

Christianity Clarified Volume 12

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about? Here in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion is Marv Wiseman with another session of Christianity Clarified.

Are you on this CD? In contemplating the promised benefits of being a believer in Christ, one is at a loss to know why everyone isn't a believer.

Consider the benefits, both immediate and future, that await all who put their trust in Christ. First, there is the promise of sins completely forgiven. Who doesn't need that?

Some more desperately than others. Second, there is a promise of eternal life following this life in the presence of God himself and all others who have trusted in him.

Is there anyone that doesn't want that? Third, there is the promise of a new glorified body when this one is resurrected, and that body will be devoid of illness, pain, or death.

[1 : 01] Who wouldn't want to trade in this body for a body like that? Fourth, there is the God-given assurance for seeing all of life like you have never seen it before. When one becomes a Christian, a whole new way of understanding and perceiving the world, yourself and others, comes into view.

Who wouldn't welcome that? Fifth, there is the promise that while believers are not now exempt from pain, adversity, and even death, God promises he will be with us in whatever it is.

He will not leave you nor forsake you. Who wouldn't find comfort in that? Sixth, God who cannot lie has promised to work all things for our ultimate good, for all who love him and are called according to his purpose, no matter what our immediate circumstances.

And who wouldn't want that kind of guarantee? Romans chapter 8 speaks to this. Seven, the Christian is promised a satisfying answer to the internal longing for meaning and significance, that there is much more to life than the unbeliever knows.

And who wouldn't welcome that answer? Eight, Christ provides a new capacity and dynamic for loving others and being loved by others, one that is real and fulfilling in ways that cannot be realized apart from God's love in Christ.

[2 : 24] Don't we all want that? There are many we have listed as to the promises provided for every believer, short-range and long-range. And these promises are provided for every person who has put their faith in Christ and his substitutionary death on their behalf.

And these are only the benefits and blessings we know about. We can only imagine the total package God will provide when the time comes. This being the case, why would anyone not want to avail themselves of all that's promised by a God who cannot lie?

Can a man actually be so opposed to what God went to great lengths to provide for him as to be ungratefully refusing what is only in his best interests?

How irrational is this? If you are one who has yet to commit your life to Christ, you will be able to identify yourself and your reason or reasons for not doing so in the word pictures that will describe you on the next track.

And if you have received Christ as your Savior, there will be word pictures in which you can identify yourself and be amazed for not having come to him sooner than you did.

[3 : 37] One or more of the following descriptions will fit you. And when you hear it, you can say, that's me. Then what will you do? A Commonality of Unbelievers, Part 1 As we shall note in upcoming segments on this CD number 12, there are many different answers given by people as to why they have not placed their faith in Christ and received forgiveness and salvation from him, who, by the way, is the only one offering it.

Despite the great variety of answers, there is one item that all who are unbelievers have in common. It's stated in 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 4, and here's what it says.

If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world has 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.

This spiritual blindness that is systemic to all of humanity is induced by none other than Satan himself. Little wonder he's called the deceiver.

In fact, his deception and devices are so clever, he has actually succeeded in making many think he doesn't even exist. How clever is that? It's the epitome of successful deception.

[5 : 04] This, of course, is the same Satan who confronted Christ during his 40 days of temptation in the wilderness as found in the Gospels. Consider that Satan already has a head start when it comes to deceiving man, and that's because ever since the fall of our first parents and their passing on their sin nature to succeeding generations, all come to the issues of logic and reason by applying a warped intellect.

Fallen man, which is all of us, in and of himself, applies faulty reasoning powers regarding moral issues. This causes him to see things as other than they truly are.

He is not able to process data and reach proper conclusions that represent reality because the lens through which he looks at himself and all of life are distorted.

A distorted lens prevents one from seeing a truly clear picture. And as one looking at himself in a distorted mirror at a circus sideshow that makes one look much fatter or much taller because of the misshapen mirror, it's much the same in the way fallen man sees moral issues.

Not seeing them clearly as they really are, his conclusions are distorted and inaccurate. The problem is that this distorted meaning isn't as obvious as his standing before a distorted mirror.

[6 : 27] Many go entirely through life without ever having seen life and the world as they truly are. They were simply deluded all the way. And, of course, the ultimate in delusion is never having known you were deluded.

This important concept of satanic-induced blindness, coupled with an already impaired reasoning and lodging facility, is more than enough to hold men captive without their even knowing it.

And if one is spiritually captive without even realizing it, why would they seek to be freed from that captivity? They wouldn't. And they don't.

Only when the light shines upon them can they see things as they really are. Then, in recognizing their bondage and seeing it for what it truly is, can they call upon Christ to set them free.

Remember the verse. 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 4. A Commonality of Unbelievers Part 2 With all of unbelieving humanity, as a result of the fall, having warped powers of reason and logic, plus the fact of satanic deception as referred to in 2 Corinthians 4, one might correctly say that the unbelieving person has two strikes against him.

[7 : 49] And, indeed, he has. Only a much greater power and enlightenment can combat those two powerful negatives. The negative of man's defective thinking skills and the negative of satanic blindness designed to prevent man from ever seeing the light.

But there is just such a greater power and enlightenment capable of overcoming those two negatives. In fact, it is the only power that can.

It is referred to in Romans 1. The Apostle Paul, who himself had experienced this very power that overcame his own warped logic and Satan's blind deception, stated, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.

Man is blinded by Satan's supernatural lying deception. Man is also enlightened by Christ's supernatural and truthful enlightenment. It is spoken of as the light of the glorious gospel or good news of Christ.

The psalmist said, The entrance of thy word gives light. So when the gospel, the word of God, is proclaimed, it spreads the light of truth wherever it goes.

[9 : 02] One of the very names assigned to Christ is the light of the world. And it's a very fitting title. He wears it well. Bearing in mind these two realities, man's own innate blindness imposed upon all humanity by the fall, and Satan's promotion of that blindness with his own deception, we may say this is the sad plight of all humanity.

No matter then what other reasons a man may give for refusing to trust in Jesus Christ, these two negatives lead the list, whether he knows it or not.

And when we add to these two powerful list leaders additional objectives that men have for not trusting Christ, which we will include on the following segments, it is truly miraculous that any are saved at all.

Matter of fact, we may well say it's only the grace of God that anyone is saved. And a truer word could not be spoken. While God's love and grace are often denied, spurned, and sometimes even ridiculed by unbelievers, it is the same wondrous love and grace that reaches out to them in pity and sympathy, tirelessly and tenderly calling them to himself with open arms, even while they persist in turning away.

In his warped thinking, man just doesn't know he is his own worst enemy, and Satan is helping to keep him that way. This was once the plight of every single one of us.

[10 : 27] But there is one corrective, and it lies in the embracing of Jesus Christ, God's Son, as our Savior. Hymn writer P.P. Bliss captured this truth when he wrote, The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin.

The light of the world is Jesus. Like sunshine at noonday, his glory shone in. The light of the world is Jesus. Come to the light, tis shining for thee. Sweetly the light has dawned upon me.

Once I was blind, but now I can see. The light of the world is Jesus. A commonality of all unbelievers, part 3.

The two previous sessions dealt with a commonality among all unbelievers. In other words, whatever other reasons anyone might give for not having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, these two negatives are held in common for all non-Christians.

Remember? The first thing all unbelievers have in common is their inability to think and reason in a truly logical way. And yes, this is true of all the great human intellects, including all the PhDs outside of Christ.

[11 : 41] None of us think with the kind of intellect possessed before the moral fall and failure of man. And in reasoning with the skewed logic, we reason incorrectly and reach incorrect moral conclusions.

That's obstacle number one. And number two is the reality and objective of Satan who effectively blinds men's eyes to the truth, as we noted in 2 Corinthians 4. He is referred to as the God of this age, and he is the master deceiver.

These two formidable negatives are true of all unsaved humanity, and we have already described them as man having two strikes against him. In addition, as if those two were not enough, man adds to the list his own objectives or reasons for having no interest in Jesus Christ as his Savior.

Man presents these upcoming objections, which to him are very logical, by using that flawed logic of which we spoke. Man's excuses are arrived at by his using that inadequate reasoning.

Oh, by all means, let's clarify this. Are we saying that if one is a Christian, their logic and reasoning powers are always correct and flawless? Ah, by no means.

[12 : 55] Sadly, one can be a true Christian and still engage in very sloppy logic and faulty reasoning, leading him to wrong and even foolish conclusions. Christians are not immune to erroneous thinking.

Not at all. What we do mean to say is that non-Christians are locked in to erroneous thinking, particularly of a moral caliber. He simply does not have the wherewithal to use consistent logic because he is not connected to the source of logic.

He is only connected to his own rationale and that of his colleagues. Man's thinking with that sorely limited resource is precisely what has produced the world as it is today.

And being a Christian is certainly no guarantee his thinking will be so sharp either. Our point is that the Christian has the divine resource available to him that non-Christians do not have.

The wisdom of the ages is at his disposal through the abundance of wisdom and revelation provided in the Bible. That provision is automatic. It's simply God having done his part by providing it.

[14 : 06] So the provision is automatic, but our use and application of it is not. The provision, being God's, has been made and is adequate.

The applying of the provision is ours and involves our volition, sometimes enacted responsibly and sometimes not. The divine wisdom God sets forth in his word is usually ignored by non-Christians, but for those in Christ, it is our only source of sure authority.

Those who never heard of Christ, part one.

The gospel of Jesus Christ means the good news about Christ, who he was, why he came, and why it is so vital to everyone who ever lived.

Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and his substitutionary death for mankind results in connecting with God, forgiveness of sin, eternal life.

[15 : 11] If that is true, why doesn't everyone believe it? Well, the first and most obvious reason is that most of the billions in the world have never heard it. Christians have been charged with the missionary enterprise begun by the Apostle Paul 2,000 years ago.

That effort has been commendable in many areas, but feeble in others. Resulting in much of the world still never having heard the good news of the gospel. Obviously, people cannot believe in something they've never heard.

Romans chapter 10 speaks to this issue. Romans 10, 11, for the scriptures say, Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved. This is the rationale and essence of the biblical missionary enterprise.

It is simply the sending of a messenger who believes and knows the gospel to an area where people do not know nor believe the gospel. Those who know vital information should care deeply about those who do not know.

And they care because the information they have to give is vital. Life-giving. The message of the gospel is so critical that it, upon being believed, actually imparts spiritual life to those without spiritual life.

[16 : 46] They are living in the sphere of spiritual death and do not even know it. While it is true that those who do hear the gospel usually reject it upon their first hearing, there are others who recognize the information as the very thing they had always wondered about and longed for.

To these, the gospel that there is a loving Savior who loved them in such a way he became their substitute, It's as welcome news as a drink of water to a very thirsty person.

They never heard it before. Never knew the message even existed. But now they do. They respond by repenting of their sin and embrace this Savior of whom they previously had never heard.

These are a source of rejoicing to the missionary. After all, this is the very reason they left their homes and family. It was to proclaim the message of God's love and forgiveness to those who have never heard it.

This, we may safely say, remains one of the chief reasons, if not the chiefest, why many people do not believe the gospel. They have never heard the gospel.

[18 : 01] Once they hear, the option to believe or not believe becomes real. But never having heard, they have no option. Missions provides the option for those who have never heard.

Those who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, part two. A question often heard from those who object to the Christian doctrine of the exclusivity of salvation through Jesus Christ and Christ alone is this.

How can you say that Christ is the only way of salvation? What about all those who have never even heard of Christ so as to believe on him? How can they be blamed for never believing on someone of whom they have never heard?

Romans chapter 1 tells us that God has revealed himself through creation. The text says, Powerful and ominous words, without excuse.

Man is not so much alienated from God because he does not know God, but because he does not want to know God. He wants to be his own God, or create gods of his own making.

[19 : 26] On the day of the great accounting, when all stand before their maker, one thing is certain. God will be just. Abraham asked the rhetorical question in Genesis 19, Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?

Yes, Abraham, the judge of all the earth will do right. And because God is just, righteous, and all-knowing, we may be sure that all men, at the very minimum, will receive perfect justice from God.

Perfect justice means the punishment is perfectly equal to the offense. Their sentence will be fair, perfectly fair, and they will know it is fair.

They will also know there is no higher court to which they can appeal. This is the real Supreme Court. This court is not construed of nine men and women with flawed thinking, political leanings, and built-in preconceptions.

This is the law court of heaven, presided over by the one who knows even the thoughts, intents, motives, and all else that concerns every person. Justice that is perfect is the very least that all will be given.

[20 : 38] Those never having heard of Christ or His death and resurrection for their sin will be judged by God on the basis of what they did know and what they did about that. He need not even ask them, for He knows their thoughts altogether.

They will voice no objections or excuses because they will know He knows. And for these who never heard of Christ and for those who did but rejected Him as their Savior, their portion will be absolute, perfect justice, which perfectly fits what they deserve.

But while justice is the very least God can dispense, He can do more. He can dispense grace to those who plead the finished work of Christ, and on their behalf and in their stead.

God is more than just to those who are in Christ. To these, He dispenses His grace and mercy because Christ received the justice they deserved when He died for their sins.

If you want God's justice, do not believe on Christ, and you will receive precisely what you deserve. If you do want grace and mercy, then place your faith in Jesus Christ who died in your place to take your justice upon Himself.

[21 : 51] Amen. The Gospel is not credible. It has been noted that many who do not believe the gospel or good news about the substitutionary death of Christ on their behalf is simply because they have never heard that message.

Thus, they have no opportunity to accept or reject the message. But what about many others who have heard and yet do not believe? What is their rationale for not believing what the Bible and millions of Christians claim to be the most important message ever proclaimed?

How could they possibly not believe it? Well, they simply and honestly do not believe it to be true. After all, it would be illogical to embrace something as a belief that one is convinced has no authenticity, and we would agree.

Such would be an unreasonable thing to do. Anybody considering taking some claim of great importance to be their own and commit themselves to it and what it involves surely ought to be convinced that the claims it makes about itself are factual, that its claims correspond to truth and reality.

So, many do not believe the gospel because they simply do not accept what the Bible and its proponents say about life, death, forgiveness, the hereafter, and many related subjects.

[23 : 24] How they reach their own conclusions may involve several years, different sources, and personal experiences, but their bottom line, their objection in their own mind is that the Christian position simply lacks credibility.

They don't buy it, and they feel justified in their rejection of it. People can be very sincere and honest about their own conclusions and apparently are willing to stake their eternal destiny on that conclusion.

And to these, we would offer a warning, a question, and a challenge. Here they are. The warning is, you had better be right.

You had better really, really be right. Because when your present life is over, there are no do-overs. And the question is, have you ever been wrong about any other important issue in your life?

If you have, how can you be sure you're not wrong about this issue that contains eternal consequences? How can you be sure the Bible has it all wrong and there is nothing to this thing called Christianity?

[24 : 38] And are you willing to stake your eternal well-being on your present position of rejecting God's offer of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ?

And here's the challenge. Find a New Testament and get near the front of the Bible, the front of the New Testament, the Gospel of John. Read what it says about Jesus Christ and who he is and why he came, what he did, and why it matters.

And then ask yourself if you remain convinced that Christianity is not factual and you are justified in your rejection of it. It's the very least an honest person could do, and it's certainly in your best interest to do so.

Intellectual integrity should prompt us to at least examine the claims Christianity makes, especially in light of what is at stake. True or false, the Gospel's implications are stunning.

In attempting to clarify Christianity, it is obvious that the concept of biblical Christianity is absolutely monumental, whether it is true or not. And what do we mean by that?

[25 : 50] Well, if it is true, and our attempts to clarify it means, of course, we believe it, so please consider this. The Bible sets forth the proposition that God, the creator and sustainer of the universe, became as one of his creatures, a man.

This God enfleshed himself with a human body in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He then proceeded to proclaim the plan and purposes of God to men, was then rejected by the nation of Israel to whom he came for the purpose of reaching the entire world.

And being rejected by those he came to save, he was tried and sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate, who also, by the way, proclaimed his innocence. After being crucified and buried, he rose from the dead three days later with a promise of resurrection life to all who believed in him.

Is that not a rather stunning account of what is arguably the greatest life ever lived? And Christians worldwide, even with variations as to details they believe about Christianity, are all called upon to believe the description just given or forfeit the name Christian.

And if all we just stated is true, and we believe it is, it is unquestionably the most monumental event ever to have occurred in this world. Thus, the implications of it all are immeasurable for now and eternity.

[27 : 20] But what if it isn't true? Well, the implications remain immeasurable. It means, of course, that Christians are not only mistaken, but greatly mistaken, horribly mistaken.

It means Christians have been wrong all along about Christ. As the Apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15, If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless.

You are still in your sins. Our preaching is in vain, and your faith is also vain. What is more, all of us who claim to have witnessed Christ after coming back from the dead are liars.

We've all borne false testimony. The conclusion as to the stunning nature of the gospel is inevitable, whether regarded true or untrue. Its implications are world-shaking, and there is no middle ground.

Christ was not crucified, buried, and risen, kind of, sort of. He either was or he wasn't. Now, you can take your choice, but you can't have both.

[28 : 26] And you can't choose neither. Logic requires the exclusion of a middle ground. Throughout the centuries, there have been skeptics who have set out to disprove the historical record of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, only after having examined the evidence concluded to their amazement it was true after all.

And some have even written best-selling books attesting to the historical validity of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. They were forced to accept the Bible's claims they earlier rejected as true after all.

Like we said, the gospel's implications are indeed stunning. It's too good to be true.

The question may well be asked, if the gospel of Jesus Christ is such good news and actually leads to sins forgiven and eternal life, why doesn't everyone believe it? That is a good question.

And there are good answers. First of all, many do not believe it, especially upon their first hearing, because it sounds too good to be true. That anyone could be placed in a right relation to God simply by believing in the death of someone else, supposedly for the sins of the whole world, just seems downright fanciful.

[29 : 52] Admittedly so. It does. At least it does to one whose thinking process and powers of logic are seriously skewed. That's right. Skewed.

Warped. Distorted. It's because when Adam infected the whole of the human race through his disobedience to God, it was not merely his body that fell in its entirety.

It included not only his physical brain, but his non-physical mind as well. The brain and mind work in tandem, exercising its ability to receive and process information to reach conclusions based on cognition.

And upon reaching a conclusion, a plan of action involving the volition or the will is engaged. This includes the decision to do or not do something as well as to believe or not believe something.

The good news of salvation by the act of believing on Christ as one's substitute and way to God simply does not compute with fallen man's way of thinking.

[30 : 54] You might even call it foolishness. Foolishness is what the Corinthians called the gospel of Christ when the apostle Paul preached it to them nearly 2,000 years ago. As worldly wise as the Corinthian Greeks were with their superior intellects and love of deep thinking philosophy, the gospel Paul preached to them was rejected as foolishness.

They prided themselves in their insistence of multiple deities, totally dismissing the idea of their being but one true God, and that this one God enfleshed himself in a human body that later was crucified and then rose from the dead.

They called it moronic. Makes no sense at all, they insisted. But what can we expect from someone who reasons with a fallen and warped sense of logic?

Paul also describes this attitude in Romans 1 by saying, These people, in professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. It's also notable that when Paul wrote that to the Romans, he was writing from the city of Corinth in Greece.

This warped thinking affecting all of humanity can only be overpowered by the truth of God provided through the message of the gospel. This led the apostle Paul to exclaim in Romans 1, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.

[32 : 28] So even though one reasons with a faulty intellect and logic, the power of the gospel can overcome that upon man's willingness to put their faith in the person of Jesus Christ.

Some do not want it to be true. Some do not believe the gospel because they are convinced it is not true, and some do not believe the gospel because they do not want to believe it.

Perhaps they are afraid it is true, and they may not even want it to be true. But why would that be? Why would anyone, upon hearing the gospel proclaimed, upon being told God loved them in such a way that he surrendered himself to crucifixion, to pay the world's sin debt, and that by repenting and placing their faith in Jesus Christ, they could receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life?

Why or how could anyone possibly not want that to be true? Let's think about that. A message that makes the claims just stipulated is an amazing concept to ponder.

And even if one does not believe it to be true, it's still an amazing proposition to contemplate, even just as a concept. And just in case it is true, the implications that would attend something of this magnitude would have to be really significant.

[34 : 00] And they are. The implications are of moral significance. Right and wrong stuff. The first implication that comes with believing the gospel is the requirement of repentance.

And this is a vastly misunderstood concept, but it means to change your mind. Change your mind about what? About you and your need, your moral weakness, deficiency, inability to right yourself before God.

That's implication and requirement number one. And it is so hard to do. Most refuse to do it, at least in the beginning of their considering it.

And the reason for this is given in the Bible itself. In John's gospel, chapter three, the text says, and this is the judgment that light has come into the world.

And men loved the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

[35 : 06] That's why some who do not believe the gospel do not want it to be true. They understand that embracing the gospel will require them to fall out of love with their evil deeds, with their sin.

And they love their sin. That's why they do it and will fight to keep it. They love it, even to their own peril. And this isn't true only of certain bad people.

It's true of all people who are outside of Christ. And for those who are in Christ, it was true of them also before they came to know the Lord. Only he and a personal relationship to him can cause a believing sinner to hate the things he once loved and to love the things he once hated and didn't want to be true.

This is a prominent reason many do not believe the gospel. Their doing so would involve what they think would require a painful cleavage with sinful, comfortable deeds they have come to love.

Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Neither does he come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. God's got your number. Too good to need salvation.

[36 : 29] There is no question that there are a lot of really good people in our world. We all know the kind we mean. The give-you-the-shirt-off-their-back kind of people. They are blessedly unselfish, very considerate of others, and they stand ready to aid their fellow man however they can, sometimes even to the point of risking their own lives to save others.

And at their funeral, their left-behind friends to a person are heard to repeat, he was such a good man. He would do anything for anybody. Never had an enemy.

There'll never be another like him. I never heard him say an unkind word about anyone. If anybody makes it to heaven, he would be a shoe-in. Yes, sir.

The most respected and admired man I ever knew. And on and on the accolades go, without even one word of disagreement. Just positive head nods and amens.

No doubt, the deceased of whom they all spoke made a wonderfully positive impression on all who knew him. For sure, he was a good man. And compared to the reputation the average man has, the deceased was head and shoulders above most all of them.

[37 : 43] Good. A good man. But good according to what standard? Isn't it true that all of us can look around and come up with somebody who really makes us look good?

Simply because they are so lacking in what everyone thinks goodness is. The problem is, even while we admire the deceased and his reputation for being a good man, we have to ask ourselves, good according to what standard?

How is goodness measured? And who measures it? And how much goodness is needed to satisfy the one who evaluates it? Here is where much of humanity goes astray.

God is the only one capable of assessing man's goodness, because he and he alone knows absolutely everything about us, including the acknowledged outward goodness of the deceased of whom we spoke.

But goodness is not evaluated on the basis of quantity, as in how many good deeds one has done. The goodness God looks for and demands is an issue of quality, not quantity.

[38 : 52] It is not how much goodness one has, but what kind of goodness. But what other kind of goodness can a man have except human goodness?

Goodness in himself. That's it. That's all he has. And he can never, ever have enough, because all he does have is flawed, seriously flawed.

Only a goodness that is utterly pure and holy can satisfy an utterly holy God. And here is where the sinless Son of God comes in. Upon receiving Jesus Christ as one Savior, he imputes to that believing one his very own goodness and perfect righteousness.

Christ's righteousness is of a quality, not a quantity. So those who have Christ have Christ's righteousness given as a gift.

No human has goodness of this variety. The only kind God can accept. All of us have it, or we don't. Good men included.

[39 : 57] Too bad to be saved. Part 1 The previous segment addressed the person who may see himself sufficiently good, so good that God will surely accept him as he is.

He is, of course, tragically mistaken, because God's estimation of goodness, God's gauge or standard of righteousness, is found in his only begotten Son, the very one who knew no sin, yet became sin for us.

Christ is God's measuring rod to establish what goodness really is. Any of us mere mortals, who is confident that he is equal to Jesus Christ in his character, nature, and righteousness, would surely be acceptable to God.

But if you aren't, and the Bible says you aren't, then you obviously are devoid of the kind of goodness God requires. You need a Savior. And only one was delegated for that role.

At the opposite end of the self-deceived person who thinks himself good enough that God will accept him is the equally self-deceived person who sees themselves as too bad to be saved.

[41 : 08] Both types are suffering from an ego problem. The former's ego tells himself he is so good and so acceptable he has earned acceptance with God and doesn't need a Savior.

The latter's ego tells himself he is so bad and has such a wretched past that God wouldn't want anything to do with him and wouldn't even consider saving the likes of him.

How is that for an example of egotism? It's egotistic in thinking by his sinful life he has put himself out of the reach, the care, and the interest of God.

We are delighted to say he is wrong, wrong, wrong. God loves such an one, dearly loves him, even to the degree of arranging for his purchase and pardon through the price Christ paid in dying for him.

This is called Calvary love, amazing grace. Christ died even for the worst among us, solely because of his great love. Listen to one who called himself the chief of sinners, Paul the Apostle.

[42 : 13] But while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. It's in Romans 5. Look it up and rejoice in it. You are not so bad God can't save you.

You are not so bad that God doesn't want to save you. You are so loved that when you plead the death of Christ on your behalf, God will delight in saving you.

Those who think God couldn't or doesn't want to save them suffer from a faulty transference problem. By that I mean, they try to put themselves in God's position and then they recount all of their past failures and wrongs, some really unkind and selfish things they have done, and conclude, well, if I were God, I certainly wouldn't save the likes of me.

Well, we understand that reasoning. But it's totally wrong. First, you are not God, and you need to get over that. And secondly, God is love. God demonstrated his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, God loved us and Christ died for our sins.

All of them. Don't think for one moment you have put yourself beyond God's desire or ability to save you. The penalty Christ paid for humanity's sin greatly outweighs the sin debt of the entire world, and it doesn't leave you out.

[43 : 34] Too Bad to be Saved Part 2 We continue addressing the subject in the previous segment about people who regard themselves as too bad to be saved.

And we do this because we know there are many who feel this way. But we are delighted to tell them they are very, very wrong. And this should be to them a wonderful revelation to know just how wrong they are.

You know, we are seldom pleased to hear that we have been wrong about something. But this is one of those cases. Several things need to be mentioned. One, Christ died for the sins of the entire world.

That excludes no one, including you. And two, the whole purpose for Christ's coming was to die for our sins. All of them. They are those ugly, hurtful, despicable, horrible things we may have done.

And to suggest even for a moment that one's sins are so great and so many that God could not and would not want to forgive and save you utterly defeats the purpose of Christ even coming into the world.

[44 : 43] And add to that the idea that the payment Christ made for your sins was inadequate. Such actually demeans and insults the substitutionary work of Christ on that cross.

Are you suggesting Christ died for the sins of the world but he somehow couldn't cover yours? Your sins were greater than the ability of the love and grace of God to overcome them?

Are you suggesting your past was too sordid and evil even for God to handle? But all of Scripture refutes that notion. Christ, being the infinite Son of God, made a payment in full that sweeps away all the sins of the world for all time.

We read in 2 Corinthians 5 that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The world is, of course, the people in it and all their horrendous evils combined.

And yes, yours and mine are somewhere among them. Because Christ did that and did it so thoroughly, not omitting one transgression, he cleared the way for every individual to come to God and personally appropriate that payment Christ made when he died for the sins of the entire world.

[46 : 00] While it's true, sadly, most will not come. But they could. Some would stubbornly prefer to die with their personal sin on their own head.

But they need not do so. Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life, extends the invitation to all to come. And if you come, you will surely not be turned away.

He will pardon you, forgive you, cleanse you, regenerate you, and give you his eternal life if you will but come. And you come, just as you are, laden with all your past sin.

Jesus said, Whoso comes to me, I will in no wise cast out. To think for a moment that he has received and forgiven past millions with their sins that makes yours pale by comparison but that somehow he couldn't or doesn't want to cancel your sin is clearly wrong.

You need to dismiss your faulty notion that you were too bad to be saved and that God sending his son to die for your sin just really wasn't up to the task. It was too big a job even for God and his son to handle.

[47 : 08] That's utter nonsense and all the Bible says so. Objections of Plenty We continue exploring objections people have stated that prevent them from coming to Christ as their personal Savior.

They are no doubt logical to those holding these positions and we do not doubt their sincerity nor their seriousness. We do, however, urge them to give the most careful thought to this issue because there is no subject as critical with such eternal significance as this.

So, if you are presently an unbeliever in Christ, then, as we work our way through the segments on this CD number 12, have you yet been able to identify yourself in any of the reasons presented?

Because, if not, please keep listening because a description of you and your objection to becoming a believer may surface soon. In fact, some will find that more than one applies to them and their reluctance.

After proclaiming the gospel of Christ for more than five decades, nearly every conceivable reason or excuse for not trusting in Christ has been heard. Because people are much the same the world over as regards their hopes and fears, their presuppositions and ways of thinking regarding life and death issues.

[48 : 37] Most of the objections to trusting in Christ for their eternal salvation are found in the list that we're considering on this CD. It's almost certain that every person who is a believer and is listening to this in their past before they came to Christ can identify with one or more of these objections.

They now know how foolish they were, but they didn't seem foolish when they held them. It was only after they put their trust in Christ and looking back on their excuses for not doing so that they realize how wrong they were.

Such is true of probably the vast majority of people, especially of those who come to faith as an adult. And, as an adult, one is less likely to put their faith in Christ as is a child for several reasons.

A child is naturally more trusting and less objecting, whereas most adults over the years can become suspicious or even cynical in their thinking. An adult, particularly an older adult, does tend to become set in one's ways, a kind of hardening to anything they see as new, and the gospel may certainly be new to them.

And, an adult may have seen firsthand over the years the behavior and sometimes hypocrisy of those who claim to be Christians, and they were a real turn-off to them. An older adult, sometimes upon hearing the gospel, will tell himself, well, it's too late for me now.

[50 : 05] I've lived my entire life with my own reasoning and logic, and while it didn't always serve me well, it's too late for me to change now. And the same older person may reason, I've lived my life ignoring the religious stuff, and now that I'm nearer to the end, I would just feel like a piker to try and climb on board now.

I'll just go on with what I have or don't have and take my chances in the end. While these are all quite natural thinking on the part of an adult, they are all terribly wrong.

While you are alive and God is in business, your best time for this momentous decision is now, whether young or old, especially if older.

Is this gospel confusing? Upon hearing the gospel that Christ died for our sins, and that by exercising our will, we can come to him and receive his salvation and eternal life, one is often in confusion.

And why is this? It's usually because they just don't know what to make of it or how to go about it. This too is natural. They may have heard bits and pieces of the gospel in the past, perhaps over several years, but it just came across to them as religious talk or churchy language, a kind of God talk that was very obscure or vague.

[51 : 34] But now, perhaps they're beginning to connect the dots and it becomes more serious. When they heard the gospel, but didn't really get it, it just kind of rolled off them like water off a duck's back.

But eventually, as is the case of many, they now start to really pick up on it. They begin to see the sense of it all that they never saw before, when they just let it run in one ear and out the other.

Now it's different. It is beginning to take hold and they don't know what to make of it. It is confusing and a little scary too. It's getting to be more than a little God talk that one can easily ignore as in the past.

They are in a quandary. What do I do about this? What should I do? What if I don't do anything? Can I safely continue to ignore this talk about Jesus Christ dying on a cross to become my personal Savior?

Is all this stuff even true? What would happen if I acted on this and did try to give my heart to God by believing on Christ? How would that change my life?

[52 : 42] Do I want my life to change? These are all very common questions in the minds of many who have come to this juncture in their thoughts about what really matters in life.

If you have thoughts like these, be grateful. It's a good sign you are not far from the greatest, most important event ever to take place in your life or anyone else's life for that matter.

You may be nigh unto a meeting with God Himself even as millions before you have met Him. And the confusion is understandable, along with so many questions, fears, and doubts.

All normal. The main reason for all the questions and apprehension, the doubts and fears is because this is all brand new to you and you've never been here before. This is unfamiliar territory and you don't quite know what to make of it.

You wonder, is this just psychological? Maybe it's just my feelings or emotions acting up. How can I tell? What to do? What to do?

[53 : 45] Do this. Just offer a simple prayer and tell God, if you were there, really there, I want to know you. And if you were there and you were really what the Bible says you are, you ought to be able to show me so I will know what to do.

I don't want to be naive or gullible and I don't want to be closed-minded about this. I just want the truth. And if you are really the God that Christians say you are, you should be able to convince me of that.

If you are real and you want me to put my trust in you and your Son, you should be able to show me that. My friend, pray that way. And see what God will do.

And God bless you. Salvation can't be that easy.

A frequent response from someone who has just heard the Gospel of Christ, perhaps for the first time, is, that's too easy. You can't tell me that someone can become a Christian and get right with God simply by believing.

[54 : 48] That's too easy. Anybody can do that. Precisely. That's why God arranged it that way. Although, there is a very hard aspect to the Gospel.

In fact, it was so unbelievably hard we can't even imagine the difficulty it involved. What it was that was so hard is what God and His Son, Jesus Christ, did.

The Father handed over the Son to be our substitute, and He who knew no sin was made to be sin for us. That was what was hard. Don't even try to go there with your understanding, no matter how high your IQ, you can't.

None can, but deity. We might say that in providing the good news for us that Christ died for our sins, God did the very hardest thing He could do so that He could require of us the very easiest thing we could do.

Simply believe. Put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ as our substitute. This means no one will ever be able to tell God that they didn't become a believer in Christ because it was something too hard for them to do.

[56 : 02] God made sure that was not the case. The ease of believing is an expression of the grace of God in that He did not require some great accomplishment on our part.

The great accomplishment required was on God's part and that of His Son. And while believing in Christ is easy, it's not what some describe as easy-believe-ism where one utters some special phrase or religious mantra and presto, you are now a Christian.

Nor should anyone misunderstand what it means to believe on Christ. They may confuse believing in Christ like many say they believe in Christ, but all they mean is they believe there was such a person.

And these also confuse believing in God with believing in God's existence. Neither of those beliefs can save anybody. James tells us in chapter 2 that those who merely believe there is a God have essentially done nothing.

Even the demons believe that, he tells us, and they tremble at the thought. But of course, one must begin there, that is, by believing that there was and is such an historical person who visited our world in time and space history.

[57 : 19] But that isn't saving faith. That is merely an intellectual ascent to an historical reality. Saving faith placed in Christ is akin to one's trust, confidence, reliance upon, commitment to Christ as the object of our faith.

One's exercise of faith is a deliberate act of our will where we choose to transfer our trust or confidence in whatever we have our faith in, including ourselves, or our church, or our baptism, a transfer from whatever to the person of Jesus Christ.

He is the only proper object of our faith. That is the faith that saves because Jesus saves. I couldn't be a good Christian.

This is a very understandable concern that honest people have that prevents them from becoming a believer. They are simply saying that they know themselves only too well.

And this leads them to think that if they ever did become a Christian, they would make a real mess of it. Well, welcome to the club. Never in all the annals of human history has there ever existed a Christian who didn't embarrass himself and his Lord in his Christian life somewhere along the way, and more often than not, multiple times.

[58 : 46] Just because one has come to faith in Christ doesn't mean he has to walk the straight and narrow, never messing up, or God will kick him out. Good grief, Charlie Brown. Who among us could ever live like that?

Even though one may be a believer, your will, your volition, has not been taken from you. As a believer, we maintain a capacity to really mess up through dumb and sometimes downright sinful things we can do.

And if God kicked out believers for behaving unchristianly at times, nobody but God and angels would ever occupy heaven. Those who have perhaps yet not become a Christian have no idea of the power and enablement God provides for all believers after salvation through the person of the Holy Spirit.

He is the comforter and guide to believers, but only to believers. God's Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are sons of God. The Holy Spirit does not prevent you from exercising your will in disobedience to God.

We still have the ability, even as Christians, to do really dumb and sinful things. It's just that we now have no excuse. People who think a Christian never says or does anything wrong is simply unaware of who and what a Christian is.

[60 : 10] God is wonderfully patient with us, and He treats us like what we are when we come to faith. He treats us as spiritual infants, which is what a new believer in Christ actually is, even though he may be much older in years.

Reliance upon the Holy Spirit and a regular intake from the Bible provides the basis for our spiritual maturity. We move on from being born again to growth and development, and as we do, our powers of discernment develop, the sensitivity to sin increases, and with the growth comes a life that is more and more pleasing to the Lord.

Salvation takes place in an instant when it occurs. It is a crisis act, but maturity knows no shortcuts. Only time will suffice.

It is only after we become a child of God that we can grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Even such a stellar saint as the Apostle Paul freely admitted that he had problems with his old nature, his internal enemy called the flesh.

Read all about it in Romans chapter 7. If you are a believer, you can identify with the struggle Paul described between the flesh and the Spirit. And also, consider Galatians chapter 5.

[61 : 31] If you are not yet a believer, take comfort in the fact that God does not demand anything like a perfectly holy life after coming to Christ. My life is my own.

This is another objection one might pose as their rationale for not believing the gospel and placing their faith in Christ. And it truly is a tough concept to fathom. But those who embrace this position are out there.

They have heard the gospel, John 3.16, Christ dying for the sins of the world, including theirs, the opportunity to trust Christ, receive the forgiveness of sin, and all the other features of the gospel.

Their response is not merely that they do not believe it to be true, but they don't want it to be true because they consider their life their own. They don't want God or anyone else to come meddling.

Yes, you heard correctly. Perhaps they are not great in number, but enough to be concerned about. These have made it quite clear that they do not believe it to be true.

[62 : 41] They do not know, perhaps, whether it is true or not, like the position of an agnostic, but wonder of wonders, they consider their life their own and they don't want it to be true.

How could anyone possibly express such a sentiment? That they would not want a salvation with eternal life provided for them through Jesus Christ as a gift from God.

Upon pursuing a little bit of probing, the truth comes out and here it is. Really, it should not terribly shock us given the direction our present culture is taking. Say they, this whole business about Jesus Christ, the Christian gospel, and even that of the existence of God, the whole religious bit is something that, I don't know, may or may not be true.

I'm not really sure which, but I do know one thing. I really don't care and I hope it isn't true and I don't even want it to be true. And upon further questioning as to why they feel that way, they respond with, I want my life to be my own, lived as I please to live it.

I don't want to be in a position of giving account to some deity off in the future. If there is a God, I want him to leave me alone. I want to do my own thing.

[63 : 54] I don't want any phony guilt hang-ups or fear of some future judgment. Believing all that religious gobbledygook only leads to restriction and a bunch of taboos.

I want to be a free spirit doing whatever, whenever I want with whomever I want. Don't talk to me about some God in the sky who is nothing but a big bully anyway, that is, if he even exists.

Wow. Talk about having crawled out on a limb. We can probably assume that the majority of those thinking this way, and hopefully they are not many, are primarily among the more youthful.

They do tend to have a more daring-do attitude than the more mature generation. They are old enough to know a few things, but young enough to think they know everything.

They are among the current crowd in today's world who think they can create their own reality. Well, you can't, and no one ever has.

[64 : 52] It is what it is. We can only hope the youthful brashness lives long enough to seriously rethink his position and his wishes. Isn't it amazing, though, how our God can endure foolish insults like this without bringing his hammer down?

My, my, the grace and mercy of our God. The one who, if they could, would wish him out of existence. I fear what God may ask of me.

One might well suppose that man can come up with all sorts of reasons, objections, or just plain excuses for not committing their life to Jesus Christ, who loved them and gave himself for them.

And here is another, voiced from the ever-reluctant, who respond to God. I am afraid of what God will ask me to do if I become a Christian. This is similar to the previous case who wants to make sure he runs his own life.

But at least this person won't say he doesn't want there to be a God. He just wants to live his life that way. He has heard numerous accounts of what God called certain people to do after they became believers.

[66 : 06] And horror of horrors, some had to go to school to become a preacher. And even worse, some had to go far away to a mission field where they didn't even know the language, no modern conveniences, separation from family, friends, and the good life.

As long as I refuse to become a Christian, God can't call me to any of that stuff. There are several answers to that, but we offer only three. First, God is God and you are not, Buster.

So get your identities in order because you surely have them out of place now. Second, God's will, whatever it might be, is absolutely unable to be improved upon by anybody.

What could possibly be better or sweeter than the will of God? In fact, the will of God is so superior, so preferable, that you should bend every effort to place yourself smack dab in the middle of it.

That's to God's greatest glory and your greatest advantage, no matter what He might call you to do. And He may not at all want you to be a minister or a missionary, but whatever it would be, would be the best.

[67 : 15] Third, you unwisely fear what you think God may call you to do while at the same time you are placing your eternal future in jeopardy by refusing the offer of an incredibly loving Savior.

How foolish is that? Actually, the greatest, the wisest, the most advantageous thing you can possibly do is also the most honorable thing you can do.

Simply make yourself disposable at the service of Him who gave His all for you. Whether this proves to be a small thing or a great thing, it will always be the right thing.

There is no better thing than the right thing because that's a God thing. Paul the Apostle expressed the only appropriate attitude in 2 Corinthians 5.

Said he, Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

[68 : 14] Just think of that. Since Christ died for us, the least we can do is live for Him. There is no greater victory in the life of the believer than a total, unconditional surrender to this wonderful Lord.

Think of it. How many ways can victory be achieved by surrender? But a victory it is, of the richest and sublimest kind. Our surrender and disposability to Christ is much more than an obligation.

It is a privilege for which we should be forever grateful. Not trusting Christ for fear of what He might want you to do? Away with such nonsense. The Savior is waiting.

God's Part and Your Part Part 2 Throughout Scripture, God's gracious provision for man's salvation and eternal life with Him is abundantly clear.

Whether in John 3.16 or Paul's expression in 1 Corinthians 15 that Christ died for our sins or any of the myriad of other passages, the message is the same, and it is utterly glorious.

[69 : 25] What else could it be called but good news? Sins forgiven, righteousness imputed, acceptance with God assured, and an eternity spent in His presence. What could prevent anyone from enjoying these gracious eternal benefits?

Only the refusal to appropriate them. This incredibly generous provision of God through Christ must be applied to the individual, believed by the individual, received by the individual, because salvation is individual, individual, personal.

It's not institutional, nor is it sacramental. While salvation may and should be proclaimed by the church, the church is not the instrument that imparts salvation.

That is the exclusive prerogative of the only one wearing the title Savior. Mary, His mother, was told by the angel, Christ and His salvation are presented throughout the New Testament as God's only remedy for man's lost condition.

Upon hearing of this, one must do something about it. One may ignore it, reject it, ridicule it, or gratefully embrace it. Whichever is done is one's response to what God in His great love has provided.

[70 : 51] And one's response, whatever it was, was an act of the will. We have a God-given capacity to make choices, decisions, for which all will one day be accountable.

And when we repent of our sin, we are acknowledging that we are, in fact, quite the opposite of a holy God. When then we call upon Him for His salvation, we acknowledge our moral weakness and inability.

Of course it's a humbling thing. It's a wound to our pride, but it's what truth and reality demand. God will save us from our pride, but He will not save us in it.

Coming to Christ means coming to an end of yourself and your feeble efforts to improve yourself, clean up yourself, and hope God will say you did a good enough job. With repentance, humility, and contrition, we exclaim, Lord Jesus, I believe you died in my place for my sin.

I want to appropriate what you did for me by putting my faith, trust, reliance, and confidence in you and you alone.

[72 : 04] Thank you for dying for me and for doing for me what I could never do for myself. I want you as my Lord and Savior.

That is the response that gets a response from Him, including His forgiveness and eternal life. Yes, my friend, it is just that simple.

You believe with your will. You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. This project, named Christianity Clarified, exists for that very purpose.

It is an attempt to clarify Christianity. For the 2,000 years it has been in existence, that is, from the time that Christ Himself provided the very basis of Christianity, through His death, burial, and resurrection, what Christ actually established has been subjected to every interpretation of man that one could imagine.

And therein lies the problem, the interpretation of man. That in itself sounds ominous, or should. So, how is it that this present series and its conclusions is not also simply the interpretation of man?

[73 : 29] What could make these conclusions reached on Christianity Clarified any more valid or trustworthy than any of the other myriads of conclusions men have reached, many of which, by the way, are in sore disagreement of the conclusion of their learned colleagues?

So, please be assured we are not claiming any special powers or gifts of interpretation that are not open to anyone else. We do not profess any kind of inside track with God that provides us with special insight no one else has.

To be sure, there is no unique revelatory information here from Christianity Clarified. However, there is unique revelatory information in the Bible itself.

That's what it's all about. And it remains the only unique revelatory information we have. Our goal is to disclose this disclosure, to remove ourself from mere human opinion and human logic so as to reveal the divine logic.

We only wish we could give ironclad guarantees that this is precisely what we do. But we can't. Being merely human and as subject to flawed thinking and wrong conclusions as anyone else, in fact, should you ever be confronted by anyone who insists their particular interpretation of the Bible and its topics are guaranteed absolutely accurate, such would be a good person to avoid, as well as their conclusions.

[75 : 11] No mere mortal is in any position to offer those guarantees. The only guarantee we can offer with our conclusions is in our sincere intentions of providing the truth.

Yet, be advised, we fully admit that sincere intentions are no guarantee for right conclusions either. So, with these admissions made and these warnings given, we shall proceed with the next compact disc, number 13, and attempt to set forth many of man's misunderstandings of what Christianity is all about in an effort to allow the Bible to speak for itself.

Man has his conclusions and God has his. His he has been pleased to reveal in the Bible. This Bible, we believe, to be an intelligible source of divinely revealed information.

information which often contradicts the wisdom of men. If the Bible is not intelligible, that is, capable of being understood, then its entire purpose for being given is defeated, a concept impossible for us to entertain.

With all this in mind, we invite you to give the upcoming content on CD number 13 your most critical scrutiny. Please evaluate it and make comparison with your own understanding of what the scripture text means or with the conclusion set forth.

[76 : 43] It may well become a challenging intellectual and spiritual exercise. That could be very rewarding to the serious inquirer. At least, that's our sincere intention and that we are able to guarantee.

God bless you.