

SPIRITUAL CRUTCHES

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Matthew 7:13-29

I'm writing on this subject because many who "profess" to be saved are leaning on one or more "spiritual crutches" (which have no real Biblical foundation) instead of being secure on a firm foundation which is Jesus Christ. (I Cor. 3:11). The reason I say this is from experience. I was a "church member" for 26 years and preached for 8 years before I got saved. You may ask how could that be? I was in this condition because I had many "spiritual crutches" to prop on during those years.

The dictionary defines "crutch" as a prop or support. A prop is something used to support or hold up something else. When I was a boy, I remember we had a barn on our farm that was leaning because it didn't have a foundation under it. My dad cut some long poles to prop up the building to keep it from falling. Over a period of time the poles deteriorated and the building was tore down to keep it from falling on someone. "Spiritual crutches" will deteriorate and give way and let you fall one day just like the building without a foundation. I would like to share a few of the spiritual crutches (some of which I propped on) in this book.

Crutch #1: Baptism

Many think because they have been baptized their sins have been forgiven using Acts 2:38 for a proof text. This verse is an answer Peter gave to the question asked in Acts 2:37 by those who were convicted of their sins ("pricked in their heart") when they heard the message Peter and the others preached in Acts 2. The question was, "What shall we do?" Peter said unto them in verse 38, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Remission means forgiveness of sins.

The construction of this sentence puts the emphasis upon the word repent, which means a change of mind, attitude and heart which is a work of the Holy Ghost. Repentance coupled with faith (Acts 20:21) produces forgiveness of sins. Then the command is to be baptized because of (for) the remission (forgiveness) of sins.

An example of this could be applied. If a man kills another and the judge sentences him to prison, he sentences him "for" murder, does this mean that he is sentenced to prison and then murders the man or is he sentenced to prison "because" he had already committed the murder? Anyone knows he is sentenced because he had already committed the murder. In like manner one is baptized because he has experienced forgiveness of sins and not in order to receive

forgiveness of sins.

Baptism is a type and a picture of two things: 1) a picture of the gospel of Christ, (I Cor. 15:3-4) ". . . how that Christ died for our sin . . . and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day . . ." 2) a picture of what happens to each individual that is saved, how that he died to self and that the old man was buried and was raised a new creature in Christ.

If you are depending on baptism for assurance for salvation, all you really have is a "spiritual crutch" that has no Biblical foundation. And one day that crutch will deteriorate and let you fall into hell.

Crutch 2: Church Membership

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3, ". . . Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The new birth (salvation) is necessary for one to enter heaven. You can join a local church and have your name upon their membership roll but if you're not saved your name will not be in the Lamb's book of life at the Great White Throne judgment and you will be cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:11-15) Church membership is not enough. Judas Iscariot was a member of the first church and he died and went to hell because he was not saved. Being a member of a local church doesn't make you saved any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.

Church membership is a "spiritual crutch" that will deteriorate one day and let you fall into hell.

Crutch #3: My Mother Was A Good Christian Woman

This statement may be true but if you have not been dealt with personally by the Holy Ghost and brought to the end of yourself and made alive in Christ, then you are still headed to hell. Salvation is personal, with a personal conviction, personal repentance and personal faith. No one else can be saved for you and you are not saved just because someone else is saved. Romans 14:12 states, ". . . every one of us shall give an account of himself to God."

Leaning upon someone else's experience is a "spiritual crutch" that will deteriorate one day and let you fall into hell.

Crutch #4: I Have A Time And Place

That's good. That's necessary. In fact if you don't have a time and place then you are not saved!! But you can have a time and place where you had some kind

of an experience and it still not be salvation. Let me ask you a question. At the time and place you have where you say you got saved, "What did God do?" Did the Holy Spirit reprove you of sin, righteousness and judgment? Was Godly sorrow produced? Was repentance worked? Did God grant you saving faith? Salvation is of the Lord. It is His work and when you are saved you know something happened that was supernatural. You may not have known what to label every ingredient at the time but when they are preached about and explained you can identify those ingredients in your salvation experience, if what you have came from the Lord.

I had a time and place for 26 years that I propped on. I could tell you what color the wall of the house was, what color the couch was, and all the little details of the "physical" time and place, but I couldn't tell you what God did because He didn't do anything. I was just leaning on a "spiritual crutch."

If you are leaning on a "spiritual crutch" of having "a time and place," get rid of that and let God do something for you that's real, for if you don't that crutch will deteriorate one day and let you fall into hell.

Crutch #5: Live Clean

You may say, "I don't cuss, don't smoke, don't mix bathe, don't lie, don't steal, don't run around on my mate, and I go to church, read my Bible, try to be good to my neighbor and love everybody." That's good but does not necessarily mean you're saved. The question is, "Was there ever a time in your life when the Holy Spirit convicted you of the sin of unbelief?" (John 16:8-9). Unbelief is the root problem of all other sin. You may say, "but preacher I've believed all my life." You may have had intellectual faith, belief in facts, but saving faith is a gift of God that comes through every utterance (word) of God. (Rom. 10:17; John 3:27) And this kind of faith only comes after repentance is worked. (Mat. 21:32)

You can be as clean as a hound's tooth on the outside yet wicked on the inside. The Pharisees were, but Jesus warned them in Mat. 23:25-26, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also." Jesus warns everyone in Mat. 5:20, "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

You can prop on the "spiritual crutch" of "living clean," but if that is all you have, that crutch will one day deteriorate and let you fall into hell.

Crutch #6: What Others Say

Your flesh wants to prop on what someone else says. When God begins to work in your life, as a religious person especially, the devil will send someone along to say, "I think you're OK," or "I think you're saved," or "I was with you when you got saved," and many more similar things. No one knows whether you are saved but you. Don't prop on what others think or say. It is just a "spiritual crutch" that one day will deteriorate and let you fall into hell.

Mat. 7:21-23 is very plain, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

You can prop on the "spiritual crutch" of "what others say," but if that is all you have, that crutch will one day deteriorate and let you fall into hell. I beg you to do what Paul said in II Cor. 13:5, "Examine yourselves. . ."

Crutch #7: I Doubt My Salvation

"KNOW" MEANS TO

Webster's defines "doubt" as to be unsettled in opinion or belief; to be uncertain or undecided. I John 5:13 says, ". . . that ye may know that ye have eternal life. . ." "Know" means to have absolute knowledge which is opposite of "doubt". Romans 4:20-21 says that Abraham ". . . staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." "Staggered not" means to "doubt not."

There are some today who teach that one of the evidences of knowing you are saved is that you doubt. They state, "Before you were saved you knew you were lost. There must have been some changes made or you would have nothing to doubt." This is a very weak "crutch" to lean on. Because if you have ever had Godly sorrow worked in your inner being you will not ever doubt that. By the way, it takes Godly sorrow to work repentance (II Cor. 7:10) and repentance is necessary to be saved. (Luke 13:3,5) You may question your salvation but when you go back and examine the ingredients that make up salvation, according to God's word, you do not doubt. Doubt comes when you can not find those ingredients when you examine.

I doubted many times during those 26 years of being a lost church member, especially when I was exposed to light (truth in power). Light just revealed the real condition of my soul and immediately the devil would try to put a "crutch" under me by saying, "That's just the devil making you doubt." I tried to believe that was the Holy Spirit telling me this but I later learned it was the devil lying to me to keep me lost. The devil has never told the truth. (John 8:44)

The reason you continue having that "nagging doubt" is because the Lord is good to you in not leaving you alone. (Rom. 2:4) That's the Holy Spirit trying to get you

to recognize the emptiness in your heart. So when you are bothered about your salvation, get honest, junk pride, do not worry about what others say or think and let the Holy Spirit finish His work in you so that you can have real salvation. When you are really saved "doubt" will flee.

If you are leaning on a "spiritual crutch" that "doubting" is evidence you are saved, get rid of that "crutch" and let God do something for you that is real. For if you don't that "crutch" will deteriorate one day and let you fall into hell.

Crutch #8: I Prayed The Sinner's Prayer

We are living in a day when many preachers will tell you, you are saved if you prayed the sinner's prayer. Where is that found in the Bible? It is true that the publican in Luke 18:13 prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and went away justified or saved. But tell me what did the woman at the well in John 4 pray or Zacchaeus in Luke 19 when he came down out of the sycamore tree.

Only one man prayed this prayer yet many have adopted this as the "sinner's prayer" and say if you pray this you are saved. Lord help us! No one is saved by words that come out of their mouth. It is a heart condition which is the work of the Holy Ghost. ". . . No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." (1 Cor. 12:3)

You may have been praying such a prayer when you got saved but that prayer did not save you. The Lord did, because salvation is of the Lord. And if you understood what the publican understood when he prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner", you too would be justified. "Merciful" is from a kindred word as "propitiation" in Romans 3:25 and means that Jesus is our sacrifice, substitute, and mercy-seat. This understanding only comes from the Holy Ghost as he ". . . reproveth the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." (John 16:8)

God deals personally with each person as an individual. He is original, while the devil is the one who is a copycat, one who tries to stereo-type everybody and put them in the same mold.

If you are leaning on a "spiritual crutch" by saying I am saved because I prayed "the sinner's prayer", get rid of that and let God do something for you that is real. For if that prayer is all you have for your assurance one day that "crutch" will deteriorate and let you fall into hell.

Crutch #9: I Am Bothered When I Am About To Do Wrong

Many prop on this just as I did for many years. You say, "Is not that a sign the Holy Spirit lives inside me because I am bothered when I do wrong?" Not necessarily so. It could be a moral standard you grew up with. At times when tempted to do wrong it seemed a voice said "that's wrong," then the devil used that

as a "crutch" to make me think I was saved. The problem was the devil was lying to me again, trying to make me think I was saved so that I would not turn toward the Light. The real reason I was bothered was because there was a fear of what dad would do if he found out. You see it was a moral standard that I grew up with that bothered me, not the Holy Spirit.

It is true the Holy Spirit is your hidden radar to warn you against wrong. But it is also true the devil can use a moral standard to bother you thus causing you to prop on a "spiritual crutch." If that is all you have, get rid of that "crutch" and let God do something for you that is real, for if you don't, that "crutch" will deteriorate one day and let you fall into hell.

Crutch #10: The Lord Chastises Me

It is true that the Lord chasteneth all that are sons. (Heb. 12:6-8) But it is also true that it rains on the just and the unjust alike. I know in my own life when calamities came the devil tried to prop me up by saying that was the chastisement of God. But I found out over a period of time that those things were not chastisements of God but really it was God trying to get my attention to show me where I really was. The devil had lied to me again.

If you are basing the assurance of your salvation upon incidents that have happened in your life and calling those chastisements of God, you had better check it out. It could be just a "spiritual crutch" and if so, get rid of that and let God do something for you that is real. For if you don't, that "crutch" will deteriorate one day and let you fall into hell.

I beg you to do what Paul said in II Cor. 13:5, "Examine yourselves. . ."

Crutch #11: God Answered My Prayer

This is a "crutch" that many have used for years for assurance for their salvation. I propped heavily on this "crutch" because of what I had heard preached, "God heareth not a sinner's prayer except, God, be merciful to me a sinner." It is true that part of their statement is found in John 9:31, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners. . ."

The scripture also says for us to rightly divide the Word in II Tim. 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." In the context of John 9 we find a man who was born blind, ". . . That the works of God should be made manifest in him. . ." (John 9:3) Jesus passed by one day and healed this man on a Sabbath day. The Pharisees were enraged and wanted to ensnare Jesus, so they called the man who had received his sight to question him. John 9:24-25 gives part of their conversation. "Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him,

Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

This man was not saved at this point. He only knew one thing, that he was blind but now he was able to see. After some discussion the man who was blind made the statement of John 9:31, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners. . ." "We" refers to the man who was blind and the Pharisees who were blind spiritually and by tradition did not believe that God heard a sinner. After this statement the Pharisees cast the man, who was made to see, out of the synagogue. At this point the man still did not know who Jesus was but Jesus revealed Himself to the man and he got saved. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." (John 9:35-38)

The scripture is the best commentary of itself and it sheds a lot of light on tradition. The Bible does not contradict itself. That being the case we read of a man, Cornelius, in Acts 10, a lost man who prayed. "A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." (Acts 10:2-4)

Cornelius did what the angel told him and sent for Peter and upon Peter's arrival this is what he said. "And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." (Acts 10:30-31) The inspired Word says that the angel of God told Cornelius that his prayer was heard. This is enough to tell me one cannot prop on "answered prayer" for assurance of salvation.

A man who is a lost sinner has a blinded mind, ("But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." II Cor. 4:3-4) and a heart that is deceitful ("The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Jer. 17:9). An individual in that condition cannot prop on "answered prayer" for three reasons: 1) How do you know the devil did not answer your prayer? 2) What if someone else was praying and God answered their prayer instead of yours? 3) How do you know it did not just happen? One cannot prop on answered prayer for an assurance of salvation.

Some say God answers only prayers that deal with your salvation. Let me ask you this, "How does one who has a blinded mind and deceived heart know what deals with salvation and what does not deal with salvation?" Let me share my experience in the area of answered prayer as a "crutch."

In the early 1970's, I had developed a nervous stomach to the extent that I could hardly keep anything down that I ate. One Sunday night, our preacher was dealing with a specific subject, "giving up smoking." At invitation time he said, "God can help you give up those cigarettes." Since I didn't smoke that didn't bother me but the phrase, "God can help you," rang a bell in my heart. I thought if God could help someone give up cigarettes He could heal my stomach. Standing at my pew I simply prayed, "Lord, heal my stomach." At that moment it was like a butterfly fluttered all over the inside of my stomach and coated it. From that day to this, I have not had a problem with my stomach. God answered my prayer and I was a lost sinner at the time. You say the devil did that? Oh no, I didn't pray out loud so the devil could not hear it and I never told anyone else about it at that time. God answered my prayer!!!

It would seem that this had absolutely nothing to do with my salvation. But as time went on, I recognized that God showed me He was real that night, which is necessary before one will come to the Lord in salvation. ". . . He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6)

So you see, you cannot prop on the "crutch" of answered prayer. I'm not saying that a lost sinner will have consistently answered prayers like a saved person in God's will. He will not. In fact, usually there are very few places he can put his finger on and say, "I know God answered that prayer." Yet the flesh wants to prop on that for assurance. Don't do that.

If you are leaning on a "spiritual crutch" that "God answered my prayer" as evidence you are saved, get rid of that "crutch" and let God do something for you that is real. For if you don't, that "crutch" will deteriorate one day and let you fall into hell.

I beg you to do what Paul said in II Cor. 13:5, "Examine yourselves. . ."

Crutch #12: I Understand The Scriptures

Romans 3:11 states, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." I Cor. 2:14 states, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Isa. 64:7 states, "And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: . . ." Romans 5:6 states, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

These scriptures are true because they are God's Word. The natural man doesn't seek nor understand the things of God. "Understand" means to "put it together" like putting the pieces of a puzzle together. "Discerned" means a sifting process to get at the truth by investigating as of a judge. A natural man is incapable of rendering a decision for they are unable to recognize the facts. He is "without strength," which is from a word from which we get our word

"anesthetic." The natural man is under the "anesthetic" of sin and is unable to understand the spiritual things of God.

Because of these scriptures, many have said God does not show a lost person anything. Is that true? If it is, how does a person ever get saved? Mat. 13:23 states that those of the good ground "understandeth" while those by the wayside in Mat. 13:19 "understandeth not." The good ground are the saved therefore there had to be some understanding before they got saved. John 6:45 states that only those who ". . . hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." The word for "learned" is also translated "understood" in Acts 23:27. "Cometh" means along the path of understanding. For one to come to the Lord Jesus for salvation, he must understand some things.

Some say this is a contradiction. Oh no!!!! This just reveals the fact that the Holy Spirit has begun a work in the heart of the natural man so he can begin to seek God. The natural man is said to be "sensual" in James 3:15. This means that the natural man is under the influence of the senses of the flesh or animal nature, in opposition to being influenced by the Spirit of God. But when the Spirit of God begins to influence the natural man, He moves in his darkness, reproveth him (John 16:8-11) and brings him to salvation (John 6:44). It is the Holy Spirit's work to bring us to salvation. And when He begins to influence and work in our lives, we begin to seek and understand some things so that we may come to the end of ourselves and be saved. Some say a lost man does not seek God, but Jeremiah 29:13 says, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Jesus also said in Luke 13:24 that many will seek but will not be saved.

Just because you can quote scripture and seem to have a knowledge of the scripture that is no proof you are saved. Don't prop on that "crutch." The Pharisees could quote scripture and seemed to understand it, but Jesus stated plainly in John 5:39-40 that they were not saved. The devil even quoted scripture and it is a sure fact he is not saved.

The devil had me propped on this "crutch" for some time. In fact, about the time I was dealing with this very issue and trying to throw away that "crutch," an older preacher called me for some advice. I remember thinking that this is a setup of the devil, unbeknown to the preacher. I asked him, "Why are you calling me?" The preacher said, "You seem to know the scriptures." By the grace of God, I pushed aside the devil's attempt to keep me propped on that "crutch."

You see, when I got saved I recognized that I really did not understand the Word of God, even though I thought that I did and so did others, but I was blinded. (II Cor. 4:4) It sure is different now!!

If you are leaning on a "spiritual crutch" of thinking you are saved because you understand the Scriptures, get rid of that and let God do something for you that is real. If you don't, that "crutch" will deteriorate one day and let you fall into hell.

Crutch #13: Called To Preach

In November of 1972, I made a move toward God and picked up my Bible for the first time and begin to study. I went to Camp Zion, Myrtle, Mississippi, in January, 1973 where I got in the presence of God's power for the first time. There the gift to preach was stirred in me and I begin to desire to preach God's Word. I begin to pray that the Lord would call me to preach. I knew a divine call was necessary to preach God's Word.

On March 18, 1973, while in an altar prayer meeting at my home church I experienced what I called a divine call from God to preach the Word. I surrendered to that call on March 28, 1973 and doors begin to open. Southside Baptist Church in Mckenzie, Tenn. called me as their pastor the first Sunday of June, 1973.

We had our first revival meeting in September, 1973. On Wednesday night of that meeting, September 5, 1973, I was pricked in my heart with Holy Ghost conviction. This was the first time conviction had ever really come upon me. The message preached that night was concerning a saved man having a "well" out of which he can drink living water anytime and anywhere. Reference was made to a man who had made a profession but was not saved, as having only a "cistern" which does not have an internal source to supply water. This type of individual has to get around those who have "wells" so that he can drink out of their wells, and then, when he is all alone, there is no water in his cistern from which to drink. God pricked my heart that night, and showed me that I didn't have a "well."

When my wife and I went to bed that night she said, "I don't know whether I'm saved or not." (She was lost at the time and was saved September 10, 1975.) I said, "I don't know whether I'm saved or lost but one thing I know, I know I'm called to preach and I know God doesn't call a lost man to preach!" That's what I had been taught. So every time I was bothered about being lost I would prop on the "crutch," "I'm called to preach."

This went on for several years. But as I begin to study the Word of God I begin to see what Paul said about himself in Gal. 1: 15, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace." God had set Paul apart from his mother's womb even though he didn't recognize that in his early years. I also saw Jeremiah in Jer. 1: 5, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." Then I found Samuel, how the Lord called him before he knew the Lord. "Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, neither was the word of the Lord yet revealed unto him." (1 Sam. 3: 7)

I rationalized according to tradition that these last two men were in the O.T., but that did not fill the emptiness I had down inside. I kept propping on my "spiritual crutch" until I came face to face with Judas in the N.T. Judas was called just like the other eleven. (Mark 3: 19) He was sent by Jesus to preach, heal the sick, and cast out demons, (Mat. 10: 7-8) and was given power to do so just like the other eleven. (Luke 9: 1-2) Yet he was not saved. His outward life was such that when Jesus said, "One of you shall betray me," all the disciples asked, "Is it I?" (Mark 14: 18-19) None suspected Judas to be lost, but he was, even though he was called to preach.

When I got a good look at that and also saw in Rom. 11: 39 how that God's "gifts

and calling are without repentance," then I begin to put the "crutch" of being called to preach aside. At least I tried to. It is hard to junk what you have been taught all your life, even though it is not Bible.

I had to lay that experience of March 18, 1973 aside and just leave it in God's hand. I found out God can do what He wants, when He wants, and how He wants. We can not put God in a mold. After I was saved and settled I wanted God to extend a call to me that was as real as March 18, 1973. I wanted this more than anything for the "Brethren's sake." The Lord did not give me that great of an experience, but in March of 1986, through the Word of God in Isa. 53:8, He spoke to my heart, "Who shall declare his generation?" I volunteered! Yet I still have to say God spoke to my heart March 18, 1973. I'll just have to ask Him to explain it all to me when I get to be with Him.

God uses the experiences you go through to help others. Because one day at Camp Zion, a preacher came up to me and said, "How did you preach 8 years lost?" I explained the "crutches" I propped on and after a period of time he said he was lost and God saved him about 3 days later. I saw him about a year later and asked him where he was preaching. He said, "You know I was never called to preach." The devil, flesh, and tradition had propped him up on a "spiritual crutch" of a "call to preach", when it was never there. You see a lost man is so blinded (II Cor. 4:3-4) and his heart is so deceived (Jer. 17:9) that he is not able to sift properly everything he experiences.

After hearing what that man had to say about his "crutch" I said, "Thank you, Lord for allowing me to go through what I did." Had I not propped on this "spiritual crutch" I would have not been able to help him in this area or others that will cross my path one day.

I talked to a preacher one day and shared my experience with him and he told me, he too was called to preach before he got saved, but he knew enough to know that he needed to get saved before he surrendered to preach. My background was different from his. I did not know enough to get "the horse before the cart." If I had not surrendered to preach in 1973, I would have probably died and went to hell from a Baptist pew.

Are you basing the assurance of your salvation upon "your call to preach?" If that's all you have, get rid of that "crutch" and let God do something for you that is real. Jesus said in Mat. 7:22, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name. . .?" That refers to preachers who just may be leaning upon a "spiritual crutch" of their "call to preach." Then Jesus said in verse 23, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." How sad!!

Are you propping on this "crutch?" Get rid of that while you can. I know there will be a price to pay, but it is better to pay a price now and be saved than to lean on that "crutch" which will deteriorate one day and let you fall into hell and pay the price of an eternity in the lake of fire.

Crutch #14: The Word Of God

This "Spiritual crutch" was a strong one and took some time before I was able to set it aside. I would read in religious papers that you can know you are saved "by the Word". "Just claim it by faith and it would be yours," they would state. These papers used such scripture as John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." This is true, but I was lost, blinded, deceived, and did not understand what this verse truly meant.

Many times during my eight years of preaching as a lost man, when doubt and guilt over my past sins came, I would get on my knees, confess my sins again, and claim John 5:24. I would read it, point to it and say, "I did that, I did that." Then I would make a new commitment, go my way, and feel better for a while, but there was no lasting peace.

Then one day John 5:39-40 came before my eyes. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." I saw how the Pharisees had the Word, the scriptures, the written Word, but they did not have Jesus, the living Word. Therefore, they didn't have life. "In him was life. . ." (John 1:4) "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (I John 5:12) I had the written Word, but not the Son, the living Word; therefore, I didn't have life.

I John 5:11 says, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." What is the record? The answer is the written Word which we must believe. I John 5:10 says, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." The record (written Word) points to the Son (living Word), therefore, we must believe the record before we will ever believe on the Son. When we believe on the Son, we have a witness inside.

I John 5:9 speaks of this witness which is described in verse 8. "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son." (I John 5:8-9) This witness in us is the Spirit, the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (Rom. 8:16) I had heard this verse quoted many times as someone would say, "My spirit bears witness with your spirit." The verse does not say this, but does say that the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit.

". . . These things are written that you may know that you have eternal life. . ." (I John 5:13) This refers to I John 3:24, ". . . And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." This also refers to I John 4:13, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." During those times of trying to claim a verse in the Bible, I never had any assurance because I had Word only and did not have the Son. I did not have the

Spirit. I Thess. 1:5 says, "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; . ." Word only will not produce life. It takes the Spirit. ". . . For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." (II Cor. 3:6)

When I was saved, I received an inner witness, the Spirit, who agrees with the blood and the water of I John 5:8. The Spirit agrees with the blood because He was present when the blood washed my sins away and cleansed me. The Spirit and the blood agree with the water which is the Word of God (not baptismal water). (Eph. 5:26) What the blood cleanses the Spirit agrees to and the Word verifies. Now I do not have a problem with John 5:24 or any other verse in the Bible because I have an inner witness and not just Word only.

If you are leaning on a "spiritual crutch" of thinking you are saved just because of a verse of scripture, get rid of that and get the Son and when you have Him you have life. Then anywhere you open the Word, it will agree with the Spirit and bear witness with your spirit that you are saved.

Are you leaning on a "spiritual crutch" or are you standing on a firm foundation. Mat. 7:24-25 says, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." That rock is Jesus, a foundation that standeth sure.

Junk all those "spiritual crutches" and let God do something for you that is real. Let the Holy Spirit have a complete work of "reproval". "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." (John 16:8-11) This is Godly sorrow which works repentance. "For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." (II Cor. 7:10) Then faith is produced by the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17) Then when the Holy Spirit works repentance and faith you can repent and believe unto salvation and have something real. But if you choose to keep those "crutches" they will deteriorate one day and let you fall into hell. Please allow the Holy Spirit to do a complete work.

I'm your friend and if I can be of help, please feel free to call or write anytime day or night.

Because of Calvary,
EDGAR LEE PASCHALL