

FALSE CONVERSION!

By Herbert W. Armstrong

Millions have been led to think they are "saved," who are only deceived and don't know it! Here is a frank, daring article, making the truth PLAIN!

IT'S DIFFICULT to believe, but it's true. In today's religious confusion millions have supposed they had salvation spiritually - they have believed on Jesus Christ - and are not saved!

Would you suppose one could actually worship Christ - and all in vain?

Do you know what Jesus himself said of these people who want to worship him without obedience to God's Commandments?

Listen to his words: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men... Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:7-9).

Back to the Faith Once Delivered

But what does GOD tell you in his Word?

Through Jude, God says: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares . . . ungodly men, turning the GRACE of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4).

Yes, even before the New Testament was completely written, ungodly men had crept inside the Church to corrupt it - turning GRACE into LASCIVIOUSNESS.

And what is "lasciviousness"? It means "license" - unrestrained liberty - abuse of privilege. In other words, license to do that which seems right in human eyes - according to human conscience - though it disobeys God's LAW! And that is exactly what those ungodly men, even in the first century, did - turned GRACE into unrestrained privilege to disobey God's law and turned to human conscience as a guide! And once introduced, the practice has persisted and spread over the whole world until today!

This is one of the FABLES the apostle Paul warned us men would turn to. Paul said: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. . . . For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts [lasciviousness - human reasoning] shall they ... turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto FABLES" (II

Tim. 3:13; 4:3, 4).

But, one will argue, Jude said these men would deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not the men who teach a "no works" doctrine believe in Christ? Do they deny him?

Yes, they DENY him! God says: "They profess that they know God; but IN WORKS they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every GOOD work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). The way of human reason - that seems RIGHT - is often DISOBEDIENCE to God!

What the Savior Himself Taught

These deceived teachers have just one favorite text. They quote Acts 16:31: "BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Now that text from the inspired pen of Paul means what it says. But there are two kinds of BELIEVING - the living faith that brings salvation, and a dead "no works" faith that produces only DEATH!

But WHY do they, in their tracts and their sermons, never quote what the Savior himself said in answer to the question? WHY?

Jesus was asked: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18.) Some might try to tell you that the SAVIOR himself did not know, or teach, the way of SALVATION - he was teaching Old Testament religion. Well, he was asked HOW to gain ETERNAL LIFE. Is that salvation? It certainly is! Old Testament religion teaching lasted until John-not until the cross- not until "Pentecost." Just UNTIL JOHN (Luke 16:16). Jesus preached the SAME gospel he commanded his disciples to teach ALL nations- gentiles included-the same gospel Paul preached to gentiles. He preached only the NEW Testament gospel. He revealed the WAY OF SALVATION.

Here is his answer- that of the SAVIOR HIMSELF on HOW TO BE SAVED:

"IF thou wilt enter into LIFE, keep the commandments." And he enumerated enough of the Ten Commandments to show it was this particular law that must be obeyed AS A CONDITION to receiving eternal life as God's GIFT. Jesus said "IF" - (THERE WAS A CONDITION) - "IF" we are to be saved, by God's grace, WE MUST KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS!

God lays down his own terms and conditions. His FREE GIFT is conditional - you get it ONLY if you "keep the commandments."

You can't EARN it. God GIVES it - but only to those who "KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS." God will not GIVE you eternal life in sin. And what is Sin? "SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW" (I John 3:4).

Some who pervert God's truth insist Jesus did not name ALL of the Ten Commandments in the above scripture. Sin is the transgression of THE LAW. It is a COMPLETE LAW. He named enough of its points to designate WHICH LAW he was talking about. And James says that law has "POINTS" - and, if we break any ONE of the 10 points of the Ten Commandments, We BREAK THE LAW, and are sinners (Jas. 2:8-11).

The very same day the Holy Spirit came - the very day the NEW TESTAMENT Church commenced - thousands, hearing the inspired Peter's sermon, which struck straight to their heart, asked, "What shall we do?" - yes, WHAT SHALL WE DO TO BE SAVED?

The inspired answer was: "REPENT, and BE BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts. 2:38).

Jesus said, "REPENT YE, and BELIEVE THE GOSPEL." We must BELIEVE not only in Jesus as Savior, but we must believe also THE GOSPEL he brought and preached - the Gospel of the Kingdom of God- the AUTHORITY of God and the WORD of God over our lives - a message not preached today by most organized churches!

After his resurrection, in his parting instructions to his disciples for preaching the way of salvation, Jesus said: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that REPENTANCE and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48). This is the gospel for ALL NATIONS!

But what must we repent of? WHAT is SIN? Do you realize that VERY FEW people know? Very few know the BIBLE definition of SIN.

God's inspired definition of sin is this: "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). Paul would not have known what was sin, except by the law. But what law? The very law which says: "Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:7). That law is the Ten Commandments.

This law is summed up in the one word - LOVE! It is further defined in the two great Commandments, LOVE to God, and LOVE to neighbor. But the same law is further defined and divided into 10 points, by the Ten Commandments - the first four of which tell us how to love God, the last six of which tell us how to love neighbor.

James' Inspired Answer

And thus it is explained in James: "IF ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well" (Jas. 2:8). Here is the royal law - the whole law - as a general principle.

The law is LOVE - and LOVE is the fulfilling of the law. Jesus fulfilled it, setting us an example that

we, too, should fulfill the law. We fulfill it with LOVE - not any natural, carnal love in human nature, but "the love of GOD is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5). The Holy Spirit in us is merely GOD'S LAW IN ACTION IN OUR LIVES! And so, if we fulfill this royal law we do well -but if not, we commit sin (Jas. 2:9). Now read verse 10. If we keep the WHOLE LAW - the general principle of LOVE to neighbor- yet offend in one point, we are guilty - we have broken the law -and the penalty is DEATH, not eternal life.

Notice, please, the law is divided into points! And it is divided into 10 POINTS- the Ten Commandments. These are merely the 10 points, or subdivisions, of the general royal law, LOVE to God and to neighbor. "For he that said [or, that law which said], Do not commit adultery" said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery" - if you do not break that specific point - "yet if thou kill" - you just break that one point - "thou art become a transgressor of the law" (Jas. 2:11). So you see the TEN COMMANDMENTS is the very law it is sin to transgress.

It is a SPIRITUAL law (Rom. 7:14). It is fulfilled by the SPIRITUAL LOVE that is God's precious gift to us- his love placed within us. "Wherefore the law is HOLY, and the commandment HOLY, AND JUST, AND GOOD" (Rom. 7:12).

To REPENT of sin means to turn from sin. It means to QUIT SINNING! And that means to stop transgressing God's holy law. And the way to stop breaking it is to begin KEEPING God's Commandments- ALL OF THEM, for if you break only one, you bring on yourself the penalty-ETERNAL DEATH - and you lose salvation.

Now Jesus "magnified the law, and made it honourable" (Isaiah 42:21). When we put a spiritual "magnifying glass," so to speak, on the Ten Commandments, it is enlarged in spirit and principle into many more points. And in a larger aspect the ENTIRE BIBLE is a magnification of God's law. The law is the basis of all Scripture. It defines THE WAY of life- the way to happiness, joy, eternal life!

Notice how like God it is! The law is GOOD (Rom. 7:12). God is good.

The law is HOLY (Rom. 7:12). GOD is holy!

The law is JUST (Rom. 7:12). GOD is just!

The law is SPIRITUAL (Rom. 7:14). GOD is spiritual!

The law is PERFECT (Psalm 19:7). GOD is perfect!

The law -including all his Commandments- is immutable, ETERNAL, stands fast FOREVER AND EVER (Ps. 111:7-8). And GOD is eternal!

Of course - for the law is the very character, the very nature, of God! It is the WILL of God.

Conscience Not Your Guide

But in the modern-day Babylon - confusion of conflicting teachings - you have been taught, falsely, that YOUR CONSCIENCE tells you what is sin. But your conscience only troubles you when you do what you THINK is wrong! And what you think is wrong, another may think is right! Your conscience is NO GUIDE!

Sin is not the doing of what you think is wrong. Not the transgression of conscience - sin is the transgression of God's LAW (I John 3:4). Sin is thinking and doing what GOD SAYS is wrong- and he says it in his law.

One who does what he thinks is right may be committing a great deal of sin!

God says: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of DEATH"! (Prov. 14:12 and 16:25.) Again, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (Prov. 12:15). And: "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes" (Prov. 16:2). The world has been going the WAY that seems right to man for some 6,000 years. But this WAY has brought only unhappiness, emptiness, discontent, poverty, sickness and disease and finally, CHAOS and DESPAIR all over the world! It has produced NOTHING GOOD!

God says: "SEEK YE the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; 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. FOR MY THOUGHTS ARE NOT YOUR THOUGHTS, NEITHER ARE YOUR WAYS MY WAYS, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55:6-8).

And there is THE WAY of salvation! There is THE WAY to find GOD! SEEK HIM, by forsaking - WHAT? Forsaking YOUR WAY - your thoughts! The way you have THOUGHT to be right.

The WAY of SALVATION

The first step toward salvation is to REPENT, and that means forsake your way- the customs and traditions you have been following, the ways of man, the ways you have been living. FORSAKE YOUR OWN WAY. Turn to God's way - the way of HIS LAW! The way of HIS WILL! Yes, the WAY of success, achievement, doing good, of prosperity- the WAY Of ETERNAL LIFE!

Since the entire Bible contains the magnified explanation of GOD'S LAW, the Bible becomes OUR GUIDE FOR RIGHTEOUS AND SUCCESSFUL LIVING! That is why Jesus said man shall live by every word of GOD!

True repentance means you give your SELF to God. And the only kind of repentance that is prerequisite to the gift of eternal life is COMPLETE AND UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER TO GOD - to his will, which means to HIS LAW. You become HIS, literally, and wholly, with no

reservations! Repentance is a COMPLETE CHANGE in your life- in your attitude TOWARD life - your purpose in life - your THOUGHTS and your ACTIONS.

It means forsaking some of your old friends and companions - if they are living the worldly life that seems right to MAN. It means turning from and forsaking worldly social and religious customs, interests, pleasures that are contrary to GOD'S WAYS.

It means THE BIBLE becomes the SUPREME AUTHORITY over your life - your guide to living- yes, to happy, abundant, gracious living, and SUCCESSFUL and righteous living, henceforth and forever - to live your life from now on with GOD'S HELP, and BY HIS POWER, according to the spirit and principle, as well as the letter and precept of his Commandments. You henceforth STUDY THE BIBLE- not just carelessly read, but STUDY, to learn GOD'S WAYS, and to LIVE BY EVERY WORD OF GOD!

Now ask yourself, candidly: How MANY people who profess salvation - who have "accepted Christ" - do you believe have REALLY COME TO THIS KIND OF REAL REPENTANCE? "Except ye REPENT," warned Jesus, "ye shall all likewise PERISH" (Luke 13:3, 5). And again, "He that SAITH, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a LIAR, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4). Yes, MILLIONS ARE DECEIVED!

But if millions are deceived about the prior CONDITION of repentance, just as many millions are deceived today as to the KIND OF FAITH that really SAVES!

The FAITH That SAVES

Now think a moment! Use your REASON! We are taught, and rightly, that we cannot EARN our salvation - it is the GIFT of God. It is by GRACE - and "grace" means undeserved pardon and free gift. Yet, notice how inconsistent people are! They argue there must be NO WORKS - no OBEDIENCE to the Commandments, or doing GOOD- no recognizing of God's AUTHORITY over your daily living - because salvation comes by GRACE - God's free GIFT. And yet they seem to believe that somehow WE must supply the FAITH that brings salvation! If WE work up, or if WE supply this FAITH by which we are saved, would not that, in fact, amount to our producing our own salvation by the very WORKS of supplying this FAITH?

So notice, briefly! Notice more CLOSELY than you did before! "For BY GRACE are ye saved through FAITH; and that [that FAITH] not of yourselves; it [this saving FAITH] is the gift Of GOD"! (Eph. 2:8.) The faith that really saves is GIVEN TO us by GOD - it is a GIFT from HIM! You don't supply it, or work it up.

Did you ever notice that before?

Well, what then? In Gal. 2:16, Paul explains a man is justified only "by THE FAITH of Jesus Christ." Notice, he does not say, by the man's faith IN Jesus Christ- he says by "the faith of Jesus

Christ" - which means CHRIST'S FAITH - the faith HE has and uses - the same faith with which he performed all his miracles - the same faith by which he lived - his faith, placed by a miracle, as a gift direct from God, into the man!

So, PLEASE UNDERSTAND! Salvation is GOD'S GIFT. You do not, cannot, earn it. God GIVES it. But - and here is where people become mixed up, and stumble- God will GIVE it only on condition! Yes, there are terms and conditions! God has set these terms, and you can't alter them, and he won't change them!

I want to make this perfectly PLAIN. It is not your faith in Christ - a faith YOU supply by BELIEVING in him as Savior- that saves you. It is CHRIST'S faith, which he supplies and places in you by his Holy Spirit, which actually IMPARTS ETERNAL LIFE. But WHAT, then? Is it not necessary for YOU to believe, with YOUR OWN faith, in Christ?

Now let me make this PLAIN! Salvation is GOD'S FREE GIFT- it is by GRACE ALONE. Yet the very purpose of God demands TWO prior CONDITIONS on YOUR part. First, you must REPENT! Second, you must BELIEVE in Christ as Savior. But you cannot believe in Christ unless you also believe his message - the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 16:15-16). But NEITHER your repentance, followed by your obedience, NOR YOUR faith earns any salvation! They are merely prior CONDITIONS. But when you supply these two ingredients, then God STANDS BOUND BY HIS PROMISE to impart to you by his Holy Spirit HIS righteousness, and CHRIST'S faith - and THESE, supplied by GOD, are the ingredients that SAVE AND IMPART ETERNAL LIFE!

Paul explains: "Even we have believed IN Jesus Christ, that we might be justified BY THE FAITH OF CHRIST" (Gal. 2:16). You must repent and believe in Christ, as a condition, a prerequisite, IN ORDER THAT you may receive, and be saved by the faith OF Christ - by his faith placed within you!

Cut Off From GOD

All have sinned!

All have gone the way that seems right in human eyes. And our sins have cut us off from God: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:2).

Now salvation - eternal life - comes from GOD. But your sins have cut you off from God. The connection is SEVERED. You severed it! God will not GIVE you his gift of eternal life until you are reconciled to him!

But he so LOVED you, that he GAVE his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to DIE FOR YOU so that you need not perish - but, through Jesus Christ, be brought into contact with him so he can GIVE you eternal life!

The PENALTY of transgressing his law is DEATH! Jesus paid that penalty in your stead. If, and when, you TRULY REPENT, as I have explained at length, and BELIEVE on Jesus Christ as your Lord and personal Savior from sin and from sinning, then by and through HIM you gain access to GOD THE FATHER.

The two conditions of turning FROM sin, and accepting Christ (including baptism), YOU must DO YOURSELF! That's what YOU must do! That is NOT what saves you! It merely reconciles you to GOD - brings you into CONTACT with God, so that God will then GIVE YOU his HOLY SPIRIT - and his SPIRIT imparts the gift of the FAITH that saves - and is also the Spirit of UNDERSTANDING, of knowledge, of the love that FULFILLS the law and imparts GOD'S righteousness.

Millions have been deceived and . falsely believe that they have a salvation that they do NOT yet have at all! GOD HELP us, then, to UNDERSTAND.

What You Should Do

Now, finally, just HOW shall you go about it?

Must you go down the aisle in a church? Must you go to a public altar, and shed tears in front of others, and pray aloud before others?

Being converted is not an initiation into a lodge or secret society! It is not a rite or ceremony! It is a matter of turning FROM the old life that was false, yet may have seemed right to you - of turning TO a new and TRUE way of life in Christ Jesus, living by every word of God, in and by the power of God's Holy Spirit! When you UNDERSTAND the real MEANING and the PURPOSE, you'll see that it is something that takes place down deep in your HEART and not a matter of THE PLACE or THE SURROUNDINGS, or the presence of other people. What Jesus said about confessing or denying him before men did not refer to a rite, or ceremonial form of being converted. Being converted is the receiving of the Holy Spirit - the very life - of God.

You CAN, of course, make this full surrender and consecration to God in front of others, at an altar. You can, also, make it just as sincerely and fully, in a private room at home, all ALONE with God! You can pray in church before others and do it sincerely from the heart. Yet Jesus said, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet [any private room], and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall, reward thee openly."

WHEN you have really repented - repented of what you are as well as what you have done - WHEN you come to this parting of the ways from the old life - when you come to the place of making this COMPLETE CHANGE- this total unconditional surrender to God- this complete consecration, GIVING your SELF to him, accepting Christ as your personal Savior - turning FROM your sins, and TO GOD'S way of life as you'll find it in the Bible, you'll want to PRAY! Yes, you'll want to throw yourself completely on God's mercy, and ask him through Jesus Christ to FORGIVE YOU all your

past sins and transgressions against him.

The apostle Paul reveals how. He confessed: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform "that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7:18-19).

He saw human nature in its gruesome reality. He struggled with it-fought against it- only to find that it was more powerful than he!

What could he do?

Paul cried out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Read the answer to the problem in the Moffatt translation: "Miserable wretch that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? GOD WILL! Thanks be to him through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (verses 24-25).

It is not, perhaps, of great consequence where you do it! But the IMPORTANT thing is to DO IT! The longer you put repentance off the harder it will become. WHY it should be difficult to just go and throw yourself on God's mercy, and ask his forgiveness and give your SELF to him, is hard to understand- yet something in the human nature within you will keep tempting you to PUT IT OFF. That temptation is not of God, you may be sure.

If you are sick and tired of the empty, fruitless, materialistic life you have been living - IF in your heart you DO want to turn from it to the FULL and JOYFUL life filled with God's SPIRIT, then WHY DELAY? This is just the start of the real Christian life. Don't look for a certain feeling, but repent and believe.