

Christian Foundations
PHASE 1: THAT WE MAY FIND GOD



A Bible Study led by

PASTOR KEVIN REDIG

At Vistoso Community Church in 2007

AUTHOR'S NOTE FOR CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS

That We Might Find God

Welcome to our *Foundations* Bible study. I am using this term to mean those items, essential to the Christian Faith, in which we must be thoroughly grounded in order to abide in Christ and accomplish his purposes for our lives. These are truths, which should excite our hearts the first time we are exposed to them. However, they are also truths that we must constantly review mentally, and to which we must ever be open to the Spirit revealing in a fresh and expanding manner. It is my hope that this study will play a role in accomplishing one, or both, of these objectives. Let's begin!



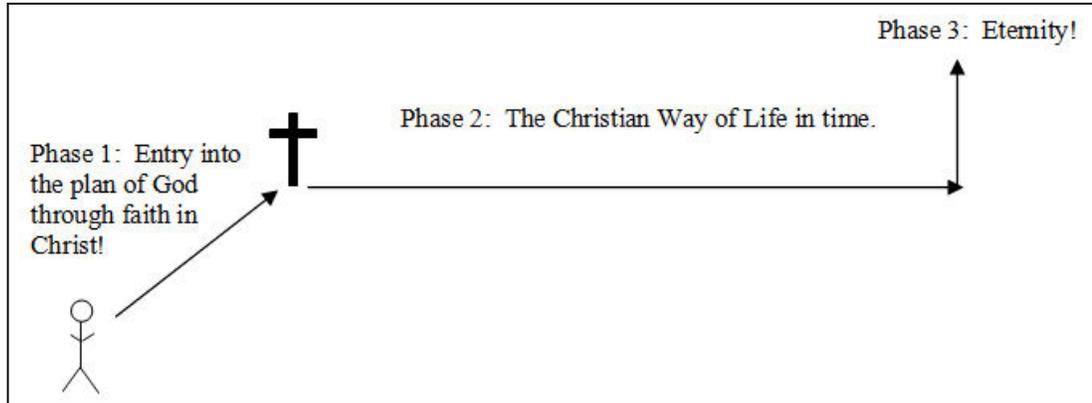
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Redig'.

Kevin Redig, Pastor
Vistoso Community Church



LESSON 1 INTRODUCTION

For the sake of discussion, the Christian Way of Life can be broken down into three components, or phases, as illustrated in the diagram below.



Phase 1 is our entry into the plan of God and occurs at the moment we place our trust in Jesus Christ as Savior. Phase 2 consists of the Christian Life in time, that is the period of time between our salvation and when we depart this earth to spend eternity with God. Phase 3 is the eternal state, or the eternal life promised by Jesus Christ to all who believe in Him.

For the purpose of organization, we will look at each phase of the Christian Life in turn, and discuss the foundational principles associated with each.

PHASE 1: THAT WE MIGHT FIND GOD

I would like to begin our investigation of Phase 1 of the Plan of God by looking at Acts 17:16-34—specifically what has become known as Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill. Please read the entire passage, and then turn your attention to the excerpt below.

The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. . .

If we examine the passage closely, we can make the following observations about God:

- He is Creator and sovereign.
- He is the author of life.
- He is intimately involved with the ongoing details of his creation.
- He is seeking a response from man, and has provided the evidence to prompt man to do so.
- He is a judge, and with justice will judge the inhabitants of this world.

It is absolutely astonishing to me that tucked away in this one little passage are clear, definitive statements about the nature and character of God, about which the world around us is either terribly confused or openly resists. Let me give you a few examples. God is “Creator of this world” and “Lord of Heaven and earth”. What’s more, “He gives all men life and breath and everything else.”



Without wanting to get too far off track, this passage leaves no room for the Big Bang and evolution to be the ultimate answer with respect to origins—God is! The context cannot be dismissed as language of accommodation, an issue of historical setting, or societal construct; rather, it is crafted as a clear statement of fact. Of course you may still be struggling with the reliability of the Bible as a source of fact. That’s fine; however, that is the position from which this study will unfold. Perhaps 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20-21 will give you something to think about.

As a point of application, the Christian would do very well to give no ground with respect to either of these areas. God is the ultimate Creator of both the universe in which we live and the life of man—both his physical life and soul life (Psalm 19:1-6, 33:6-9, 139:13-16). What’s more, this passage also directly refutes the common deist view of God as an uninvolved or disinterested spectator. Instead, we see God intimately involved with his creation with the definite intent that the human race would choose relationship with their Creator. Lastly, it is clear that God’s character attributes work in concert with one another. I am sure you have heard skeptics question the compatibility of hell and a *loving* God? It is refreshing to see in such a succinct manner the sovereignty and omnipotence of God, coupled with his motivation to act on our behalf. If we in turn reject His overtures, who is there to blame but ourselves should we find ourselves on the receiving end of condemnation.

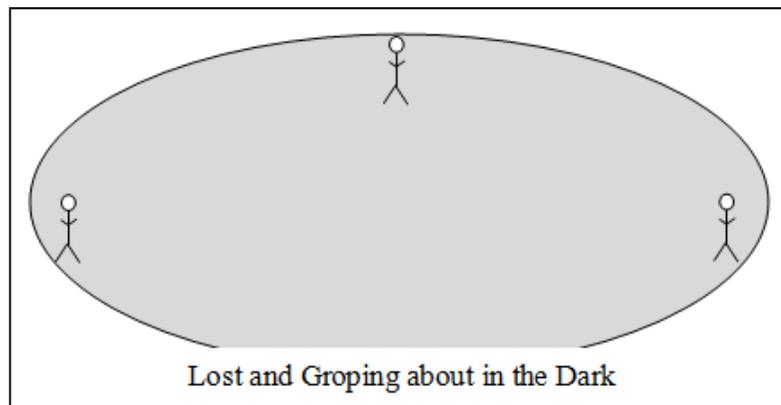
Now how about the status of man? What observations can we make from this same passage?

- Man is “in the dark” separated from God.
- Man is ignorant of what God is like or desires.
- Man is in a status of pending judgment.

Using this passage as background, we now have everything we need to start a dialogue about the condition of man, and God’s response to it.

A. Why is Mankind in the *Dark* and Separated from God?

In order to answer this question, let’s begin by picturing the content of Acts 17 as follows:



So why has the Word of God pictured mankind as alienated from God and “groping around in the dark” trying to find meaning in life? I am going to try and group the Biblical answers to this question into three broad categories. The first answer is the problem of sin!

Now let me surprise you a little bit—I am not referring to a list of personal sins. If you are a non-Christian reading this, I am not the least bit interested in pointing out what I might perceive to be sins in your life. For neither my acts of sin, or yours, are the real problem—rather they are just a symptom of a much bigger problem. Let me illustrate. Was the chunk of ice floating above the water responsible for the sinking of the Titanic? No, although it might have been responsible for cosmetic damage to the ship, it was the much greater bulk of ice below the waterline that was responsible for damaging extensive portions of the shell plating and opening the vessel to the sea. In the same way, our personal failures, whatever they might be, are just symptomatic of a much bigger problem; and it is this bigger problem that has separated us from God. Let’s get into the specifics of this bigger problem, which we will discuss in four parts: because of Adam’s sin, because of a nature to sin, because of the penalty of sin, because of the demands of God’s perfect character.

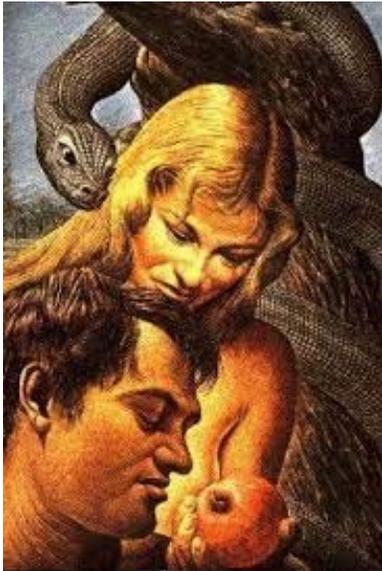
Because of Adam's Sin

The third chapter of Genesis describes the fall of mankind which includes the spiritual death of Adam and Eve. Now as the just ruler of the universe, God used his sovereign prerogative to include all of Adam's offspring with the fall of Adam—the head of the human race. This means when Adam sinned, all of his descendants became guilty of disobedience. When Adam died spiritually, all of his future progeny died. The short version of this concept can be found in 1Corinthians 15:22 *“For as in Adam all die. . .”*

A more detailed account of the same concept can be found in Romans 5:12-19. You should read this passage in its entirety, as I have just included an excerpt below.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned— . . . For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, . . . Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, . . . Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, . . . For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Pretty clear isn't it? When Adam fell the whole human race fell with him. Now I expect that some of you are saying, “Not fair—it wasn't me who sinned!” There are a couple of things you should think about before you



pursue this line of thinking. First, you have a pretty high opinion of yourself if you think you would have fared any differently against the wiles of Satan. Second, and much more importantly, to accuse God of injustice is only to demonstrate your connection to the fallen head of the human race. God is perfectly just, in fact Psalm 89:14 tell us that justice is one of the two foundational elements of the very throne of God.

Therefore, it would be a much better approach to ask, “Why did God condemn all of us in Adam?” Since the same passage in Psalm 89 tells us that love and faithfulness go before Him, He must have some good reason for doing so. Indeed He does; however before revealing it, I am going to continue to develop the lostness of man. Thus far we have developed one reason—we are dead in the sin of Adam and as a result under the same sentence of condemnation.

Because of a Nature to Sin

Not only are we condemned judicially in Adam, each member of the human race has also inherited a nature to sin from Adam. So intimately a part of man is this sin nature, that the Bible often refers to it as the “flesh”.

*But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door;
it desires to have you, but you must master it.*

(God’s comments to Cain prior to his murder of Abel Genesis 4:7)

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.

*. . . Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it,
but it is sin living in me that does it.*

Romans 7:18-20

*For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the
Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict
with each other, so that you do not do what you want.*

Galatians 5:17

Although I don’t quite mean this literally, with the recent advances in our understanding of the human genome, I can’t help but think that somewhere in our bodies is a gene that codes for the sinful aspect of our human nature. Now condemnation of Adam’s sin and a nature to sin are a problem when dealing with a Holy God—one who is perfectly righteous and just. How can a sinful creature have a relationship with a Holy God? This is one reason mankind is pictured as “in the dark” with respect to relationship with God. To make matters worse, the next category I would like to discuss is the effects of sin.

Because of the Penalty for Sin

Romans 6:23 is very clear, “*For the wages of sin is death. . .*” The word death has a much wider range of meanings in the Greek language, and includes the concept of separation. For example a divorced couple has undergone death of the marital relationship, that is they have separated. This is the net result of Adam’s sin, a nature to sin and acts of sin—we are separated from God. There are two things to connect with the concept of separation. The first is to understand separation as it relates to the character of God. Consider 1 John 1:5:

*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you:
God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*

This is another way of telling us that the human race, groping around in the dark, has no fellowship with their Creator. Why not? Because God is the “Holy One” in whom there is no darkness—no sin, no shortcoming, no lack of perfect righteousness.

Now you see another reason why mankind is pictured as groping about in the dark, i.e. his standing in sin prohibits him from having a relationship with a perfect God. We can clarify this point further by looking at Gen 2:16-17:

And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

In the Hebrew, the last part of this passage is literally, "in dying you will die." This more literal translation actually makes the passage much easier to understand. God is telling Adam that should he eat of the tree, he will die immediately, i.e. he will suffer spiritual death in that his sin will cause him to lose fellowship with God. In addition, this spiritual death will then be the basis for his eventual physical death. Adam did sin; and now every member of the human race is born separated from God, spiritually dead, with physical death, and eternal separation (death) as our bleak future. This seems like an insurmountable problem does it not?

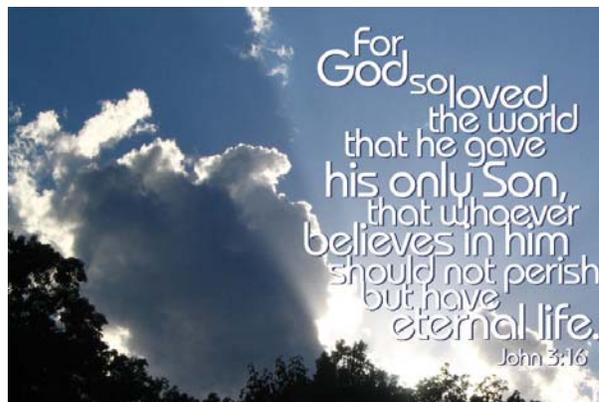
Because of the Demands of God's Perfect Character

Perhaps the best known verse of the Bible is John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son. . .*"

Rather than finishing the verse, there are many who have grabbed hold of the concept of God's love and then attempted to hold Him "hostage" with it. You can recognize this when someone says, "How can a loving God sentence anyone to hell?"

It is good for us to have compassion regarding the concerns of the lost, but we should also be ready to address this kind of shallow thinking directly. For although the Bible certainly does emphasize the love of God as motivating him to act on behalf of His creation, it just as clearly displays a full, perfect and balanced character. For example, Psalm 89:14 tells us, "*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your (God's) throne. . .*" In other words, these two characteristics are an essential aspect of his overall character.

And so how do these two characteristics impact us? To help you understand, I want you to think of righteousness as a standard, or the yardstick, against which everything can be measured. Psalm 71:19 tells us, "*Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God. . .*" In other words, God is the standard of perfect righteousness against which the "rightness" of all others can be evaluated.



Now, how about our level of righteousness? We know that some of us are more righteous than others. You can call this *relative righteousness*. However, God is not going to compare our righteousness against our neighbors', but against His own. The Bible makes it very clear the outcome when our righteousness, coming from a spiritually dead source, is compared against God's standard.

And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. . . Isaiah 64:6

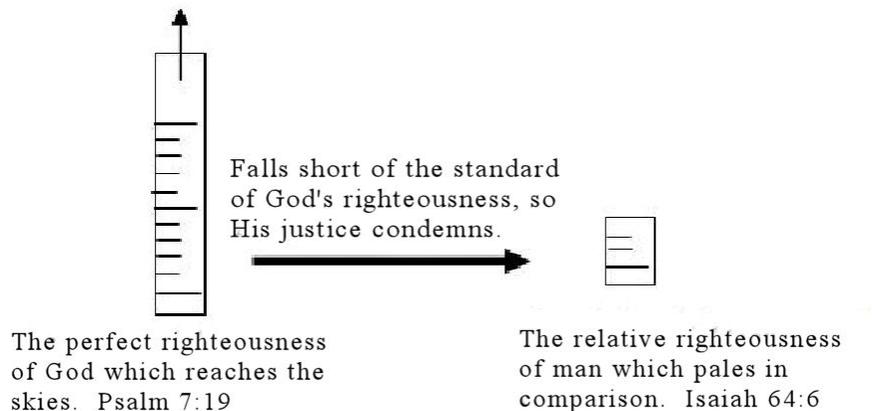
*As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;
There is none who understand; There is none who seeks after God,
They have all turned aside. . . Romans 3:10-11*

And so we see, we do not measure up to the righteousness of God. This becomes a much more serious matter when we add the concept of justice. For if righteousness is a standard, then justice condemns all that does not meet that standard. Is this not what happens within our legal system? It is the function of the courtroom process to determine if the accused violated the law (standard of righteousness), and if so, the judge then sentences the guilty (executes judgment). This very concept is a common theme throughout the Psalms.

He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth. Psalm 96:13

He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity. Psalm 98:9

Just to make sure I have made this concept perfectly clear—God will judge the world in righteousness! But the question is whose righteousness? The answer, which really puts mankind in a tight spot, is God's righteousness! Since we can never measure up to the standard of God's righteousness, we are left with no standing before God but one of condemnation. Consider the graphic below as a way to illustrate this concept.



All of the attributes of God's character work together in perfect concert. In fact, let me show this by completing a Scripture I quoted earlier.

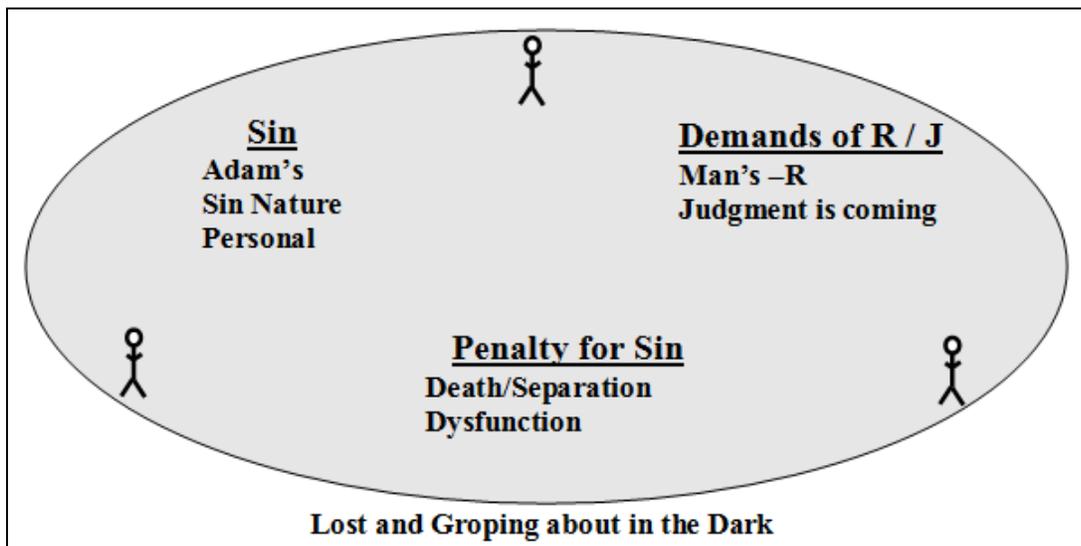
*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
love and faithfulness go before you. Psalm 89:14*

On the one hand, we can be thankful for, and trust in God's love and faithfulness to us. On the other hand, we must also understand that all of God's character is anchored in his righteousness and justice. There is no more compelling example of this than the fact that God's love motivated him to send His Son to the cross on our behalf. And when Jesus bore our sins during the crucifixion, God's righteousness and justice could only condemn His Son to the spiritual death we deserved.

We will continue developing the condition of man in our next study; and then thankfully, begin to unfold God's marvelous solution to our seemingly insurmountable problem.

Summary

Let us summarize the subject of why mankind is in the dark and separated from God with the following diagram:



We have seen that man is lost, lacking fellowship with God his Creator, and under a status of pending judgment—all this despite the fact that according to Acts chapter 17, God is close at hand. As we have discussed, the reasons for mankind's predicament include sin, the penalty for sin and the demands of God's perfect character.

Is it really as bad as I am making it out to be? Or asked another way, if this picture of man's condition is really accurate, what kind of things would result?

Recall just the last sixty years. Hitler attempting to eliminate a *problem* allows the planned execution of close to 7 million people. Stalin kills or sentences to hard labor close to 15 million. Mao wipes out an estimated 50 million Chinese in order to firm up his grasp on power. Mind you, these are not war casualties, but the specific efforts of men and regimes to hold power. Perhaps you are thinking that we have moved past this war-like time in our history. How about Cambodia, Rwanda, the Sudan and Iraq?

Even in the 21st century, man continues to be guilty of unspeakable inhumanity to man. Why is this the case? Man is in the dark, separated from his Creator. His resultant condition can be summarized by the term *depraved*. What's more, this term applies to all those groping about in the dark and separated from their Creator, and not just some despot in a foreign country. This term applies to you and me. Perhaps you think I am being a bit harsh or judgmental, or failing to see the goodness in man. I am actually just trying to help you have a Biblical view of man.

Let me give you one more set of evidence. In addition to a door on your home, why do you have a lock? After paying the fare, why do you need a ticket? In addition to laws, why do we need police? Interwoven into our very day-to-day existence is the fact that man has a fallen nature. Malcolm Muggeridge was right when he said, "There is no doctrine more vehemently denied, or empirically verifiable, than the depravity of man." Whenever we are willing to look into our own hearts, we will always come face to face with our fallen nature.



That is what happened to the Apostle Paul, despite his religious fervor. And that is no doubt what happened to the prime minister of Japan shortly after the conclusion of WWII. This man committed suicide, and on the night stand next to his bed was Oscar Wilde's *De Profundis*. A passage from the book had been underlined by the Prime Minister, which I paraphrase: the evil I have done to others is nothing compared to the evil I have done to myself. (Perhaps a reference to his complicity with the plans which led to the terrible acts of inhumanity associated with Japanese expansionism.) The bottom line is that we are a fallen race, desperately in need of a Savior and reconciliation with our Creator.

B. What Can Man Do About His Lost Condition?

Without necessarily understanding the root nature of his problems, mankind certainly has numerous answers to the problematic aspects of his existence. Let me list a few broad categories:

- **The “Fairy Tale” Approach:** Your typical fairy tale revolves around a hero, or heroine, performing some great deed—against impossible odds, in order to save “the kingdom” from a bleak future. In essence, the nobility of man saves himself from his predicament. This type of thinking is found in the “noble savage” of Rousseau, and is especially prevalent in the rugged individualism of the heroes in such diverse authors as Louis L’Amour, Jack London, and Tom Clancy. We must realize that here in America, we are especially susceptible to a “mankind can save himself” mentality. The real question is, what does God think about the noble acts of man? The Bible is very clear; man is not noble but lost. Look for a minute in just one chapter of the Bible, chapter 5 of the book of Romans. Starting in verse 6, man is described as: powerless, ungodly, sinner, and God’s enemy. There is no descendant of Adam, who from his depraved status, can perform a deed great enough to restore relationship with God.
- **Science and Technology:** This certainly is the anti-god mindset of the *intelligentsia* in our day and age, and unfortunately many have put their trust for the future in the promise of new discoveries. Despite the many advances of the past 100 years, I challenge you to take a closer look at history. How have we done in terms of man dealing with man? If you look at just the number lost in the wars of the past 150 years, you will see a trend toward an ever-increasing death toll; rather than a solution to the evil tendencies of man’s heart. Science and technology has given us nothing more than an improved means to an unimproved end. (Although I do not know the source of this particular phrase, I have heard something similar from R. Zacharias and feel compelled to give him the credit.)
- **The Political Solution:** We have tried quite a few political solutions: imperialism, monarchy, empire, fascism, communism, democracy, republic. Have any these political systems solved the inherent problems of man? Does the current political climate in our country, one attempting to divide and pit groups of Americans against one another, offer any potential solution? About the most that we can say about the political solution is that, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”



- **The Religious Solution:** The religious solution is all about what man can do to gain the favor of god(s). Carried to an extreme, acts of the most heinous nature can be justified simply as part of religious worship. (No doubt you immediately think of the acts of Muslim fundamentalists. The Crusaders, in some cases, acted as barbarically, and there has been a host of religion-driven evil in between.) As we will see, Christianity is really not a religion at all. For from the outset it is clear that man can do nothing to address his lost condition before God; rather, Christianity is about how God has taken matters into His own hands apart from any help from man.

I hope my point is clear—there is nothing man can do about his lost condition. This concept is so very difficult for us to accept! Therefore, let me give you two final things to think about. A solution originating from fallen man is futile for two main reasons: **source** and **will**.

- **Source.** Any solution that originated from man would come from a source that is dead in Adam, with a nature to sin and under a sentence of judgment. Life does not come from the dead, righteousness does not come from sin, and liberty does not come from the one under sentence.
- **Will.** What's more, despite the best of intentions, man simply does not, on his own, have the ability to sustain right behavior over time. He does not have the ability to perpetuate right behavior that is acceptable to God. Romans 7:18-24 is so clear on this matter.

*For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.
For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want
to do—this I keep on doing. . . What a wretched man I am!
Who will rescue me from this body of death?*

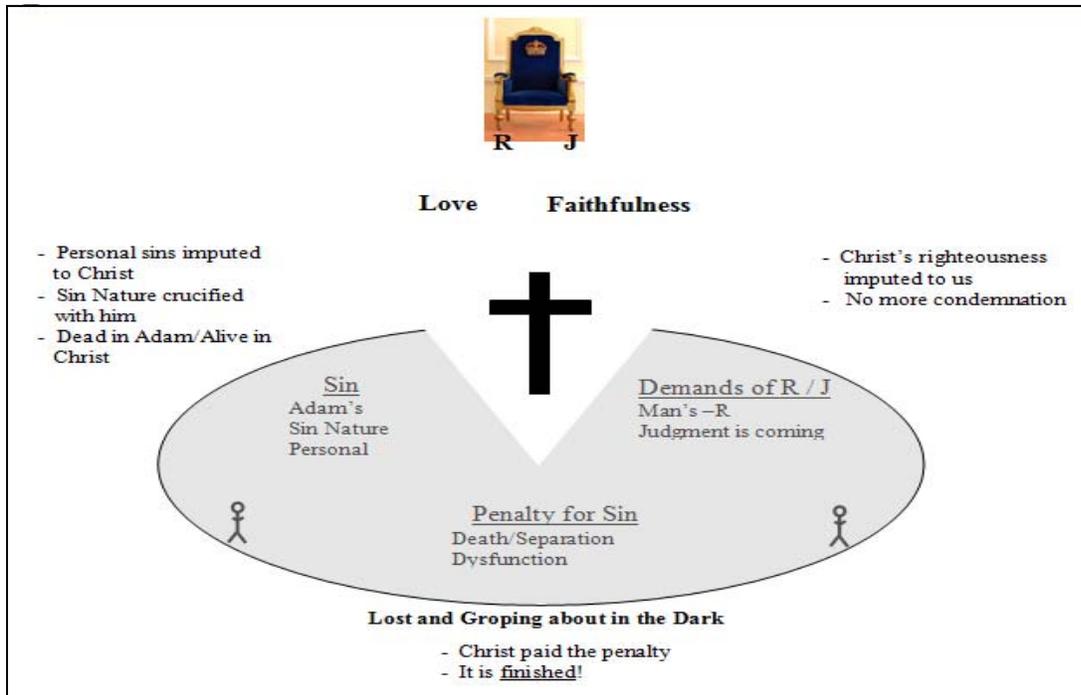
If this quote from Romans is correct, man is in a terrible predicament. He is lost, groping about in the dark, separated from God with nothing to look forward to other than a fearful anticipation of judgment from the hand of God. Is there no hope? Let me introduce you to the sweetest of words for those who recognize their lost condition—the word is grace. The word grace is a term that has been used to summarize the way in which God has chosen to deal with mankind. You may have learned various definitions for this term, let me give you two complimentary ones:

- Grace is God's abundant provision for mankind's ever changing need!
- Grace means that God does all of the work and we receive the benefit.

We will see one example of "grace in action," as we move into the next section and begin to study what God has done about man's desperate situation.

C. What Has God Done About Man's Desperate Situation?

In the graphic below we recall man's lost condition, described as "groping about in the dark"; and consisting of sin, the penalty for sin, and the demand's of God's perfect character. I have also included God's gracious provision to deal with each of these problems, which are otherwise insurmountable. Please review the graphic for a moment or two and then we will break it down one item at a time.



Before we discuss God's specific provision for each of man's problems, let's make sure we are thoroughly grounded in God's motivation for acting on our behalf. Let's return again to Psalm 89:14.

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;
love and faithfulness go before you.*

Or the famous passage from the 3rd chapter of John's gospel:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son . . .

We have seen earlier that God's righteousness and justice are a problem for man, now we will see God's love as the motivation for His actions on our behalf. Here is the seed of a very important truth regarding our interaction with God. Do you see how this passage in Ps 89:14 displays multiple aspects of God's character? We must always view God in this way; rather, than attempting to isolate one aspect of his character from the rest. This is the mistake made by those who question the concept of judgment from a "loving" God.

Do you see how they have attempted to isolate God's love from the rest of His character? God is an integrated whole and not disparate parts! The great wonder of His plan of salvation is that from the source of His love He has saved us, while at the same time acting in a manner consistent with his righteousness and justice. As we will discuss, the cost of doing so was so very great—even to the death of His Son on the cross. So how did God deal with the issue of sin? Let's break it down item by item.

Adam's Sin: We have learned that when Adam sinned, we sinned with him. What's more, Adam's condemnation became our condemnation. It is easy to cry, "unfair" at being included with the sin of Adam. Somehow we feel like we should have our own test, i.e. our own Eden and our own tree. That is the thinking of fallen man, now let me introduce you to the infinite wisdom of God. For you see, He included the entire human race in the fall of Adam, so that He could include the whole human race in the perfection of His Son. Go back and look again at the passage we studied in Romans 5:12-19, a portion of which is provided below.

But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! . . . For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

By including us all in Adam—the precedent had been set. God could then turn around and include all of humanity in the work of his Son. Nowhere is this better summarized than in 1 Corinthians 15:22:

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

(Does this mean that all will be restored to relationship with God? Will all be "saved"? Give me a bit more time to unfold this; but for now, I will give you the short version of the answer—God has done what is necessary for man to *find him* and be restored per the language of Acts 17. What remains at issue, is the response of man to what God has provided on his behalf.)

Our Nature to Sin: God had done a remarkable thing to deal with the sinful nature of man. He has made it possible for the Christian to break with the sin nature's power over our life by means of the cross. This great truth is most explicitly revealed in Romans Chapter 6 from which I have selected several verses.

Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? . . . For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with (rendered ineffective), that we should no longer be slaves to sin. (parenthesis mine)

A detailed investigation of the concepts associated with the above passage will have to wait until we study Phase 2 of the Christian Way of Life. However, is it not clear that the sinful nature (self) is a problem, and that God has addressed that problem through the cross? The concepts associated



with our union with the crucifixion of Christ are a part of doctrine called “positional truth”. We obviously were not physically, personally there at the time of the crucifixion; however, God has taken those who trust in the Son of God as Savior, and included each in the work of the cross in a legal, real way that we summarize as “positional truth”, that is it is truth that is ours as Christians by virtue of our position in

Christ. Furthermore, has not the cross of Christ become our cross?

Our Personal Sins: Now how about the baggage of personal acts of sin that we accumulate during our lifetime? Those things that are symptomatic of the fact that we are dead in Adam and have a nature to sin. God has thoroughly dealt with these as well. Consider 1 Peter 2:24.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

The sins of the entire human race were imputed to Christ while he hung on the cross. So thoroughly did Christ deal with the sin issue, that in 1 John 2:2 we read the following.

He is the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (parenthesis mine)

You may never have thought through the ramifications of this verse, but consider the fact that no person will ever spend eternity in hell because of sin. God has efficaciously dealt with sin on the cross—the debt completely paid! If you are surprised by this statement, consider also 2 Corinthians 5:19 which tells us that God is not counting men’s sins against them, coupled with John 3:3 and Revelation 20:15. Both of these scriptures make an issue of life—whether or not we have eternal life—and not sin, the determining factor with respect to our eternal destiny.

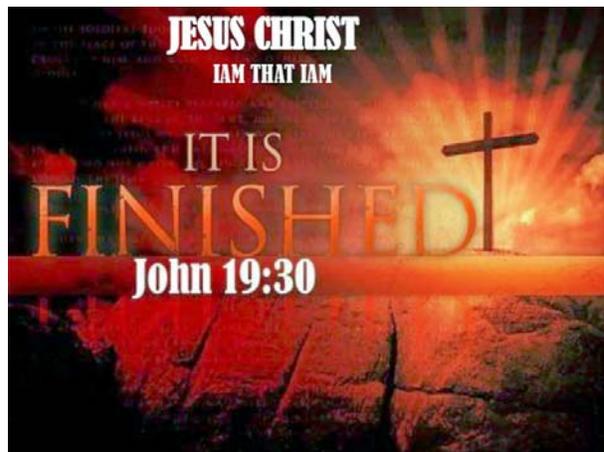
There you have it—a brief summary of God’s plan as it deals with the problem of sin. The sins of all mankind were poured out on Christ during the hours He spent on the cross. What’s more, the cross of Christ is our cross, in that it is the means of breaking the hold of the sin nature. Lastly, if the fall of Adam was the undoing of all humanity to come; then the work of Christ is its recovery! Let’s continue on and see how God has dealt with the penalty of sin.

As we have studied, the penalty for sin is death in the form of separation from God. As a corollary, fallen mankind is unable to comprehend spiritual phenomena; or stated another way, his spiritual intellect or capacity is dysfunctional. This is perfectly illustrated in our theme passage of Act 17, i.e. man is groping about in the dark, unable to interact with God—though he is not far from each of us. So how was it possible for God to deal with both the penalty and spiritual consequences of man's sin? Let's break it down and look at both issues.

Death (Separation): Given the perfect nature of God's character, the demands of justice must be met. They were! We have already seen that Jesus himself bore our sins on the cross, taking our place. What's more, while on the cross He received in Himself the penalty for our sin, that is spiritual death or separation from God. Consider Matthew 27:46.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" -which means, "My God, my God; why have you forsaken me?"

Perhaps you have never paid attention to the repetition in this verse. I think it likely that Jesus is addressing both the Father and the Spirit. I want you to pull together several of the concepts we have discussed. God is light, that is sinless perfection, and can have nothing to do with sin. Therefore, when the sins of mankind were poured out on Christ, it severed his unbroken fellowship with both the Father and the Spirit. Do you realize that God the Son had enjoyed unbroken fellowship with the other members of the Trinity from eternity past. Furthermore, throughout His entire time on earth, the Son was in fellowship with the Father and led by the Spirit—until the cross! Then for the first and only time, the fellowship between the Son and the other members of the Trinity was broken. Why? Because of the penalty for our sin! Jesus paid it Himself! Now I want to show you one more thing to make this issue perfectly clear. Review John 19:30



When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

The Greek word translated “it is finished” is *tetelestai*. There are two important things for us to note about this word. First, its meaning—it could just as easily have been translated, “paid in full.” In fact, it was one of the words used in the ancient world to indicate that a debt had been satisfied. Second, with respect to the grammar associated with this word, it’s in the perfect tense. The perfect tense is used to indicate action that has taken place in the past, with results that continue right up through the present.

Now let’s draw these powerful truths together. As Christ’s time on the cross drew to a close, he made a declaration of historical fact—the fact that the penalty for sin was paid in full. What’s more, although that payment happened in the past, the results continue right up until the present time and include every single failure of our lives!

Dysfunction: Now we are ready for one of the better known, and often ridiculed, passages of the Bible.

In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” John 3:3

You see, in addition to paying the penalty for sin, God also dealt with our spiritual dysfunction through the provision of a new birth—a spiritual birth. John 3:3 documents the need, 2 Corinthians 5:17 documents the provision.

If any man is in Christ he is a new creature (has been born spiritually), the old has passed away, the new has come. (parenthesis mine)

In the same way that God has comprehensively dealt with the problem of sin, he has wonderfully dealt with its penalty. By now we should have a certain eager anticipation to see how impeccably he has dealt with the demands of his perfect character. You will not be disappointed.

As we have discussed, man’s lack of righteousness before a Holy God renders us an object of wrath from the perspective of God’s justice. For it is not just the negative side of things, or sin, that separates us from God, but also the lack of the positive, that is a righteousness equivalent to God’s. We have seen how God has taken care of sin, but what has He done about the shortcomings of our righteousness in comparison to His own? To begin with, the function of religion is to prescribe a *system*, which leads to righteousness or acceptability before God. We must see this approach as bankrupt, in order to appreciate the provision of God. Recall that God has declared, “**all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags. . .**”; for the source is corrupt, and so, from our own resources, we are not capable of achieving the standard of God. Mankind has no answer, but that is always the point at which God’s grace shines brightest!

Justification: Look with me at Romans 3:20-f:

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

First, in Verse 20 we see a reinforcement of the concept we have already discussed. No system of religion, including the Mosaic Law, will ever lead to one being declared righteous before God. Instead, in the case of the Mosaic Law, it documents our shortcomings. Now look carefully at the next few verses.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Do you see God's solution? Faith in God's provision leads to righteousness—not a righteousness that originates from self, but one that is provided by God. God provides, or imputes, righteousness to *our account*. In several places, the Bible actually uses an accounting term to describe the im-



putation of righteousness to the one who trusts in Christ. This is the perfect way to make clear what God has done. For although the sin problem had been solved and our debt paid, our *account* was still empty. To further press the accounting analogy, our debts and liabilities are gone; what's more, our asset ledger is now full.

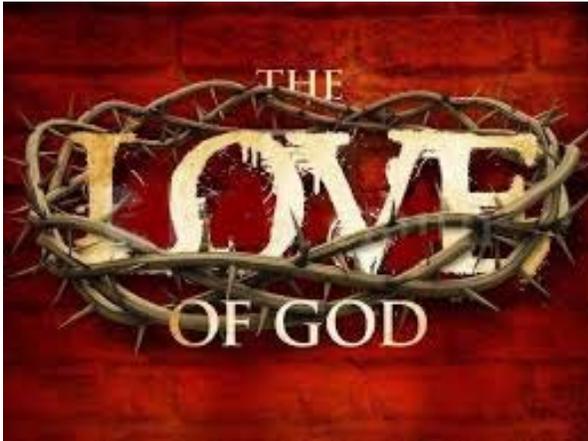
Verse 24 introduces the word justification; the context makes it easy to understand this theological term. Justification is to be *declared righteous*, and fittingly enough was used in secular situations to describe the thinking of a judge. God, as the ultimate judge of the universe, has looked at the one to whom His righteousness has been imputed, and declared him justified! The believer in Jesus Christ is forever acceptable before Him.

Justice Satisfied: Let's make sure to finish the train of thought. God's justice will take action against all that falls short of His standard of righteousness. However, since we have received the imputation of God's righteousness to our account, we need never fear the justice of God as a source of condemnation. We will always stand acceptable to Him once we have received the gift of His righteousness.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Romans 8:1

God's awesome provision for our needs should indeed invoke a sense of wonder within. It is clearly not something that could ever have originated from the mind or imagination of man. I would like to put His Good News, or Gospel, for man into the following context. How often have you heard someone castigate Christianity with the statement, "How could a loving God ever send His creation to hell?" Those who attempt to mitigate man's hopeless situation by finding fault with the love of God have no idea, do they?

It is the love of God that motivated the Father to send His perfect Son to die



on our behalf. It was the love of God that implemented a plan that would separate the Son from the perfect righteousness of the Father as He bore our unrighteousness. It is the love of the Father that now considers the penalty paid and invites us into a relationship with the full rights of sons and daughters, holding no animosity for what our rebellion did to His Son. Perhaps you will appreciate the

hymnist's efforts to portray this great love as much as I do.

*The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell
It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell
The guilty pair bowed down with care God gave His Son to win
His erring child He reconciled and pardoned from his sin*

*Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made
Were ev'ry stalk on earth a quill, and ev'ry man a scribe by trade
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry
Nor could the scroll contain the whole tho' stretched from sky to sky*

*O love of God how rich and pure how measureless and strong
It shall forevermore endure the saints' and angels' song*
(Frederick M. Lehman)

From the standpoint of man as described in Acts 17, mankind is in a hopeless, helpless condition that all the works of religion are futile to resolve. He is destined to receive wrath at the hands of a Holy God. However the grace of God has provided a solution almost too wonderful to believe. The love of God has provided a solution to the problem of sin, the penalty for sin, and the problem of unrighteousness. We have reached what is perhaps the most important aspect of our study of God's solution to mankind's problems, that is how is it that mankind enters into the provision of God? How do we take, and make personally applicable, what God has provided? Is it automatic? Do we have to work for it? There are likely a number of other questions you may have. At this point clarity is essential. We have already been given a hint of the means by which we receive what God has provided (Rm 5:12-f and Rm 3:21-f), in our next lesson we will try to lay it out as clearly and thoroughly as possible.

D. What Can We Do When We Have Found God?

When we accept and realize the truth and value of the *Good News*, we must share it. In order to be ready to share the *Good News* of eternal life in Christ, let's make one more effort to distill the Gospel to its bare essentials.

I have attempted to establish that salvation is by means of faith alone in Christ alone. However, it is a reasonable follow-up question to ask, "Just what is the content that one has to believe?" By nature, I am somewhat of a methodical, organized person; motivated to make sure that I don't leave out a single detail. Therefore, my first inclination is to include all of the content that we have discussed during our previous lessons, that is God's provision in Christ to deal with sin, the penalty for sin and our need of righteousness. However, when I study the Scriptures, I see something more direct. Let me take you through four consecutive chapters in the Gospel of John—a book written to the unbeliever. We will see that repeatedly the Gospel writer distills the message of salvation to the same essence.

John 3:14-18—at the conclusion of Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus.

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

For
God
so
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world
that he gave his only begotten
son so that whosoever believeth
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have
eternal
life
John 3:16

This passage contains the famous John 3:16. I wanted to include the larger context so that you would be absolutely clear on what is being communicated. Jesus Christ came to this world as Savior—at least that was the purpose of His first visit. Now notice it clearly states three times, faith in Christ (as Savior) leads to the receipt of eternal life. Do you see it? The offer is that of life, the means is faith.

John 4:13-14—which is a small portion of Jesus discussion with the Samaritan woman.

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

To drink is a common synonym for the exercise of faith, and again the result is eternal life. Jesus is offering this woman life. The means is faith and notice the quality of life right from the outset—it is eternal life.

John 5:21-24, 39-40—which is a small part of a passage where Jesus is dogmatically stating his divinity and relation to the Father.

²¹For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. ²²Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, ²³that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. ²⁴"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." ³⁹"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, ⁴⁰yet you refuse to come to me to have life."

It is hard to ignore the fact that the topic at hand is life. Vs. 24 is one of my favorite passages in John. Not only does it tell us that we have eternal life by means of faith, but it provides strong support for the eternal security of the believer as well. The verb associated with the phrase "has eternal life" is in the present tense indicating this is something we keep on having. What's more, the verb translated "crossed over" is in the perfect tense indicating an action that has been completed with ongoing results. This verse is telling us that as the result of faith, we keep on having eternal life; while simultaneously, the transition from death to life has been completed, that our standing is one of having *crossed over* as a completed fact.

John 6:27-29, 32-33, 35, 40—and finally passages from John 6.

²⁷Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

³²Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁵Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. ⁴⁰For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Chapter after chapter, in one encounter after another, the essence of the message to the lost is the same. Jesus came as God's provision for the needs of man. The offer from God is eternal life, the *work* of man is to believe in the One who was sent.

Let me summarize what I think we can learn from the above passages. Because Christ's death on the cross has dealt with the sin issue, man's need is one of life. A spiritual kind of life that is capable of spending eternity with God. That is the essence of what is being offered in each of the above chapters of the book of John. It is not that the other things we have discussed are not important, but rather they are not the central truth that we must communicate to others. They may play a vital role in ongoing discussions, but are not the initial focal point.

Let me show you what I mean by relating a hypothetical discussion between two people. One is a bold and knowledgeable Christian (Chris) and the other an unbeliever (Lost).

Chris: I thought we had a good discussion the other night about what it means to be saved. So what have you been thinking?

Lost: So if I understand you correctly, you are encouraging me to believe in Jesus Christ in order to have eternal life?

Chris: That's correct.

Lost: What is it about Christ that I have to believe?

Chris: That Christ is the Son of God, who died for your sins, and as such is offering you eternal life through faith in himself.

Lost: I'm already alive, why do I need life?

Chris: Right now you are physically alive, but spiritually dead. You need a quality of life that is suitable for eternity with God. What you need is eternal life, and that is what God is offering to provide.

Lost: What do you mean I am spiritually dead?

(Let me break in on the conversation for a minute. Do you see how the conversation centered around the concept of life? However, as will often be the case, as the discussion continues it has moved away from a focus on eternal life. Fortunately, we are well equipped to handle the change in focus.)

Chris: You are spiritually dead, because of sin. Here, take a look at this sketch with me. (Chris pulls out of his Bible the diagram page at the end of this section.) God has revealed to us in his Word that every member of the human race has a sin problem. I don't just mean a problem related to his acts of personal sin, but both a nature to sin and inclusion in the sin of Adam.

(From here, Chris would likely open his Bible to show Lost the specific Scriptures. No doubt this would generate more questions, but let's skip ahead a bit.)

Lost: Since we all sin, what makes sin such a problem?

Chris: Again, God's Word reveals the crux of the problem. The penalty for sin is death, which is both separation from God and the inability to understand spiritual concepts.

(Again, we might expect extended discussion.)

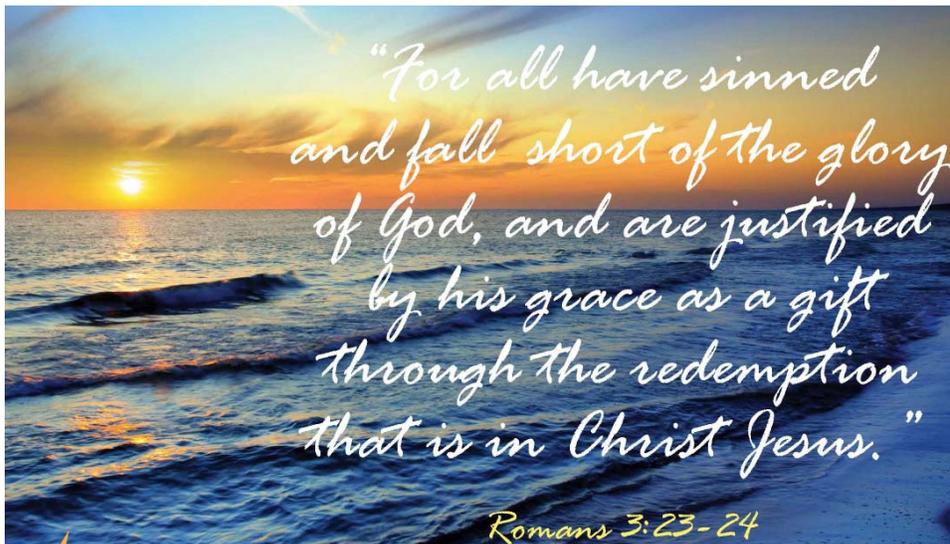
Lost: Since you are saying we all have these problems, isn't God going to have to accept those who have tried their best to live a good life?

Chris: That might be man's perspective, but we have to realize that God's holiness is not going to accept anything less than perfect righteousness. If we fall short of God's requirements, not just some relative human measure, then we can expect nothing less than judgment at the hands of a Holy God.

Lost: This whole thing just seems hopeless. How can anyone be saved or have eternal life?

Chris: Now you're getting it! It is a hopeless situation that none of us can do anything to solve. However, God knew precisely what to do and did it for us. This is what grace is all about, and here is what God did. . .

And that takes us back to the content of our study. Hopefully, each of us is prepared to answer the specific questions of those with whom we interact from the lost world around us. What I am trying to show you is that the thrust of the Gospel is the offer of eternal life. However, in order to provide this life, there are many associated issues: the lostness of man, the character of God, the cross as a satisfaction for the demands of God's justice, and so on. Furthermore, in the course of explaining the offer, it is very likely that questions about the plan of God will arise. We have developed a basic understanding that should address many of these issues. What's more, I want to encourage you to communicate both the permanency of the life offered by God, as well as the certainty associated with it.



E. Has God Given Us Enough Proof !

The brilliant philosopher and famous skeptic, Bertrand Russell, wrote and spoke extensively against Christianity. As he reached the end of his life, he was asked what he would say to God, if after his death, he found out he was wrong? He replied, "I will tell God that he didn't give me enough evidence to believe." I wonder if he had such a ready quip at the point he came face to face with the consequences of his choices about God? All musing aside, did Mr. Russell raise a legitimate defense? Has God been somewhat lax in providing adequate evidence to support the work of His Son as mankind's Savior? Let's go back to our theme passage in Acts 17 as a place to begin.

“. . . we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.” Acts 17:29-31

First, let's make sure we understand the references within the passage. Who is the man appointed by God to judge the world? 2 Timothy 4:1 is quite clear on this matter (as are numerous passages throughout the New Testament).

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, . . .

I think we have sufficient background to understand the content being summarized in this passage. Idolatry is illustrative of the fact that mankind is groping about in the dark and trying to find God. God wants man to repent from his wrong-headed efforts, and instead turn to His provision in Jesus Christ. If not, man should have an expectation of judgment when Christ returns. And here is the key part—God has provided proof! Proof in the form of the resurrection, and proof in support of His requirement to repent from the futility of religion and turn to His provision of Christ.

Bertrand Russell's claim is in direct conflict with the clear declaration of God. Who's right? Aside from the obvious answer, how could an objective person not accept the resurrection as legitimate, and in fact unique evidence? Has anyone ever been horribly murdered, and then come back to life with a kind of body and life that is unlike that of any other human being? What's more, this is exactly what Christ said would happen prior to His death (Matthew 16:21, 27:63). God considers the resurrection as adequate evidence to believe. At a minimum, it must be carefully addressed by those who claim to investigate the issues of truth (philosophers). To dismiss it categorically, is to display a mind closed to all but a personal agenda.

Actually, the statement of Bertrand Russell illustrates a common form of delusion, which can only be attributed to the *lostness* of man. The delusion to which I refer is often stated something like this: The realm of faith and facts are separate and exclusive. The assumption is that faith is something exercised apart from facts. By extension, the realm of facts is the domain of the intelligent while the realm of faith is the domain of *the simple*. This is completely contradictory to the Word of God, of which Acts 17 is just one of a multitude of examples.

God always lays a groundwork of evidence upon which faith is to act. In terms of believing His provision of salvation, He has provided the greatest single piece of evidence in all human history—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What’s more, the facts of the Word of God continue to be the solid basis for all further exercise of faith by the follower of Christ. This is how God works, He always provides some sort of truth upon which to base faith.

Now I am aware that the truth of Christ’s death and resurrection have been attacked right from the time of their occurrence. Let me close this section by briefly addressing a few of these attacks.

Historicity. Unbelievably, there are those who deny the historicity of Jesus Christ. To claim that Jesus Christ was not a real, historical person, one must set aside the normal *rules* by which history is determined and established. Following the rules by which some deny the historicity of Christ, would also do away with the likes of Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Plato, and so many others. In other words, by changing the rules in order to push an agenda which does away with the historical person of Jesus Christ, you also do away with the reality of all lesser historical figures. In reality, there ceases to be any such thing as history.

Reality of the Cross. There are those who acknowledge the historicity of Christ, but deny that He really died on the cross. Instead, they hypothesize that He simply fainted, and then was revived in the coolness of the tomb. Consider with me John 19:33-37:

But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken,” and as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced.”

Aside from the issue of fulfilled prophecy, let's consider just the account of the piercing of Jesus' side. Notice first the care with which the author records these events. Second, notice the specific reference to the flow of "blood and water" from Jesus' side. Given our current state of medical knowledge is this significant? Samuel Houghton, M.D, and renowned physiologist thinks so:

"When the soldier pierced with his spear the side of Christ, He was already dead; and the flow of blood and water that followed was either a natural phenomenon explicable by natural causes or it was a miracle." He goes on to explain, that a flow of blood, followed by a flow of water, would be indicative of a crucified person who had died upon the cross from rupture of the heart. He concludes, "There remains, therefore, no supposition possible to explain the recorded phenomenon except the combination of the crucifixion and rupture of the heart."

Evidence that Demands a Verdict, Volume 1, McDowell, 1991, pg. 198

It is especially interesting to me that John is the one who records these facts and not Luke. Luke was a doctor, and would of course have been clinically interested in these things. It also means he would have known what to say should he have wished to aggrandize these events on his own. On the other hand, John would not have known the significance of what he said one way or the other, and so on the face of it is more likely to have described exactly what he saw.

Mistake. There are those who claim that Jesus' body was simply misplaced by the disciples, and when they couldn't find him, they assumed he had



been resurrected. It is hard for me to believe that anyone with at least a bit of common sense and reasoning ability would fail to think this through. Once the disciples started to teach Jesus as resurrected from the dead, people began to respond. At this point, who was it that had a powerful motive for finding and producing the body of Christ? The members of the Sanhedrin, of course! I want you to picture what would have happened if, during any of Peter's preaching of Christ as crucified and resurrected in Acts 4-5, one of the burly guards of the Sanhedrin, with a ranking Pharisee at his side, had dumped the body of Christ in

front of the crowd. The Pharisees had every motive to make this happen did they not? Why do you think they never did? The most logical reason is that there was no body to produce!

Duplicity. Lastly, there are those who say that the disciples stole the body of Christ, hid it, and then perpetuated the lie that Jesus had been resurrected. Those who believe this explanation are probably not aware of its origin. Matthew 27:62 and 28:12 make it clear that the Sanhedrin was concerned about this very thing. As a result, they first of all obtained a Roman guard to secure the tomb.

Realistically, what are the chances that militarily untrained, unarmed fishermen overpowered this guard to steal the body? Second, we see that the Sanhedrin hatched the very same lie that has been selected by modern day skeptics. It is not a new lie, and in fact many today follow in the footsteps of those who were not the least interested in the evidence; but rather were going to pursue their own agenda regardless of the duplicity involved.

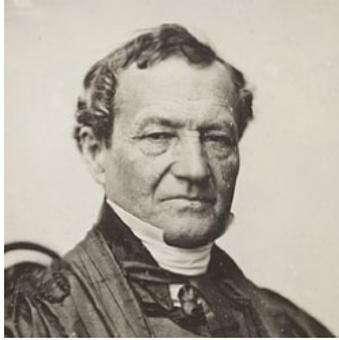
To further debunk the above argument, do you know how many of the disciples died a martyr's death? All but one! Is it even remotely reasonable to believe that this group of men perpetuated a conspiracy that caused each of them to live a life of suffering and self-sacrifice for a cause they knew was false? Is it reasonable that nearly all gave their lives to a cause, which they knew to be a lie? Is it reasonable that in the face of the tremendous pressures they all faced, not a single one cracked? There is a much more logical and reasonable explanation—that Jesus Christ was who He said He was, and we are simply seeing what the Spirit of God can accomplish in the people of God.

Conclusion

For those who think they reject the reality of the cross and resurrection on intellectual grounds, let me leave you with two quotes. The first is by Professor Thomas Arnold, a great scholar and one-time chair of Modern History at Oxford:



“The evidence for our Lord’s life and death and resurrection may be, and often has been, shown to be satisfactory; it is good according to the common rules for distinguishing good evidence from bad. Thousands and tens of thousands of persons have been through it piece by piece, as carefully as every judge summing up on a most important cause. I have myself done it many times over, not to persuade others but to satisfy myself. I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort, to the understanding of a fair inquirer, than the great sign which God hath given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.”



The second quote is from Simon Greenleaf, famed Royal Professor of Law at Harvard University and author of a work called, “A Treatise on the Law of Evidence.” This work is still considered the greatest single authority on evidence in the entire literature of legal procedure.

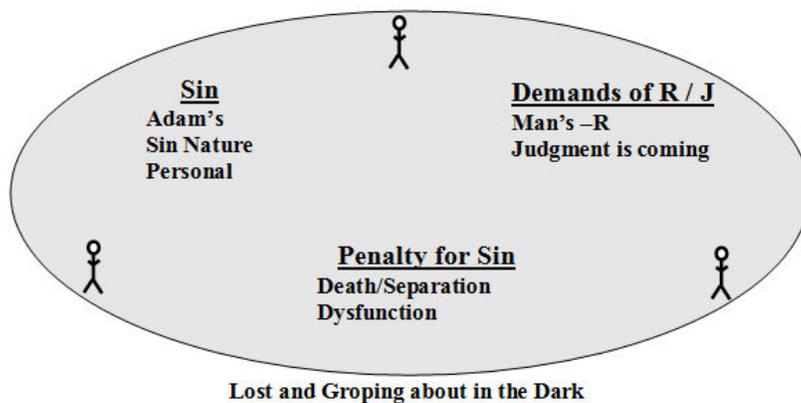
“The great truths which the apostles declared, were, that Christ had risen from the dead, and that only through repentance from sin, and faith in Him, could men hope for salvation. This doctrine they asserted with one voice, everywhere, not only under the greatest discouragements, but in the face of the most appalling errors that can be presented to the mind of man. . . Propagating this new faith, even in the most inoffensive and peaceful manner, they could expect nothing but contempt, opposition, revilings, bitter persecutions, stripes, imprisonments, torments, and cruel deaths. Yet this faith they zealously did propagate; and all these miseries they endured undismayed, nay, rejoicing. As one after another was put to a miserable death, the survivors only prosecuted their work with increased vigor and resolution. The annals of military warfare afford scarcely an example of the like heroic constancy, patience, and unblanching courage. They had every possible motive to review carefully the grounds of their faith, and the evidence of the great facts and truths which they asserted; and these motives were pressed upon their attention with the most melancholy and terrific frequency. It was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact. If it were morally possible for them to have been deceived in this matter, every human motive operated to lead them to discover and avow their error. To have persisted in so gross a falsehood, after it was shown to them, was not only to encounter, for life, all the evils which man could inflict, from without, but to endure also the pangs of inward and conscious guilt; with no hope of future peace, no testimony of a good conscience, no expectation of honor or esteem among men, no hope of happiness in this life, or in the world to come. . . If then their testimony was not true, there was no possible motive for its fabrication.”
(From “An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice”)

When it comes to understanding and applying the rules of evidence, there are few on the face of this earth who are the intellectual or professional equals of these two experts. Theirs is the conclusion to which honest evaluation of the evidence always comes—just as God intended (Acts 17:31).

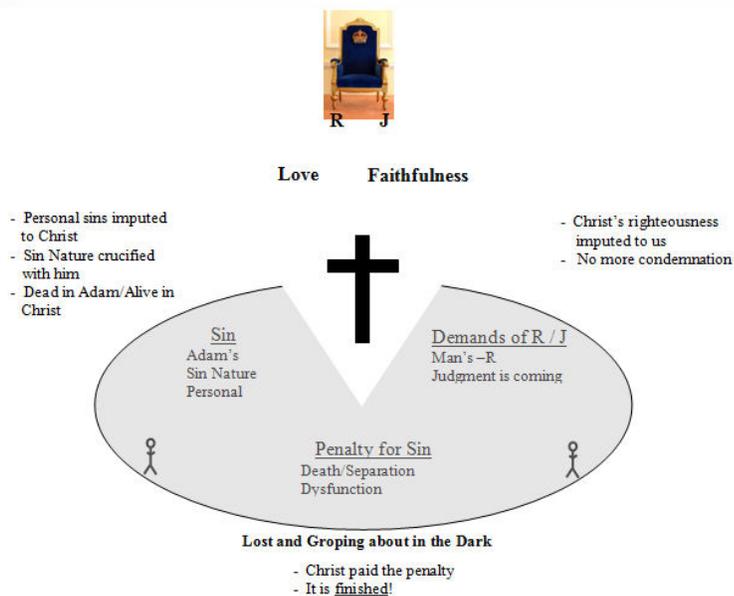
Conclusion

As you can see, this booklet ends with the two graphics on the next page that we have used during the course of our study. I have included them at the end of this booklet in the hope that you will print them, fold the printed page in half and keep it in your Bible. Of course it will serve as a good reminder of what you have in Christ. However, I want to encourage you to use it as a tool to share the Gospel with those God causes to cross your path just as I indicated in our example discussion between Chris and Lost on the previous pages.

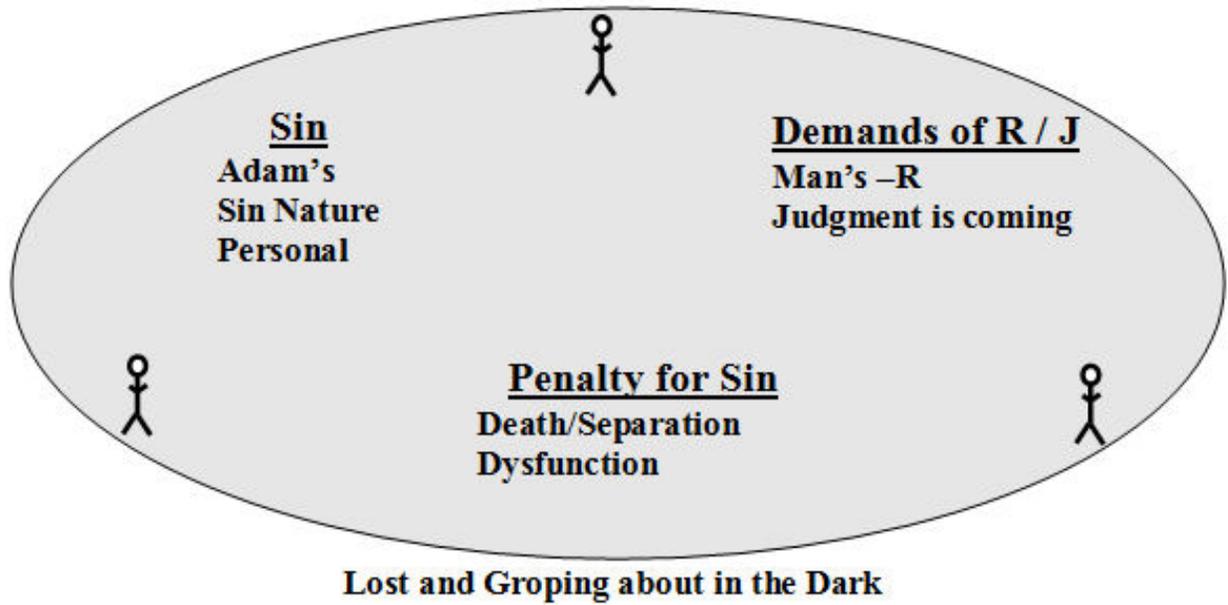
To clarify, the first graphic shows those things which are the cause of mankind's lost condition and separation from God.



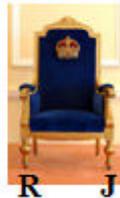
The second graphic includes God's grace provision to deal with each of man's problems.



Factors That Are the Cause of Man's Lost Condition



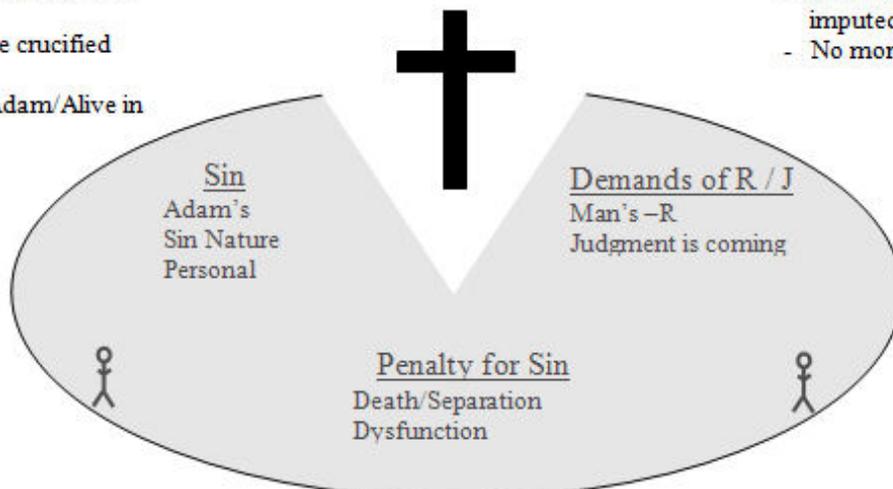
God's Grace Provisions to Deal with Man's Lostness



Love Faithfulness

- Personal sins imputed to Christ
- Sin Nature crucified with him
- Dead in Adam/Alive in Christ

- Christ's righteousness imputed to us
- No more condemnation



Lost and Groping about in the Dark

- Christ paid the penalty
- It is finished!

Vistoso Community Church

OUR PURPOSE

The purpose of Vistoso Community Church
is to bring glory to God by completing
the work He has given us to do.

John 17:4

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to be used by God to help
the lost receive eternal life,
and those with eternal life to grow
in grace and knowledge.

OUR CORE VALUES

- Christ is the only Lord and Savior. Acts 2:36
- The Bible is the inspired word of God. II Timothy 3:16-17
- We honor God through traditional worship: Psalm 19:14
- Our loving fellowship strengthens us. Hebrews 10:24-25
- Seeking the lost is our commission. Matthew 28:19-20
- The principles of divine establishment are God given.
Nehemiah. 4:14



VISTOSO COMMUNITY CHURCH

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