

Christianity Clarified Volume 21

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[0 : 00] What is Christianity really all about? The issue remains very confusing to a large segment of our society.

At times, it even extends to many who consider themselves Christian. Here, in an ongoing effort to try and dispel some of the confusion, is Marv Wiseman with another session of Christianity Clarified.

The Bible is a big deal. Why do some people, at least people called Christian, make such a big deal of the Bible? Isn't its importance overstated?

No, its importance is understated. The Bible is the absolute bedrock of everything that is Christianity, and it is no exaggeration that it is often called the Christian's only rule for faith and practice.

Understandably, then, everything Christian rises or falls with the authority or lack thereof of the Scriptures. Little wonder, then, that the book has been subjected to vicious attacks, even attempts to destroy it over the centuries.

[1 : 04] A new round of opposition confronts the authority of the Bible today. As religious pluralism, political correctness, and moral relativism take center stage, less and less authority is accorded the Bible, which, by the way, was largely regarded as the unquestioned authority only a generation or two ago.

Today's social engineers and apostles of modernity would have us believe the Bible's only current purpose is limited to the study of quaint customs and traditions of bygone days.

They deny its historical accuracy, challenge its assertions, and ridicule its standards of morality. But is not all this to be expected from the secular-minded materialists?

Of course it is. We should be shocked if they did not do this. What, however, is deeply troubling is the degree to which those who claim Christianity as their faith often nod in agreement to the crowd just mentioned.

Why would they do that? There are multiple reasons for this. One, the secular faction represents the avant-garde in academia, which in the minds of many means they are brilliantly all-knowing, and only a fool would dare challenge them.

[2 : 18] Well, no one wants to be thought a fool and out of step with the latest pronouncements from these highly placed scholars. And two, the sheer modernity of the latest position and opinion versus the very old tenets set forth by the Bible offers the excitement of the new as opposed to the comparatively familiar of the old.

Many are prepared to elevate the new above the old simply because it is new. And their motto is, if it's newer, it's better. And three, possessing only a superficial understanding of the Bible, thus failing to grasp and appreciate its breadth and depth, makes it relatively easy to put it and its authority aside as it is buried in an avalanche of so-called scholarship from the so-called experts.

In reality, though, those who have taken the time and devoted the mental energy the Bible deserves invariably come to one conclusion. This book is simply beyond human contrivance.

It pulsates with an inexplicable energy that no mere man can explain or replicate. Its accuracy, scope, emphasis, its bear-all, tell-all, its prophetic portions, many of which have already found precise fulfillment that guarantees the ultimate realization of those yet unfulfilled, simply puts the Scriptures beyond the possibility of human origin.

Human writers? Yes. Human authors? No. In no wise. Were this sacred book merely the invention of man, he surely would and could write more books equal to it.

[3 : 53] But he hasn't. The Origin of Today's World The Christian Bible is comprised of what is generally called the Old and New Testaments, or, as they are sometimes referred to, Old and New Covenants.

The important thing to remember is that neither is complete without the other. The Old by itself reveals a dramatic story, obviously devoid of an outcome. Lack of a conclusion simply leaves the story in mid-air, begging for an ending.

The New Testament is that ending. But the New Testament by itself leaves you at a loss to understand how it got there. Where did it come from? The New came from the Old, continues the Old, completes the Old.

It tells the rest of the story. It has been said that the New is in the Old concealed, and the Old is in the New revealed. Many Christians have erred for centuries in thinking, because the New Testament is a later revelation, the Old can be ignored.

All we need is the update. This is foolishness. Without the Old, and an understanding of it, one is at a loss to explain and appreciate much of the New.

[5 : 12] Both Old and New are verbally, plenarily inspired of God, and neither is more or less the Word of God than the other. While it is true the Old has a greater emphasis on things Jewish than does the New, yet these are essential for grasping the movement in the New from Jew to Gentile.

Never lose sight of the fact that, while the New represents an updated and later revelation, it derives its very meaning from that which preceded it and set the stage for it, the Old Testament.

The earlier section of the Bible, commonly referred to as the Old Testament, reveals the very earliest dealing between God and man. In Genesis, called the Book of Beginning, the record of how everything related to the heavens and the earth than those who dwelt upon the earth had their origin.

Only in the first few chapters of Genesis do we have the historical account which explains why our present world is the world that it is. The account of creation is closely followed in the third chapter of Genesis with the moral fall and failure of our original parents, and it's been downhill ever since.

After functioning in his fallenness for a thousand or more years, the Creator God saw fit to destroy his original creation and began anew with the singular family of Noah.

[6 : 38] Not long after the repopulation of humanity began, the Table of Nations is formed. Various groupings of humanity spread over the area following the Tower of Babel incident in Genesis 11 and the divine confusion of human language.

An anti-God protagonist named Nimrod, with his wife Samarimus, introduced a permeating evil that centered in Babylon, present-day Iraq.

It would contain the grossest kinds of idolatry coupled with pervasive humanism. The cult of Babylon and its practices would continue to influence and dominate the world scene through all succeeding millennia of humanity.

It will meet its final end when revealed for what it truly is in Revelation 17 and 18. It is there identified as Mystery Babylon, the mother of harlots.

Transformational Christianity What is it that really occurs at the supposed point of one's personal salvation? Does something of objective reality take place?

[7 : 53] Or is nothing present but one's subjective feelings, fueled only by imagination? Is there something that actually occurs between the individual and God Himself?

And how can we know? Untold multitudes of people over thousands of years have provided first-hand testimony that God Himself somehow entered their life and changed them forever from inside out.

Are they to be believed? And what would be their motive for lying? If true, what formula induced such an experience?

And could others employ the same formula and obtain the same results? Connecting with the very God of Heaven? Is such a formula embodied in what the Bible calls the Gospel?

And what exactly is that? How does it work? How is it implemented? How can one's life be transformed merely by believing something? Could it work for anyone?

[8 : 58] Good questions, all of them. And yes, it is what is called the Gospel, or good news, that can do that. In fact, it alone can do that, because God provided this information for that very purpose.

Romans 1 says this Gospel, this good news, is the power of God through faith unto all who believe. It is the singular way, the exclusive way, whereby human beings can connect with God.

And the link is God's Son, Jesus Christ, who came to earth so as to make that very connection available. 2 Corinthians 5 tells us God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

And when in an individual act of will, we embrace that truth, we are admitting our need and God's provision for that need.

That is called believing the good news, the Gospel. We personalize it by our response to it. This can only be accomplished by an individual, and not through the religious workings of any institution.

[10 : 14] It is not Protestant, nor Catholic, nor Jewish, nor Muslim, but it is Christian. And Christian is what it makes one upon believing it.

It is instantaneous and crisis-oriented, by which in a mere instant of time, one passes from spiritual death into spiritual life. It is divine regeneration.

That means it is God who actively affects this regeneration or renewing of our human spirit, which only God can reach.

It is this part of our being, our non-physical self, called the Spirit, that God makes new. This is called being born again.

God makes you new on the inside. Has He done this in you? Transformational Christianity Part 2 In our previous session, we briefly spoke of an actual connection occurring between the individual human and the Almighty.

[11 : 28] Admittedly, it's scary. But if it's available in a matter of spiritual life or death, wouldn't you want to know about it? And how can we know?

Untold numbers of people over thousands of years have provided first-hand personal testimony that the God of heaven somehow entered their life and changed them forever from the inside out.

In addition, this inward change, they insisted, occurred within them, soon begins to show up outwardly in their attitude and actions, often so much so that those closest to them, began noticing profound differences.

Differences in behavior, interest, and a seeming dramatic shift even in lifestyle are especially obvious. What happened here? If they really did make a connection with God Himself, was it some kind of religious phenomena that occurred just for them, if indeed they did have a visitation from the Almighty?

Was it just for them, but not for me? Was there some mysterious formula or ritual involved? If so, what was this formula that so dramatically changed them?

[12 : 50] Could others employ this same formula and obtain the same results as they, whereby one actually connects with God Himself? All of these are good questions, and you cannot find more important questions.

And yes, there is a formula, if you want to call it that, a recipe, a plan. It's called the plan of salvation, and it's all wrapped up in a message that is itself all wrapped up in a person.

The message is called the gospel, or the good news, and the person upon whom the good news is based is none other than the Son of God Himself, Jesus Christ.

The message is, this Son of God, Jesus Christ, died for our sin, paying the full penalty for all of humanity.

He was able to do this solely because of who He was, God in the flesh. Because He died as our substitute for our sin, the way of access to God has opened up, and we are free to come to God through this way of access He has provided, namely, He Himself.

[14 : 05] When we, in acknowledging our sin, and believe in Christ as our substitute for our sin, that is our response to what Christ provided in His sacrifice.

We place our faith or trust in Him alone because He alone made that payment, and we do this as an act of our will. It is not a religious ritual, nor are there any secret words to repeat.

This is a decision we can make in the same way we make any other important decision, except this decision is the most important anyone could ever make.

Have you made it? Transformational Christianity Part 3 It may well appear to many to be a stretch that we mortals can actually connect in a real way with the God of the universe.

In fact, such is the connection that God transforms the individual from the inside out. Of course, for someone who has never experienced this connection, it not only seems far-fetched, but downright impossible.

[15 : 20] But don't try to tell that to the multitudes who insist they have experienced that very connection, nor to those who have witnessed the dramatic change of life in those who have made that claim.

But, you see, this change, this connection with the Almighty, is the very reason God took the steps He did to make this man-and-God connection not only available, but incredibly desirable.

Even more than desirable, it is essential in order for man to become right with God. This is because the Father sent His only begotten Son to do the deed.

The deed? Yes, the deed. The deed of being made to be sin for us, so that we might be made right with God.

This deed that only Christ was qualified to accomplish was then prepared as an historical literary package, a story, if you will, called the Gospel, or the Good News.

[16 : 30] Romans chapter 1 tells us that when this story of the Gospel is proclaimed and people respond to it by believing it, the very power of God is unleashed in that believing person, and they are made anew and alive to God for the first time in their life.

We still don't know how God does this, how He can reach us deep inside our very being. We only know He does.

And we know this is the only way He does it. It is through our believing this good news that the man-God connection takes place.

It ought to be obvious, then, that this is why Christians from the first century to the present are charged with the privilege and responsibility of spreading this Gospel.

For, said Paul, it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. This power, and it alone, is that which regenerates or makes us over again on the inside.

[17 : 40] We become a child of God, forgiven for our sin and assured eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. And if that were not enough, several collateral provisions become ours at the very same time we believe, including a peace that passes understanding.

No wonder Christians sing, I love to tell the story of Jesus and His love. It is the sublimest of all stories ever told, and upon believing, it actually causes the spiritually dead to become spiritually alive.

How did faith originate? The principle of faith was originated by God in order to salvage fallen humanity. In man's corporate rebellion, via our first parents, we became alienated from God and utterly incapable of any work or deed that could restore us to God's favor and acceptance.

Man's moral impotence could accomplish nothing pleasing to God. Because man could not facilitate his own way back to God, he and all his progeny were doomed to remain alienated from their Creator.

Man's utter inability excluded him from a solution. Only one possibility remained. Would the offended Creator be willing to initiate a strategy whereby he could restore fallen man to the place and position of acceptance?

[19 : 29] And why should he? And were he to do so, what possible strategy could be derived? Yes, the offended Creator was willing to so initiate such a strategy.

And why he should do so? Only because of an amazing love. It was a love that stemmed not from the lovableness of his rebel creatures, but from his own great loving heart.

And what possible strategy could do it? What could restore man to the place of favor and acceptance while allowing God to maintain his character of justice and holiness?

How could God forgive without justice being fully satisfied? How could God forgive without sully or tarnishing his nature and character?

How could he suspend the judgment and death that man deserved for his sin? Justice demanded it. The moral integrity of a holy Creator must be maintained.

[20 : 35] It's part of what makes God God. The answer is utterly sublime. And it resides only in Judeo-Christianity. None of the religious systems can lay claim to this strategy.

Only in the confines of Judeo-Christianity do you find it, and it's called justification by faith. And coupled with this principle, God made out an IOU, payable to himself, with man making not even a smidgen of a contribution to it.

It was payable by himself, to himself. How's that for grace? The marker would be called in four thousand years later when God the mighty Maker died for man the creature's sin.

And even before Christ died and picked up the tab for man's sin, justification by faith had been in place all along. Before Christ came, man's faith was simply deposited in the person and promises of God.

Now, after Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, our faith is placed in that Savior who made good on all God had promised. And since that time, our message caused humankind worldwide to place their faith in the substitutionary Christ and be justified on the basis of faith, Christ being the object or depository of our faith.

[22 : 06] The Divine Rational of Faith So, what's the big deal about faith? Why is it emphasized so much, particularly in Christianity?

And isn't one faith as valid as another? Doesn't it only mean that you need to believe in something, and whatever that might be is just as good as whatever someone else believes?

Well, faith is a big deal, and nothing makes more of it than Christianity. But faith was not instituted by Christianity. It predates Christianity and goes back beyond even the root of Judaism.

We're told about Noah finding grace in the eyes of the Lord in Genesis 6, and Abraham who believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness in Genesis 15, predating both Judaism and Christianity.

So, what did that actually mean, and how did it work? And why? Why was this principle called faith even instituted by who and when?

[23 : 12] Well, first off, Noah demonstrated faith when he responded to God's call and built an ark. But Abraham, often called the father of Judaism, represents one of the earliest and clearest examples of faith.

Here is how it seems to have played out. God instituted the principle of faith because in doing so, he was able to require something that man could provide that was not works or deeds-oriented.

Man was simply required to believe. Well, who couldn't do that? Precisely! It is one reason the gospel of grace through faith is such good news.

Anybody can believe. But back to Abraham, who believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. It? What was it? His belief.

Abraham's belief was counted for righteousness. Notice, the text does not say Abraham was righteous. It says his faith, his belief, was counted to him in the place of righteousness.

[24 : 23] Abraham's faith was a substitute for the personal righteousness that he did not have. Since the quality of one's faith is determined by its object, what was the object of Abraham's faith?

Well, it was simply God himself and God's promise to Abraham. Follow me now. Here is God, a perfectly righteous and utterly holy being who demands holiness of character from any being in his presence.

But, like us, Abraham didn't have that. How then can he connect with God and be accepted by him? Only by faith. In other words, only by his volitional trust and confidence in who God was and what he said, it is as though God is saying, Abraham, I am well aware you are a flawed, fallen human being as is all of humanity, and I know you cannot fulfill or measure up to the standard of holiness that will allow me to accept you.

So, if you will place your trust in me, make me and my promises to you the object of your faith, I will accept your faith in place of the righteousness you do not have.

That is justification by faith. Truth alone deserves belief.

[25 : 49] InterVarsity Press, a Christian publishing house, released a book in the 1990s written by James W. Sire. It was an intriguing title. Why should anyone believe anything at all?

It addresses the issue of belief or faith, but on a different level than the usual approach. I viewed the book as a welcome addition to my library.

While James Sire dealt skillfully with several attendant issues to the subject of belief, his main thrust, at least as I gathered it, was that people should believe what they believe because it is true.

It comports with reality. Imagine that. Believing something, embracing something, committing to something, because you are convinced it is true.

What an utterly novel idea. Well, I'm being a little facetious, of course, yet maybe not so thoroughly at that. One is amazed at those today who dismiss the very notion of truth even existing.

[26 : 53] Or if it does, it is not discoverable. Multitudes relegate truth to the same standard as beauty, you know, in the eye of the beholder.

You have your faith and your truth and I have my truth and isn't it wonderful that our truths are mutually contradicting and yet we are both right.

Well, for these moderns, truth is whatever they perceive it to be. Create your own reality. And they make it sound so intellectual and sophisticated.

But in reality, it's pure nonsense. While preferences and opinions are all subjectively valid and everyone has a perfect right to whatever suits their subjective fancy, the door is closed when we try to apply our preferences to objective truth.

Because a thing is what it is, whether we want it to be or not, whether we like it or not, or whether we believe it or not. Truth is that which corresponds to reality.

[28 : 00] Those who insist there is no objective truth, particularly in areas of morality, might as well say there is no such thing as reality. Actually, the only absolute to which they will agree is the absolute that there are no absolutes.

Go figure. It all becomes a study in absurdity. So, while the axiom of believing something because it is true appears very simple, it also sets the stage for dealing with the attendant issue of truth itself.

It does exist, you know, with all its pains and its joys. When we believe something, anything, because we discover it to be true, we step into the reality of the thing.

And when we refuse to believe something that is true, we are living in an untruth of the thing. Its truthfulness is not altered, but remains intact.

It is we who are out of step with the truth, and we need to reverse ourselves and embrace the truth to be aligned with reality. God is a God of reality. God's revelation is adequate.

[29 : 25] Have you ever heard someone raise the following question? Since there is so much emphasis in the Christian faith about believing, why hasn't God made himself more obvious, making it easier to believe in him?

I mean, if he is really there, why does he seem to be hiding? God could make himself more known and make it easier for people to believe.

And then, even atheists would be compelled to believe. And isn't that what God wants? People to believe? Yes, he does want people to believe in him.

And this is why the scripture says, without faith, it is impossible to please God. For he who would come to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

And it is true that God has not fully revealed himself. However, he has adequately revealed himself and given us the ability to process information about his revelation.

[30 : 33] He has also put into action the principle of faith, the God-given volitional option of belief or unbelief. And he does not ask us to believe in him without sufficient reason.

God does not want our faith to be baseless, but intelligent. Intelligent faith has processed and evaluated the several evidences God has given in creation, the order of the universe, and the reliable historical records of his working through the incarnation of his son, Jesus Christ.

faith is man's response to what God accomplished in providing his son as a sacrifice for sin. When we respond to that good news, we deposit our faith or reliance in who Christ was, what he did, why he did it, and how man's eternal destiny is wrapped up in it.

This kind of belief is known as the justification by faith kind of belief. It means to be declared righteous before God merely on the basis of our faith in him.

And in doing so, we simultaneously admit that we are unable to provide the quality of righteousness God requires. So, we trust in him to provide for us that which he himself requires.

[31 : 58] But, why should God do that? Because that's the kind of God he is, a God of love and grace, a God who provides for us what we could not provide and then gives it to us as a free gift.

Can we see, then, why this is called good news or the gospel? Placing one's faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ is a far cry from a leap of faith in the dark.

It is a responsive and intelligent step of faith into the light. And in taking that step, we align ourselves with reality.

And God is a God of the real, not the imaginary. This justification by faith is the pearl of the Christian faith.

What's Behind Christian Nerdiness? Speaking to a group of college students, the visiting lecturer was addressing the claims of the Christian faith and told these young people they should give very serious consideration to who Christ was, why he came, what he accomplished, and why it mattered so much.

[33 : 16] At the conclusion of his talk, he offered to entertain any questions they might want to ask. A sophomore in the rear stood to his feet. Encouraged by the speaker to go ahead, the young man began.

I appreciated some of the things you said tonight. In fact, I've been thinking a lot about this spiritual stuff. But there's something about Christians or people who call themselves Christians that really bugs me.

Man, they seem so nerdy, like real holy Joes. I don't know many of them, but they don't seem normal. They never come to our keg parties. They don't smoke.

Always going to church and carrying a Bible around. They just come across as weird, like they never enjoy life or anything. Man, I couldn't live like that. I mean, I want to have some fun and live a little.

What is it with these people anyway? If that's the way you have to act because you're a Christian, I mean, count me out. The speaker couldn't help noticing a number of bobbing heads around the audience, indicating they agreed with the question he had just asked.

[34 : 24] Offering a brief prayer and hoping that other Christians who might also be in the audience would do so as well, he started by saying, I understand exactly what you're saying.

In fact, your very observation was one I myself had made prior to my becoming a Christian. So, I guess after a manner of speaking, I too have become what many might call a nerd.

But let me try and explain what I think lies behind it. You see, when one becomes a Christian, he really does begin seeing with different eyes than before.

The Bible says those in Christ become a new creation. And there often is a radical difference. Christians even view their own body in a new way.

Before, they thought their body was theirs to do with as they pleased, so they were eager to engage in whatever they thought pleasurable with whomever. But after Christ saved them, they realize they have a body and soul that Christ died for on that cross.

[35 : 28] They now view all of themselves, including their body, as being the property of Christ. They are merely stewards of their body. They are very serious about caring for it, including what they put into it that may be harmful to it.

For Christians, the Bible makes it clear that we are not our own, for we have been bought with a price, even the blood of Christ. And, as for those who carry their Bible, well, if you really believe it to be God's Word, as Christians do, it only seems logical to have it at your fingertips for ready reference for yourself or someone else, especially in an academically charged, controversial setting that a campus often is.

So, bottom line, I think we're saying but without apology, and yet, I hope with some understanding that the secular lifestyle and the Christian's lifestyle simply represent two different and distant worldviews, and each should allow the other to be true to their own convictions.

Belief Determines Behavior We've all heard it before.

Maybe we have even said it, frequently. When it comes to religion, it isn't what you believe that matters, it's what you do. Isn't that right?

[36 : 54] Well, yes and no. What do we mean? Just this. What we do is important, but how we get to the doing is equally important, because doing is preceded by being, and being is determined by belief.

In other words, what we do is based upon what we believe. Beliefs establish the agenda and the value system under which we operate. We do not do what we do so we can establish our beliefs, but we do what we do because of our already established beliefs.

Our beliefs determine our attitudes, our priorities, and our value system. Out of these things, we act and engage our doing. Perhaps we should think of our belief like the root and our behavior as the fruit.

There can be no good fruit if there is no good root. Christ used the good and the corrupt trees as examples, and each bore fruit after its kind.

Jesus said, don't expect a corrupt tree to bear good fruit, or vice versa. It simply will not happen. The kind of fruit we bear is determined by the kind of tree we are.

[38 : 18] Don't try to begin with the fruit. You must begin with the tree being what it needs to be. And then the fruit or results from the tree will be of like kind.

Good fruit for good works. This is what the Apostle Paul referred to in Ephesians 2 when he tells us we are not saved by good works but saved unto good works.

The temporary objective of every believer while on earth is to engage in good works or as Christ said, we are to let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

But you can't let your light shine if you don't have one. Where can you find a light you can shine? Only in the one who is the light of the world.

Light, spiritual light, is merely one of the several things Christ imparts to one who comes to him. We receive his light and all else he gives when we exercise our will by believing in him.

[39 : 28] So while we see that what we do is important, what we believe precedes and determines what we do. It's the old cart before the horse analogy. If we try to make the behavior pull the cart, we get it backwards.

No one ever saw a cart pull a horse and spiritually no one ever produced behavior acceptable to God without the right belief being in place beforehand. Behavior is what you do with what you believe.

Belief is primary and critical, but it isn't merely belief for the sake of belief. It is believing something because of the truth of it. Coming to Christ Throughout the four gospels, Jesus consistently refers to the reality of things spiritual with things physical.

There is physical light and spiritual light, physical bread and water and life and death, and spiritual bread, water, life, and death. Christ is merely saying that what light, bread, water, life, and death mean to our physical bodies, these also have a counterpart in value to the human soul or spirit.

We tend to be very conscious about the physical needs for our body. Billions are spent every day on feeding, clothing, and pampering it. But our spiritual self needs food, water, and attention as well, and we neglect it to our great peril.

[41 : 02] Because man is not to live by bread alone, Jesus said, thus clearly declaring that we are more than our physical body. It is the spiritual to which Jesus makes reference in the 11th chapter of Matthew when he says, Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Jesus is not telling them to take a break from their physical labor and that he will physically refresh them. And when he continues saying, Take my yoke upon you, he did not mean the physical kind of yoke worn by oxen.

He meant to come to him and align yourself with him, signing on to be his disciple and be taught of him. This is precisely what the twelve apostles did at the invitation of Christ.

And while he then engaged them in an arduous ministry that was anything but easy, they nonetheless enjoyed a real rest for their souls spiritually. When Jesus mentioned those who labored and were heavy laden, it wasn't from the task of fishing and mending nets.

He referred to their spiritual labors and weariness that accompanied the letter of law that was imposed upon the people by the religious establishment. The problem wasn't with the law God gave through Moses.

[42 : 23] It was just and righteous. The problem was what the so-called experts did with the law. They were consummate nitpickers who majored on legal minutia while overlooking the real and helpful provisions of the law.

And this produced a laborious burden upon all of Israel. This God never intended. Christ countermanded all that while carefully observing the law that he came not to destroy but to fulfill.

Today, some religious establishments require the same kind of burdensome nonsense via ritual tradition and foldy roll as did the Jews of Jesus' day.

A lot of religious hoops to jump through. What's the solution? The same now as it was then. You come to Jesus Christ by an act of your will and he will give you the spiritual rest, peace, and security no one else or no organization can provide.

It is sin and man-made religion that ensnares people, binds them, and makes more and more demands on them with a heavy yoke. Jesus said his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

[43 : 38] He'll never make unreasonable demands upon those who come to him. Come now. Why Some Have Not Believed Through the past two thousand years since the gospel became available via the death and resurrection of Christ, it has been proclaimed to untold multitudes.

The presentation and offer of eternal life by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ has been made to massive audiences such as a Billy Graham crusade, on television, in church services, and to one single person in a private setting.

As a result, huge numbers have seen the merits for the truth of the gospel, have believed on Christ as their Savior, and were regenerated by the Spirit of God.

But along with those multitudes who responded, there were also multitudes who did not. Why didn't they? After all, who could possibly pass up the offer of sins forgiven and the promise of eternal life?

What reasons might they give for their rejection? There are no doubt multiple reasons given, but we are persuaded that a principal reason why many do not embrace Christ and His good news is because of an inadequate understanding of what is actually involved.

[45 : 06] Sometimes, because of time constraints, the gospel is presented in a way that leaves the hearer unable to make the connection between the message and its provisions with his own needs.

Sometimes, one is simply unable to connect the dots as to how this information really applies to him. The information and his understanding of it is simply inadequate, and he may not know enough or understand enough to be able to make a genuine commitment to Christ.

Especially may this be true when one is hearing the gospel for perhaps the first time. Trusting Christ for one's eternal salvation truly is a momentous decision that will impact every sphere of one's life, not only in this world, but the next.

And this person needs our prayers and our patience. It is unwise for Christians, no matter how sincere, to attempt to pressure or push someone into a decision they are not able to make in an intelligent way.

After all, we are not responsible to convert people. That's the job of the Holy Spirit. Our job is to faithfully and joyfully share the gospel with people, tell them how we came to faith in Christ, and then prayerfully commit that person to the Spirit of God to work in their heart in the way that only he can.

[46 : 36] And this may require repeated hearings of the gospel over a period of time, perhaps even years before one actually gets it and is willing to make that decision.

Of course, they run the risk of running out of time because none of us know when hours will be up. Each one who has heard the gospel and does understand sufficiently what is involved should be honest with himself and ask himself whether he truly needs more information or whether he knows the necessary information and has simply been unwilling to take that step.

A lack of information and a lack of willingness are two different matters. Do you know which lack you are facing? Do you know which lack you are facing?

An illusion of being in charge. Children in every culture the world over have one great passion.

That is to be a grown-up, a real adult. And why is that so desirable? Because children naively think when you're an adult all grown-up, then you can do anything you want.

[47 : 51] Ah, little do they know. But that's the illusion. We call it personal autonomy or self-governance, making your own decisions, going where we want, when we want.

Of course, when you become an adult, it doesn't actually work that way, does it? So, it is an illusion of childhood that invariably gets corrected shortly after arriving at that coveted adulthood.

childhood. Clinging to our personal autonomy is a major excuse lots of folks have for not wanting to surrender their life to God. They want to remain in charge, make their own decisions, etc.

It's that master of my own fate, captain of my destiny thing. But that's an illusion, too. We're simply not in charge of anything to the extent we would like to think we are.

Have you ever had unexpected events enter your life that upset your plans? Of course. We never had control over those things, nor how they played out.

[48 : 57] In childhood, we lack authority and are not in charge. In old age, we have authority but lack ability and are not in charge.

In fact, we are so not in charge, we can't even make our body do what we want it to. In youth and in old age, there is realization we are not really in charge.

But between youth and old age, this is when we really are in charge, right? Ah, don't be so quick. Remember the unexpected things that upset the apple cart when we thought we were in charge?

Who was in charge when we were fired? Or hired? Who was in charge when the officer pulled you over or the judge slammed down his gavel?

Or who was in charge when the batter drove your best curveball out of the park? Who was in charge at 5th and Main the day of your near-fatal accident? Our personal autonomy, my friend, is illusory.

[50 : 05] Sure, there are times when we think we are, looks like we are, folks think we are in charge. But it can all change in a heartbeat, or the lack thereof.

These realities visit us all of the time. It's life. And as much as we hate to admit it, we are not as autonomous as we'd like to think. This is why it's a terribly flimsy excuse to say, as some do, I don't want to give my life over to Christ because I need control.

It's my life, and I want to call the shots. How foolish is it to insist on being in charge of our own life while actually not being that at all, when we could simply turn everything over to the one who is truly in charge and derive the benefits from being under his benevolent supervision.

The very least God can do. Because God is holiness and righteousness personified, it would appear only logical that he must in every case be just and righteous in all his doings, whether with men or angels.

What precisely does justice entail? It is a universal concept and one that seems to have been identified and agreed upon by humanity through the ages.

[51 : 33] Simply put, justice is the proper sentence carried out upon the guilty. The proper sentence for the guilty is appropriate punishment. The proper sentence for innocence is acquittal.

So when the guilty are punished and the innocent are set free, we say, justice was done. In each case, the subject received what was deserved.

We know how difficult it is to render justice in human courts. The information that would sometimes exonerate or incriminate the accused is never full or complete.

And the difficult task of the jury is to reach a verdict with only the available evidence to consider. Many cases would have received a different verdict had all the information been available.

Consequently, some verdicts legally handed down by a well-meaning jury fall far short of justice having been done. This is not a problem with our just judge of the universe.

[52 : 42] He who knows everything is not dependent upon exhibits being presented either for or against the accused. He need not cross-examine or even question the witness.

And God's all-knowing mind fully considers any and all mitigating factors when he judges each person before him. When rendering his verdict, it will be perfect justice administered.

It means one's just desserts will be realized. Justice is receiving the sentence that perfectly fits the offense. Not one bit more than is deserved, nor one bit less.

And while this is hard for man to achieve in his human law courts, it is the only way God operates, and it reflects his righteous nature. There will be no appeals and no reprieves.

Once the judge of heaven and earth pounds his gavel, justice has been done. And justice is the very least God can dispense.

[53 : 48] Every person before him can definitely count on receiving from God exactly what is deserved at the very minimum. But while God cannot do less, he can do more, much more.

His wonderful grace is available to all who know they deserve God's justice, but they have placed their faith in Jesus Christ who bore God's justice for them.

We can receive the justice we deserve, or we can receive the justice through Christ, our substitute. When we do, God's justice is wondrously transformed into grace, mercy, and peace, all procured for us through the death and resurrection of Christ our Lord.

Included in the Cost of the Ticket Many years ago, a European immigrant came to the United States as a youth with his family, and poor as they were, their passage was assigned in the lower hold of the ship.

They had carefully selected the food items most likely to keep and sustain them during the long passage. Making a living and improving his lot in the USA, he grew to adulthood and into more mature years, and had managed to accumulate a meager savings that he hoped would support him for the rest of his life.

[55 : 17] Yet he had one strong ambition to fulfill while he was still physically able. It was to pay a return visit to Europe, to the town where he was born.

But it would be expensive. The cost of an ocean voyage had increased considerably from what it was when, as a youth, his family made the trip years ago. Deciding to sacrifice and reduce his savings so he could make the trip, he went to the steamship lines and purchased the ticket.

As when his family left Europe many years earlier, he again secured several simple food items to sustain him for the several days at sea. After visiting and reconnecting at the village of his youth, he again stocked up on the necessary food items to eat on the way back to America.

Each simple meal he ate all alone in his small inside cabin. And then, when in only a short time the ship would arrive in New York, he decided to treat himself to a few last meals in the ship's elegant dining area, where, he concluded, all the wealthy people dined.

Upon being seated, the waiter handed him a fancy engraved menu and informed him he would return momentarily to take his order. Immediately, he thought he would look for the cheapest items listed and keep his cost as low as possible.

[56 : 38] But he was perplexed. Perplexed because none of the elegant described entrees and other items had prices indicated beside them. When the waiter returned, he asked him in a whisper why the cost of the menu items was not given.

He was unable to make a selection because he couldn't tell how much the items would cost. The waiter patiently informed him that all three daily meals plus the midnight buffet were all included in the price he paid for his ticket.

He was stunned. He could have been dining sumptuously at every meal in the beautiful linen tablecloth surroundings, enjoying the accompanying music and chatting with the other passengers.

Instead, he was all alone in his little cabin trying to stretch the meager supply of food he brought with him. And it was all included in the price of the ticket.

There was no way he could recoup the loss or relive it. It was all gone. And it had all been included with the cost of the ticket. Sad as this was, it doesn't begin to compare with what Christians forfeit by way of not enjoying the benefits of the Christian life that were all included in the cost of the ticket.

[57 : 57] The full price of redemption that Christ paid by his death on the cross includes numerous operating assets, benefits, and resources many Christians don't even know they have.

They came with the cost of the ticket. Moving Toward Saving Faith Few words are used as ambiguously or as vaguely as the word faith.

We have explained in past segments that faith is a common commodity possessed by everyone. We noted that even the convinced atheist has faith, although it is not, of course, religious faith or a faith that has anything to do with the spiritual.

Yet, he does have faith, that is, confidence or trust just the same. The difference, of course, is realized in the object of the atheist's faith, which in his case makes himself the object of his faith.

Rather than having placed his faith, confidence, or trust in God or in Jesus Christ, the atheist has placed his faith, confidence or trust in his own intellect and reasoning powers.

[59 : 14] He himself is the object or depository of his faith. While it is true the atheist would loathe the idea, even of the word faith, because it conveys to most people the concept of something religious, which, of course, he soundly denies, we are using the word faith in the classic sense of its definition, which simply means trust, reliance, or confidence, which, again, of course, everyone has and uses on a daily basis.

We all exercise faith in a bank, a secure online commercial site, a best friend, an insurance company, an airline, and on and on.

These are all objects of our faith and trust to do whatever we have contracted them to do. Despite the fact they have nothing to do with anything spiritual, they are, nonetheless, objects of our faith in the particular area where they function.

The huge difference between this kind of everyday faith, possessed by everyone, and the Christian faith is, of course, found in the fact that Jesus Christ is the object or depository of the one who is exercising the faith, commitment, or trust.

Faith in Christ is not a generic catch-all trust, but a very specific trust. And, unlike all other objects of faith, faith in Jesus Christ involves eternal consequences.

[60 : 52] The importance of understanding this cannot be over-exaggerated. While the faith itself that is possessed by the believing Christian is the very same kind of faith, the only thing that makes it different to the salvation of the soul is that Christ is the object of our faith, and what we are believing in Him for is the forgiveness of our sin because of the price He paid for it in His substitutionary death.

This removes our faith from the generic and deposits it in the particular. This is referred to as saving faith or justification by faith via believing on the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The ancient Latins had a helpful explanation of the three levels of faith we plan to explore upcoming. Fascinating content you'll appreciate. The first level of belief Three Latin words will help us all to understand the three levels of belief.

These represent progressive levels that leads to what we have described as saving faith. And, no, we don't have to know Latin to appreciate them because they have a close resemblance to English.

They are a wonderful triad of terms called *noticia*, *essentia*, and *fiducia*. The first word *noticia* spelled N-O-T-I-C-I-A relates to our English word notice.

[62 : 35] This represents the first step or level that must be taken before saving faith can be realized. *Noticia* is realized when anyone first hears of the gospel of Christ.

We connect this initial hearing with the idea of being notified, simply another form of the word *noticia*. One who hears the gospel for the first time has been notified, or placed on notice about Jesus Christ, who he is, and what he did.

To have been notified about Christ is the absolute first step that must be taken before anyone can move forward in their belief. This is connected with the proclaiming of the gospel or good news of Christ.

It is the meaning of the phrase in Romans 10 that says, Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The context makes it clear that the faith in question is saving faith, or faith that is exercised which results in the saving of one's soul.

Our being notified is the very first step everyone must take before saving faith can be realized. Nothing can be done or believed by the one hearing until he has first heard the information about Christ.

[63 : 57] Everyone who has become a believer in Christ had to start here, first of all, that is, simply hearing the word regarding the person of Jesus Christ.

And for many, this is as far as they have gone, they have been notified, they have heard, but have done nothing or believed nothing else about him in connection with what they have heard.

This is the first level of belief, and no one can move to the second or third level until they have experienced this level of information, this level called notitia.

We could say that in notitia, the hearer has been notified, or has noticed Jesus Christ regarding who he is, and he has been put on notice about him.

Many throughout the world have never experienced even this first level of belief. The name and person of Jesus Christ is completely foreign to them. Faith does come by hearing, but these cannot have faith in Christ because they have never even heard of his existence, much less about who sent him, why he was sent, or what he accomplished, and for whom.

[65 : 09] Here, level one is the beginning point for everyone. Notitia, N-O-T-I-C-I-A in the Latin.

All who have heard this message have been notified. The Second Level of Belief Once someone has been notified regarding the gospel of Christ, they have experienced the very first level of belief, and no one has ever bypassed this level to become a Christian without having experienced this basic and fundamental information the Latins call notitia.

But they have done nothing with this information apart from hearing it or logging it in their mind. Doing something with what they have heard involves this Second Level of Belief, which our Latin friends call assentia, spelled A-S-S-E-N-T-I-A.

And you may have already picked up on the English equivalent of assentia, and if so, you recognize it means assent. When we assent to something, it means we agree with it.

This is the Second Level of Belief. The First Level is notitia, and it means we have been notified regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ, but we haven't done anything about our being notified about it.

[66 : 42] This Second Level of Belief is experienced when we actually do something about what we heard when we were notified or put on notice about Christ and what it is that needs to be done with it.

We need to agree with it or assent to it, and this is assentia. It occurs when we process the information about Christ and reach a decision based on the information with which we were notified.

We must accept that information as valid and agree with it, or we reject the information and disagree with it. If we agree, we assent to it.

If we disagree, we dissent or become a dissenter, and we refuse to take the second level of belief. Here is where many people are today.

They have heard the gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ, and that he died a death as a substitute for the sins of the world in general, and for their sins in particular.

[67 : 46] They heard the information, they have been notified, but they simply do not agree with it. They do not assent to the information. There may be numerous reasons they give for not agreeing with it, but the bottom line is, they don't.

Thus, after having been notified, that is, notitia, they go no further than level one of belief. Level two, which is to assent to what they hear or agree with it, they refuse to go that far, and they remain in their unbelief.

They have heard notitia, but they refuse to agree with what the gospel says, what it says about sin, salvation, eternal life, and everything else involved in the gospel. The person who dissents may change his mind from not agreeing to agreeing.

He may give more thought to the gospel or experience certain things in his life that causes him to move from disagreeing to agreeing, and if he does, he moves into the second level of belief and becomes an assenter.

This assentia is the second level of belief. He is then prepared to engage the third and final level that leads to his salvation. It's upcoming and it's wonderful.

[69 : 09] The Third Level of Belief Before anyone can become a Christian, he has to have been notified about Jesus Christ, who he is, why he came, who sent him, what he did, and why it matters.

This first level of belief is called the notification, or notitia, as we explained from the Latin. Once one has been notified, or given the information about the gospel, they must then do something about what they heard, and there are but two possibilities.

One must agree with it, or disagree with it. To agree means we assent. Its Latin is called essentia, and to assent means we agree with the information given in the gospel, and we accept it, or assent to its truthfulness.

This is Level 2 of Believing. Level 2 means we have done something about Level 1, namely, we have agreed with it, assented to it.

And many have come to this level, but have gone no further. They have acted on Level 1 by agreeing with it, but now they must act on Level 2 in order to actually become a Christian.

[70 : 22] That brings us to Level 3, which is arrived at when one does something with Level 2. Then they move to Level 3 in Fiducia. When we make a commitment with our will to what we agreed or assented to in Level 2, we become then a bona fide believer in Christ to the saving of our soul.

Fiducia, in Latin, relates to the word fidelity in English, and it connects with faith, or as in justification by faith.

We may call our faithful dog, Fido, which is a derivative of the word fiducia. Our banking institutions often use the word fidelity or trust because we want our money placed with someone we can trust.

Husbands and wives pledge their fidelity or faithfulness to one another, and doing so is one's willful act of commitment to another in what we call good faith.

And if one breaks that trust, they are guilty of infidelity. People who do not espouse a spiritual faith are called infidels.

[71 : 36] This term, Fiducia, is the third and final level of believing, and no one can arrive at it without having negotiated levels 1 and 2, or being notified about the gospel, and agreeing or assenting to what the gospel declares.

Then, entering into level 3 of belief means we willfully, deliberately entrust ourselves to Jesus Christ. We commit ourselves or place our reliance upon Christ for his forgiveness and salvation.

It is only in this follow-through of the third and final level of belief that salvation actually occurs. Tragically, many have stopped at level 1 or 2 and mistakenly think of themselves as Christian when it is only those who have actually committed themselves to level 3 whom God accepts as genuine believers in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

These words, from the Latin, Notitia, Accentia, Fiducia, bless them all, and the God who is worthy of believing.

You've just heard another session of Christianity Clarified with Marv Wiseman. Preview of upcoming volume 22.

[73 : 04] There probably isn't a normal human being living anywhere on planet Earth who hasn't at some time asked this question. It has been rightly identified as the question that just will not go away.

And you probably already know the question and, like most of us, have asked it at multiple times. It's automatic whenever something unexplainable comes into our life.

And the question, of course, is why? Why? Why as in, why has this happened to me? Or, why this? Why me?

Why now? What did I do to deserve this? Does God understand what I'm going through? And if he does, does he care? And if he does care, why doesn't he do something about it?

Or, is he unable to do something about it? Doesn't he see how I'm hurting with this? But if he's God, isn't he supposed to be able to do anything about anything he wants?

[74 : 11] And if so, why doesn't he want to? Or, is there even a God who actually exists? Because if there is, why does he allow all this terrible stuff going on all over the world?

These questions, and no doubt others you could ask on your own, are all a part of the human predicament that comes from just living in this world and having a limited perspective on everything.

And it certainly results in a lot of confusion and sometimes deep, deep pain that just doesn't go away.

Satisfying answers just do not seem available. At least none we have heard yet. So how are we to cope in all of this sometimes indescribable agony?

Multitudes of people through the ages have come to despair for the lack of believable, understandable answers. Some have even taken their own life rather than going on without answers to their particular why.

[75 : 20] When it comes to satisfying biblical and logical answers, we certainly do not have all the answers we would like.

Nor can we guarantee that the answers we do have will be adequate and satisfying to you. But without reservation, we can say that we have discovered some answers that have been comforting and satisfying to a great degree.

These answers were in response to questions as to the why of a mentally disabled child, the unexpected death of that child as an adult, and the sudden death of a spouse after nearly 50 years of blissful marriage.

A loss of health was thrown into the mix of all these questions with coronary heart disease and open heart surgeries. And, of course, emotionally and psychologically and spiritually, every pastor has some struggles with his own set of whys in connection with ministry, its blessings, and its disappointments.

So, while this does not mean we have all the answers we would like as to the whys we are prompted to ask, but it does mean the answers we have received have given us a calm contentment regarding the answers we do not yet have.

[76 : 53] And this is what we want for you. And, we'll attempt to provide those answers on the upcoming volume 22 of Christianity Clarified.

If you are already receiving Christianity Clarified on an ongoing basis, you will receive volume 22 automatically. But if not, and you would like to obtain it free and postpaid with no strings attached, you may write to us at Christianity Clarified, Grace Bible Church, 1500 Group Road, and that's spelled G-R-O-O-P, 1500 Group Road, Springfield, Ohio, 45504.

Telephone orders may be placed by calling 937-322-3113, preferably between the hours of 9 a.m. till noon, Eastern Standard Time.

Or, orders may be placed online by logging on to gracebiblespringfield.com. That's all one word, gracebiblespringfield.com.

Also, please remember that if there are others that come to your mind whom you believe would be helped by this content, you need only send us their name and mailing address, along with permission to use your name as the person who thought of them and recommended them to us, because we do not mail Christianity Clarified CDs to anyone anonymously.

[78 : 31] Also, be assured that should you choose to recommend one or several as recipients to Christianity Clarified, they will never receive requests from us for donations, nor will their names or addresses ever be sold or given to anyone else for any purpose.

This is Pastor Marv Wiseman thanking you for being a recipient of Christianity Clarified and inviting you to come along with us in the discovery of some very critical whys that can make an enormous difference in your life.

They have in mind, God bless you.