1:16 says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.” Romans 10:4 says, “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.” Romans 10:9 says, “that if you confess

with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

***To repent is to change one’s mind or purpose.<sup>39</sup> This change always leads to a corresponding change of lifestyle. To be saved, you must change your mind about who you are and about Who God is. You must stop thinking that you are a good person and that you are in control of your own life. You must begin to think that you are a sinner in need of grace and that your life is to be lived in submission to the Lord. Salvation is not yours until you do this.***

In Luke 13:3, Jesus says, “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” Acts 17:30 says, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent.” Second Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

If these six categories describe you,

I want you to know that salvation is available to you today. You can experience a real life-changing relationship with God; not a superficial one. You can know the God Who is sincere, not contrived. The Son of God has been crucified and raised to life that sinners might partake in His life. He has paid the price of their sins so that they don't have to and you can accept that sacrifice for yourself. You do not have to become a better person. You do not have to make up for the wrongs you have done. You do not have to perform penance or do some good works; you just have to do what He has told you to do in His Word. You have to come as you are and believe on His Son and turn from your sins. Embrace His free gift of salvation and give your life to Him in return and he will change you from a Superficial Christian to a Sincere One.

## End Notes

- 1 Quoted from *The Person and Work of Christ* (Philipsburg, N. J.: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1950) 480.
- 2 For more information on what it means to be a Christian, see "What is a Christian?" in our Frequently Asked Questions page.
- 3 The first four are discussed in "Superficial Salvation, Part 1."

- 4 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/1998/issue57/57h028.html> as of 3/23/10.
- 5 Jerry Bridges, *The Crisis of Caring: Recovering the Meaning of True Fellowship* (Philipsburg, N. J.: P & R Publishing, 1985) 15-16.

Fellowship, as it is described for us in the Bible, is much more than Christian social activity. It is more than enjoying food together, or playing games in a Christian atmosphere, or chatting with one another about the events of the past week . . . The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*. It is translated several ways in the New Testament: for example "participation," "partnership," "sharing," and, of course, "fellowship." These various uses of *koinonia* convey two related meanings: (1) to share together in the sense of joint participation or partnership, and (2) to share with in the sense of giving what we have to others.

This is drastically different from the idea conveyed by the word "company." Believers are to partner together and share together in life and ministry. Most Superficial Christians do not have any interest in this kind of relationship with members of the church. They do not want to share life and ministry together because they are not saved. Hence, they are more interested in the company than in the fellowship.

- 6 Rom 8:1-2, 5-6.
- 7 Rom 6:11-18.
- 8 2 Cor 5:17.
- 9 [www.christianatheism.com/about](http://www.christianatheism.com/about) as of 3/23/10.

- 10 Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008) 26.
- 11 Ps 51:5.
- 12 A. W. Pink, *The Doctrine of Human Depravity* (Pensecola, Flo.: Chapel Library, n. d.) 137.
- 13 Rom 5:12, 15.
- 14 Jn 3:5-8; 6:63; Rom 8:11.
- 15 Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2001) 15.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 17 Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996) 51.
- 18 "Why Some Leave Christ" in *Free Grace Broadcaster*, Fall of 2008 (Pensecola, Flo.: Chapel Library) 4-7.
- 19 *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, and Roots* (Darlington, Del.: Evangelical Press, 2007 ed.) 286-287.
- 20 [www.transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0506/20/lkl.01.html](http://www.transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0506/20/lkl.01.html) as of 4/1/10.
- 21 2 Thess 2:10.
- 22 Jn 3:36.
- 23 In John 14:6, Jesus even goes so far as to say that He is the truth. Therefore, you cannot love Him if you do not love the truth.
- 24 Gen 15.

- 25 Gen 17:1-14.
- 26 2 Cor 5:17.
- 27 *The Cross: God's Way of Salvation* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1986) 45.
- 28 Jn 3:3-21.
- 29 *The Cross*, 33.
- 30 This article was posted by Chelsea Shilling at WorldNet Daily. It was downloaded from <http://www.wnd.com/index.php?pageId=85408> as of 4/1/10.
- 31 Eph 6:1; Col 3:20.
- 32 Eph 6:4.
- 33 1 Tim 5:8.
- 34 Eph 5:25-33.
- 35 Eph 5:22-24.
- 36 Webster's New World Dictionary, ed. by Michael Agnes (New York: Wiley Publishing, Inc., 2003) 318. Hyperbole is "exaggeration for effect, not meant to be taken literally."
- 37 *Christ's Call to Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1986) 116.
- 38 G. Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001) 362. The word that the New Testament writers used for "believe" is *pisteuo*. These definitions are taken from the meaning of this Greek word.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 287. The word that the New Testament writers used for "repent" is *metanoeo*. This definition is taken from the meaning of this Greek word.