

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

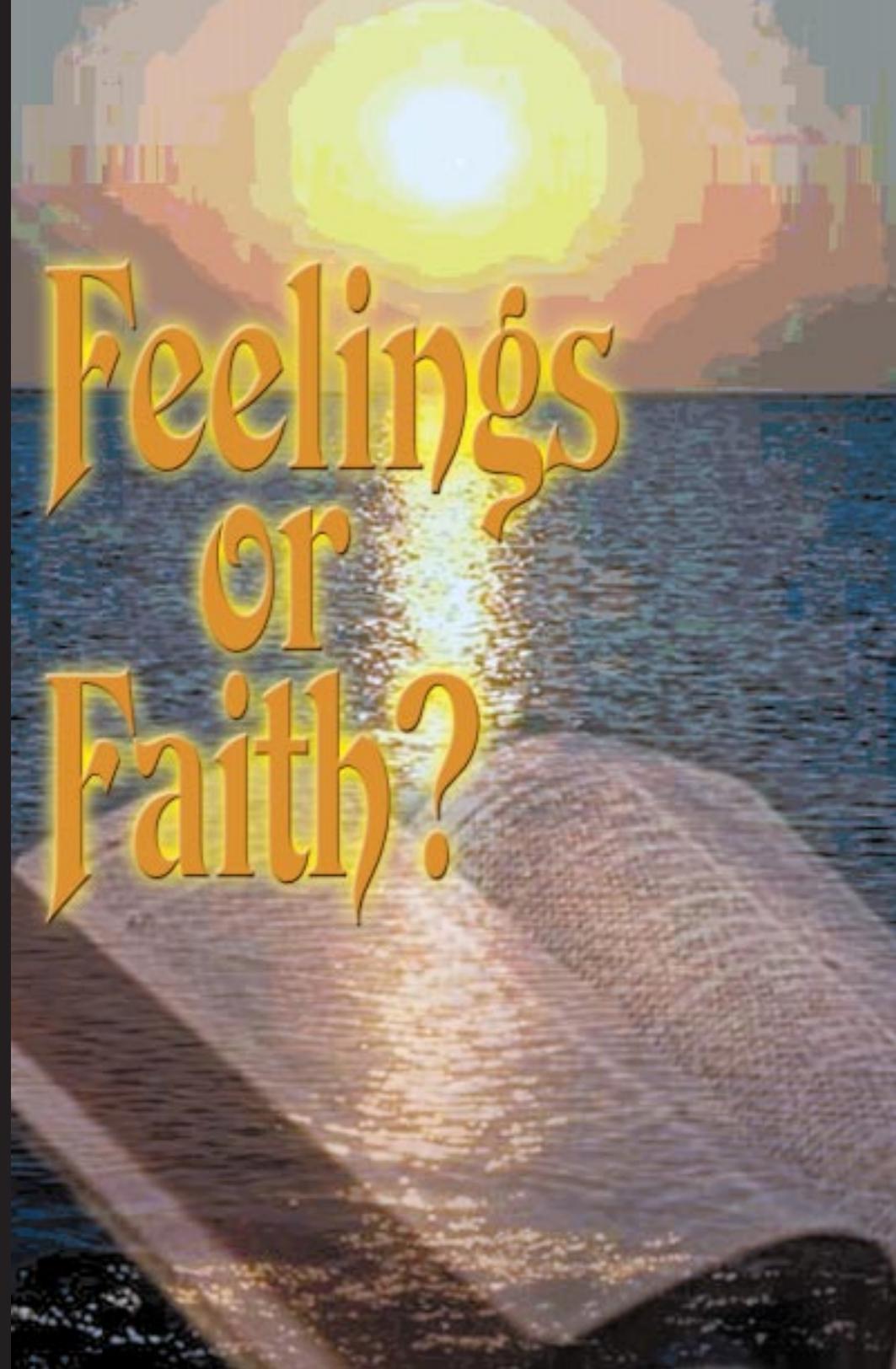
Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,



An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

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Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

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Feelings or Faith?

Every summer thousands of Christian teenagers return home from youth camps and mission trips “on fire” for God. The majority of these teens stay emotionally high for about two weeks.

Others will actually make it through the summer flying high, and a few even make it through the first semester of school. But eventually, most of these well-meaning Christians fall by the emotional wayside; guilty and defeated, believing, in hind sight, that either their experience wasn’t real or they weren’t sincere enough to sustain the emotions that accompanied their experience. What a tragedy that no one tells them their feelings have nothing to do with walking with God.

We all love the wonderful feelings that come when we are on the mountaintop with God. But the depth of our relationship with God, and the life we live in Christ, are not about feelings. We are emotional beings because God created us that way, and emotions are wonderful God-given blessings. Feelings do matter and should never be trivialized, but Christians who put an over-emphasis on their emotions or allow their emotions to be the basis for their relationship with God are headed for trouble in every area of their lives. Just as it is unhealthy to deny or repress our feelings, it is equally unhealthy to live our lives, or make decisions, based on how we feel.

Too many Christians make the mistake of using the way they feel as a measuring stick for their relationship with God. If they are “on fire,” or emotionally high, then they walk in obedience with God. But as soon as the feelings are gone,

they assume they have lost something and are no longer “right with God.” So, guilt and discouragement set in, and before long, they quit walking with God. What they don’t understand, is first, it is impossible and unrealistic for anyone to be emotionally up all the time.

Secondly, God never intended for an emotional experience to be the basis of

our relationship with Him or the object of our faith. It is very easy to fall into the trap of trusting our emotions and not God—of seeking the good feelings and not the Father. Mature believers know the Christian life is a life of obedience, a day-in-day-out obedience, regardless of how we feel. Christians who are overly dependent on their feelings have difficulty living consistent lives and usually struggle with doubt and depression. Here’s why:

When God created us, it was His perfect plan that our spirits, controlled by His Spirit, would control our minds, wills, and emotions. Our minds were to be full of God’s truths and our emotions were to flow from those truths.

...the depth of our relationship with God, and the life we live in Christ, are not about feelings.

But many Christians have rejected God's way of doing things, and instead make decisions based on their emotions and not on the facts of God's Word. This is the major cause of emotional instability among Christians today and the reason most are not able to maintain a mature, consistent walk with God. Satan attacks our minds, emotions, and wills by putting thoughts in our minds that cause us to feel and to act on things that aren't true. Satan starts this process by distorting our belief systems. This is the way it works:

- We each have a belief system.
- That belief system determines what we think about.
- What we think about determines how we feel.
- How we feel determines the choices we make.

Putting it simply, our feelings and the choices we make in life are nothing more than belated announcements of our thoughts. If our belief

system is not based on the facts of the Word of God, and our thoughts are not God's thoughts, then our feelings will be distorted, and we will make choices contrary to God's purpose and plan for our lives. Our belief system is the most important thing about us, because it will determine everything in our lives. If we believe something, we will see and hear it whether it is true or not. Where does this all-important belief system come from?

Before we were really old enough to think for ourselves, our thought processes were dictated by those around us. Other people taught us what they believed to be true. Eventually, these "truths" became convictions about ourselves, other people, and the world in general. These basic convictions then became our patterns of thinking. As we were growing up, the people around us taught us some important things about life:

- who we are
- who to trust
- what is good and bad
- what we are worth

This information became the basis for our belief system through which we evaluate everything in life. If the people who were significant in our lives at an early age didn't help us develop a belief system that lined up with the truth of God's Word, then we will have faulty, defective belief systems.

It is possible to have been reared by parents who loved us yet still feel unloved if those parents, for whatever reason, were unable to communicate their love in a way we could understand. Dr. H. Ross Campbell says, "Most parents love their children, that is not the problem. The problem is that most parents have no idea how to make their children 'feel' loved." Parents can mean well, but unless they understand their own faulty belief systems and allow God to change them, parents will parent their children exactly the same way they were parented. This style of parenting may very well fail to realize the importance of meeting the following emotional need:

- The need to feel unconditionally loved and accepted.

- The need to feel valuable and capable.
- The need to feel that we are not alone.

These needs do not change throughout life. When they are met, the result will be a person who is secure and confident and who has a healthy sense of self-esteem. One who is able to cope with the pressure and stress of life. On the other hand, a person who was raised believing there were strings attached to his parents' love and acceptance will grow up feeling very insecure in every relationship of life. All too often, this insecurity will follow him into the salvation experience because he assumes God's love is conditional, as well. This kind of Christian believes that if he performs well, God will accept him, but if he fails, God will reject him.

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Christians who feel unacceptable to God may accept Jesus as Savior and then spend the rest of their lives trying to get Jesus to accept them. They will find it difficult to believe God could love and accept them unconditionally, so they feel unworthy and unsaved, even if they know the Bible assures them of their salvation. They have a discrepancy between what they know to be true and what they feel is true. Anytime there are unmet emotional needs in our lives, our feelings will always seem to be more real, so we will conduct our lives on the basis of feelings rather than facts. This will cause us to always distort the truth, so the facts will agree with our emotions.

Satan tricks us into believing that if we feel a certain way, then it must be true. About 20 years ago a song called You Light Up My Life was very popular. Even though it is a very sweet song, it contains a phrase that is a very dangerous lie. It says, "it can't be wrong, when it feels so right." What that song is trying to sell us is if something "feels" good, then it must "be" good. Many of us have used that same faulty reasoning to determine that if something "feels" bad, then it must be bad. Or in this case, "I feel unsaved, therefore I am unsaved." We judge how saved we are by how saved we feel.

Feelings can cause us to soar to the highest of heights, or they can cause us to plummet to the deepest of depths. Because of this, feelings are often a lousy barometer of reality. In any given week, and even sometimes on any given day, we will experience a wide variety of emotions. When things are going well, we can experience great happiness and contentment. But when things take a turn for the worse, our emotions can plunge us into doubt, frustration, fear, and anger. As our feelings change, the way we feel about our relationship with God often changes, too. This is a tragedy because this is no way to determine our acceptance before God. The Scripture promises if we are saved, God's acceptance of us is not based on what we do, or don't do, but only on His unconditional love for us and the price that Jesus paid on the cross to redeem us.

In Ephesians 1:6, the Bible says that Christians are "accepted in the Beloved." We are accepted because we are "in Christ" (the Beloved). Here is an illustration of what it means to be "in Christ" and to have Christ in us: Take a cup of boiling water and put a tea bag inside. Instantly the tea becomes one with the water and the water becomes one with the tea. The longer the tea bag stays in the cup, the stronger

the tea becomes. But, from the first second the bag hits the water, the two are one and can never be separated again. It would be impossible to accept the tea and reject the water, or to accept the water and reject the tea. If we have been saved, our lives are like that tea bag and Jesus is like the boiling water. We were placed in Him and He is in us for eternity. God can NEVER reject us because He could never reject His Son. We are "accepted in the Beloved!"

There is another verse that explains this truth and it is Colossians 2:14, "having canceled the CERTIFICATE OF DEBT with its regulations that were against us and that stood opposed to us, He took it away (removed forever), nailing it to the Cross." Today the term "certificate of

debt" is not one that we are familiar with, but if we had lived in Paul's day, this verse would have painted a powerful word picture. Back then, whenever a person was convicted in a Roman Court of Law, the scribe of the court would make a written list of all the crimes for which that person had been convicted. That list was called a "certificate of debt." This certificate would be taken along with the criminal to the place of imprisonment and nailed to the large wooden door of his cell. When the sentence had been completed, the scribe would take down the "certificate of debt" and write across it the word that meant, "It Is Finished," roll it up, give it to the prisoner, and he could never be convicted of those crimes again.

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In this verse Paul was saying that 2000 years ago a “certificate of debt” was prepared for each of us. A list was made of all our sins, and that list was nailed to an old, rugged cross. The words Jesus spoke from the cross were not a cry of defeat, but a shout of victory. It Is Finished! It meant paid in full! All our sins, past, present and future, have been paid for, and we can never be found guilty of them again. Because God accepts and approves of Jesus, He completely accepts and approves of us, because we are “in Christ.” We don't have to perform or meet certain standards to win God's love and acceptance or to prove that we have value and worth.

Our salvation is the result of God's unconditional love for us and the price Jesus paid on the cross to redeem us. Even though these are the facts, if we have unhealed emotional wounds, it will seem more natural to feel condemned and unworthy, instead of forgiven and loved by God. As a result, we will go through life feeling guilty, insecure, and condemned. We must remember that our relationship with God has nothing to do with feelings. C. S. Lewis once said, “...feelings are not what God principally cares about...The great feelings come and go, His love for us does not.” The relationship we have with Him is based on the truth of God's Word and His unchanging faithfulness to us.

Even though we don't want to, we will all continue to sin after we are saved. When we do sin we need to immediately apply I John 1:9 to our sin: “If we will confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” This verse assures us that there is never any reason for a Christian to be out of fellowship with God or to carry a load of guilt. If, after we have confessed and claimed the forgiveness that is ours in Christ, but still feel guilty, then what we are experiencing is “false guilt.” False guilt is from the pit of hell and is a device Satan uses to rob us of peace, joy, and any usefulness we could otherwise have to God. False guilt has no place in the life of a Christian.

Sometimes, after we have sinned, the hardest forgiveness to accept is our own. Here are three things about forgiving ourselves that we all need to know:

1. If we have received God's forgiveness and sought the forgiveness of those we have offended, then we need to release ourselves from guilt by accepting something God does—we are human and our humanity gives us feet of clay. God accepts this and so should we.
2. We need to remind ourselves that God does not “overlook” our sin. He requires every sin be paid for. He can only forgive us and release us from our debt because Jesus paid our debt, our entire debt of sin. The debt has been

removed from our account, so not to forgive ourselves is to ignore the blood Jesus shed and the sacrifice He made to pay our debt.

3. We may wonder at times if we have truly repented or have been remorseful enough. We must never forget that it is not the depth of our repentance or remorse that makes God's forgiveness possible—it is His grace and grace alone. If God has “graced” us, and He has, then we should be able to “grace” ourselves.

Christians who are constantly questioning and doubting their relationship with God usually are those who are guilty of emotional reasoning and don't believe that they are eternally secure in

Christ. They have the idea that Christians can lose their salvation through prolonged disobedience, even though they have no Scriptural guidelines for determining which sin is the unforgivable one, or how many times they can commit this sin before they lose their salvation. People who struggle with this issue of eternal security need to understand how their salvation was secured in the first place. The burning question which must be answered is: Does forgiveness come to us because of something we did, or is it a result of what Jesus Christ did for us?



To begin with, the terms, to be saved, and Christ our Lord. This is just one of many then not be saved, are direct opposites in the Bible that tells us that salvation is a wage is earned; a gift is from falling off a cliff. Neither you fell off or offered freely. So then, if salvation is not earned didn't. When Jesus said that He came to do something we do, how can it be lost as a and to save the lost, He meant what He said of something we did? The gift of salvation Temporarily saved, is not saved. The wise gift offered to us by the grace of God, not Eternal in Scriptures means from agents on the basis of our goodness. Salvation does not age and describes a forever experience. The merit of man but in the mercy of salvation Jesus gives offers the gift of eternal life. It does not begin in the life of man, but in (John 3:16; John 3:36; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 7:25; I John 5:11-13). If Jesus said, that the life He gives us as a gift is eternal, it can't be temporary. In John 10:28 Jesus said, "I give eternal life to them, and they never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." Jesus choose to use two very strong words in this verse: Eternal and never. If something eternal lasts forever, then how can it be lost? If we can never perish, how can we go back to perishing? These two things have created a Grand Canyon, so to speak, between man and God. Romans 6:23 says, "...the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in

1. Deliverance from what we are, or from self. The basis of salvation past, present, and future is grace and the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The basis of our salvation is not our forgiveness for sin. faith and faith does not save us. If salvation were about faith then it would be about us and not God. If a man leaps from the ledge of a burning building and the firemen on the ground below catch him in a safety net, what saved him? Would it be his leap or would it be the net and the firemen? Of course it would be the latter. We are the ones who dug the canyon with our sin but God is the One who built the bridge. We cannot change what we are on the inside, which is a sinner. We also cannot remove the guilt of what we have done, which is what we deserve. Faith is simply getting on the bridge that gets us to what really saves us. Faith is choosing to believe God and accept what we don't deserve and mercy is not what we do deserve. The object of our faith is God and the truth of His Word.

The gift of salvation offered to us by the grace of God is not on the basis of our works.

Emotional reasoning is a problem some Christians struggle with more than others. Not understanding that they are eternally secure in Christ causes these Christians to live in fear, anxiety, and insecurity, while robbing them of the peace and joy they should be experiencing in Christ. When believers hold to the opinion that Christians can be saved and then lose their salvation, they normally use the same verses in the New Testament to back up their belief. At first reading, it may appear that these verses do defend this line of thinking. However, wise Biblical interpretation and a careful study of the context of these Scriptures will help us understand that eternal security is consistent with the entire emphasis of the New Testament which is grace. Three of the most commonly used verses to support this belief are:

1. **John 15:5-6.** These verses are a part of Jesus' illustration of the vine and the branches where He says, "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." When looking at this passage we need to remember that it is allegorical and the language is symbolic. It is never wise to build a theology on a parable. The point that Jesus was trying to make here was the importance of our abiding (continually

depending on Him) in Him if our lives are going to produce fruit for Christ. The issue here is not rebellion, sin, or losing one's salvation. The issue is how spiritually useless Christians are who don't live a life totally dependent on Jesus.

2. **Galatians 5:4.** This verse contains a phrase that has been more misunderstood than almost any other verse in the Bible because it has been taken out of context. The phrase is "fallen from grace." When we read the book of Galatians, the background of this book will explain the misunderstanding. A group of Jewish Christians from Jerusalem had come to Galatia. They were known as Judaizers, and their goal was to follow Paul and contradict his teaching of salvation by grace. These Judaizers wanted the Gentile believers to add Jewish traditions, such as circumcision, to their commitment to Christ.

This made Paul so angry that he had some very strong words for anyone who distorts the gospel of Christ by teaching anything but salvation by grace alone. The term "fallen from grace," did not refer to these Christians in Galatia losing their salvation; it was simply saying that they had fallen away from the principle of grace salvation. The danger they faced was not in losing their salvation but in losing the freedom they had in Christ. Christ had set them free from the law and now they were trying to get back under the

bondage of keeping the law in order to be right with God. They were putting something else in the place of the cross of Christ.

3. **Hebrews 6:4-6.** Every Scripture in the Bible was written for a specific purpose and to a specific audience. Identifying the author's purpose and the audience helps greatly when it comes to proper interpretation. The writer of the book of Hebrews was writing to a predominantly Jewish audience who had been the object of much persecution. As a result, some had become disillusioned with Christianity and were beginning to drift back into Judaism where their religious practices would be protected by Rome.

This paragraph must be read in connection with Hebrews 5:12-14 (there are no chapter divides in the original text).

Hebrews 5:12-14 was written to believers who ought to be mature in their faith but were very immature instead. Hebrews 6 begins with the word "therefore" which shows that what is about to follow is connected to what was said before. The writer is warning these Hebrew Christians that they need to graduate from the ABC's of the faith and go on to maturity in Christ. Then in verse 4 it says, "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back

to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again..."

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The phrase, “if they fall away” is only one word in the Greek. It is a participle, setting up a hypothetical situation. A paraphrase of this verse would be: “If a Christian should turn aside (literal translation of fall away) from the faith, it is impossible for him to repent and turn back to the faith, because Jesus would have to be crucified all over again.” The writer is saying that hypothetically, IF it was possible (which it is not) for someone to be saved and then be lost again they could never again be saved because Jesus would have to die all over again. So the point the writer was making was that because it would be impossible for a true Christian to renounce Christ; if any among them did abandon Christianity for Judaism, it would simply be evidence that they had never been saved in the first place.

There are four words in the New Testament which describe what Jesus did for us on the cross that made a bridge possible between the sinfulness of man and the holiness of God:

1. Justification. Romans 3:24 says, “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.” Justified is a legal term which means to declare “innocent,” “not guilty,” or “righteous.” Because Jesus died in our place, sin was punished, the holiness of God was satisfied, and we are justified or declared “not guilty” once and for all, just as if we had never sinned.

2. Redemption. Romans 3:24 also says, “being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ.” The Greek word “ransomed” is translated redemption and means “the price paid to a slave owner to purchase a slave.” The price paid to purchase our salvation was the blood of Jesus. Once we are redeemed or purchased by Jesus, we can never be a slave again.

3. Propitiation. Romans 3:25 says, “whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation for sins.” This word pictures the altar where the Jewish high priest would offer up an unblemished lamb as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. The word means to turn away anger by the offering of a sacrifice. This word describes how Jesus death cleanses sinners and removes all their guilt. The anger that propitiation turns away is God’s anger toward our sin. Because of propitiation, God can’t be mad at a Christian because Jesus took God’s wrath on Himself. Therefore, when Christians sin, we need not fear the wrath of God. The concern of a Christian’s heart should be grieving the heart of God with our sin, not making God angry.

4. Reconciliation. In Romans 5:10-11 it says, “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God

through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.” To be reconciled to God means to be restored to fellowship with God because the canyon that separated us now has a bridge. Because we have been reconciled, we now have eternal life and eternal peace.

Many people are afraid to teach what the Bible says about grace and eternal security because they believe this gives Christians a license to sin, but nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible says in II Corinthians 5:14, “The love of Christ compels (motivates, propels) us...” When Christians truly understand the unconditional love of God and

who they are in Christ, they are motivated by love and gratitude to live a godly life. God never intended that the motivation for our obedience to Him be fear or guilt. Because of justification, redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation we are eternally secure in Christ. Whenever Satan tries to convince us that we are not saved or tempts us to feel unworthy, we can remind him that we have been saved eternally by grace. What grace gives, grace does not retract. The extent to which we have the assurance of our salvation will be the extent to which we put our faith in the promises of God and not in our feelings.

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