

# **Understanding the Times: The Importance of Evidence & Biblical Faith**

Alicia Martin

The Christian is commissioned to be salt and light in a dark world. The ship's place in the water, but God help the ship if the water gets in it. So how do we interact with our culture, without being sunk by it? An important part of the answer to that question is to understand how our culture thinks, and why it thinks that way. Evidence is also an important part of the answer, as is Biblical faith.

The following article is broken into three parts. Part 1 seeks to help the reader understand how our culture thinks, and why. Part 2 addresses the definition of Biblical faith, and how it relates to evidence. Part 3 attempts to combine 1 & 2, by outlining what Biblical faith 'looks like' on a practical level, when it is lived out in our culture.

Please consider the following parable, which will be referenced in the body of the article: A man was walking through a cornfield, and he found an arrowhead. He holds the arrowhead in his hand, and looks around. He can't see, taste, touch, smell, or hear the Native American. But the man is *holding the evidence* for the existence of the maker of that arrowhead. One might say that, "The invisible Native American is clearly seen, being understood to exist by the thing that was made, so that the man has no excuse to pretend that the Native American never existed." Romans 1:20: The invisible God is clearly seen, being understood to exist by the things that were made, so that men are without excuse if they try to pretend He does not exist.

## **Part 1 Understanding the Times Why People Today Divorce Science & God**

You may have observed that, in today's culture, there is a huge wall between "science" and "God." It is as if the very thought of God, the supernatural, and all things spiritual are 'the opposite' of science; it is very 'incorrect,' or so we are told, to mix God and science. One may find it helpful and instructional to understand where this notion came from – for the founders of science didn't think that way! – and how it became so ingrained in people's thinking. To do this, we need to dig into a little bit of philosophy...

Kant was a philosopher who was born in the early 1700's. He built 'a wall' which is called Kant's Wall. This wall is not a physical wall of stones, but rather a way of thinking. But no physical wall on earth – not the Great Wall of China, not the infamous Berlin Wall – is nearly so big and so powerful as Kant's Wall.

Kant's Wall puts all physical stuff 'on one side of the Wall.' And then it puts all spiritual stuff 'on the other side of the Wall.' This Wall is so tall, so deep, so wide, and so long, that it is impossible to get from one side to the other using logic or reason. In other words, according to Kant's Wall, the only way to 'get to God' is to put one's brain on the shelf and 'take a blind leap.' According to Kant's Wall, there is no way to 'connect' physical evidence and God; *according to Kant's Wall, there is no physical evidence for God.* → Do you see why? All the evidence is one side of the Wall, with the physical stuff. God is on the other side of the Wall, with the spiritual stuff. And, since the Wall is so huge, there is no way to make a logical, rational, connection between the two sides. What just happened? *The whole notion of God became irrational.* People who are trained to think this way say things like, "Of course, you can believe in God if you want to, but you don't have any evidence for Him. If you want to go ahead and 'make a blind leap' without any evidence, go ahead – but I'm not going to do that."

What was the whole point of the Arrowhead Parable? ***Kant's Wall is incorrect.*** Humans have the ability to make a rational, logical connection between physical evidence, and non-physical realities. (See R.C. Sproul, *The Consequences of Ideas, Kant*)

Nevertheless, Kant's Wall controls the way our culture thinks. It's a lie that greatly influences the way a lot of people think. And as I will show you, it is a lie that has a lot of influence both inside and outside the Church. But I'm getting ahead of the story. Back to the 1700's and 1800's...

The founders of science understood that people ought to start with physical evidence and logically conclude that God exists. They understood that when the scientist's goal is truth, it inevitably takes him to the feet of a Creator to Whom he is accountable. One such man was Nicholas Steno. He was the Father of Geology, who understood that the best scientific explanation for most of the fossil record was the global Flood of Noah.

The Enlightenment was a big anti-God push. (If you want to understand the context, the Protestant Reformation had brought great advances for the Kingdom of God in Europe, and the Enlightenment was the Satanic push-back against the Reformation.) A big part of this anti-God push was to hi-jack science and infiltrate it with lies. Why? Because, as noted above, true science supported – and was being properly used to advance – spiritual truth. Men who did not want to be accountable to a Creator despised this reality. And so, they set about to destroy it...and Kant's Wall was a key tool...

Recall, according to Kant's Wall, physical stuff is all on one side of the wall, and spiritual stuff is all on the other side of the wall. In a nutshell, here's what the anti-truth guys did: They defined 'science' as *only* being concerned with the stuff on the physical side of the wall. Oilá! All of a sudden, "science" is divorced from God! And, according to the lie of Kant's Wall, since there is no *logical* way to get from one side of the Wall to the other, the anti-Truth crowd managed to insult the intelligence of anyone who chose to believe in God. In the end:

1) Science was re-defined and hi-jacked by the anti-Truth crowd;

- 2) The anti-Truth crowd successfully stole ‘the high ground of evidence,’ and made everyone believe that people who believed in God had no evidence to support their position;
- 3) Everyone was deceived into thinking that the only way to believe in God was to put their brain on the shelf and take ‘a blind leap;’
- 4) The Church lost all the physical, apologetic evidence that rightfully belongs to her;
- 5) The Church, oblivious to the gravity of this battle over evidence, was deceived into thinking Kant’s Wall was true – which meant that the Church no longer taught the truth of Romans 1:20 (recall, this verse *directly* contradicts Kant’s Wall; it is the verse that the Arrowhead Parable illustrates);
- 6) The Church, now believing the lie of Kant’s Wall, began teaching an utterly anti-Biblical definition of ‘faith.’ Witness the reality: In our culture, and even in the Church sometimes, ‘faith’ is defined as ‘taking a blind leap.’ In our culture, and even in the Church sometimes, ‘faith’ is thought to be ‘the opposite of evidence,’ or, ‘something that you believe *in spite of* the evidence.’ But that is not accurate. Biblical Faith, as defined by the Apostle Paul in Romans 1:20 is not anti-evidence! On the contrary, Biblical Faith, as defined in Romans 1, *is connecting* physical evidence and non-physical reality: It is that “bridge” in men’s minds that allows men to rationally connect the arrowhead and the Native American, or the creation and God. *Biblical Faith is exactly the opposite of what Kant’s Wall claims.*

Because our culture has been trained to believe the lie of Kant’s Wall, most people think that ‘faith’ is ‘the irrational, anti-evidence, blind leap that gets you to the other side of the Wall.’ No! Biblical Faith is *the destruction* of the Wall. (Biblical faith is the destruction of the lie that claims there is no physical evidence for God.) Biblical Faith grabs hold of the evidence with both hands and proclaims, “*Because of this evidence, I concede* – based on logic, reason, and scientific law – **that God exists!**”

Please notice the use of the word “concede” in the last sentence. If Romans 1:18-20 is true, then all men *know* that God exists; the question is, do they willfully restrain and ignore that evidence, or do they concede to the Truth? It’s an expensive concession, because it plunks you right down at the feet of the Creator to Whom we are accountable. And, since we all know that we have sinned, and offended His Righteous Law (John 16:8), it is also a scary concession; we know He has the right to condemn us. But if the sinner opens his eyes, he will see the nail-scars in those Beautiful Feet. And it occurs to me as I write this, that perhaps a part of the purpose for those particular scars is for those who find themselves unable to look up towards His side, or hands, or face.

God’s heart’s cry: “Look at the evidence!”

How does the faulty, Kantian-based definition of ‘faith’ affect the health of the Church? If the Church taught the Biblical, evidence-based definition of ‘faith’ (as opposed to the Kantian, anti-evidence lie), do you think the unsaved would have a different attitude towards Christianity?

Many people believe that they have to accomplish certain tasks in order to be saved and get to Heaven. Other people believe that faith is the only ingredient that men have to contribute to their salvation. What *does* the Bible say? Romans 10:9: “If you believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord, and confess that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” The in-heart key is *Lordship*...Jesus is God, and His rules for running the universe (men are sinners and need divine forgiveness) are True. Recall, the thief on the Cross met all the requirements of Romans 10:9 – he called Jesus Lord, understanding that He was innocent and would rise again, and he confessed his own sin. He didn’t accomplish a single ‘work;’ he *couldn’t*: He did not even have the use of his own hands and feet, and he was about to die in moments. Yet Jesus assured him that he would be in Heaven with Him *that day* (Luke 23:43). Jesus, being God, knew that the thief *meant it* when he called Jesus Lord. But Jesus Himself warned us of the fact that some people who use the word don’t mean it (Matthew 7:22-3).

Many people believe that ‘faith’ is the *only* ingredient that men have to contribute to their salvation. But, as we just saw, that is over-simplification to the point of inaccuracy: While it is true that we do not have to accomplish any works, genuine Lordship must not be neglected.

Then what about Ephesians 2:8-9? “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any many should boast” (RSV). This verse is describing the process before and after Romans 10:9. “Before” Romans 10:9 comes faith: the logical understanding, based on the creation, that God exists as Creator, and therefore all men are accountable to Him because the Creator is the one who has the right and responsibility to make the rules. The Holy Spirit convicts the world (i.e., all men) of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Thus, all unsaved men know God exists, that they are accountable to Him, that they have sinned, and that they will be judged for their sin.

Now, Romans 10:9, enter the Person of Jesus. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but by Him (John 14:6). He is the Means for the forgiveness that every man knows he needs. Faced with the Lamb of God, slain upon Calvary and resurrected as proof that every sin *was* paid for (for even one un-paid-for-sin would have kept Jesus in the tomb), the unsaved man now has a choice: accept or reject the Truth that stands before him. One criminal beside Jesus on Calvary accepted it. At this point, Ephesians 2:8 describes what happens next: the moment forgiveness is requested, God extends grace – and in that moment, the gavel comes down, and the Judge declares through the halls of eternity-future, “Pardoned!” Thus, Ephesians 2:8 emphasizes that salvation is *through* faith (the man sees and admits what is needed), but *by grace* (God does ‘all the work’). Both man’s contribution of faith, and God’s contribution of grace, are necessary ingredients to the recipe of salvation. And those are the only necessary ingredients – that’s ‘the point’ of Ephesians 2:9, “and not by works, lest any man should boast.”

Now let’s run a bunny trail, because a lot of non-Christians have a legitimate question. “What about the person in the middle of Africa who never has a chance to hear about Jesus?” Go back to Romans 1:18-20 and John 16:8. All men know God exists, that they are

accountable to Him as Creator, and that they have sinned against Him. The only question is, do they restrain this truth (consciously repress it), or do they concede it? Admitting God exists is, according to Romans 1, an expression of faith – *but that is not salvation*. Recall, “knowing I am a sinner in need of forgiveness + asking for that forgiveness through Jesus (Romans 10:9) = salvation.”

When a man admits that God exists and that he is a sinner in need of help before his Creator-Judge, *that is not salvation* – but, I will submit, it is the key to answering the question about the guy in the middle of Africa. God sees the hearts of men, and He knows the moment a man or woman makes this admission. And remember, it doesn't take a Bible, or a missionary, to come to this place. So now we've got a person who admits that God exists and that he needs a Savior. *At this point*, God will move heaven and earth to make sure that this man or woman hears about Jesus.

We think of missionaries as sent to a place where no one may ever care to hear about the forgiveness God offers through Christ. I will submit that is inaccurate; rather, missionaries are sent to specific locations in order to meet the heart-cry for a Savior that God will always respond to. Now, that doesn't mean the missionary necessarily *sees* that person get saved. The missionary may not even *meet* the person whose heart's cry caused him to be sent to that place. God operates outside of time, and so the missionary may leave a Bible for the man who needs to find it 100 years later. The point is: God will always make sure that the person who admits his or her need for a Savior sees the Truth; He will always make sure that, before death, the individual sees Jesus.

Sadly, a lot of people reach the place where they see Jesus – they see the Answer they know they need – and then they reject Him. Witness: There are a whole lot of people running around who have heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but who refuse to bow their knee to Him. According to Romans 1:18-20 and John 16:8, these are people who know God exists and that they are accountable to Him. Some of them freely admit this – tragically, some even make jokes about being judged by God, and make light of the eternal consequences of their sin.

The old 'fire and brimstone' preachers are roundly condemned by today's culture. The mantra today is, “God is love, and we have to *love* people!” True. But if we 'love' them so much that we let them think God would never allow them to condemn themselves to hell, we are not loving them at all! God is love, but He is also holy, and that means that He personifies a divine balance between love of sinners and hatred of sin. Yes, the Church has a responsibility to communicate that God loves sinners, but we must never neglect that He also hates sin. And He hates it so much that people who are determined to cling to their filth in this life will be eternally cursed by it. Contrary to pagan thought, this life is the only chance we get, and the choices we make here will determine our eternal fate. “Man is appointed to die once, and then comes judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

## Part 2

### What is Biblical Faith? What is its Role in Salvation?

Eastern religion feeds on the lie of, “You can make it happen just by wanting (visualizing, trying) it hard enough.” What does it look like when this lie infiltrates the church? It looks like this: “You can make it happen if you just have enough ‘faith.’” (Notice how this anti-Biblical notion of ‘faith’ fits hand-in-glove with irrational, Kantian blind-leap ‘faith.’)

That notion is so far off the mark with regard to understanding what Biblical faith really is! This error turns faith into a crowbar that can be used to force God into doing what a person wants. But just as surely as Kant’s Wall is exactly the opposite of Romans 1:20, the notion that ‘faith’ forces God to do man’s will is exactly up-side-down! *Biblical faith* is when we submit our will to God’s. It has nothing to do with us hoping, wishing, trying, or forcing God to conform to our will.

One might say that Biblical faith has three sub-sets, or “levels.” One can think of them sort of like a three-step staircase. The first step is pre-salvation. The second step is salvation. The third step is post-salvation.

The first step up is explained by the Arrowhead Parable, and Romans 1:20. It is the expression of faith that concedes the existence of God as Creator, to Whom I am accountable. “Concedes” is a very important word there. Based on Romans 1:18-20, *all* men know God exists as Creator, and thus *all* are without excuse. What is the rational, evidence-based means of knowing this reality? Faith. Recall, Biblically, faith is men’s ability to observe physical evidence and make a logical conclusion regarding spiritual truth. This is the ‘measure’ of faith Paul references in Romans 12:3, when he says that *all* men have it. Why? *Because God gave it to them* (Romans 1:19). Why? So that *all men* are without excuse when it comes time for Him to judge them (Romans 1:20). Recognize: The creator of something is its owner, and the creator has the right and responsibility to make the rules and enforce them (judge). Dodge is the one with the right and responsibility to write the owner’s manual for my truck, because they are its creator. The truth of God as man’s Creator is why He has the right and responsibility to be our Judge.

Notice, and this is crucial: ‘that first level of faith’ – simply acknowledging God’s existence – *is not saving faith*. → The Church, for the most part, fails to distinguish between the stages of faith, and thus confusion is created with regard to the process of salvation. As one will see, once the stages, or steps, are distinguished, the process of salvation is much more easily understood.

Before we go to Step 2, I want to go back to Step 1 for a moment. What’s the difference between the guy who is standing on the floor, and the guy who is standing on Step 1? *They are both unsaved*, but there is a very important difference: The guy standing on the floor is the one described in Romans 1:19 *as restraining the truth*; he knows God exists as

Creator, but he refuses to concede the point. The guy who is standing on Step 1 has bowed his knee to the demands of natural revelation: he is admitting that God exists as the Creator to Whom he is accountable.

Again, let me underline: To stand on Step 1 is *not* to have attained salvation. It is merely to concede to natural revelation. Salvation, as we are about to see, requires special revelation, i.e., the Word of God, i.e., Jesus.

The man standing on Step 1 knows he has a problem. It is a very big, eternal problem: He is a sinner. The Holy Spirit convicts men of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Thus, by natural revelation alone, even the person who has never met a missionary or seen a Bible *knows*: 1) God exists as Creator; 2) He is accountable to that Creator; 3) He has sinned against that Creator; 4) Therefore, he has a very serious problem. I will submit that once a person is willing to admit these things (realize: ‘knowing’ and ‘admitting’ are two different things; the latter is a concession of the will), God moves Heaven and Earth to set Jesus before them.

The person who admits the four points in the previous paragraph knows he needs a Savior. At that point, he must make a choice: will he seek The Truth, or will he turn to a lie? If he seeks The Truth, then *somehow*, God will place Jesus before him – that’s the promise of Jeremiah 29:13-14. The tragedy is that some men, instead of seeking The Truth, turn to a lie. Before we feel sorry for them, realize: Every man who turns to a lie *will never have peace in his spirit*. All the individuals who turn to Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, a ‘christian’ cult, or any of the other pagan religions out there, know that their ‘solution’ to their sin-problem is not working. The justice and love of God would *never* allow such men to be comfortable, clinging to a false savior.

Granted, some men are drawn into, or else ‘try out’ one or more false religions while seeking The Truth. But these men are not pretending that the lie of a false religion is meeting their need. They are genuinely seeking The Truth. And the promise is, if they keep seeking, they will find Him (Jeremiah 29:13-14, John 14:6).

All men who seek The Truth find Him. But finding (simply seeing) the Truth, and accepting the Truth, are not the same thing. Having located Jesus, the individual is now standing on Step 1, the Cross of Calvary is stage-left, and the Empty Tomb is stage-right. In the center stands Jesus, Who asks, “Who do *you* say that I am?” Again, the individual must make a choice. And this is the most important choice he will ever make. The evidence is clear. The man knows he needs a Savior. God has provided The Answer. Will the man standing on Step 1 accept or reject The Answer? The choice will determine his eternal fate. And eternity is a long time.

“God is commanding men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). “It is not God’s will that even one should perish” (II Peter 3:9). It is God’s will that every man and woman repent and receive the forgiveness they need. But not all people do so. Men have a free will that can rebel against God’s will. With regard to God’s will versus man’s free will, God clearly states what His will is, but the evidence around us clearly indicates that men do things contrary to

God's will. Both Christians and non-Christians act in ways that contradict God's will (I Thessalonians, Acts 17:30, respectively). (This does not diminish God's sovereignty, because God's *choice* to not over-ride our free will does not negate His *ability* to do so. → This does not diminish God's goodness, because True Love will never *force* another person into a relationship.)

“God is commanding men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). “It is not God's will that even one should perish” (II Peter 3:9). It is God's will that every man and woman repent and receive the forgiveness they need. Recall: Biblical faith is submitting to God's will (which is always in our eternal best interest). Thus, the transition from Faith Step 1 to Faith Step 2: From ‘knowing God exists and I have an eternal problem’ to ‘Accepting Jesus as God's Answer to my problem.’

It doesn't cost anything to step up and onto Step 2, but it costs everything to remain there. Why? Because *Lordship* means that you don't stand on Step 2, but kneel upon it.

What exactly “is” Step 2? “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). Confession may not be easy, but it is simple. Believing that God raised Jesus from the dead is as simple as admitting to the obvious evidence. But Lordship? That's a whole-life, give-up-my-rights-to-myself deal. It's conceding that God is God, and I am not. Who is the lord of my life? If I'm doing what I want, I am my own lord. If I'm going to say Jesus is Lord, then I'm bound to do what He wants. Sometimes this is easy, but not always.

Obedience is always simple, but not always easy.

There are pagans out there who understand the Gospel better than the Church gives them credit for. They understand that becoming a Christian means making Jesus Lord – *for real*. Realize: These unsaved individuals are doing one thing ‘very right:’ they are counting the cost up-front (Luke 14:28). Granted, they have been deceived into believing a false cost-benefit ratio; while they realize that Lordship is costly, they do not appreciate the value of what is gained through that Lordship. But the point is this: Those unsaved people have a better grasp on true Lordship than some who *call themselves* Christians but who go out and do what they want with almost no regard for God's will.

Notice how the thief on the cross beside Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of Romans 10:9: “We [are sentenced to death] justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong. And he said, “Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:41-43). He confessed Jesus as Lord, and believed that God would raise Him from the dead. (He knew being crucified would kill Jesus, and yet he believed Jesus would ‘come into His kingdom,’ i.e., be resurrected.)

It doesn't cost *us* anything to step up and onto Step 2. But make no mistake: There was a cost – a very high cost. Jesus paid it (II Corinthians 5:21, Romans 6:23, Mark 15-16). Even so, each individual *does have a role to play* in his salvation: the choice to kneel on Step



2. We can't earn or purchase our salvation. But we must give the one part that God can't do for us: our free will. Notice the manner in which the analogy of Christ as the Groom and the Church as the Bride becomes so poignant: Christ gave His life for us. We give our life for Him. That – *that!* – is true love: no forcing, no coercion; but rather two individuals giving their lives, of their own free will, to each other.

“We love, because He first loved us” (I John 4:19). On earth, some people have the awesome privilege of being loved by another so much that your heart just melts, and you can't help but love them in return. By no means is this a 'forced' love; it is a 'drawing' that makes us thankful for a free will that gives us the privilege of walking – ere, running! – toward the person who is the object of our desire.

It doesn't cost anything to step up and onto Step 2, but it costs everything to remain there. However, like the bride who *loves* her betrothed, the cost is not a sacrifice, but a privilege.

True love has a dimension of mystery that the mind can not fully wrap itself around. For this reason, one may hesitate to claim an 'understanding' of the process of salvation. Nevertheless, one can easily read and understand the vows that create the binding covenant of marriage during the wedding ceremony. Thus, one *may* observe and understand 'the roadmap' of salvation. And, if one is taking a journey and needs assistance arriving at the destination, all one needs must do is follow the map.

“It is by grace you have been saved through faith...not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). A man is sitting on an old-fashioned wagon, which is harnessed to a team of horses. The horses want to go forward, but the man holds the reins, preventing forward motion. He is consciously restraining the horses. Then the man *chooses* to slacken the reins. What happens? The wagon begins moving forward. Is the man 'doing any work' to cause the forward motion? No. All he's doing is sitting on the seat. But did the man play a role? Absolutely: He chose to 'let the horses have their head.'

This word picture *very accurately* describes how Biblical faith 'works,' and the role that it plays in a person's salvation. (The word commonly translated “hold” or “suppress” in Romans 1:18 implies that the object *wants* to go in a certain direction and the person is consciously preventing its motion.) When someone asks 'how' salvation happens, the Church has a tendency to say, 'by faith!' 'by faith!' 'by faith!' Yes – but – it's actually “*by grace...through* faith.” Is faith crucial? Absolutely. Is that all that the man has to contribute? Yes. *There are no works* that have to be added before one is firmly established on Step 2.

But the word 'faith' is like the word 'sit.' I can sit in a chair. I can sit on the grass. I can sit in a wagon. I can 'sit' in any one of a number of places – and in each instance, I will be in a different location. The solitary statement, “I have faith” doesn't say *anything* about whether or not a person is saved. Why? Because *what you have faith in* (where you are sitting, if you will) determines whether or not you are saved. Lots of people 'have faith' in Buddhism; they are 'setting their eternal fate' in that set of truth-claims. Are they saved? No. Lots of people 'have faith' in Islam; they are 'setting their eternal fate' in *that* set of truth-

claims. There are a whole passel of truth-claims out there that people ‘put their faith in’ (a whole lot of places to sit), but those claims are false; they are lies. They will not save a soul. Only the Truth will save.

“It is by grace you have been saved through faith...not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Is Biblical faith important? Absolutely. Is it crucial? Of course. Which place you choose to sit will determine whether your chair is the One that spends eternity in Heaven, or whether it spends eternity in hell. So yes, Biblical faith is imperative. But “it is by grace you have been saved.” The roadmap is saying this: God’s grace did all the work – all the work – necessary to create ‘a vehicle’ capable of transporting a person from the condition of ‘unsaved’ to the condition of ‘saved.’

But there are a lot of places ‘to sit’ out there. Faith *chooses* the place to sit. If a person chooses to put their faith in the Truth, then he is sitting on Jesus’ lap: “I Am The Way, The Truth, and The Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me” (John 14:6). Then, being seated on the wagon seat, we *choose* to ‘give the horses their head.’ *That* is Biblical faith: *Not restrain* the horses. The result is that the wagon goes forward: God’s will happens.

Recall from earlier, Biblical faith = we simply submit to the truth that the evidence demands. It starts with the truth that God exists, that we are accountable to Him as Creator. And that is a *faith-based* submission (i.e., faith is what enables men to take physical evidence and draw a conclusion about a non-physical reality). Thus, faith is what takes a man from standing on the floor up to Step 1. This ‘faith-step’ from the floor to Step 1 is a submission to God’s will. God *wants* men to be saved, and they have to take this first step in order to be saved.

Step 2 is, again, a simple submission to the Truth that God has revealed. And again, it is *faith-based* because it involves taking physical evidence and drawing a conclusion about (what is, this side of Heaven) a non-physical reality. The Person of Jesus stands before the sinner and the evidence demands that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; a man must put his faith in Jesus in order to be forgiven and saved. *That’s* God’s will. And again, *faith* submits to the truth revealed, and allows God to have what He wants – namely, for the individual to be born again.

Please notice that to go to Step 1, and then to go to Step 2, the man is not doing any *work*. Biblical faith is ‘simply’ obedient submission to God’s will. God shows the man the truth, and Biblical faith ‘simply’ submits to the conclusion that the evidence demands. Please also notice: Although ‘simple’ does not mean ‘easy,’ it *does* mean that even young children can be saved.<sup>1</sup>

*Our will plays a role in our salvation*, but God did – and continues to do – all the work. All we have to do is ‘let the horses have their head;’ *not restrain* the truth God shows us. God’s power alone makes the wagon go forward. The guy on the seat is just sitting up there; he’s not getting out and pushing. Grace provided the wagon. Jesus is the wagon. God didn’t *have to* provide us with a means of salvation. He chose to do it, because He loves us. That’s why it’s called grace – unmerited favor. If you ‘merit’ something, it means you earned

it; you deserve it (like a paycheck). We don't *earn* God's love for us, any more than the mewling infant *earns* his earthly parents' love.

Does faith end on Step 2? No. It gets better. A wedding is just a beginning. Two people do not get married, and then go their separate ways; it is the antithesis of the desire of true love. They got married so that they could be together. They sit together on the wagon seat, the wagon starts moving forward, and never stops. The journey has just begun.

Step 3 is, 'after every wedding comes a marriage.' I hesitated to write that, because in today's culture, it's a negative, sad statement. Unfortunately, few people have had the privilege of observing a *good* marriage. Is there such a thing as a perfect marriage on this sin-cursed earth? By no means. One sinful person has enough problems. Put that one person together with another sinful person, and put them in the same house? Only a fool would anticipate perfection and the total absence of conflict.

But for those of us who have been blessed to see good marriages, the evidence is obvious: The costs and frustrations are there, but the benefits and blessings are myriad. It's oh-so-worth-it. A good marriage is, arguably, the most spectacular blessing on earth – which is why God picked that analogy for Christ and the Church.

After initial salvation, Lordship means obeying God. On a practical level, this means: There are areas and issues where He defined the Truth, and we are obligated to accept and defend this Truth. The Word of God contains a lot of black-and-white definitions: This is true...this is lie... Incidentally, every *command* is a truth-claim: "Thou shall not steal" defines *the truth* that it is best for us if we do not steal. When God made the rules (law), what He was doing was expressing the truth about what would be eternally best for us. He was also expressing His own character and nature. Thus, when we look at the command, "Thou shall not steal," the following statements are all implicit: 1) God does not steal; 2) God knows that stealing would be harmful to ourselves and/or others; 3) God loves us, and wants what is eternally best for us; 4) God is seeking to provide a hedge of protection for us – and the command is designed to keep us inside the hedge. A lot of people think that God was being a kill-joy when He wrote the commands; nothing could be farther from the truth.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). God's desire is for our good, our benefit, our protection, and our joy. That reality is obscured by the fact that we live on a sin-cursed earth, by the fact that a proper perspective is eternal (not in-this-life-alone), and by the fact that God does not care just about me, but about everyone.

Step 3 is the faith that chooses to believe what God says for the rest of our lives. Our choice to remain inside His hedge of protection is the expression of that faith. But it's more than adherence to the black-and-white truths of the Biblical text. The Bible is the Word of God. Jesus is also the Word of God. The Book reveals the black-and-white basics. The Person desires a relationship. A lot more happens inside a marriage than 'the basics' that were defined by the vows on the wedding day. Granted, those vows (the written Word) are

the over-arching principles that ‘define everything.’ But the fleshing out of those details is couple-specific. God desires a relationship with each person on an individual level.

Notice that, although this article ‘divides’ Biblical faith into three parts, or steps, if you will, the basic definition of *what faith is* does not change: The individual knows what God is revealing, submits their will to that truth, and then acts/thinks/believes accordingly. Notice how acts/think/believes is combined: Biblically, the word “believe” is a whole lot more than just thinking something might be true, or saying with words that you agree. Biblically, “to believe” is to say, “I accept this as absolutely true, and I will die standing for and defending it before I compromise it;” Biblically, it is impossible to divorce ‘belief’ from actions (i.e., the way one lives day-in and day-out).

This Biblical concept of ‘belief results in action/obedience’ and ‘faith results in action/obedience’ is beautifully obvious in the original (Greek) New Testament language: The word that is translated ‘believe’ in John 3:16 is derived from the word translated ‘faith’ in Romans 1 (and described in verse 20) (see Strong’s #4100, #4102). It gets better...

The word that is translated ‘faith’ in Romans 1 is derived from a root that means, ‘to persuade’ (see Strong’s #4102) and, if it is genuine (as opposed to ‘false faith,’ which the Bible also references), it precipitates action. Meaning: A man evaluates the evidence, and is *persuaded by the evidence* to concede that God exists (the Arrowhead Parable). The result is that he *acts* on what he knows. This action is either unbelief (the rejection of Jesus as Savior), or belief (the acceptance of the gift of salvation). Notice that both belief and unbelief are actions – and the root that distinguishes them is *Lordship*.

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9) – **Lordship**. “All men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20) – God has revealed the truth to all men, and wants them ‘to give the horses their head’ (i.e., submit to the Truth He has revealed) – **faith**. “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not of yourselves, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9) – God steps into the life of a person who has submitted his free will – **grace**. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes on Him will never perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16) – **belief**.

God did all the work. We can not ‘do’ – in the sense of earn, or merit – a single thing to ‘get salvation.’ *But we do have a responsibility in the process:* We contribute the only thing that God can not contribute into the equation: Our free will. To believe or not to believe – that is our choice. And it will determine our eternal fate.

It may be tempting to say, “This ‘belief’ thing is too nebulous. I wish God would just say, ‘do this,’ and ‘do that.’ Why didn’t God do it that way? One reason: because then, men like the thief on the cross would be without hope. That man didn’t have time to do anything before he died. He couldn’t get baptized. He didn’t even have the use of his own hands and feet. But because belief was the only requirement – *that* he could do. God is not willing that anyone, not even one, should perish. If there were a single requirement beyond simple belief,

then Heaven's door would be shut to some who would otherwise have the opportunity to enter.

There is another reason salvation is not works-based, and Paul clearly spells it out in Ephesians 2:9: "...lest any many should boast." If we had to – or could – ‘perform’ (in the sense of merit) a part of the salvation process, then a man would have the right to say, “God let me into Heaven because *I did* such-and-such.” No. God does not have favorites; He treats every one of His children the same. We are all on equal footing, and no one will be allowed to boast. Every single one of us will have the exact same words to explain our presence in Heaven: “God let me into Heaven because of what *Jesus did* for me.”

Thus, Biblical salvation is not works-based. “Work” carries the notion of, “I did thus-and-such, and therefore I deserve to be paid.” That philosophy will never open Heaven's door.

Biblical salvation is faith-based – but faith does not “end at the altar.” We kneel before Jesus as Lord, and He declares, “Teleo – It is finished!” (John 19:30). Our salvation is purchased and bestowed; the Greek word conveys the sense of a debt being paid in full. But that is *just the beginning* of our faith-based relationship.

It is instructional to understand that, in Jewish, Biblical-times culture, an engaged couple was “betrothed,” and a betrothal carried all the commitments of a marriage covenant. What a betrothal lacked was the aspect of physical intimacy; that privilege followed the wedding ceremony. Jesus is described as the Bridegroom, and the Church as His Bride. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is yet to come; that event is prophesied in Revelation (Revelation 19:7). Then, the dwelling of God shall be with men (Revelation 21:3). But until then, our status is ‘betrothed.’

Understand, the betrothal status binds *both* individuals: We, the Church, live by faith in the Son of God (Galatians 2:20); we honor, cherish, and obey Him; we are set apart, holy. And, while our commitment is to Him, His is to us: He lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25); even though we are yet imperfect vessels of clay, He looks forward and sees us perfect, holy, and righteous – the condition that we shall be at the marriage supper (Ephesians 5:27, Revelation 19:7-8).

The ‘finishing touch’ of the marriage analogy has to do with the Holy Spirit. It is written in Ephesians 1:14 that He is the “guarantee” (or “earnest”) of our redemption: that which was given to us as evidence of the promised Marriage. The word in New Testament Greek which is translated “guarantee” is used in modern Greek to mean – guess what? – an engagement ring (Our Daily Bread, 7/13/99).

### *Part 3*

## **Application of Biblical Faith**

Another important aspect of understanding the times involves making a clear distinction between Judeo-Christian Truth and the lies of false religions. The reader is encouraged to mentally draw two boxes, with a clear dividing line between them: Judeo-Christian Truth goes in one box, and all false religions go into the other. (And, contrary to relativism, nothing is allowed to set on the floor between them.)

Now, you are standing in front of the two boxes, and someone asks, “What do you *believe*?” Remember, ‘belief’ (where a person sets his faith) is defined by what a person does, and how they act. If a person has integrity, what they say they believe will match how they live their lives (integrity → integrated → thoughts, words, actions all match each other). However, when it comes to determining what a person *really believes*, all that really matters is how they *live*. Hopefully, what a person says he believes matches how he lives – but if it doesn’t, the truth regarding what he believes is defined by his actions, and the words are empty and meaningless.

Witness James 1:18: “I will show you my faith by my works.”

Now go back to the boxes. The Christian is asked what he believes, and he points to the box of Judeo-Christian truth-claims. The Christian says, “I *have faith* that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Remember, this is an evidence-based, rational, conclusion. The physical creation testifies to God’s existence as Creator, and our accountability to Him. Because it is sin-cursed, the creation also testifies to the man regarding the brokenness of his spiritual state. The Holy Spirit convicts all men of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8). Man recognizes that he has an eternal problem, and so when he is told that God has provided the Solution through Jesus, the wise man accepts God’s terms, and is born again.

Notice: The entire process – from the existence of God, to the sinfulness of man, to the decision to accept the resurrection-based proof of Jesus’ deity and sacrificial sufficiency – the entire process just described is evidence-based, and rational. Meaning: Judeo-Christian faith is evidence-based, and rational. It is not a blind leap.

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The repeat of that paragraph was not a typo. The reality described is crucial.

Now, let us go back to the two boxes again. A member of a false religion – Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, a so-called ‘christian’ cult – is asked the same question: “What do you believe?” He points to the box of lies. Now, watch this, because it is a little tricky, but oh so VERY important to grasp... The member of a false religion says, “I *have faith* that what I believe will provide me with eternal security.” Is that a faith supported by evidence? No.

Lies have no evidence to back them up. On the contrary, evidence disproves a lie – *that’s what makes it a lie*. And yet, there stands an individual who is determined to believe the truth-claims of a false religion. He ‘has faith’ in that false religion. But his faith is not evidence-based. On the contrary, his faith is *anti-evidence*, or *in spite of* the evidence. That – that! – individual is *making a blind leap*. Thus, the adherent to a false religion is putting his brain on the shelf and saying, “I don’t care what the evidence says, I’m just going to believe what I want to believe.”

It gets confusing, doesn’t it? ☺. But, do you see? *It all goes back to the value of evidence*, and the fact that evidence is what determines truth. The Kantian notion that ‘faith’ is ‘a blind leap’ does *not* describe Biblical faith, but it *does* describe every ‘faith’ in a lie.

“But...???...Even in Christianity, is there not a place where ‘faith’ goes against physical evidence? I mean, it was ‘by faith’ that Joshua marched around Jericho, blew a trumpet, and the walls fell down (Hebrews 11:30) – and that’s contrary to what the evidence suggests should happen. So...???...where is the intersection of Biblical faith and the supernatural?” It is a good point, and an important question. Observe the following quote from Charles Spurgeon, who begins by quoting Jeremiah 32:17:

“‘Ah, Lord God, behold, Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for Thee.’ (Jeremiah 32:17)

“At the very time when the Chaldeans surrounded Jerusalem, and when the sword, famine, and pestilence had desolated the land, Jeremiah was commanded by God to purchase a field, and have the deed of transfer legally sealed and witnessed. This was a strange purchase for a rational man to make. Prudence could not justify it, for it was buying with scarcely a probability that the person purchasing could ever enjoy the possession. But it was enough for Jeremiah that his God had bidden him, for well he knew that God will be justified of all His children. He reasoned thus: ‘Ah, Lord God! Thou canst make this plot of ground of use to me; Thou canst rid this land of these oppressors; Thou canst make me yet sit under my vine and my fig-tree in the heritage which I have bought; for Thou didst make the heavens and the earth, and there is nothing too hard for Thee.’ *This gave a majesty to the early saints, that they dared to do at God’s command things which carnal reason would condemn*. Whether it be a Noah who is to build a ship on dry land, an Abraham who is to offer up his only son, or a Moses who is to despise the treasures of Egypt, or a Joshua who is to besiege Jericho seven days, using no weapons but the blasts of rams’ horns, *they all act upon God’s command*, contrary to the dictates of carnal reason; and the Lord gives them a rich reward as the result of their obedient faith.” (Spurgeon, C.H., Morning & Evening, p.m., June 30, emphasis added)

God’s Word is replete with instructions that are justified by physical evidence: For example, the principle of sowing and reaping. God gives men many instructions that fit comfortably within the scope of natural law: Watch, pray, worship, share the Gospel, serve one another, etc. *But every once in a while*, we receive a command which betrays the dictates of natural law: “Go march around Jericho, and then shout.” At that point, carnal (worldly)

thinking says, “You’ve got to be kidding!” But the Christian who has tested, proved, lived and experienced God’s faithfulness – the person who, like Jeremiah, knows God’s voice – responds, “*That is the instruction of a God whose voice I know, and evidence from the past convinces me that I ought to trust Him.*”

Thus, when one stands at the intersection of Biblical faith and the supernatural, has evidence disappeared? By no means! The decision to obey God’s command is always rational, because it is *always* evidence-based. But when the command involves the supernatural, the evidence that supplies the necessary confident assurance is in the past.

The key to unraveling the confusion, as Spurgeon highlights, is that Christians only act contrary to carnal reason when they know that the command is from God Himself. Moreover – and this is critical – acting contrary to ‘carnal reason’ *is not the same* as acting contrary to reason. The difference is that the world (those relying upon carnal reason) is determined to reject the historical evidence with regard to God’s interaction with men.

It all goes back to the over-arching definition of Biblical faith, which we have already established: The headwaters of Biblical faith are *knowing what God instructed* (i.e., His will), and then obeying. Most of the time, the action of faith relies upon the evidence of natural law. But sometimes, it relies upon the evidence of history. Thus, even when the command from God to the Christian involves the supernatural (or the future), Biblical faith (i.e., a level of trust that dictates action) is not divorced from evidence. Rather, it is relying upon evidence that carnal men are determined to ignore. This willful ignorance is the world’s inadequate excuse for condemning the expression of Biblical faith as irrational.

When one has a grasp on what Biblical faith really is, Hebrews 11 makes sense. It begins with the definition of faith from Romans 1. (Compare Romans 1:20 with Hebrews 11:3 & 6; notice Hebrews 11:1 in the KJV). But whereas Romans 1 goes on to describe what happens when people restrain faith-based action, Hebrews 11 goes on to describe what happens when people submit to faith-based action. Hebrews 11 begins this description by listing people who, ‘by faith’ *accomplished great and amazing things*. They knew what God commanded, and they did it. But verses 36-37 lists people who, ‘by faith’ *were killed*. They knew what God commanded, and they did it.

What’s the point? ‘By faith’ (i.e., faith-based action) **has everything to do with obedience to what God commands**. ‘Sufficient’ Biblical faith **is not what controls whether the earthly outcome will be ‘good’** (by the world’s standards). Our culture thinks that ‘faith’ is what forces a positive outcome. Not true. Biblical faith *is not* – is not! – “If I just believe hard enough, the outcome will always be positive and painless.” Spurgeon writes, “*Presumption* boasts, ‘If the sea be before you, march into it and expect a miracle.’ But Faith listens...[and] hears God” (Morning & Evening July 24, emphasis original).

Read Hebrews 11:29: “By faith the people [of Israel] crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned” (RSV). The waters remained parted for Israel, because God told them to go across. The Egyptians were drowned because they were trying to do something contrary to God’s instructions.



There is a temptation to think, “The Israelites just put their brains on the shelf and took a blind leap of trust, whereas the Egyptians ‘didn’t believe enough.’” *Nothing could be farther from the truth.* God commanded Israel to cross. God did not command the Egyptians to cross. And, in fact, the Egyptians had been commanded to let Israel go, and release them from slavery. The Egyptians were doing exactly the opposite of God’s command when they stepped between those walls of water. Thus, Israel crossed by faith; they were being obedient to what God commanded. The Egyptians attempted to cross in an act of anti-faith; they were acting contrary to God’s command.

Yes, Biblical faith sometimes motivates a person to do things that carnal reason condemns. *But it never motivates a person to do anything that reason condemns.* Why? Because reason will always side with evidence, and the evidence demands that Biblical truth-claims have veracity (i.e., are, in-fact, true).

Sometimes, a well-intentioned Christian will say, “I don’t care what the evidence says, I believe the Bible.” Please, hear my voice, which is gentle: Does the reader see that such a statement is actually not Biblical? God places a very high value on evidence, and therefore the Christian is obligated to do the same. Realize: The statement, “I don’t care what the evidence says, I believe...” is what the adherent to *a false religion* is forced to say. But the Truth needs must never – ought to never – dismiss the value of evidence. On the contrary, Truth *stands* upon the foundation of evidence.<sup>2</sup>

Evidence is the Truth’s best friend. Evidence is a lie’s worst enemy.

Because our culture is relativistic, and very hostile to the notion of absolute Truth, the culture defines all faith as blind-leap-ism. The distinction between the two boxes (‘truth’ and ‘lies’) is blurred. The Truth in the Judeo-Christian box gets mingled with the lies box, and people try to pretend that the stuff in the lies box can be ‘true,’ even though it is contradicted by the evidence.

The Church faces a challenge: Kantian blind-leap-ism has infiltrated Christian thinking. Proof: Well-intentioned Christians do not understand what Biblical faith really is – many think it is ‘put-my-brain-on-the-shelf-and-take-a-blind-leap.’ Many well-intentioned Christians make statements like the one mentioned earlier: “I don’t care what the evidence says...” Many well-intentioned Christians think that Kant’s Wall stands: they think that ‘faith’ and ‘science’ are ‘opposites.’

How do we solve the problem? What does the application of true Biblical faith look like?

1. Learn to discern the difference between evidence and interpretation. Where does the evidence end, and where does the interpretation begin? It is a very important line. Why? Because a person has to know what the evidence demands, as opposed to what is merely an interpretation. An interpretation may be correct, but one is allowed to reject an interpretation, without doing violence to value of evidence. What kind of evidence am I speaking of? Both

physical evidence, and the Biblical text. Physical evidence carries authority. For the person who chooses to submit to the Bible, the text of Scripture carries authority. With regard to both types of evidence, where does the evidence end, and where does the interpretation begin? Finding that line with regard to physical evidence means finding the place where the data ends and the story-telling about the data begins. Finding that line with the Bible is based on the fact that words have meaning, and a book's author writes with the intent to convey meaning. The Author's (i.e., God's) intended meaning is *evidence*, and anything that 'goes beyond' what the text itself justifies is interpretation.

2. Value truth. This is politically incorrect in a relativistic culture.

3. Appreciate the gravity of lies. This is even more politically incorrect. In our culture, the only thing worse than saying, "This is absolutely true" is saying, "That is absolutely a lie."

4. Always remember: Truth is never irrational, and is therefore the only thing worth dying for.

5. Practical: Stand for Truth, no matter the cost. Teach it. Defend it. No matter the cost. And what enables the Christian to do this with unwavering confidence is the certainty that comes from knowing that the evidence unflinchingly supports the Truth. When you get down to the nitty-gritty, that's what the Bible is all about.

Perhaps the most important part of the long Spurgeon quote is: "They all act upon God's command." Christians mistakenly think that faith is a crowbar that they can use to move God into accomplishing *their* will. Exactly the opposite is true: Faith is obediently submitting to *God's* will. God says to Joshua, "March." Joshua marches, and the walls fall down. God says to Abraham: "Take only Isaac up the hill on the way to the sacrifice." Abraham obeys, and a Ram is found. God says to a Godly Grandmother today, "Pray." She prays, and as she watches, miracles happen in her family. God says to every one of His children, "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). From the pages of Scripture up until this very day, people obey, and are martyred. And God keeps His promise. Thus we read in Hebrews 11 that it was *by faith* that God accomplished great and noteworthy acts through some, and it was *by faith* that others died.

"My heart's desire is to accomplish great things for God." Good! Such desire brings joy to God's heart, for His heart's desire is to accomplish great things through you! Faith is not nebulous, mystical, ooh-ahh, I-don't-really-know-if-this-is-going-to-work, hopeful thinking. Faith is down-to-earth, black-and-white, obedience to what God said to do.

"But I don't know what God said." Get in the Word. "My sheep hear My voice" (John 10:27). "His sheep know His voice" (John 10:4). Are You His sheep? He wants to speak to you.

There is a lesson to be learned from the wisdom of Solomon: When he completed all that God had instructed regarding the building of the Temple, *then* the Lord spoke to him

again (I Kings 9:1-2). Sometimes, we do not hear God's voice of direction because He is waiting on us to complete what He already said. It has been said that "Bible" is an acronym for "Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth." There are a lot of 'basics' contained in the pages of Scripture. It is good to desire 'more advanced' challenges, like that of Joshua, or David, or Jeremiah. But we prove ourselves trustworthy in the small things first (Luke 19:17).

Gideon was obediently threshing wheat when God showed up and promoted him to military leader. Obediently? Yes: He was providing for his family (I Timothy 5:8). Often, Biblical faith does not look spectacular in the world's eyes. *That does not make it any less precious in God's sight.* "But all I did was..." God does not look at the size of the accomplishment; He looks at the heart that obediently did what it was instructed. A parent instructs a 5-year-old to clean his room. The task is completed well, and in a timely manner. Is the parent disappointed because the child did not clean the Empire State building? Of course not. The parent is pleased by the child's obedient willingness to do as much as he was able to do.

"But I can't do much." A wise man once told his son: "If God calls you to be a ditch-digger, you'd have to step down to be President."

"But I want to do more." Good! You are not plagued by the immature laziness that is reproved in Hebrews 5:11-14.

"I messed up too badly with God's last instruction. He won't speak to me again." Read one of my favorite truths: "And the Word of God came to Jonah *the second time*" (Jonah 3:1, emphasis added). And it is noteworthy what He said: Exactly the same thing He said the first time. It is also noteworthy what He accomplished through Jonah: The salvation of a whole city. You see, God knew that the Ninevites would repent, given the chance. And so, He was willing to move Heaven and Earth to make sure that an evangelist showed up on their city's doorstep. The big fish wasn't just for Jonah's sake; it was also for the Ninevites.

"I can't act in faith because my heart isn't right." Wrong. Go back to Jonah again, and read the end of the account: Jonah acted *in faith* – he obediently did what God commanded. And then he became angry when the city repented and turned to God (Jonah 4:1)! That was not the heart God wanted in His evangelist. Nevertheless, God used him. God knows we are all flawed, and wants to work through us anyway. His ability to do that is not prohibited by our imperfections. The only real obstacle to His ability to use us is our lack of obedient faith.

What is the key to obedient faith? Willingness and ability. Our willingness is simply a matter of choice. It's not always easy, but it is simple. Our ability is based on knowing *what is* the right choice – and this is founded on knowing what is true, and what is a lie. This is what Jesus prayed for us when He said, "Sanctify them through thy truth" (John 17:17). "The truth is the sanctifier... We only progress in sound living as we progress in sound understanding... Do not say of any error, 'It is a mere matter of opinion.' No man indulges

an error in judgment without sooner or later tolerating an error in practice.” (Spurgeon, C.H., Morning & Evening, 7-4)

Make Truth the goal; love Him with all your mind, heart, soul, and strength. *That* is Biblical faith. God will use it, and it will therefore impact your world.

S.D.G.

### *End Notes*

<sup>1</sup>Once Little Buford reaches the age of accountability, his conscience enables him to understand that he is in trouble, and has to ask God’s forgiveness for his sin. When is this? Once he knows *shame* as a result of physical nakedness (Genesis 3:7-8). Children who die before this point are taken to Heaven (II Samuel 12:23). Important: Intellectually understanding that you don’t have any clothes on, as opposed to feeling shame, *are not the same thing*. Adam and Eve were adults in full possession of intelligence; they knew they did not have clothes on as soon as they were created (Genesis 2:25). In Genesis 3:7, when the text says that “they knew that they were naked,” the word translated “naked” is not the same word as in Genesis 2:25. As a result of sin, Adam and Eve became ‘spiritually naked’ (i.e., unrighteous), and the shame they felt as a result of physical nakedness testified to them of their fallen spiritual condition. It is very relevant that they did not hide from *each other*; they hid from God (Genesis 3:7-8). Even in a sinful state, physical nakedness inside a Godly marriage covenant ought not to induce shame. *That* is the God-designed grace which points to Biblical salvation as the Way of fixing our spiritual shame, where Jesus is the Bridegroom and the Church is the Bride.

<sup>2</sup>I am *not* advocating presuppositionalism here; Biblical truth-claims are just as vulnerable to evidence as any other truth-claims. Having said that, it is the responsibility of the evaluator to discern between evidence and interpretation. A Biblical truth-claim may conceivably be negated on the basis of evidence, but the Biblical text is not obligated to admit to a fault on the basis of a particular interpretation of that evidence.

### *A closing note from the Author*

At this point, one may be tempted to comment, “The roadmap for Biblical salvation was laid out, but the age of the earth was never mentioned – so, it’s not that big a deal.” The first word of the next sentence is VERY important: Although the age of the earth was never explicitly mentioned in this article, it is accurate to say that, if the earth really is more than several thousand years old, the unsaved person has a *logically legitimate* reason to never kneel on Step 2. (Please see Disk 4 of the Biblical Creation Science DVD set.)

This is not to say that the individual has a valid excuse for rejecting Jesus, but rather that he has a rationaly defensible reason for doing so. In other words, if the earth *really is* “old” (i.e., if the fossil record is a result of processes other than the global flood of Noah), the Bible is *not* absolutely true. And that is a statement based on evidence. Christians don’t like it, because they are scared to admit that, if there is evidence that contradicts the Bible, then the Bible is not true. It’s easier – but not rational – to just say, “Well, I’m going to believe that it’s true no matter what the evidence says.” As mentioned earlier, *that’s* what pagans and cults do. But *God’s* standard for truth is that it is evidence-based. That’s what makes it rationally defensible. And yes, that is also what makes it vulnerable.

If the earth really is “old,” then the Bible is nothing more than another religious suggestion book that men can reject without fear of consequences. *That* is why Truth Plus Love Creation Ministries was born: We seek to show the non-Christian that he does not have to commit intellectual suicide in order to embrace a 6,000-year-old earth and, as a result, he is accountable to the truth-claims of the Bible. We seek to show the Christian that not only *can* he defend a young earth, but (for the sake of himself and others, especially non-Christians) he is *obligated* to do so.