



Satan's Tricks

SATAN'S TRICKS by L. M. Fontaine

Cover by Bonnie Wong

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I spoke to a woman who told me she once had been a devoted Christian, but became a Muslim because of something that happened to her while she was in college. She said that as a young teenager, she had an exceptional ability to preach about Jesus Christ; but one day she found herself unable to utter the words “Jesus is Lord.” This went on for a few years until she was in college and someone spoke to her about the Koran. The person challenged her to read it with an open mind.

That night she had both her Bible and the Koran open on her bed. As she was taking turns reading them, she fell asleep. When she awoke a couple hours later she found herself in a horrible state. When she looked in the mirror she saw snakes coming out of her head and, of course, she thought she was losing her mind. She called 911 – or she thought she did – and a man answered the phone and tried to calm her down. When he asked how she got his number, she explained how she thought she had dialed 911. He asked her what she had been doing prior to falling asleep. When she explained, he laughed and told her she was going to be all right. He then went on to tell her that he was a teacher of the Muslim faith, and that what was happening to her was the bad ideas of Christianity were coming out of her. He took her number and said he would have a Muslim woman call her the next day.

Now this woman is teaching the Muslim faith. Do you think her experience came from God, or was she tricked by the devil?

Have you been tricked?

There are a lot of people who are convinced they will go to heaven because of an experience they have had. If experience is someone's **only** foundation, he is like a person building his house on sand.

When I was seven years old, I was told that Jesus was standing at my heart's door, and I needed to ask Him in. It wasn't until I was seventeen that I found out the expression, 'ask Jesus into your heart' comes from a song, and not from the Bible. The Bible says that Christ does come in when a person believes, but not when the person asks.

Proof of this can be found in the book of Acts. When the Apostle Peter was presenting the Gospel to Cornelius and his family and friends, he explained that forgiveness for sins is received when a person believes in Christ. And the moment those listening to Peter believed, God, the Holy Spirit, indwelt them.

Please read this for yourself in Acts 10:43-44. Peter said, "Of Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." The next verse says, "While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word."

Did you notice something missing from Peter's presentation of the Gospel? Peter never gave an invitation!

The Bible teaches that the way to receive Christ is by believing, and not by asking. There is no invitation for salvation. John 1:12, says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name."

Many have used Revelation 3:20, where Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me" as proof that an invitation is necessary. But this

isn't an offer of eternal life. The Lord is addressing those who already have believed in Him. In the preceding verse He speaks of chastening them and the Lord chastens only His children (Hebrews 12:7-8). When the Lord spoke of dining with these disobedient believers, He was referring to the custom of the day of sharing a meal together to restore a broken relationship. Thus, the issue involved is not receiving eternal life, but restoring a friendship with Christ. Friendship with God is conditioned upon the obedience of the believer. Jesus said, "You are My friends *if* you do whatever I command you" (John 15:14).

Sadly, some people know that *asking Jesus into your heart* is not biblical, yet they still think it's okay to do it. Why? Because they had a life-changing experience when they did ask Him in. So even though there is **no** verse in the Bible that says to ask Jesus into your heart, these people are putting their trust in some experience rather than the word of God.

I plead with you to be willing to lay aside any experience you may have had and look only to the Bible to determine what you believe is true.

Please consider this - If someone showed you John 3:16, which says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life," and then told you that you must bow to the east, do you think you would go to heaven if you believed that? Of course not, because Jesus didn't say to believe and bow - He said only to believe. But what if a person did bow? Wouldn't he be putting his faith in the person who told him to bow rather than Jesus Christ? The same holds true for those who have asked Jesus into their hearts.

Although the Bible is filled with sinners' prayers, you won't find one place where someone prayed to be saved from hell. When the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas what he needed to do to be saved, he was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:30-31).

Please pause and ask yourself these questions –

1) Does believing mean the same thing as asking?

2) Isn't asking doing more than believing?

3) And according to the Bible, can we be saved from hell by doing anything more than believing?

Ephesians 2:8-9, say, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

There have been times when I have pointed out that *asking Jesus into your heart* is not found in the Bible; and some have objected, claiming that it does say it in Romans 10:9, which says, "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Do you see anything in that verse about asking Jesus into your heart? The word, *confess*, does not mean to *pray*. It simply means to *say the same thing as*. This verse is not teaching that someone must pray a prayer to receive eternal life. It is speaking of making a confession that Jesus Christ is Lord – that He is God.

And in the next verse Paul clarifies that this confession is not a condition for eternal life. He wrote, in verse 10, "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." This confession is made by someone who already is a believer in order to let others know he believes that Jesus is the Lord. Salvation takes place the moment a person places his faith in Jesus to save him (Ephesians 1:13).

Paul stated repeatedly throughout the book of Romans that eternal life comes through believing alone. He is not presenting a new requirement to go to heaven in Romans 10:9. Paul had even written a few verses previously, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4).

Is it possible to believe in Christ and never confess? According to the Bible, *yes*. It says, in John 12:42-43, “Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” To avoid persecution, these believers remained silent about their faith in Christ.

Are these people in heaven right now? Yes, it says they believed. But do these people have rewards in heaven? No, because Jesus said, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). Going to heaven is a free gift, but serving God costs us something. We can remain silent about our faith, but the consequence will be a loss of rewards in heaven, as well as a loss of blessings in this life.

When it comes to what is required of us to go to heaven, the message is consistent from Genesis to Revelation – it is faith alone in God alone.

Did Abraham confess with his mouth to be saved? No, he didn't. And Paul made the point in Chapter 4 of Romans that Abraham was saved by faith alone. And we are saved exactly the same way (vs. 23-24). So Paul is not teaching in Romans 10:9 that there is another requirement for salvation besides believing. This confession with the mouth is so that others can know you believe.

When Peter described how the first Gentiles heard the Gospel through him and believed, he explained, “God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith... But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they” (Acts 15:8,9,11).

Don't I need to repent?

You might be wondering why the Bible says you need to repent. The word generally translated *repent*, simply means to *change your mind* - it doesn't mean to change your behavior.

When people tell me that *repent* means to *turn from your sins* or *feel sorry for your sins*, I often ask them if they know that the Bible says God repented. It is rare to find a person who does. Repentance could not possibly mean turning from sin or feeling sorry for sin if the Bible says God repented.

One account is found in Exodus 32, where God was about to destroy the children of Israel for worshiping the golden calf. Moses interceded on their behalf, and it says that the Lord repented. What did God do? The obvious answer is, He changed His mind.

It is peoples' way of thinking, not their way of living, which ultimately will condemn them to hell. Those who think they have to do anything more than believe in order to gain eternal life, are not putting their faith in Jesus as a Savior, but as a Helper. These people need to change their way of thinking and trust in Christ alone as Savior. As long as they think they have a part in getting themselves to heaven, they are not trusting in Christ alone. It doesn't matter whether it's a small thing like asking Christ into their hearts, or a big thing like turning from sin - either way, it is something more than simply believing.

To place the demand of turning from sin on a person in order for God to save him is like a lifeguard demanding that a drowning person swim a few strokes before he'll save him. Do you see how nonsensical that is? But that's exactly what a lot of people are preaching.

I plead with you to make sure what you believe is based upon God's written word.

How much are you paying for your salvation?

I've talked to a lot of people who are convinced they are saved because they have experienced a changed life. But many of these people's lives changed because they were told in order to go to heaven, they **had** to change their life.

One writer who claims that salvation rests not only upon believing, but also upon turning from sin and following Christ, had this to say about those who don't agree with him, "They stumble over the twin truths that salvation is a gift, but it costs everything."

The Apostle Paul would certainly stumble over that statement. Paul wrote, "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Romans 11:6).

What is grace? The word means *undeserved kindness*. Whenever you put forth effort to get something, what you get for your effort is owed you; it's like a paycheck. Paul expressed it like this - "Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt" (Romans 4:4).

The person I quoted who says that salvation costs everything, yet it is still a gift, would deny that he is teaching works for salvation. But let me ask you a question. If I offered you a gift and then explained it was going to cost you a thousand dollars, would my calling the item a gift, make it a gift? The same holds true for those who are teaching that heaven is a gift, but that you have to turn from your sins and make a life-long commitment to follow Christ in order to go there. They may call heaven a gift, but something is not a gift if you have to pay a price.

God Himself already paid the only price required for our salvation when He died on the cross. The Lord Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). All the work that Jesus had come to do was now done. It is of interest to know that the words "it is finished," are from the Greek word *tetelestai*, which was used by merchants to signify the *full payment of a debt*.

When a debt had been fully paid off, the parchment on which the debt was recorded was stamped with *tetelestai*, which meant the debt had been *paid in full*. “Paid in full” means that once a thing is paid for, you never have to pay for it again.

Do you understand the significance of this? God Himself has already done everything that needed to be done to get you to heaven.

If God is doing the work, then why am I tired?

One sly way that people try to get around the fact that turning from sin and following Christ are works is by saying it is God who is doing those works through you. Somehow, if God gives you the power to turn from your sins and live a holy life, they say that those things are no longer work.

But are we saved because of what God does *through* us or because of what God did *for* us? These false teachers are telling people that Christ paid the price to get us to heaven, but we still have to pay the cost of discipleship to get to heaven.

It was because of what Christ accomplished on the cross that we are saved. The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote, “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the most holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12).

It is because of Jesus’ sacrifice, not ours, that we will be able to spend eternity with God. Christ alone paid the price that had to be paid to get us to heaven. Those who say you must make Christ the Lord (meaning Master or Ruler) of your life to be saved are teaching that heaven is a reward.

The following quote is an example of someone trying to make heaven a gift and a reward at the same time - “Faith in Him demands a willingness to make any sacrifice He asks. The hard truth about Christianity is that the cost is high, but the rewards are priceless: abundant and eternal life that comes only

from faithfully following Christ.”

But is heaven a reward? Does eternal life come from faithfully following Christ? Romans 6:23, says, “... The **gift** of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Not only is heaven a gift, but also it will not be given to those who try to earn it by following Christ. Romans 4:5, says, “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.” There is no price for us to pay to go to heaven, and those who are trying to pay for God’s gift (with or without God’s help) are, in fact, rejecting it.

When the Bible speaks of making a sacrifice for Him and following Him, it is addressed to people who are already on their way to heaven. Following Christ doesn’t get you a home in heaven, but it does get you rewards in heaven.

There is **no cost** involved in becoming a believer because Christ paid the cost for us. But to become a follower of Jesus, the cost is very high. Discipleship requires a lot of work. And what did Jesus promise those who become His disciples? He promised they would be amply **rewarded** for their work. But heaven is not the reward! In Matthew 6:20, Jesus spoke about laying up treasures *in* heaven, not laying up heaven as a treasure!

Failure to see the difference between being a disciple and being a believer is like baking a cake with the icing mixed in. You have a real mess on your hands!

People who think that being a believer and a disciple are the same thing, look at their lives to determine whether they’re going to heaven or not. But those who understand that salvation and discipleship are two different things, look to the word of God for their assurance of salvation. 1 John 5:13 says, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”

A believer can know he is going to heaven even if he never makes the decision to become a disciple. This is clearly shown in the Gospel of John where a distinction is made between

believing in Christ as Savior and serving Christ as Lord. John 8:30, says, “As He spoke these words, many believed in Him.” What happens when a person believes in Him? Jesus said, in John 6:47, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life.”

John 8:31-32 go on to say, “Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed in Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”

What if a believer chooses not to become a disciple, and therefore *never* abided in His word, would he spend eternity with God? Absolutely! But would he experience God’s joy, God’s peace, answered prayer or the wonders of His friendship here on earth? Absolutely not! Instead of experiencing the freedom that God promises to give to those who serve Him, he would remain a slave to his old sinful nature.

And when he faces the Lord someday, he will face Him ashamed. The Apostle John expressed it like this – “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” (1 John 2:28).

A Day of Accounting

There is a day coming when all believers are going to have to stand before God and give an account of how they lived their lives since the day they trusted Christ alone to save them. It says, in 2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

A picture of this judgment is given to us in 1 Corinthians 3:11–15, and it says there will be some believers in heaven with no rewards. This passage explains that works done for Christ

amount to gold, silver, and precious stones; while works that are worthless, or bad, are wood, hay, and straw. The Lord is going to have a fire come upon the believer's works, and only those works done for Christ will remain.

If the believer has done works for God, then he will be rewarded accordingly. It says, "If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward" (1 Corinthians 3:14).

But there are some believers who squander their precious time here on earth and have nothing but wood, hay, and straw to show for their lives. Those works will be consumed at that final judgment. They are saved from an eternity in hell because they believed in Jesus, but because they never served Him, they will suffer loss of eternal rewards. Verse 15, says, "If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." They are going to be like people who safely get out of a fire, but everything they owned is consumed. It is only what we do for Christ that has eternal value.

Jesus said, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My **reward** is with me, to give to everyone according to his **work**" (Revelation 22:12).

But doesn't the Bible say, "Even the demons believe - and tremble!"?

Many times when I have been explaining the concept that salvation is by faith apart from works, people have responded, "Oh, that can't be. The Bible says that even the demons believe."

My question is – what can the demons do to be saved? The answer, of course, is *nothing*. Jesus never died for demons. He died only for human beings. So when James says that the demons believe and tremble, he could not be using them as an example of how to be saved from hell.

The believers that James addresses are guilty of saying one

thing and doing another. When it comes to being an *obedient* Christian, believing the right way is not enough; it must be accompanied by behaving the right way.

James said, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe – and tremble!” (James 2:19). James was obviously being satirical when he was praising these believers for believing in one God. Even the demons did that!

What about “Faith Without Works is Dead”?

Some people have problems reconciling Paul’s statement that we are saved by faith apart from works and James’ statement that we’re saved by faith *and* works. What they fail to understand is that Paul and James are *not* dealing with the same subject. They are dealing with completely different topics. One is dealing with eternal salvation and the other is dealing with one’s service to God.

In Romans 4, Paul was dealing with how to be saved from hell and have eternal life, which comes by faith and **no** works. It is this faith that results in one becoming a child of God. But James is not talking about salvation from hell; he is explaining to those who already are children of God about how to be saved from God’s discipline in their life. To escape God’s chastening, one must have faith and works.

Please read James chapter 2 to see this for yourself. You’ll see that James rebukes his readers who were treating people differently according to their financial status. When a poor man came into their assembly, he was given a place on the floor or made to stand. But when a rich person came into their assembly, he was given a good seat. Their actions revealed that they were judging other people based on faulty premises, and it exposed a lack of love in their lives. Believers may *claim* to be loving, but it is their *actions* that demonstrate the truth of what they’re saying. Because of these believers’ lack of love, God was

about to discipline them. James writes, “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:12). Unless these believers started treating people in a loving way, they were about to experience God’s chastening hand.

So what did James mean when he wrote, in verse 14, “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?” Is he explaining how to be saved from hell? Is he saying that faith alone isn’t enough to get you to heaven? No, James is telling them that faith alone cannot save a believer from God’s discipline right now on earth – only a change of behavior can do that.

Another topic that James deals with is how to have God bless you. He wrote, “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25). This verse shows there are two different kinds of responses from believers who hear God’s word – those who are forgetful hearers and those who are doers of the work. And it is only those who are doers of the work who will be blessed by God.

What if someone offered you money for doing a job, and you believed the person would pay you, but you didn’t do the work required to get the money, wouldn’t your faith be in vain? The same holds true in the Christian life. God is offering a multitude of rewards to His children, but only those who do the work will receive those rewards. This is what the phrase, “faith without works is dead” means.

Let’s look at the example of the promise of answered prayer. If I say I have faith that God is going to answer my prayers, but I’m not doing any work for Christ, will my faith in God result in my prayers being answered?

No! It says in 1 John 3:22, “And whatever we ask, we receive from Him, *because* we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (italics added).

Only those who are serving Christ have the promise of answered prayer since it is a **reward** for obedience, and not a gift.

So to say that *faith without works is dead* applies to salvation from hell is to make eternal life a reward, but Romans 6:23 clearly states that it's a gift.

Do you see there is a difference in putting faith in God to give you something He paid for (the gift of eternal life) and putting faith in God to give you a reward for something you worked for? Faith in God for eternal life is a faith without any accompanying work. But when a believer is putting faith in God for rewards, he will always have works. Just as in the case of Moses, he gave up everything the world had to offer in order to gain eternal rewards. Hebrews 11:24-26 explain, "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the **reward**."

Does an experience mean something is true?

The enemy of man's soul is very successful at blinding people to the truth of the Gospel.

Matthew 7:21-23 provide an example of Satan using experiences to blind people. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'"

Jesus will say to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

It seems that these people, while on earth, thought they were assured of heaven. They are going to say to the Lord someday, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” (Matthew 7:22). Yet they are going to hear Jesus say He **never** knew them. Their ultimate destiny is hell.

They had done a lot of miracles in Jesus’ name, so why is Jesus going to tell them He never knew them? He explained that it was because they had never done the will of the Father. And what is God’s will for the unbeliever? Jesus explained what it is in John 6:40. He said, “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

So one thing is certain – these people, who had done many works in Jesus’ name, never put their faith alone in Christ. They thought they had to do their part too. But Jesus did not come to be our Assistant - He came to be our Savior. Instead of trusting in the finished work of Christ for their salvation, they were trusting in what they thought God was doing through them. To them, this authenticated whatever message they did believe.

These people were tricked by the devil. I have no doubt that the miracles and wonders they saw were genuine experiences, but the source of those experiences was not the Father of light, but rather the father of lies.

The Lord prophesied about a time period before His return that would be characterized by miracles. He said, “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24).

The Muslim woman, whom I mentioned in the beginning, did have an incredible experience. I never doubted her sincerity or the truthfulness of the story she shared with me; I simply recognized the source.

The Bible explains that Satan is actively involved in keeping peoples' minds blinded to the truth of the Gospel. 2 Corinthians 4:4, says, "Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." Satan's ultimate destiny is hell and it is obvious that he wants to take as many people with him as possible.

Does Satan deceive believers too?

Satan is interested not only in deceiving unbelievers, but he is also intent on deceiving those who already have believed. Although he can never affect someone's eternal salvation once they have believed, he can affect that person's usefulness for God. God has left His children on earth to be His representatives and share the message of eternal life. What a victory for Satan if he can influence one of God's children to preach a message that is powerless to save a person from hell. Think about it. If he can get a child of God to preach a false message, he has that believer working for him! The Apostle Paul expressed it like this in 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted – you may well put up with it!"

These false teachers that were influencing the Corinthian believers were preaching Jesus and they were preaching a gospel, but it was not the Jesus or the Gospel of the Bible. The Jesus of the Bible is God Almighty who made a complete and perfect payment for our sins. He didn't leave us our part to do. The Jesus of the false teachers is one that didn't do everything necessary to get us to heaven, and did leave us our part. If someone thinks

he has to believe in Christ and keep the Commandments, pray, live a good life, etc., then that person is putting his faith in both Jesus and himself. A lot of people can clearly see those things are works; but these same people fail to see that such things as asking Jesus into your heart, committing your life to Christ, and turning from sin are also works. But Ephesians 2:8 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith and that **not of yourselves**; it is the gift of God.” So *anything* more than faith alone in Christ comes under the category of work. It is an addition of human effort. It is not our doing, but what was done for us by God that is responsible for our eternal salvation.

What hinders people from seeing the truth?

So why are so many people unable to see that things like committing, turning, and confessing *are* works? Generally it's a combination of two things. The first thing is that someone they respected, trusted, and perhaps admired presented that message as the Gospel message and told them that believing in Christ as Savior involved doing these things. So they trusted the message because of the messenger. Secondly, many of these people who have done these things to go to heaven, have had a tremendous experience. Some have felt an incredible peace and joy. Others, who have been addicted to drugs and alcohol, completely lost their desire for those things. To them these experiences are proof that God has accepted them and that the message they believed was true.

One time I was having a conversation with a young man who confessed to me that he had committed some very grievous sins and he gave God the glory for his changed life. He was convinced that his religion was true because his life had changed so dramatically. He had become a Jehovah's Witness! Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus is Michael the Archangel and that they are required to do many works to be worthy of

eternal life. As sincere as this man was and as dramatic as his experience was, it only served to blind him to the truth.

If this young man had looked into the Bible for himself, he never would have believed Jehovah's Witness doctrine. I've asked many of them the question – If you only studied the Bible without Jehovah's Witness material, would you believe the way you do? Every one of them has answered, *No*. What does that tell you?

As far as putting your faith in the messenger, I'd like to bring your attention to what the Apostle Paul had to say about that. He wrote to the Galatian believers, who were being influenced by false teachers, "But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8-9).

Think about what Paul wrote. He said that even if *he* came back and presented a different message than the one he originally presented, he was under a curse. Why does Paul use such strong language? The reason is because any message other than faith alone in Christ alone is powerless to save. Paul told the Philippian jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

I plead with you to investigate the Scriptures for yourself. It behooves us to make sure our understanding of the Gospel comes from the Bible, and not from someone else's interpretation of the Bible.

When Paul and Silas went to Berea and presented the Gospel, the Bible says concerning the Bereans, "*These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore, many of them believed...*" (Acts 17:11-12).

There is nothing more important than your eternal destiny. Heaven is a real place and so is hell. Someday every human being will stand before his Maker to be judged. This judgment has nothing to do with determining who will go to heaven or hell; that is determined while a person is here on earth. John 3:36, states, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Those who trust in Christ alone to save them from hell will stand before their Heavenly Father to be rewarded for their service for Him (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). But those who never believed in Christ alone to save them will stand before God, not as His child, but like a condemned criminal awaiting sentencing. Hell is the fate of all these people, but they will be judged to determine the degree of punishment they will suffer in hell (Revelation 20:11-15).

Those who have placed their confidence in Jesus alone are promised they will never face this judgment. Jesus said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24).

So please don't let Satan trick you into making your experience the foundation of your faith. The Bible is a Rock. Experience is sand.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.