

# Contradictory Concepts?

By Gary Henry

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness . . ." (2 Peter 3:10,11).

In the New Testament, as in life, there are many pairs of concepts or ideas that seems to be contradictory but are actually complementary. "Faith" and "works," for example, seem on the surface to cancel one another, but on closer examination we see that they strengthen one another. In order to get what the gospel of Christ offers us, we have to emphasize BOTH concepts. Consider some other examples of complementary couples:

**Development of one's own spiritual life vs. evangelism/edification of others.** Various individuals may lean in one of these directions more than the other, but neither can be totally ignored. And when we see ourselves overemphasizing one of these at the expense of the other, most of us try to supply some balance on the other side.

**Contentment vs. the desire to better one's situation.** Some may find it hard to get the balance just right, but it is possible to

be both content and motivated to improve one's station in life. And what we see, in fact, is that our motivation enriches our contentment and vice versa. The two concepts are not enemies but friends.

**Doing today's work vs. longing for the Lord's return.** Theologians have long debated whether Christianity is about the "here and now" or about the "hereafter." And historians have argued whether Jesus was a social reformer or a preacher of the endtime. But in the New Testament, there is no conflict. Which truth needs to be emphasized at a given moment depends on who the audience is and what the needs of that audience may be at that time.

In 2 Peter 3:10-11 there is a striking reminder of the importance of the Lord's return. But in the same passage, we also see an emphasis on the Christian's responsibility right now: "what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness." If this is a "tension," it is a healthy one; being pulled in both ways helps us. We need to be pulled in the direction of our present duty and in the direction of our future hope. The truth runs both ways.

**Luke 8:38-39** - Now the man from whom the demons had departed begged Him that he might be with Him. But Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

Sick				December Birthdays	News and Notes
Joey Stephens (Anna Stalling's Uncle)	Owen Mauldin (Seth and Summer Mauldin's Son)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister)		
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Jeffery Miller (Friend of Walker Davis)		
Emma Hettinger (William Herd's Mother)	Neal May (Manna Jones' Mother)	Roger Whatley (Daphne Whatley's son)	Andrew Hagewood (Friend of Sarah Norman)		
Pat Webb (Friend of Jared Johnson)	Quinton Addison (April Jerkins' Grandfather)	Diane Hudson (Josh Hudson's grandmother)	Arline Harkrider (Nichole Pender's Grandmother)		
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Don Meadows (Ashley Miller's step-father)	Emily Stallings (Anna's sister)	Madi Wise (Friend of the Robert's)		
Marty Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Frances Fultz (Davis Fultz's grandmother)	Judy Nichols (Suzanne's Mother)	Ann Scaff (Hannah Morris' grandmother)		

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Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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## Courageous Faith

By Paul Earnhart



### Thoughts to Ponder

It doesn't matter how great the pressure is. What really matters is where the pressure lies-whether it comes between you and God or whether it presses you nearer his heart.

For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline. Be not ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, nor of me his prisoner; but suffer hardship with the gospel according to the power of God..." (2 Timothy 1:7-8)

The Prussian king Frederick the Great was widely known as an agnostic. In striking contrast, one of his most trusted officers, General Von Zealand, was a deeply convicted believer. It is reported that during a very festive gathering of his general staff, the king created uproarious laughter with his crude jokes about the Son of God. Finally, after enduring this with much patience, Von Zealand arose quietly and addressed the king:

"Sire, you know that I have not feared death. I have fought and won 38 battles for you. I am an old man; I shall soon have to go into the presence of one greater than you, the mighty God who saved me from sin, the Lord Jesus Christ whom you are blas-

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pheming. I salute you, sire, as an old man who loves his Saviour, on the edge of eternity."

The room went deathly still, and with a trembling voice the king replied, "General Von Zealand - I beg your pardon! I beg your pardon!" and with that the party quietly ended.

It took courage for an old Prussian general to stand alone before his king and amidst his scoffing fellow officers and announce boldly and

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Worship .....10:20 AM  
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without shame his own deep faith in that God and His Son whom they were blaspheming, but that is just the kind of faith which being a follower of Christ requires. We cannot serve Him and be ashamed of Him, no matter what the odds or the dangers.

So many have stood entirely alone in defense of their confidence in the true God. **Noah** is a remarkable example. It is difficult to conceive the loneliness of being, with your family, the only one on earth who genuinely believed in God. (This may have included his father, Lamech, and grandfather, Methuselah, who, if the genealogy is complete, died just before the flood.) But Noah was not only steadfast, he was bold, preaching earnestly to warn his contemporaries of a rapidly approaching disaster (**2 Peter 2:5**) - and at last, in the final 100 years before the deluge, rearing three sons who shared his singular faith so strongly that they were able to convert their wives (**2 Pet. 2:5**). What laughter and contempt his boat and his preaching must have provoked can be easily imagined. Noah's was a faith that blossomed in a spiritual desert against incredible odds.

**Abraham** was a kindred spirit. What amusement and disdain must have followed him out of Ur of the Chaldees as he left that pagan, but prosperous, city to go to some place about which he knew absolutely nothing! The only explanation he could offer was that he went at the behest of the true and living God, risking everything on His promises. Folks that worshipped the likes of Nannar the moon-god would not have been much impressed. Abraham was all alone in his faith, a solitary figure walking out on ap-

parent thin air. It is no marvel that he is called "the father of the faithful."

And then there is **Joseph** - friendless in Egypt, with the vivid memory of his brothers' hate and the heartbreak of a presumed abandonment by his once doting father. He could easily have felt forsaken by God as well - all those dreams and visions, and now this! Whether Potiphar's wife was a beauty or a hag is not stated by Moses, but the young Joseph, in the flower of his manhood and perhaps on the edge of despair, was certainly vulnerable to her seductions. We marvel, therefore, at the courage of his lonely, but unyielding, faith when he resists her with the words: "...how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (**Genesis 39:9**). How he honored the God of his fathers!

And finally there is **Moses** and **Joshua** and **Elijah** and **Jeremiah** and **Daniel** and the "three Hebrew children" and **John the Baptist** and the **Twelve** and **Paul**. The list is long. But our names need to be added to it. We need a holy boldness about God and His Son as we live amidst a perverse generation - an open and unashamed conviction that attaches itself not only to who Jesus is, but to what He says - "the testimony of the Lord."

There is a very good reason why we need to be uncomfortable with a faith that fades and wilts and falls back at the first hint of social disapproval. Jesus said, "Whoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he comes in the glory of his Father and with his holy angels" (**Mark 8:38**). Must we have a supportive crowd before our convictions find a voice, or do we have the courage to speak up for Christ and the gospel even when we stand alone? It is a critical question which all of us must honestly face.



## Have You Asked Jesus to Come into Your Heart?

By Bryan Gibson

Today, when the question is asked, "What must I do to be saved?" one popular reply is, "Ask Jesus to come into your heart." It could be that someone reading this article was told these very words, or at least something very similar.

Before we deal specifically with that teaching, let's make one thing perfectly clear. One who desires to have Jesus in his heart should be commended—that desire is right and good. Look at the promise Jesus made in **John 14:23**: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." At least three different passages speak of Christ being "in you" (**Romans 8:10**; **2 Corinthians 13:5**; **Colossians 1:27**). **Ephesians 3:17** is even more specific: "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (**Galatians 2:20**). So on this matter there can be no dispute. Jesus wants to dwell in our hearts, and we should want Him to be there.

But, as right as this desire may be, "Ask Jesus to come into your heart" is NOT the correct answer to the question, "what must I do to be saved?" We know this because this same question was asked a couple of times in the New Testament, and that is NOT what they were told to do. Let's look closer to see exactly what they were told to do.

In **Acts 16:30** a man asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Their reply? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household" (**Acts 16:31**). But that's not all they said—look at the next verse. "Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house" (**Acts 16:32**). The details of this sermon are not provided, but the response

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to it is recorded: "And immediately he and all his family were baptized" (**Acts 16:33**). We can safely infer that they were told to be baptized, because that's what they did immediately following the sermon.

The question is also asked in **Acts 2:37**, this time by a group of people: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They had actually been told to do something in the previous

verse: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." This was essentially the same thing Paul and Silas said in **Acts 16:31**—"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." But again, that's not all they were told to do. Look at **verse 38**: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The response was overwhelming—"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (**Acts 2:41**).

So to the question, what must I do to be saved, what is the correct answer, the Biblical answer? Let's put together what we learned from the passages above. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (**Acts 16:31**; **Acts 2:36**). Repent of your sins (**Acts 2:38**). Confess your faith in Jesus (not mentioned specifically in the passages above, but this is clearly what people did to express their faith before being baptized—see **Romans 10:8-10**; **Acts 8:37**). Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (**Acts 2:38**; **Acts 16:33**). If you truly want Jesus to dwell in your heart, then you will obey these commandments.

