

PROFESSION EXPOSED, POSSESSION EXPLAINED



L.R. SHELTON, JR. (1923-2003)

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Profession of Christ without Life Exposed
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Profession of Christ without Life Exposed – Possession of Life in Christ Explained

1. The Need of Christ's Life Within

The Lord has laid it upon my heart to bring a series of messages to expose profession of Christ without life and to explain what it means to possess life in Christ. Hear us as we go into these studies; may the Holy Spirit open our hearts and our minds!

I believe the judgment of God is fast coming upon the vast multitudes in Christendom today because of the lukewarmness and hypocrisy that is so manifest in the lives of those who claim to be followers of Christ. There has never been a day in the history of the church when seemingly there has been more profession and less practice of godliness than is witnessed in our churches today. Every form of the media proclaims the fact that more people claim to be born again, and more people claim to be followers of Christ today than at any other time in the history of the Christian church. There are more Bible study groups, prayer groups, seminars, singing and preaching groups and retreats scattered around the country than at any other time.

But in view of this, I ask: Where is the vital godliness and holiness that characterized the church in the Acts of the Apostles? Where is the preciousness of Christ? Where is the convicting power of God the Holy Spirit? Where is the thundering forth of the law of God, so the people may know what sin is? Where are the sinners crying unto God for mercy? Where are the life-giving evidences of the claims of God upon the lives of so-called born-again believers? Where is the Lordship of Jesus Christ claimed and practiced? Where is the sacrificial spirit of giving for the cause of missions at home and abroad? Where is the separation from the world and the walking in righteousness and true holiness? Where is the old fashioned prayer meetings where people meet to cry unto God for the souls of men? Where are the praise meetings where Christ is exalted and lifted up among His people? I believe these are pertinent questions for our times!

Let me go further and state these facts: We have time to eat and drink; we have time for pleasures and the world; we have time to talk and visit with friends and loved ones; we have time for just about everything the world has to offer, but where is the time for prayer? Where is the time for waiting upon God? Where is the time for meditating upon His Word and crying unto Him for holy lives and godly tongues?

We have time to hunt and fish, swim and play, ski and skate, time to go on vacation, entertain and be entertained; we have time to work, go to school, and enjoy all the world has to offer in the form of pleasure; we have time for television, radio, stereo, and movies, but where is the time for God, His Word, and for waiting in His presence? Where is the time for God's work and service?

I ask each one of us who claim to be saved by the grace of God: Where is the fruit of the Spirit that shows we have been with God? We who say we have trusted Jesus as Savior; we who have been baptized and attend church—Where is the new life of holiness? Where is the vital godliness that makes us bond slaves to Jesus Christ? Where is the love for souls? for others? Where is the crucifixion to the world? These are important questions!

You see, our trouble today is that men have been rushed into profession without the slightest bit of work in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Let someone get the least concerned about his soul, then he is rushed into profession through the four spiritual laws and told he is saved because he has now made a commitment. Today a profession is used as an escape from every crisis: in marriage, finance, sickness—you name it. People are told that they are saved because they have said "yes" to certain questions, when they know nothing of their depraved hearts before God, or of the power sin holds over them. They know nothing of the consequences or awfulness of their sin against God, nor do they know what it is to sorrow over it and desire to turn to God from sin with a hatred for themselves (Mat 5:4; Luk 14:26).

Our Lord warned of such hypocrisy in Matthew 23:15 in these words: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves." What a commentary upon present-day evangelism, of rushing people into professions just to make more proselytes when those individuals know nothing of their own hearts, of God's hatred for sin, or of a brokenness of heart before God because of sin!

Dear friend, I am not being critical, I am only trying to analyze our situation today. My heart has cried unto God for your precious souls because I know where you are; I was there one day myself! My cry has been: "Lord, send us revival; open hearts; have mercy upon this people; O Lord, call sinners to repentance!"

When John the Baptist came on the scene to prepare the way of the Lord, he came crying, "Repent ye" for the kingdom of heaven is at hand...bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance...And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire" (Mat 3:2, 8, 10). He came preaching repentance, and by the quickening, convicting power of the Holy Spirit the human heart was laid bare before God. This is what is missing today in our churches, in our pulpits, and in our lives: the old-fashioned" work of the Holy Spirit to convince and convict of sin!

Do we see that today? Are men being awakened to the fact that they are lost? Although I've had every damnable lie told on me, I desire by the grace of God to be true to that which has been said of me: "This man desires to get you lost; he prays that you'll get lost!" And my friend, this IS my prayer, because unless a man is lost, he can never be found; unless a man stands guilty before God, he can never be delivered by the grace of God. Luke 19:10 tells us that "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" and that's the only one whom Christ saves, the lost sinner. So it must be by the convicting power of God's Holy Spirit, for without the Holy Spirit's work, our preaching is vain and our labors are in vain, for without Him we can do nothing (Joh 15:5). In John 6:63 we read: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." We must be made alive; we must be quickened by the Holy Spirit who produces the new birth in us by His almighty power. He must make us willing in the day of His power, or we will never be saved, because the carnal man cannot "pick up himself by his own bootstraps;" he cannot save himself! A little profession, a little "believism" will not do it! My friend, the new birth is not produced by our believing; it is produced by the power of God's Spirit in our hearts. It is an inward work of God's Spirit!

Oh that our churches would be turned into houses of prayer instead of just a center for socializing! Oh that our hearts would be broken before God in confession and repentance! Oh that there would be a pouring forth of our hearts before God, confessing our conformity to the world, our laziness in prayer, our religion without life, our profession without possession, our lack of conformity to Christ, our lack of the holy zeal and boldness which characterized the early church! Oh that there would be a seeking of the face of God in intercessory prayer until we would rather tear down the gates of heaven than to let God go, for a reviving of our souls and the souls of others! Dear friend, this is our only hope today: a heaven-born, heaven-sent revival where men will be born of the Spirit of God!

Why are we in such a sad condition? We have compromised with sin; we have taken the road of least resistance; we have folded our sails and said that God does not want us to live sacrificial lives as they did in the early church. Therefore we

have no testimony, no vital witness of life and tongue; we have nothing but a sickening, hellish, diabolical profession without life and without hope! We see it everywhere we turn today in fundamental as well as well as evangelical circles. Further, the false teaching of carnal Christianity has so permeated our churches that no matter how people live, they never question their interest in Christ. They have been told that if they believe, all is well with their souls. My Bible, the Holy Word of God, declares no such teaching; but in fact, declares just the opposite, for we read in Hebrews 12:14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD."

A holy life always follows true conversion, because it is the life of God in the soul. Will you listen? If this holy life does not follow the salvation that we profess to have, it is not God's salvation; for Christ came to save His people *from* their sins and not *in* their sins (Mat 1:21)!

A holy life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ or God's purpose in saving us would be defeated; and this cannot be, for we read in Ephesians 1:4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."

A holy life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ or God's purpose in calling us would be defeated; and this cannot be, for we read in 1 Thessalonians 4:7: "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."

A holy life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ, or God's will would be turned aside, and this cannot be, for we read in 1 Thessalonians 4:3: "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification."

A holy life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ, or God's grace would not reign in the believer's life, and this cannot be, for we read in Titus 2:11, 12: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

My friend, are you not seeing a little of what God requires and how far short the average professing Christian has come today? It is nothing but the sin of hypocrisy, nothing but profession without life.

Further, a holy life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ, for the God Who cannot lie (Tit 1:2), said, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Pe 1:4).

A holy life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ or God Himself is unholy, and that cannot be, for we read in 1 Peter 1:15-16: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (behavior); because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy."

A holy life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ or the eternal purpose of God for us in Christ would be defeated, and this cannot be for we read in Romans 8:29: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." And the only way that we can be conformed to the image of Christ is in holiness!

A holy life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ or God erred when He said in Galatians 1:3, 4 that He has "delivered us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father."

A holy life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ or Galatians 5:24 would be wrong, for we read: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

A holy life must follow the salvation that God gives in Christ Jesus or Galatians 6:14, 15 is wrong, for we read: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor circumcision, but a new creature."

Scripture after Scripture can show you that a holy life *must* follow the salvation that God gives poor sinners in the Lord Jesus Christ. But this is enough to show us that sanctification is a vital part of our salvation, and that if we are not made partakers of God's holiness, we are not saved. Therefore, for a man who has just a profession of life with no fruit of the Spirit, it is the sin of hypocrisy! We may say we are acquainted with justification and forgiveness of sins, but if we are not acquainted with the other part of God's salvation, which is holiness and sanctification of life, then we are not saved! No matter how much we have believed and embraced, or what experiences we may have had, if we are not being progressively sanctified by the grace of God, by the work of the Holy Spirit working in us, we are not saved, we are living in the sin of hypocrisy. We have profession without life; we have nothing but hell still in our souls, and Christ is not ours!

My friend, I trust you have listened! We've cried unto God and waited before Him that He would give us His Word, praying that He would take it home to every heart. For without the work of the Holy Spirit, I myself know that all is in vain. But I believe He has been present to take His Word home to our hearts that we may know where we stand; and if we truly do not have that holy life in the Lord Jesus Christ, we may confess unto God that sin of hypocrisy, of a profession of Christ without the life of Christ.

2. The Holy Spirit Must Work

In our first message of this series, contrasting profession of Christ without life with possession of life in Christ, we considered the very desperate need of the

work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. Although there has never been a day in the history of the church when there has been as many Bible study and prayer groups, retreats, seminars, singing and preaching groups made up of those who claim to be born-again believers as there are today, yet there has never been less practice of godliness than is witnessed in our churches today. Everywhere we turn we see lukewarmness and hypocrisy manifested in the lives of those who claim to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And beloved, my heart has been grieved because of this; that is the reason God has laid these messages upon my heart.

Others may speak of the great revival meetings of our day as being the work of God, but where are those sinners crying after God for mercy? Where is the convicting power of God the Holy Spirit? For you see, where Christ is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, there's going to be sinners! But where is the thundering forth of the law of God that people might know what sin is? Where is the Lordship of Jesus Christ claimed and practiced? Where is the separation from the world and the walking in righteousness and true holiness? Where is the godliness and holiness that characterized the church in the Acts of the Apostles? Where are the life-giving evidences of the claims of God upon the lives of born-again believers today? And where is the preciousness of Christ to men today? Seriously consider these pertinent questions!

What is missing today? The work of the Holy Spirit is missing! And, beloved, I am not being critical as I analyze our trouble, because this is the burden of our prayer meetings every morning as we meet to pray for your precious souls. This deeply concerns me; for the Lord Jesus said in John 6:63: "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Without the work of the Holy Spirit, our preaching and our labors are in vain; without Him we can do nothing. Men are dead in trespasses and sins and must be quickened (made alive) by the Holy Spirit, Who alone can produce the new birth in us by His almighty power. It is He alone Who can make us willing in the day of His power (Psalm 110:3), or we would never be saved—because we cannot pick ourselves up by our bootstraps! And, I found out a long time ago that a little profession and a little "believing-ism" just won't do it. It must be the incorruptible Word of God, that Seed, that must go home to our hearts. The Spirit must work in our souls if ever we are brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are living in a day when most everyone wants a good feeling, a good emotion, and a happy time; they do not want to think of guilt or of sin. They want only the blessings of God without the humbling, mortifying experience of Holy Spirit conviction which makes them face the awful fact of their utterly ruined condition before God. This is the reason we have profession without life. I find many people who want to get to Christ, but they want to jump over all of this

humbling, breaking, mortifying, wounding, and sorrowing work of repentance. They do not want to wait until a real work of grace is worked in their soul by the Holy Spirit. Preachers want to pick fruit before it is ripe. They are not giving time to prayer and to preaching the Word, that men might be brought under conviction before God. Therefore men are rushed into profession without life, and they have nothing; they're painted hypocrites before God! They want to rush in with a little profession instead of waiting upon God to break their hearts! They want to escape hell and have all the benefits of the gospel, "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17), without the work of the gospel—a breaking of will, a knowledge of sin, and a laying at the foot of the cross as a helpless, doomed, and damned sinner before God. They want the benefits of the gospel in their hearts before they even learn the terms of the gospel, which is a crucifixion of the flesh: "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal 5:24).

If you have never become lost before God, you can never say you are saved. Our Lord did not leave us in doubt as to the terms of the gospel; after He gave the gracious invitation in Luke 14 to come to the supper because all things were ready, in love He turned to them and said: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple...whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luk 14:26, 27, 33). He told them the truth in love, that they were to forsake their way and follow Him. Again in Hebrews 13:13, He tells us we must leave the world behind and go forth unto Christ "without the camp, bearing his reproach." But where do you find men who want to hear that today? They do not want to do as Moses, who refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter because he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; so he forsook Egypt (Heb 11:24, 25, 27). But this is what every soul who comes to Christ for salvation does: there is a refusing of the world and a choosing to follow Christ. The world must be forsaken! Oh that we would hear it!

Beloved, I am not being hard; I want to be true to your precious souls. We see these same terms of salvation laid down in Isaiah 55:7: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD; and he will have mercy upon him and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." It is the wicked forsaking his way: his way of sin, self-will, self-assurance and rebellion. It is the unrighteous man forsaking his thoughts: his thoughts of pride, unbelief, lust and self-will. It is a returning unto God in true repentance, as there is forgiveness, deliverance, and mercy in Christ.

There must be complete surrender unto Christ as Lord: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me” (Luk 9:23). Christ will not allow us into His kingdom or to be partakers of His glory and glorious salvation without a broken will and a complete surrender unto Him as Lord of all.

Further, Psalm 51:17 tells us that “the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” And a broken heart and a broken will before God can only be wrought in us by the Spirit of God; anything short of this, dear friend, is hypocrisy! This is why we preach and pray, weep and cry unto God for your souls: I don’t want you to come up to that last day and hear those awful words: “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I never knew you!”

God cannot take you in until there is that willingness to leave your rebellion. How can you be married to the Lord Jesus Christ as long as you are longing and hankering after other lovers? Why should Christ save you if you love the world and all that is in it above Him Who gave Himself to redeem us from this present evil world? He not only came to save us from hell, but He came to save us *from* our sins (Mat 1:21). And I know that under Holy Spirit conviction, the sinner does not so much desire to be delivered from the wrath of God and hell as he desires to be delivered from himself and from sin. He cries unto God: “Lord, deliver me from myself; for I find that within me there dwelleth no good thing. It is from within me that all this corruption comes!”

God does not make bargains with us. It is imperative that you come clean and clear with God; it is imperative that you lay down your arms of rebellion and give up the world. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mat 7:21-23). So only those who *do* the will of God will enter into heaven; and I don’t want you to come short of that! That is the reason we cry week after week that you repent and turn unto God; we’re trying to draw that line of demarcation that you may be awakened to your state by nature: your sleep of death, your sluggardness and prayerlessness; and that you may see how God’s Word demands that we do the will of God, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. You don’t want to hear: “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity” because you did not do the will of my Father which is in heaven!

Some may ask, "Pastor, what is the will of God?" Matthew 5 tells us: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (vs. 3). The man who does the will of God is poor in spirit; he comes before God in poverty of spirit, owning his sinfulness and helplessness before God with a broken spirit and a contrite heart. In this poverty of spirit we admit that we know nothing, we are nothing and we can do nothing, so spiritually speaking, we are poverty stricken.

Next He said, "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." The man who does the will of God is the one who mourns over sin, over his lack of conformity to Christ and his inability to produce one good work that God will accept for salvation or justification before God. He mourns because he is a sinner; he mourns because he cannot get to God by himself; he knows that the Holy Spirit must produce in him that work. So he cries after God in Christ, that by His Spirit He would work in him that which is well pleasing. He does not want just a profession without life; he wants life, he wants Christ, he wants reality! He does not want to be a painted hypocrite; he wants that living, loving, lasting union with the living God.

The will of the Father is also expressed in the fourth beatitude: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." You see, the man who does the will of God not only mourns over his sinfulness, but he hungers and thirsts after that righteousness which is found *only* in the Lord Jesus Christ. He's like the Apostle Paul in Philippians 3:7, 8: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." And why does he count all of this but loss? That he may be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which we have of God by faith of Jesus Christ. So he hungers and thirsts after His righteousness. Beloved let me tell you something: this hungering and thirsting after Christ, this desire to be His completely, to know Him, is one of the most blessed signs of a true work of grace in the heart! Following the example of the apostle Paul, the soul cries: "I have to have Christ! I must have His righteousness!" Anything else is nothing but lip service; it is vain, hypocritical, useless, and only damns the soul further into hell.

Oh I would that God by His Spirit would so work today that the Word would go home to each and every heart! For if we're not awakened to see what God demands and what the will of the Father is, how can we do His will?

Again, we read of the will of God in 1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7 in these words: "This is the will of God, even your sanctification...for God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." If our lives are not producing the fruits of sanctification and holiness, we are not saved! We are nothing but painted hypocrites,

abiding under the judgment of God! How my heart has cried, “Oh Lord, let me warn them again today! Let me tell them that profession without life, profession without Christ, is nothing but hypocrisy; it is not the real thing! and they’re acting and walking in a way that is not pleasing unto you.”

All these things must be worked in our affection and our understanding by the Holy Spirit, but praise His holy name, this is the work He was sent to perform! So I for one, am trusting Him to do it, remembering His Word that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;” for God “hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we in turn might be made the righteousness of God in Christ” (2Co 5:19-21). And this blessed work the Spirit of God is working in some hearts here in our assembly, and where we’ve been going to preach His Word. I trust that He’s also working in your heart, taking His Word home by His almighty power!

3. Sin Must Be Broken

In our first two messages, I have been endeavoring to show the sad state Christendom is in today and why, and to lay before your heart and mind just what the Word of God teaches concerning this matter of living a profession of Christ without possessing His life. In these next messages I must sound forth a warning from God’s Word as to that which deceives, and to warn all who are deceived and are in this state of hypocrisy, who are sowing to the flesh and yet knowing themselves to be living a lie, not having the life of God in them. I will also show how God delivers poor sinners who are caught in this condition, by His Holy Spirit in grace.

Listen to Galatians 6:7, 8: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit it reap life everlasting.” This Word is plain enough!

I warn you, be not deceived! Beware of that false gospel which allows a man to stay in his sins and sow to his flesh, yet gives him a hope for heaven. Beware of that false gospel that sells you an insurance policy against the flames of hell and yet gives no power over sin! Beware of that false gospel which lets you go on in your same way of fleshly living and makes no demands for the death of your fleshly nature! Beware of that false gospel that gives you religion without life, profession without possession! Beware of that false gospel that leads you to believe that there are two roads to heaven, and not only one road, which is described by our Lord in Matthew 7:13, 14 as “the narrow way.” You see, this false gospel makes a second way, the road of “carnal Christianity” which is a way that “seemeth right

unto a man" (Pro 14:12), because it is an easy road. It appeals to the flesh, but, my friend, it is a road that surely leads to hell.

Again I warn you, be not deceived! Beware of the false gospel which is preached today and which makes no demands upon you, but shows you the easy way unto salvation. It deceives; it is really the shortest way to hell! This false gospel is not opposed to your flesh, rather, it is a "friendly pal" and is the source of oceans of good clean fun and innocent enjoyment. It lets you live without interference; it makes no demands upon you; it never changes your life; it still lets you live for your own pleasure. Only now you take delight in singing choruses and watching religious movies instead of singing cabaret songs and drinking hard liquor. The accent is still on enjoyment, though the fun is now on a higher plane morally, if not intellectually.

This false gospel does not seek to slay the sinner before he receives the new life in Christ, but tells him to receive the new life before the old life is slain. It tries to pour new wine into old wineskins, and it won't work! The old must be torn down before the new can be built (Mar 2:22). Instead of slaying the sinner, this false gospel tries to redirect him. So it directs him into a clever and jollier way of living which saves his self-respect. To the self-assertive, it says, "Come and assert yourself for Christ;" to the egotist it says, "Come and do your boasting in the Lord;" and to the thrill-seeker it says, "Come and enjoy the thrill of Christian fellowship."

This false gospel completely misses the whole meaning of the cross, which means death. The true gospel of the grace of God in Christ which is the power of God unto salvation, demands the death, burial and resurrection of you, the sinner, in the Lord Jesus Christ. It sets forth the cross of Christ as the abrupt, violent end of all that you are by nature and raises you to new life in Christ with the shackles of sin broken. It brings your pride and ambition to an end, leaving you at the feet of a holy God crying for mercy.

The true gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus tells you that you will take up the cross of Christ and say goodbye to your friends and the world, for you are not coming back the same person. It tells you that you are not going to have your life redirected but you are going to the place of death: "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb 13:13), for there we die to the world. As the Lord Jesus Himself said in Luke 14:27: "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." You see, we must die to the world and all its pleasures and allurements (Gal 6:14).

The true gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus makes no compromise with sin. It demands a coming clean and clear with God or going to hell! It says, "Down

sinner, fall down at the feet of the holy and sovereign God in repentance; fall down at the feet of Christ in faith, looking only to Him for salvation!"

Again, the true gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus makes no compromise! All sin must be forsaken; all sin must be renounced; all sin must be repented of; all sin must be hated. You must die to the world and the world will die to you! You must forsake your sin and then go on to forsake yourself or you will never know Christ in true salvation. The gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus will not let you cover, defend, or excuse any sin, for the Bible tells us in Proverbs 28:13: "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." When you die to sin and self, then Christ by the power of the gospel, will raise you to new life in Himself.

Therefore, let me warn you, do not seek to make terms with God, but stand before Him with bowed head, telling Him that you are lost and deserve to die and be cast into hell. Your only hope of salvation is to come to God with the rope around your neck, telling Him to slay or to save you for Christ's sake. Although you do deserve hell, God will have mercy upon you for Christ's sake if you come to Him in this way, renouncing your sins and turning to God from them in true heart-felt repentance. He came to seek and to save that which is lost, so come to Him as a lost sinner.

There is no place in the true gospel of God in Christ for a midway ground or compromise between the broad and the narrow way. NO! For when you come to Christ to set you free from the penalty of sin in hell—which is justification—you also come to Him to set you free from the love, power, and dominion of sin in this life, which is sanctification. The Person of Christ Who is our Salvation and Hope of glory cannot be divided! You cannot know Him as Savior without knowing Him as Lord, the One Who breaks the power of sin and sets you free. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (Joh 8:36), free from sin; for Romans 6:2 tells us that in salvation, we die to sin and its reigning power. So you see, the very nature of saving faith embraces a whole Christ and demands that justification not be separated from sanctification!

Oh what a subtle trick Satan has pulled on the vast majority of Christendom today with his false gospel of carnal Christianity, deceiving precious souls into thinking it is possible to be saved without the reigning power of sin being broken! What a subtle trick of Satan to tell them they can live a life in the flesh and sow to the flesh, and yet all is well with their never-dying souls because they have made a decision and are living the best they can! This false gospel has so permeated our churches today that no one questions his interest in Christ. But my friend, if you are in this condition, you are living a lie, you are living in a state of deception and hypocrisy, for you have not the life of God in you!

He who believes this false gospel believes a lie out of hell, for God's Word teaches differently. The false gospel does not preach the law of God, but Rom. 5:20-21 says this: "The law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." You see the law *must be preached!* For when the law enters in by the Holy Spirit, it convicts of the awfulness, guiltiness, and offensiveness of sin before God, and we find sin abounding and reigning in our hearts and lives. (Then we find the sinners crying to God for mercy!) And when God saves us in Christ, giving us His new nature and sending His Spirit to dwell in us, then His grace abounds and reigns in the hearts and lives of His redeemed children.

Then Romans 6 opens with the question: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" and the answer comes back in vs. 2: "God forbid!"—by no means! of course not! heaven forbid! perish the thought!—for "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" We cannot! Why? because death is a separation. In the physical realm, death is spoken of in Scriptures as the separation of the individual from his physical body, while spiritual death is spoken of as separation of the individual from the life of God in salvation. So when God saves us, sin gets its death-blow and we die to sin! To sum it up, in this chapter, the Holy Spirit is telling us that we have died to sin once for all, we have been separated from sin as the reigning monarch of our lives and now the principle of grace reigns as a monarch. And in vs. 4 we are told that we walk in newness of life with the power of sin broken, never again to come under its reigning power. Why? because the power of the grace of God does much more abound. And this reigning grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world (Tit 2:11). This is the true gospel of Christ!

So we see clearly in these verses of Romans 5:20-21 and 6:1-2 that the true Christian has died both to the guilt of sin, its penalty, and the power of sin and its reign in the human heart. Oh my dear friend, can you see it? Here is a fine line of demarcation because this is where the subtle work of Satan has come in with this carnal Christian teaching, saying that the moment a man makes a profession of faith in Christ, he is saved from the guilt and penalty of sin; but the power of sin is not broken, so of a necessity he will still live in sin, because sin still reigns. Thus they have a form of godliness, but they deny the power of God in salvation in the gospel to break the power of sin! And this is the reason we must continue to draw that line of demarcation and battle right here. Where yesterday's battle line was over the virgin birth of Christ and the inspiration of the Scriptures, today's battle line is over two issues: 1) the Lordship of Christ—His present reign in His

present kingdom as the King and the Lord of glory; and 2) this carnal Christian theory—men living a lie in hypocrisy, living in sin, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2Ti 3:5)!

Be not deceived! There are not two roads to heaven! There is only one. I'm going to raise my voice against carnal Christianity until I die! Again I say, God's Word teaches no such salvation that gives us justification without sanctification, but it teaches that in salvation the reign and power of sin has been broken and the penalty removed. The true believer, if indeed he is a true child of God, will and must say, "I have died to the reign of sin; sin no longer has dominion over me, for now the principle of grace and not sin reigns in my heart and life." This is what the power of the gospel does for us: it delivers us, it sets us free in Christ. And my friend, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom 1:16).

We are either under the reign of sin in Adam, therefore lost, or we are under the reign of grace in Christ, therefore saved and safe. There can be no middle ground of carnal Christianity! If the Holy Spirit by His almighty power has not brought us from under the reign of sin and its rule, its power and its realm of dominion, then we are lost and lost forever. If we're living in such a profession, we're living a lie. If the same Holy Spirit, by His almighty power, has not brought us under the reign of grace in salvation, we can never know its power, its force, its might, and its dynamic influence upon our lives as it reigns in our hearts and lives through righteousness.

Oh, again I must warn you, my dear friend, be not deceived! If you sow to your flesh, you shall of your flesh reap corruption and eternal damnation, but if you sow to the Spirit, you shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting in Christ by His grace (Gal 6:8).

May God bless you!

4. The Power of the Gospel of Grace

We have endeavored to show the reason there is such lukewarmness and hypocrisy in our churches and among professing Christendom today. It is because the true gospel of Christ is not preached and practiced, and men love the "easy believism" that makes the way to heaven seem so easy. Because there is no thundering forth of the law of God from the pulpits of our churches, the people do not know what sin is, and there is no convicting power of God the Holy Spirit, nor are there any sinners crying for mercy. Because the Lordship of Jesus Christ is not claimed and practiced, there is no separation from the world, no vital godliness and holiness seen in the lives of the majority who profess the name of Christ. And where the claims of the gospel are not made known to the people, there are no

life-giving evidences of the claims of God upon the lives of so-called “born again” believers. So I ask you, what profit is all the religion and religious activity of our day but to stir up the flesh?

We see then, the necessity of the preaching of the true gospel of Christ and the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit of God, whereby Christ is exalted and the sinner is brought low with a felt need, a going out of himself and turning to Christ and His redemption in true saving faith. Only then will God give deliverance from the penalty of sin in justification and from the love, power, and dominion of sin, in sanctification in this life as He sets us in His kingdom of grace.

So we continue now with the warning found in Galatians 6:7, 8: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” We see in this verse of Scripture that the bent of a man’s life must be in the Spirit of God or he is not a child of God; he is not saved! And my friend, this is not one isolated truth; all the way through the Scriptures you will find that he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption. Listen to Romans 8:5: “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh;” so to be fleshly minded is death, spiritual death, the second death in hell, according to Romans 6:23. But on the other hand, if the bent of a man’s life is after the Spirit, then he minds the things of the Spirit, for to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Rom 8:6).

As we go through the Word of God, it plainly declares that when God saves a sinner in Christ, giving him a new heart and nature, He takes him entirely out of the realm, the rule, the reign and kingdom of sin, and brings him into the kingdom and under the reign of grace. “To the law and to the testimony” of God’s Word to prove this: In Col. 1:13 we read: “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Here we find the apostle Paul telling the Colossian believers that they who once belonged to the power and kingdom of darkness, the devil and hell, have now been translated or transferred from that kingdom and put into the kingdom of Christ, under the reign of grace. Paul declares the same truth in Romans 5:20, 21: “Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Paul also told the Philippians “Our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven” (Phi 3:20). He does not say it is going to be there; he says our citizenship is in heaven now! We are living on earth, but our citizenship is in heaven now! You see, we are a colony of heaven in this world, but our citizenship is there, not here; this transfer of citizenship has already taken place.

We find this same truth in Ephesians 2:19: “Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” In other words, we have changed once and forever. We are no longer in the territory of, or under the governing power or control of sin!

Follow us now! Before becoming a Christian, a child of God by the new birth, we were united to Adam. Because we belonged to Adam and his fallen race, all the consequences of his sin and actions came upon us. We were in Adam, but we are no longer in Adam if we are saved; we are now in Christ. You see, my dear friend, every person alive today is either in Adam or else he is in Christ, and this is the whole message of Romans 5:15-21. Listen as we go into it! This is God’s Word!

Verse 18: “As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation [that is the reign of sin in Adam]; even so by the righteousness of one of the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life [that is the reign of grace in Christ]. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, [that is the reign of sin in Adam], so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous [that is the reign of grace in Christ].” Again vs. 17: “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one [that is the reign of sin in Adam]; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ [that is the reign of grace in Christ].

We see the necessity of preaching the true gospel of Christ, for it is the gospel of the grace of God that sets the poor captive sinner free. He is freed from the love, power, and the reign of sin, as well as the penalty of sin, because now he is in Christ and in His kingdom. You see, the gospel “is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). The word “power” comes from the Greek word, *dunamis*, from which we get our word “dynamite,” and this dynamite of the gospel sets us free from sin to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. In other words, it blasts us from the rock of our depravity and we die! “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom 6:6, 7).

When we hear our doom read from the courts of heaven, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Eze 18:4), and we bow to this judgment, knowing that we are indeed hell-deserving sinners and stand before God, poor, helpless, lost, then when we hear the gospel preached—the good news of deliverance through the blood of Christ—in our desperation we desire this free gift of God in Christ. We cry for God the Holy Spirit to make it real in our souls. And when by faith we see in Christ and His gospel a full salvation and deliverance from sin, with all its power, we are made to trust and praise Him for such a deliverance that brings us out of the realm of sin into the realm of grace!

What good is a gospel that does not set us free from that which holds us, binds and reigns over us and which is damning our souls to hell? The gospel of the grace of God in Christ is the good news of deliverance in Christ, and I praise God I can preach such a gospel! It is the gospel of which the Bible speaks which sets men free from the tyranny of sin, and breaks its power!

But let us consider the positive side of the gospel; deliverance is only negative. We are not only dead to the reign of sin, but by this same gospel we are put under the reign of grace and all that that means in terms of power. The Bible is positive; for the Word of God does not merely tell us our sins are forgiven, but that we also have been transferred into the reign of grace, which is a very powerful reign. It is guaranteed to produce results! Did not the reign of sin produce results? Did it not cause death to pass upon us? Did it not cause us to sin? Did it not make us hate, swear, blaspheme, murder, cheat, lie, steal, covet, envy, commit adultery and bear false witness against our neighbor? Did it not cause us to do that which would bring down the wrath of God upon us? Did it not make us drown our conviction, persist in our own way and continue straight to hell? Sure it did, because it reigned over us! We were under its power! So in the same way grace reigns over every child of God; yea, and it's infinitely more powerful, for the Scriptures read: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom 5:20). So if the power and dominion of sin guarantees certain results (for the wages of sin is death), then the reign and rule of grace guarantees certain results, which are more certain, by the Holy Spirit working effectually in our souls because of the grace of God (1Pe 5:6-11).

You ask, "What is guaranteed by the reign of grace given in the gospel to poor sinners?" It guarantees that my full and final salvation is absolutely certain! I am not merely dead to the reign of sin; I am alive under the reign of grace; and grace is a tremendous power. It guarantees that all the dynamic of God's grace is upon me and working in me to bring me to perfection at last. This then being the purpose of the gospel (to break the reigning power of sin and its love, and to enthrone the reigning power of grace), shall we be carnal Christians with the flesh remaining in the saddle? NO! For the whole object of the grace of God given to us in the gospel is to destroy sin, its works and all that belongs to it as 1 John 3:8 reads: "...for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil," in the life of every soul for whom He died and whom He saves by His grace.

Oh this is blessed, is it not! How could I preach anything else but this glorious gospel of the grace of God that breaks the power of sin? And if God does this for us, we no longer live in hypocrisy, we live a life of reality—we are alive from the dead! And "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom 6:2).

The answer is, we cannot! Why? because that word “live” means “continue and abide.” We see from this that in view of our position—the fact that we are under the rule and reign of grace—it is impossible that we should continue and abide in sin or that a life of sin should be our life. And my friend, if grace does not so reign in our lives, then we are lost and know nothing of the power of the gospel!

Let us go to 1 John 3:9: “Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” This is a profound statement! It means that whosoever is born of God does not go on living a life of sin; he does not practice it habitually; he cannot go under the reign of sin because His seed remaineth in him, that is, the new life of grace in Christ is in him. He is not saying that a man who is born of God can never commit an individual act of sin. For had he spoken in that way, there would be nobody in heaven or any Christian living on earth today. No! What he is saying is this: the man born of God cannot go on abiding in the realm of sin. Notice that word “cannot”; it is impossible!

So, putting together all we have read from our Lord’s lips with the writings of the apostles, Paul and John, we see it is impossible for a Christian to live in sin because such a man is under the power of grace, which is the influence and power of Christ! He is in the realm of this mighty force which is called “grace and its reign.” And grace, by its influence and power, makes it impossible for the saved soul to continue where he was before. Therefore, to live any other life and call it Christianity is to live a lie, is to have profession without life, which is the sin of hypocrisy!

This whole truth is summed up in Romans 6:14 in these triumphant words: “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” Let it do its worst, it shall never again have dominion over us! Why? because grace is infinitely more powerful! Watch it now! This verse is not merely telling us who are saved that we ought not to continue in sin; it is saying we cannot and we shall not go on living in the realm and under the power of sin. Why? because we have been brought into the realm of the glorious grace of God as revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. God abides in the soul, Christ is real, and our desire is to walk in righteousness and true holiness, because God has done something for us. This is the gospel! And my friend, be not deceived! any other gospel is not the true gospel of the grace of God in Christ, but is a perverted gospel!

5. The Word Points to Conversion; The Holy Spirit Convicts

We have laid open the problem we face today: men living in unreality about spiritual things, and yet trying to palm off on God a profession without life. The reason for this is that they have missed the vital convicting power of the Holy

Spirit and the humbling work of repentance, and have believed Satan's lie: that salvation may be had on other terms than those presented in the Word of God. Because of this, man has invented the damnable heresy of carnal Christianity, so that those precious souls caught in this delusion may continue in their state of hypocrisy and yet have a hope of heaven, even though it is a false and damning hope.

Thus we have seen the necessity of the work of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of the preaching of the true gospel of the grace of God in Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation. This gracious truth is vital, for it is by the power of the Holy Spirit in the gospel that we are freed from the law of sin and death and enabled to walk in newness of life under the reign of grace; thereby making it impossible that sin would be the practice and rule of our lives.

We have seen the positive results in the saved soul, because in grace the Holy Spirit works in us the opposite of what the reigning power of sin worked; by the reigning power of grace, He works in us holiness and righteousness, which causes us to walk in a way that is pleasing before God.

So we have been working our way through the Sixth chapter of Romans to show that the truths given here are against the false gospel of carnal Christianity, against easy believism, against profession without life, and against the sin of hypocrisy. For there we find in words easy to be understood what the true gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus has done for us. Listen as we go into our message, and let us see and know what God does for us in this so great salvation.

First we read that in salvation we have died to sin and live no longer in it: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (vv. 1- 2). And why do we live no longer in it? because the Son, in His salvation has made us free from sin and its reign.

In vs. 3 He says: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" In salvation we were baptized by the Holy Spirit into Jesus Christ; that is, we were put into Jesus Christ and therefore were baptized or put into His death. All that Christ our Lord as our Substitute did in His death became ours, for we were in Him at the cross. And when we were saved by His grace, all of the benefits that came out of His "obedience unto death" became ours.

In vs. 4 we see that since we were buried by baptism into His death, then as Christ was raised up from the dead by the power of the Father, even so we have been raised up with him to walk in newness of life. Therefore sin no longer has dominion over us. Why? because we died to sin even as Christ died to our sins when He bore them in His own body on the tree. This is so beautifully brought

out in Romans 6:8-10: "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." Then He tells us in vs. 11 that because we died with Him, we are to reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. This does not say that we walk in sin! It says we walk in newness of life! Why? because we died with Christ, so as Christ died unto sin, we died unto sin; and as He lives, so we live in the Lord Jesus.

We see this same truth in vs. 5: "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." This refutes the false gospel of carnal Christianity, for the Holy Spirit is telling us that since we have been planted together in Christ's death, we are planted together in His resurrection; so all the benefits which we have received from being identified with Him in His death are made sure to us by the power of His resurrection. This to me is shouting grounds! For it leaves no loop holes in the positive salvation which is given us in Christ. That is, when God saves us, grace begins to reign and super-abundantly abounds over sin through the righteousness of God unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord, so that we are made to walk in newness of life. This is what the grace of God does for us!

Another great truth brought out in vs. 5 is this: Being planted together, then we shall bring forth our fruit unto holiness, for we are united to Christ in that vital union of oneness. Look now at vs. 22 of Romans 6: "But now being made free from sin." And when did God do this? He did it in salvation! So we no longer walk in unreality or hypocrisy; we're no longer walking in a false profession as we once did; we're walking as free men in Christ Jesus; we have become the servants of God. Then what happens? "we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Why? because we have been identified with Christ.

You see, when God saves us, He puts life within us! Our Lord gave us this same truth of identification with Christ in that vital union of oneness in Jn. 15:5: "I am the vine, ye are the branches." And what is the end of it? We will bring forth fruit unto God, which is holiness! In Matt. 7:18 He tells us that being part of this Vine (Christ), therefore a good tree, we shall bring forth good fruit unto God. And when we read this verse in its entirety, we find that "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." Why? because it is identified with Christ, the smitten One in death to sin and in resurrection unto life, yes, newness of life that brings forth fruit unto holiness. Oh, my fellow believer, this tells us of our position in Christ: that by identification with Christ in His death and resurrection, then by virtue of His life in us, we are now enabled to walk in newness of life with the power of sin

broken, and to bring forth fruit unto holiness. This is just as simple as the English language can make it, and it exposes the false profession of those who live in hypocrisy, and who walk after their will and their sinful ways, and make excuses that they are just “carnal Christians.” Oh no! We who are alive walk in reality, for Christ’s life is now in us and the life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God Who loved us and gave Himself for us. (Gal 2:20)

Let us move on to Romans 6:6: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Look first at the expression “knowing this,” for here the Lord is saying through the apostle Paul that there is something which all who claim to be saved know with absolute certainty. I hear you ask, “Pastor, what should we know?” My friend, if God has worked that work of grace in us whereby we have died to sin in the death of Christ and we have become new creatures in Christ Jesus by His resurrection power to walk in newness of life, we will know it! How do we know it? by the teaching of the Holy Spirit under conviction. So let me ask you, “Do you know this, and live in the light of this knowledge? Is it something of which you are absolutely certain? You should be if you are saved, because this is an essential, a vital part of our salvation.

“Knowing this...” In salvation we died to the world and the claim of the world over us, we died to sin and its reigning power, and now under the reigning power of grace we are enabled to walk in this newness of life in Christ—we know this by experience! And when God gives us His salvation, He breaks the power of sin, that the old man of Adam is crucified, so that we no longer have to serve him. “He that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom 6:7), so we do not walk in, or serve sin! Is this our life? In salvation we learn from God’s Word and from experience that we are freed from the reign and power of sin, and now we have the power to put off the former behavior of the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

But the majority of Christendom knows nothing of this deliverance from the power and penalty of sin, for they walk in the flesh and not in the Spirit. They walk in hypocrisy, trying to palm off on God a mere lip profession and give every excuse for the old flesh and the false gospel of carnal Christianity. If this is your state, you have missed the Holy Spirit’s conviction! For if you had ever been under Holy Spirit conviction, you would have known out of actual experience the bondage of sin, and you would have known your deliverance from it. For under Holy Spirit conviction, a soul is taught by the Spirit the things that are so humbling to the flesh.

But what are these things that are so humbling to the flesh which we learn under Holy Spirit conviction? It is humbling to the flesh to find that your righteousness in the sight of God is only as filthy menstruous rags, and that you are destitute of any righteousness or good works that God will accept (Isa 64:6). It's humbling to the flesh to learn that you are by nature a vile, wretched sinner before God (Job 40:4). It's humbling to the flesh to learn that in your flesh there dwelleth no good thing (Rom 7:18), that you are destitute of any spiritual wisdom (Rom 3:11), therefore full of vanity and pride (Psa 39:5); you are destitute of any spiritual strength (Rom 5:6), therefore unable to do anything good of or from yourself (Joh 15:5). It's humbling to the flesh to learn that you are sold under sin (Rom 7:14), therefore destitute of freedom (Isa 61:1), a bonds slave of your lusts (Tit 3:3) and walking after the counsel of the devil who takes you captive at his will (2Ti 2:26), because he is your father (Joh 8:44)!

Under the convicting presence and by the power of this Word, the Holy Spirit then lets the light of the glorious gospel of Christ shine into your heart, giving the knowledge of the glory of Christ Jesus to you, and thereby turning you from darkness to light, taking you out of the kingdom of darkness and Satan, and putting you into Christ and His kingdom. This is our position in Christ by virtue of His cross-work for us, and this the Holy Spirit teaches us from His Word.

It is then that we understand by faith those blessed words spoken by our Lord in John 8:36: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Yes, having been in bondage to sin—even its bond-slave—now in salvation in Christ you are drawn by the Holy Spirit, through His Word and by faith, to realize that you have been delivered—made free—by the gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation. As you exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you come to understand that God by His gospel not only has delivered you from the condemnation of sin, the penalty of the law, and the wrath of God, but from the bondage of Satan and the power of sin! So you rejoice that sin no longer has dominion over you, for you are no longer under *law* but under *grace*. You rejoice that being made free from sin, you have become a servant unto righteousness. Is this not shouting grounds for praise unto our living God, that He should do all of this for poor, hell-deserving sinners? And this comes to us by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, for He alone by the power of His Spirit can raise us from the grave of sin and deliver us from its slave-market, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

I tell you the truth in Christ, dear friend, this is what God does for us when He saves us. If you do not know anything about this, you have only an empty profession and live in spiritual unreality!

6. Union with Christ Is Proof against Sin

We have been setting before you a warning against the sin of hypocrisy that leaves a man in the state of unreality with just lip profession, all brought on because of the false gospel of carnal Christianity that is being preached and practiced today. We have been showing you from God's Word that such a gospel is not the good news of the grace of God as it is in Christ Jesus; it is a false gospel because it makes every provision for a continuance in sin, while the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation: a deliverance from the power and dominion of sin as well as from the penalty of sin. And I will continue to contend for the truth that the power of sin is broken in salvation; it no longer reigns in the believer's life because now the grace of God reigns through righteousness.

So we have shown you again and again from the Word of God that if indeed you have been brought by the Holy Spirit to repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have been made a new creature in Christ, and it is impossible to make sin the practice and rule of your life anymore. Why? because we have been brought into that state of union with Christ, and as Romans 6:2 clearly states: "How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" We cannot, for as 1 John 3:9 tells us: His seed, that nature which God gives to us in salvation, will abide with us forever, so it is impossible for us to live in sin.

We must stress this great eternal truth: A Christian is one who is in Christ! and because he is in Christ, he has died with Him, he has been buried with Him, he has risen with Him, he is now alive unto God in Him; and all of this because of his identification with Christ. Also because of this, the repenting, believing sinner has been freed from sin; it is something that has already happened; and this is true of every one who is a Christian! I must stress this, for herein lies our hope, our peace, and our assurance, yea, and our very salvation which has been so freely given in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the so great salvation that God has prepared for precious lost sinners!

I must stress this because there are those who would teach you that you can be a Christian, and be justified, but that you are not yet free from sin. They tell you that that is something you will arrive at later; it is some future experience. But, my friend, this is that false gospel of carnal Christianity of which I am warning you, that allows you to go on in sin and make excuses for sin, saying, "well, it is not me that sins, but my flesh, my old man, that sins." This is the false gospel that lets you claim Jesus as your Savior, but does not demand that you bow to Him as Lord of your life!

So I must continue to refute this error that deceives and blinds precious souls to the truth found in God's Word. I have shown you that the whole sixth chapter of Romans refutes this error. And as Romans 5:21 teaches, sin reigns unto death,

but grace reigns through righteousness unto life! So how could we who are dead to sin and its power by virtue of our baptism into the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and having been raised with Him unto newness of life, again be under the tyranny of sin? Oh, my dear friend, please do not get tired of me repeating these gracious truths, for I do it for your good. First, to you who are truly saved, that you may know what you have in Christ so that you may rejoice in Him. And then to you who are deceived by this false gospel of carnal Christianity, that you may, by the grace of God, recover yourselves out of the snare of the devil.

Today I desire to show you from God's Word one of the greatest proofs why the gospel of carnal Christianity is false: it is because of our union with Christ. This puts the lie to the belief that we can still live after the flesh and say we are saved, for our union with Christ in all that He is, all He has done and is yet doing for us, is the greatest reason for our holding out to the end in that persevering grace and faith that is given us in salvation.

Follow me now! As we have shown you in previous messages, if the Word of God teaches anything, it teaches us that in salvation a true child of God has become identified with Christ, having been united to Him in an unchanging and unbroken union. The words of our Lord's High Priestly prayer in John 17:20-23 tells us of His concern for our union with Him: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me...that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Here we see that our blessed Lord prayed for this union with His people which He purchased for them upon the cross; and this prayer has been answered, for in salvation we become one in Christ.

Again, the Scriptures declare that this union is of God our Father, for we read in 1 Corinthians 1:30: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." Yes, the Father purposed and planned it from eternity, the Son prayed for it and purchased it upon the cross, and the Holy Spirit has made it effective in the heart and life of each one of God's children. Listen to 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13! "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." This plainly declares that we who are saved have been baptized (immersed) into one body, and that body is Christ. So we see the truth of our union with Christ, Who is the Head "over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph 1:22).

So this exposes the falsity of profession without life and the emptiness of religious professors who claim that a child of God can walk year after year without any reality of Christ in his soul at all. Oh no! How can he be a member of the body which is united to the Head and know the Head and not know that he is united to that Head? My friend, this is union, and this God does in salvation.

Let us see further in Romans 7:4, that this spiritual union with Christ is spoken of as a marriage union: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him (Jesus Christ) who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Oh how precious this is to me: married to Christ, given to Him in that spiritual bond of matrimony, never to be divorced or separated, because we have been joined together in that inseparable union of love! And for what reason? that we should bring forth fruit unto God, and this fruit is holiness. Then how can I, who have been joined to Christ in that holy union of spiritual love, who have pledged myself to Him for time and eternity, who have made my choice forever, leaving all other lovers, to cleave only unto Him as long as I live; how can I think of, much less practice, spiritual adultery? It is unthinkable, because it is impossible! He has won my heart with His undying love that went to the cross for me; He has won my heart with the power of His resurrection; He has won my heart by all His love-gifts to my soul. Yes, He keeps me by His continued High Priestly work within the veil, and I have His promise that He is coming to receive me unto Himself, that where He is, there I will be also throughout eternity (Joh 14:3). In lieu of all of this, could I ever leave Him, or will He ever leave me so that I again will be under the rule of sin? NO! Because He has pledged Himself to get me home at last without spot or blemish, and to present me spotless before the heavenly Father, Who Himself chose me to be the bride of His Son forever (Jude 24).

This to me is shouting grounds, because I have His Word for it! that having redeemed my never-dying soul from the pit of hell, and snatching me from the captivity of Satan, He shall hold me to Himself forever and ever, and will never let me go. You ask, "Pastor, how?" By His constraining love and power, He has fenced me in. He holds me by the power of His grace, this reigning power of grace, for ever and for ever.

You see, this all holds true in the physical life. If I love my wife (and I do), then I do not need another. If I have forsaken all others just for her, then I am satisfied and content to be with her, and that until death do us part. Oh, that Christendom would see this great truth today! that just as true love holds the husband and wife and they are true to each other, so in the spiritual: true love to Christ holds us true to Him in that marriage vow taken at salvation. Remember the words of Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whore-

mongers and adulterers God will judge.” If that is true in the physical, (and it is), rest assured that it is true in the spiritual also. This truth again is brought out in James 4:4 in these words: “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Yes, God will judge the spiritual adulterers and adulteresses who claim to be married to Christ and yet prostitute their love in the lust of sin. What God is saying here is that you are not saved if you live in sin! You are his enemy and abide under His wrath!

If you are married to Christ, you desire to be with Him above all other lovers. I desire to be with my wife after 40 years. Do you know why? I love her; believe it or not, I still thrill to her touch. I love to kiss her lips; I love to hold her in my arms and tell her how much I love her. Why? because we have been drawn together in this holy state of matrimony. And beloved, this is the same way in the spiritual: God draws us unto Himself, marries us unto Christ, and we are satisfied with Christ in that spiritual relationship with Him. We thrill to His touch; we still love to come into His presence; we still love to sit at His feet; we still love to praise His name; we still love to rejoice in His love; we still love to look to Him by faith, knowing that He is our all in all. He is our life; He died for us and paid our sin debt in full. I love to be with Him! Do you?

As if all of these Scriptures were not enough proof that it is impossible for the gospel of carnal Christianity to be true, because of our spiritual union with Christ, we have this further proof in the following Scriptures: In 1 Corinthians 2:16 we find written that the child of God, the Christian, has the mind of Christ, therefore he will not make sin the practice and rule of his life. In 1 Corinthians 6:17 we find written that the child of God is one spirit with Christ, therefore he will not make sin the rule and practice of his life. In Romans 8:35 we find written that the child of God has the love of Christ, therefore he will not make sin the practice and rule of his life. Or as 2 Corinthians 5:14 declares: “The love of Christ constrains me;” it holds me. Again, in Colossians 3:4 it is written that the child of God has the very life of Christ in him, therefore he will not make sin the rule and practice of his life.

Now please hear the one I have saved for last which is found in Colossians 2:10: “Ye are complete in Christ”. Therefore the child of God will not make sin the practice and rule of his life, because he is complete in Christ and needs none other or nothing else to make him joyous, happy, content, and satisfied while he waits for his Lover from heaven.

So you see, the Bible is full of reasons why the true child of God will not make sin the rule and practice of his life: he is dead in Christ, therefore dead to the life of sin. He is married to Christ, therefore bound in the law of love and matrimony.

He is *in* Christ, therefore he is alive, and has the mind of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the love of Christ, yes, the very life of Christ dwelling in him by the Holy Spirit. So based upon the authority of God's Word, I can boldly declare that those saved by the grace of God will not walk in a life of hypocrisy, unreality, or mere lip profession. We do not believe, nor have part with the false gospel of carnal Christianity, which is a heresy, because the true gospel of the grace of God in Christ has given us so much more. By its power it has delivered us from the law of sin and death and has caused us to walk in newness of life.

My friend, do you know anything about this gospel that sets you free from the law of sin and death? Have you been married to Christ? If you have, you know it, for it is a life of reality!

Glory, hallelujah, and praise unto our risen Lord for such a gospel! Praise Him for such a redemption, such a deliverance, that sets us free in Christ Jesus to walk in the light as He is in the light (1Jo 1:7)! Praise Him for setting us in heavenly places in Himself that we might have fellowship with our triune God in Christ Jesus our Lord! Yes, this gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus lets us live in heaven while we are yet upon the earth. Why? Because where Christ is, it is heaven—and He dwells within us!



*These messages were originally delivered over the radio
on the "Word of Truth" program broadcasts.*

ETERNITY

Look backwards, and time was when souls were not; look forwards, and our souls will be when time shall not.

Who would not deny himself for a time that he may enjoy himself for ever?

What is the world to them that are in the grave, where our bodies must shortly be? Or to them that are in eternity, where our souls must shortly be?

Remember you are at the door of eternity, and have other work to do than to trifle away time: those hours which you spend in your secret room are the golden spots of all your time, and will have the sweetest influence upon your last hours.

Our life is a passage to eternity; it ought to be a meditation of eternity; and preparation for eternity.

—*from Select Sayings*

Profession Exposed – Possession Explained lays open the condition of “carnal Christianity.” Many in our day suffer from a false hope in heaven based upon a religion of their own making, not upon the Bible. They presume that an outward profession of faith in Christ as savior will gain for them eternal life, but they know and care to know nothing of repentance from sin and the cross of Christ—the whole-hearted commitment our Lord commands His disciples in denying themselves, forsaking all, and following after Him.

L.R. Shelton, Jr. (1923-2003) was born and raised in New Orleans, Louisiana, where he later became associate pastor in his father’s Baptist church. While he did not have the opportunity to attend college or seminary, as a young man he devoured the writings of Spurgeon, Pink, the Puritans, and Lloyd-Jones. In 1970 he began a church, Christian bookstore, and gospel outreach in Litchfield, Minnesota. There he developed a God-given burden to share classic Christian literature from prior centuries freely worldwide, beginning to reproduce sermon booklets on a mimeograph machine. In 1978 the small ministry moved to Pensacola, Florida, where Mount Zion Bible Church was founded. In subsequent years were added several printing presses, the prison ministry (1984), the Chapel Library audio tape ministry (1987), the Free Grace Broadcaster quarterly magazine (1988), and the Mount Zion Bible Institute (1995).