

Spring/Summer 2009



*The Vine House was the main household of the first of the Twelve Tribes communities that began in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1972. This paper reveals the secret of why this community thrived and multiplied when all the other communities of the Jesus Movement declined and died out...*

A TWELVE TRIBES FREEPAPER

# In the Vine House Days

by Gene Spriggs

**I**N THE VINE HOUSE DAYS, during the waning of the "Jesus Movement" of the '70s,<sup>1</sup> following Jesus seemed hip<sup>2</sup> enough. That was in the beginning, but that was because many of us had not followed Him very far. It soon became apparent to some that being a disciple of Christ involved far more than merely a joyful acceptance of Him and you're on your way to heaven. Because of our earnest desire to follow this Savior, the gospel and its terms began to slowly dawn on us.

Sadly, a number of those in the early days who had only believed in Jesus found it difficult to fully entrust themselves to Him, and He to them.<sup>3</sup> Many of those who we presumed were disciples at first, still believed in the *false one*<sup>4</sup> (the false gospel and savior) they came in with, not knowing the difference between the *True One*<sup>5</sup> and the phantom spirit they had received before.<sup>6</sup> Over time, of course, they became disenchanted and disillusioned with (continued...)

<sup>1</sup> We started to have our first rap sessions in the Light House the very time of Explo '72 in Dallas, which was the fatal blow in the demise of the Jesus Movement. Explo '72 was a Christian rock festival sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ, featuring Billy Graham and many Christian Rock personalities. The agenda and net effect was to draw the zealous "Jesus Freaks" back into the fold of mainstream Christianity. They went from playing guitars and praising on the beaches and city sidewalks, to sitting silently back in the same pews they once despised.

<sup>2</sup> Hip - Following the latest style, trend, or movement, such as the hippie movement.

<sup>3</sup> John 2:23-25

<sup>4</sup> "Another Jesus" as Paul referred to in 2 Corinthians 11:4

<sup>5</sup> 1 John 5:20

<sup>6</sup> John 13:20; 2 Corinthians 11:4

## Vine House



THE YELLOW DELI restaurant on Brainerd Road is a haven for teenagers and serves delicious food to all ages.

By Helen McDonald Exum

The girl used to work in the plush Playboy Club in Miami Beach. And there she sat, wearing faded yet clean blue jeans and looking... well, you could tell she was the happiest she'd ever been.

The boy had been called "the wild one." He had tried everything... marijuana, uppers, downers, acid. And there he was sitting in a pair of overalls, laughing, talking, at peace with everyone.

These were two of the 40 or 50 people sitting around the long table in the dining room of the big house at 861 Vine. They were passing the tomatoes, pouring more tea, laughing with the other members of "the family."



SANDWICHES, SALADS and home-made bread are served by Joy Martin.

And, the place which housed this once-motley crew has a story, too. It is called "The Vine House."

It is a story of love, a story about a bunch of kids determined to make "the thing work." A story that grips you in a way... well, let's go further.

Sitting at the head of the table was a good looking couple, Gene and Marsha, and looks



Chattanooga Freepress September 15, 1974 weekend feature

Photos by Jonathan Exum Eleanor Davies

GENE SPRIGGS CAME BACK TO CHATTANOOGA in 1972 hoping to reach young people who wouldn't go to church. Today he runs the Vine House, a Christian community of people that houses from 50 to 60 and reaches the



# In the Vine House Days



**WEEK-END**

**The Story Called Vine House**

*(Continued from Front Page)*

After college, the pair joined a commune of skiers in Wyoming and the Grand Tetons. When Gene came through telling them all about how God had changed his life, she was the only one who believed. She also left in love with Gene and they went back to California and were married.

They came to Chattanooga feeling that God wanted them to work with young people. They wanted to reach kids who wouldn't go to church, who wanted to have a place and wanted to be part of something.

They found a house in East Ridge, Gene and Marsha prayed for God to give them directions. "If we're to have this house, have the owner turn the key over to us."

When the owner, Dr. H. K. Williams, heard about the project, he said "A business deal for this house just fell through. I'd be glad for you to use the house. Here's the key," they could hardly believe it.

They fixed up the old house, made a big round table, and prayed that they would reach kids. They raise posters, cards, and in three weeks the

the old life that's been forgotten to be put away. The concrete on what God wants us to do now.

I asked how every one keeps busy. "Well, we have more to do than we have workers. We have three vegetable gardens to supply food for the Vine House and the Deli. We have three more Yellow Delis under construction in Dalton, Dayton, and Trifton. Construction crews go out every day. It took three months to renovate the Vine House, and we're still working on the other two.

There's a couple of weeks ago, a new opportunity to supply candles for Galtburg named another Deli.

"CAN YOU IMAGINE?" Gene's voice got enthusiastic, "what a wonderful thing it would be to have Yellow Delis all over America! A restaurant with good food for every one in the community, but it would be a place to reach all the run-aways who are passing through or all the young people who are tired and mixed up. These people are not going to church. Sometimes they stop at shelters and guidance peo-

*It all began at a place on 861 Vine Street, which we called "The Vine House."*

the demands required by the good news.<sup>7</sup> Those who left us<sup>8</sup> left with the same Jesus they came in with. They couldn't stand with their Christian Jesus in the midst of the True One and all that is required by the commands of the gospel and the leading of the Holy Spirit in the Body.<sup>9</sup> They tried to live this new life in the Community while hanging on

<sup>7</sup> Acts 5:32; John 14:15; John 3:16; Acts 2:44

<sup>8</sup> 1 John 2:19

<sup>9</sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; John 3:36; 1 John 2:5,15; John 14:15,21

to their old life, which can't be done with the real and True One who calls us to complete surrender.<sup>10</sup> Those who tried to live this life without the power of the Holy Spirit found living together<sup>11</sup> with their supposed brothers and sisters to be a torture chamber.

Those who made a claim to follow Him and know Him, without absolutely surrendering to Him in His Body, were like those described by our Master in Matthew 12:43-45:

<sup>10</sup> Luke 14:26-33

<sup>11</sup> Acts 2:44; 4:32

have a conversion experience in Christianity, or any other false religion, where they find the determination to take a stand against certain negative aspects of their life and to walk in a new way. They may have freed themselves from certain destructive spirits, but opened themselves to whatever spirits are there to give them a greater form of godliness.<sup>12</sup> If they had truly surrendered to the True One, by obeying the true gospel, then they would have had the power to stand in the day of testing. The demands of love were too high. They had a form of godliness, but denied the power of it.<sup>13</sup>

The only real confidence one can have that he has passed from death to life is that he loves his brothers and sisters by laying down his life for them every day<sup>14</sup> in His Community.<sup>15</sup> Without His righteousness, which is characterized by self-sacrificing love, all one can hope to attain to is *self-righteousness*. In the case of those who claim to know Him apart from obeying the truth, the last state is really worse than the first.<sup>16</sup> For as

<sup>12</sup> 2 Timothy 3:5

<sup>13</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:1-8; John 13:34-35; 14:15,21

<sup>14</sup> 1 John 3:14,16,23,24; Luke 9:23

<sup>15</sup> Acts 2:44; 4:32

<sup>16</sup> John 9:39-41; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Matthew 12:45

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the Apostle John said, "The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him."<sup>17</sup> And it is written that all liars will have their part in the eternal Sea of Fire.<sup>18</sup> Those who were only living in the environment of the Community with a mental concept of being clean were eventually offended by the demands of the True One on their lives and turned into Judases and liars.<sup>19</sup>

We didn't really know in the beginning that following Him was going to be a road<sup>20</sup> lined with so much opposition — from within and from without.<sup>21</sup> We used to have a saying back in those days, "It wouldn't be so hard if it weren't for self-regard."<sup>22</sup> When hardship came, self-regard took over<sup>23</sup> for those who lacked the faith to absolutely entrust their life to our Master.<sup>24</sup> But, as our Master instructed us, we would continually water every person, considering them as true disciples, and trusting that the testing of our

<sup>17</sup> 1 John 2:4

<sup>18</sup> Revelation 21:8; 22:15

<sup>19</sup> Proverbs 17:4; Matthew 26:16; John 12:3-4

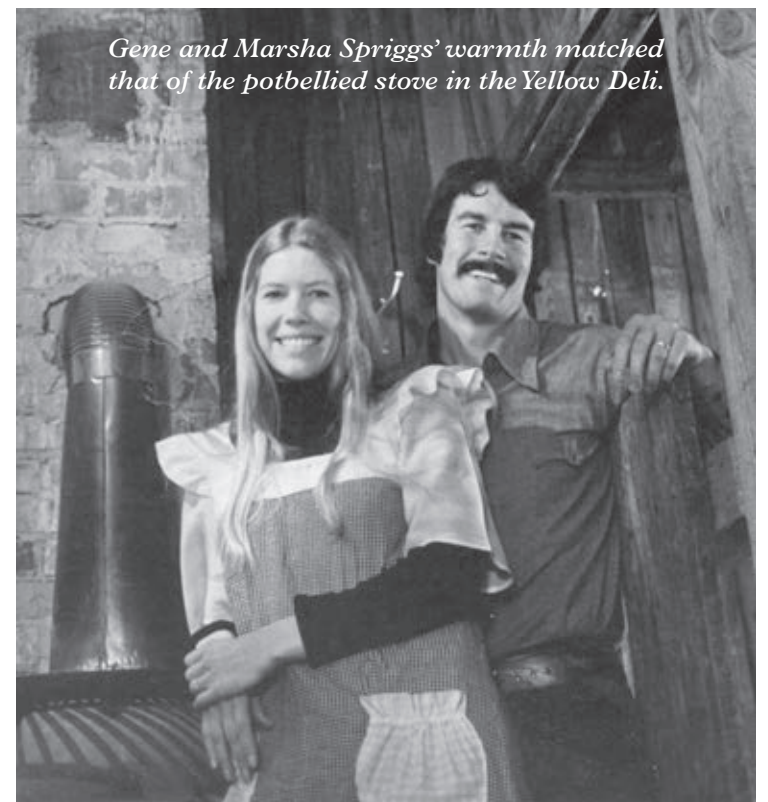
<sup>20</sup> Matthew 7:13

<sup>21</sup> Acts 20:28-30

<sup>22</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:15

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 13:21

<sup>24</sup> John 2:23-25; Matthew 13:18-23



*Gene and Marsha Spriggs' warmth matched that of the potbellied stove in the Yellow Deli.*

*"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."*

They were like those who





Once word got out, many young people made their way through the welcoming doors of the Vine House.

life would purify the true ones, and purify the Body of the false ones.<sup>25</sup>

Many of those who came to us more or less joined with their same old Jesus, not knowing then the difference between the True One and the false one,<sup>26</sup> or Billy Graham's gospel which they accepted as the true one. But over time we could see their self-regard, which was very apparent and obvious. Since selfishness is at the root of living independently from the Father and His sons,<sup>27</sup> it is the very nature of what sin is — living for yourself.<sup>28</sup> It was soon realized that following Jesus meant the denying of one's self in all its many aspects.<sup>29</sup> We began to understand that all those who believe in John 3:16 will live together and share all things in common, just as it was with the

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50

<sup>26</sup> 1 John 5:20; 2 Corinthians 11:4

<sup>27</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:15; 1 John 3:14,16,23; John 13:35

<sup>28</sup> 1 John 3:14,16,23; Matthew 6:31-33; Acts 2:44-45 Selfishness had to be put aside forever.

<sup>29</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:15

early Church,<sup>30</sup> but is no longer in the fallen Church of our day.<sup>31</sup>

But the gospel we knew required the absolute surrender of one's entire life to the Master we served in absolute submission to His absolute sovereignty, and there could be no compromise in order to be saved!<sup>32</sup> We learned that there could be no serving of two masters, and that we had to hate the one and love the other, or else we would be trying to serve two masters.<sup>33</sup> We learned that one could only serve Him *where He is*<sup>34</sup> — where He sanctifies His people, setting them apart into communities or clusters in every town<sup>35</sup> through the one true Holy Spirit who is set apart for them,<sup>36</sup> to help them endure through the process of becoming holy.

There is no working independently from the Body.<sup>37</sup> We learned that there had to be a complete leaving and forsaking of all that could cause compromise — something that many didn't want to know or understand, since they loved their own life more than the life He offered them.<sup>38</sup> The terms of peace — complete surrender to Jesus and fellowship with Him and all who loved Him<sup>39</sup> — began to become clearer and clearer, “all too clear” for many. The requirement to obey Luke 14:26,<sup>33</sup> could not be understood by Christians, since

<sup>30</sup> Acts 2:44; 4:32

<sup>31</sup> Revelation 18:2-4

<sup>32</sup> Luke 14:26-33

<sup>33</sup> Luke 16:13

<sup>34</sup> John 12:25-26

<sup>35</sup> *place, township, localities* —

1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Timothy 2:8;

1 Thessalonians 1:8; Malachi 1:11; Deuteronomy 12:11-14; Revelation 2:5

<sup>36</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians

2:13; 1 Peter 1:2

<sup>37</sup> 2 Timothy 2:4; Ephesians 2:10

<sup>38</sup> John 7:17

<sup>39</sup> John 14:15

“discipleship” to them was only going to church on Sunday and going back to their own home, and going back to work on Monday, independent from their supposed “Body,” which is actually supposed to describe the Church.<sup>40</sup> But today what is called the Church is not what is described in Ephesians 2:10; 4:16 and Colossians 2:19.

We were learning what Romans 6:2-5 actually meant — the parallel between His physical death and our own spiritual death:

*How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it [self-life, 2 Corinthians 5:15]? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized [immersed] into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.*

What baptism is, in reality, took on a whole new meaning and perspective for us when applied to truly *forsaking* our lives in order to gain His life.<sup>41</sup> *Forsake* means to *quit or leave entirely, to abandon* — no less than the words of our Master, who called us to absolutely surrender everything that constituted our former life, including our families, all our possessions,<sup>42</sup> and our occupations in this world,<sup>43</sup> when it came down to Mark 10:17-22, 28-30. This is the essence of what it means to drink the water of life freely, or *gratuitously*,<sup>44</sup> meaning without any other cause which would prevent one from drinking the water of life, which is the Holy Spirit.<sup>45</sup> So we learned that our death in baptism had to be as real as His death. Otherwise, *His* life was not our life — we would not belong to Him.<sup>46</sup> Baptism was the guard into the life of our Savior and into His one Body on earth,

<sup>40</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Colossians 1:18

<sup>41</sup> John 12:25,26; Mark 10:17-22,28-30; Philippians 3:8-11

<sup>42</sup> Luke 14:26,33; Matthew 10:37

<sup>43</sup> 2 Timothy 2:4

<sup>44</sup> John 4:14; 7:37-39; Revelation 21:6-8; 22:17

<sup>45</sup> John 4:14; 7:37-39; Revelation 21:6-8; 22:17; See the article “The Water of Life” on page 17

<sup>46</sup> Galatians 3:29; 5:24



When the Spriggs opened their hearts and their home to youth without a purpose, something amazing began to happen. More and more young people hungry for love began to join in these riveting “rap sessions”—and never wanted to leave.



What we were learning and experiencing was beyond ordinary — it was obviously the working of the Holy Spirit.



## In the Vine House Days

**LOOKING FOR LOVE?  
THERE'S LOVE HERE!**

**I AM THE VINE,**

**The  
Vine  
HOUSE**

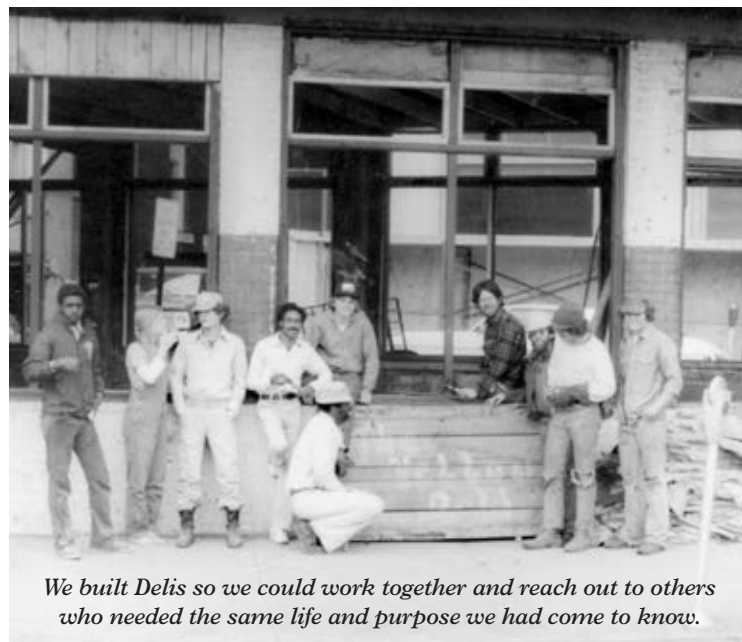
**861 VINE ST.  
265-2230**

**YOU ARE THE BRANCHES**  
JOHN 15:5

HOUSE OPEN 24 HOURS  
EVERYONE WELCOME ANYTIME TO ASK  
QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD OR JUST TO TALK  
FAMILY-TYPE MEAL AT 6:00 P.M. EVERY EVENING

- RAP SESSION — 7:30 TUESDAY
- BIBLE STUDY — 7:30 THURSDAY
- CRITICAL MASS — 10:00 SUNDAY

OVERNIGHT  
LODGING UPSTAIRS FOR  
GUYS PASSING THRU  
TOWN



We built Delis so we could work together and reach out to others who needed the same life and purpose we had come to know.



Marsha Spriggs painting the original Deli on Brainerd Rd, what else but — yellow.

which expresses itself in *community* — families and clans making up a whole nation of twelve tribes.<sup>47</sup>

We began to understand that are *two ransoms*.<sup>48</sup> A ransom is to give up something you love for something you love more. A ransom is Jn 3:16 — God loved the world so much that He gave His only begotten Son as a ransom, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. As He did for us, dying and going into death on our behalf, so we too had to “suffer the loss of all things”<sup>49</sup> as a ransom, even our loved ones<sup>50</sup> and all our other things.<sup>51</sup> It is a *life for a life* — or nothing at all.

So gradually, the good news started to make more and more sense to us. Having been forgiven of our former sins and now renewed in our conscience, with deep unrelenting gratitude we surrendered to the One who was the source of our *new life*. We started becoming disciples of the *Real and True One*.<sup>52</sup> In time, we even learned His true name, *Yahshua*.<sup>\*</sup> He is the one from whom all the so-called

<sup>47</sup> Isaiah 49:6; Acts 26:7; 1 Peter 2:9; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; Matthew 24:14; 21:43; Jeremiah 31:1

<sup>48</sup> See our book, *Two Ransoms*.

<sup>49</sup> Luke 14:26-33; Matthew 10:37-39; Philippians 3:8

<sup>50</sup> Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26

<sup>51</sup> Mark 10:28-30

<sup>52</sup> 1 John 5:20

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“hard sayings”<sup>53</sup> of the gospel originated. We understood that spiritually our old thought patterns, habits, and pleasures had to be forsaken.<sup>54</sup>

Along the way so many came in with their backpack and kept it on, waiting to be offended by something. So many kept just enough money to buy a bus ticket back home in case it didn’t work out, *but* still claimed to believe in Him who called us to absolute trust and surrender.<sup>55</sup>

As we continued, the solid foundation of our faith, based upon our obedience to the gospel, started to be established: no one who followed Him could be conformed to the world at the same time. “The cross before us, the world behind us,” we sang with joy. We (each of us) had decided to follow Yahshua:<sup>56</sup>

*I have decided  
to follow Yahshua,  
I have decided  
to follow Yahshua,  
I have decided  
to follow Yahshua,  
No turning back,  
no turning back.*

*Though none go with me,  
still I will follow,  
Though none go with me,  
still I will follow,*

<sup>53</sup> Matthew 16:24-26; John 12:25;

Luke 12:20

<sup>54</sup> Proverbs 28:13

<sup>55</sup> John 2:23-25

<sup>56</sup> 1 John 2:4,15

### THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

\* Although commonly rendered as *Jesus*, *Yahshua* is actually the Hebrew name of the Son of God. It is what His mother Miriam (Mary) and foster father Yoceph (Joseph) named Him when He was born, as recorded in Matthew 1:21. The footnote for this verse in the NIV New Testament reads: “*Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua.*” In Hebrew, as in old English, there is no “*J*” sound, so the name is more accurately rendered *Yahshua*. It means “I am powerful to save,” since it is constructed from *Yah*, the personal name of God, and *shua*, which is from a Hebrew root word that means “power and authority to save.” In Exodus 3:14, God introduced Himself to Moses as *YAH*, meaning “I AM.” Other examples can be seen in Psalm 68:4, KJV (“by his name *Yah*”), and in the familiar Hebrew word *Hallelujah* (“Praise *Yah*”). In John 5:43 and 17:11, Yahshua declared that He had come in His Father’s name, “the name which You have given Me” (NASB), so it is not surprising that the Father’s name would be directly incorporated into the Son’s name. Acts 26:14-15 says that the apostle Paul heard the Son of God introduce Himself “in the Hebrew tongue.” There it is recorded that He didn’t use the Greek name *Iesous* nor the English name *Jesus*, but rather His Hebrew name. We call Him *Yahshua* because that truly is His name, the name above all names (Philippians 2:9, Acts 4:12).



*Though none go with me,  
still I will follow,  
No turning back,  
no turning back.*

*The cross before me,  
the world behind me,  
The cross before me,  
the world behind me,  
The cross before me,  
the world behind me,  
No turning back,  
no turning back!*

To come to this conclusion, the Holy Spirit had to be our helper and teacher,<sup>57</sup> in contrast to another spirit<sup>58</sup> who inspired its followers to sing these words with no real conviction to walk that way.

Those who take this unrelenting and uncompromising



*We learned to serve one another. Here, Eddie Wiseman is dishing out steaming hot tomato soup at the Vine House.*

stand will be despised and rejected as our Master was hated by this world,<sup>59</sup> but not so for those who follow this phantom Christ. Satan doesn't persecute himself or his own spirit, which has replaced the Holy Spirit for almost 1900 years with this phantom Jesus and a false gospel.<sup>60</sup>

*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. (John 13:20)*

It is essential to understand that only a true disciple<sup>61</sup> who

<sup>57</sup> John 15:5

<sup>58</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:4

<sup>59</sup> John 15:18

<sup>60</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:4; 13-15

<sup>61</sup> John 7:18

knows and obeys the True One can be sent by Him to call others to follow.<sup>62</sup> This exposes Billy Graham and others like him who preach a phantom Jesus as Satan's servants.<sup>63</sup> There is a false one who deceives the whole world,<sup>64</sup> and there is One who is faithful and true.<sup>65</sup> Those who left us mostly came into the Vine House with this phantom Jesus, and left with it. But the ones who were willing to do God's will<sup>66</sup> received the good news from true disciples, thereby receiving the True One Himself.<sup>67</sup>

This gospel is the same gospel preached at Pentecost, which resulted in all the true believers dwelling together, sharing all things in common.<sup>68</sup>

To obey this gospel means one must come out of the world, and also come out of "her" — the fallen Church<sup>69</sup> — and be baptized into the true Body of Messiah, which is the Twelve Tribes of Israel.<sup>70</sup> This gospel of the Kingdom will always include the example of the woman who poured out her alabaster jar on our Master's body,<sup>71</sup> as this is what every true disciple will spend his life doing in the Body.<sup>72</sup> All those in this kingdom will be compared to the man seeking fine pearls, and for joy he sells all he has to gain that Pearl of great value.<sup>73</sup>

Yes, the kingdom was our goal<sup>74</sup> — to be with Messiah, to be there eye-to-eye with Him. Even so, now we are "where He is" in these sanctified places around the world.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Romans 10:13-17

<sup>63</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:4,13-15

<sup>64</sup> 1 John 5:19

<sup>65</sup> Revelation 19:11; 1 John 5:20

<sup>66</sup> John 7:17,18

<sup>67</sup> John 13:20; Luke 10:16;

Matthew 10:41

<sup>68</sup> John 3:16; Acts 2:44-45;

4:32-37

<sup>69</sup> Revelation 18:2-4

<sup>70</sup> Acts 26:7; James 1:1;

Revelation 21:9,12

<sup>71</sup> Matthew 26:13; Mark 14:8-9

<sup>72</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:15; Ephesians

2:10; 4:16

<sup>73</sup> Matthew 13:45-46

<sup>74</sup> Philippians 3:12-16

<sup>75</sup> Malachi 1:11

## The Restoration of the Only Way the Way Can Be



*by Gene Spriggs &  
Robert Chambers*

Paul would enter communal houses in the clans of Judea, he saw how they lived together, as it says in the Book of Acts:

*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common. (Acts 2:44)*

*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. (Acts 4:32)*

So, when Paul later became an apostle, this is the pattern he established in other places, and this is why he commended the Thessalonians for following the same pattern:

*For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans. (1 Thessalonians 2:14)*

The Church can be no other way than the way it was when it was the Church, and still be the Church, for, as it is recorded in Hebrews:

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)*

The Church is the Body and the Body is the Church, and all who believe and make up the Church live together and share all things in common, just as their Master and Teacher did with His disciples.

*And He is the head of the body, the Church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (Colossians 1:18) ✠*

Just as He said, we had to hate our own life in this world to be able to follow Him "where He is" and serve Him *there*, in the Community, and be honored by His and our Father.<sup>76</sup> Living together as one body in community, in harmony and unity with one another as the Father and Son,<sup>77</sup> was as close to being with Him as we could possibly be in this life, and the fulfillment of all that was prophesied about His people.<sup>78</sup>

The so-called *Beatitudes* of Matthew 5:1-7 and even Matthew 5:29-30 started to make more sense.<sup>79</sup> What could

<sup>76</sup> John 12:25-26; 1 Corinthians

1:2

<sup>77</sup> John 17:20-23; Psalm 133

<sup>78</sup> Matthew 21:43; 24:14; Genesis

18:19; Malachi 1:11; Hebrews

10:13; Acts 3:21

<sup>79</sup> John 14:15,21

be compared to the value of eternal life? Also, the many "hard words" of Luke 6:20-49, and the call to follow Him completely, totally, in Matthew 5:48 was now our only standard of discipleship in the Body of Messiah. This is what was and is being taught and learned in the Communities of the Redeemed.<sup>80</sup> We had found the way to gaining understanding and revelation — obedience to His word.<sup>81</sup>

*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.*

<sup>80</sup> 1 Timothy 3:15

<sup>81</sup> John 14:15,21; John 3:16; Acts

2:44

There is no way we could do this without being a disciple. No Christian can do it.

*Jesus answered and said to him, "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." (John 14:21,23)*

These words, and all the gospel, prepared us for our life in the Spirit: we no longer lived for *ourselves*, but for our Master.<sup>82</sup> Strong words indeed! Sadly, we found that many<sup>83</sup> could not take it. A lot of people liked it at first,

<sup>82</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:15; Matthew

5:48; Mark 8:34-38; 10:32-45;

Matthew 16:24-26; 10:17-18;

Luke 9:23-25; John 12:25-26;

13:1-20.

<sup>83</sup> Matthew 24:10-13



*Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You." But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever **does the will of God** is My brother and My sister and mother." (Mark 3:31-35)*

Is it true that one does not necessarily need to obey the Scriptures, but to simply be willing to do God's will? "You don't really have to give up all your possessions,"<sup>1</sup> they say, "you just have to be willing to do so if God should require it of you." But really, who in the Church is going to have the authority to tell you that God wants you to surrender all your possessions? Yahshua's commandments would seem downright cultish in today's world.

### Fulfilling God's Eternal Purpose

Hardly anyone realizes that God has a purpose, and within that purpose, certain objectives. He has even made certain promises that have yet to be fulfilled. His will is the means to the end that His purpose would be fulfilled on the earth, in this age and continue throughout eternity. So for one to say he is willing to do God's will, without actually doing it, shows that he either has no vision for God's purpose to actually be accomplished, or that he doesn't really believe that it makes any difference to God what he does or doesn't do.

But the word *does* in Mark 3:35 is the means by which an object is obtained, a cause devoted to producing and bringing forth something which is essential. It is not enough to be simply willing, for it is only those who do His will who will bring about

<sup>1</sup>Luke 14:33

# Is it Really Enough to be Willing?

the restoration of all things in this age,<sup>2</sup> which will herald the return of Yahshua to set up His Kingdom on the earth,<sup>3</sup> which will bring about the restoration of all things in the next age,<sup>4</sup> which will lead into God's eternal purpose to spread life to the ends of the ever-expanding universe.<sup>5</sup>

So you can see that one thing leads to another. But it all starts with God finding someone who will do His will. He's found a few down through history, but the prophets have made it clear that His purpose will be accomplished by a holy nation of twelve tribes, called Israel.<sup>6</sup> So that little word "does" is pretty important.

### Only Those who are Truly Willing will Know the Truth

*If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the teaching, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. (John 7:17 NKJV)*

Many of the watered-down Bible translations of our day translate this verse, "If any man is willing..." which doesn't convey the same sense of resolve. The one who is truly willing will execute God's will. The King James Bible says it even more plainly, "If any man will do his will..." Only those who have that kind of true inner resolve to act on what they hear will recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd when He calls them to do His will.<sup>7</sup> Such a man was David, the King of Israel.

*And when He had removed*

<sup>2</sup>Mark 9:11-12; Luke 1:17; Matthew 21:43; 24:14, etc.

<sup>3</sup>Hebrews 10:13; Revelation 19:7,8,11

<sup>4</sup>Acts 3:21

<sup>5</sup>Ephesians 3:20-21; 1:22-23; Psalm 102:28, etc.

<sup>6</sup>Isaiah 49:6,8; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Acts 26:7-8; Ephesians 2:12; Galatians 6:16; Revelation 21:9,12, etc.

<sup>7</sup>John 10:3-5,14

*him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." (Acts 13:22)*

Once one truly understands the gospel, by revelation,<sup>8</sup> it takes obedience to do what it takes to become His follower,<sup>9</sup> so as to walk as He walked.<sup>10</sup>

After His resurrection, Yahshua commissioned the apostles to make disciples, teaching them to obey all He commanded them.<sup>11</sup> This was explained at great length by Peter and the other disciples on the day of Pentecost to those who were pierced to the heart, when they cried, "What must we do to be saved?"<sup>12</sup> With many other words he testified and exhorted them, explaining how they could "be saved from this perverse generation."<sup>13</sup> The spiritual reality is that they were hearing first hand, face to face, from the Author of the gospel what one must do to inherit eternal life.<sup>14</sup>

Those who received their word "gladly"<sup>15</sup> were like the man seeking fine pearls, who, upon finding one of surpassing value, sold all he had to secure that pearl.<sup>16</sup> That Pearl is our Master Yahshua. This is the essence of the good news, which one must receive and obey to have eternal life.<sup>17</sup> The response at Pentecost was in sharp contrast to the Rich Young Ruler, who upon hearing the gospel, which demanded

<sup>8</sup>Matthew 16:16-18; Romans 10:14-17

<sup>9</sup>Luke 9:23; 14:26-33

<sup>10</sup>1 John 2:6

<sup>11</sup>Matthew 28:19-20

<sup>12</sup>Acts 2:37

<sup>13</sup>Acts 2:40

<sup>14</sup>Luke 14:26-33; Matthew 10:34-39; Mark 8:34-38; 10:17-30, etc.

<sup>15</sup>Acts 2:41

<sup>16</sup>Matthew 13:46

<sup>17</sup>Acts 5:32; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; John 3:18,36



by Gene Spriggs

forsaking all he had, went away sad.<sup>18</sup> To obey the gospel is to follow Yahshua, which the Rich Young Ruler would not do. So, though he asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" was he willing to do His will?

So are you willing to do His will? How can you know? The book of First John was written to a church that was falling away from keeping the greatest commandments — to love Him with all of their heart, soul, and strength, and to love their neighbor as themselves.<sup>19</sup> Somehow, doctrinal knowledge was beginning to take precedence over simple obedience and love. Yet, Yahshua Himself said, "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."<sup>20</sup> So First John is the litmus test to see whether we truly believe unto salvation:

*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. Brethren, I write no new*

<sup>18</sup>Mark 10:17-30

<sup>19</sup>Matthew 22:36-40

<sup>20</sup>John 14:21

*commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (1 John 2:3-11)*

So, judge yourself. You have to be a liar, or be saved — one or the other.

*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:12,13 KJV)*

Reading the book of First John will either confirm that we indeed have the Son, and that we have passed from death to life, or we can now do what is necessary to receive the free gift of eternal life. ✿



being numbered among the true followers of Jesus at such an exciting time. But, when we started talking about the true and only way one who is actually saved could live, and the sacrifices necessary to live that way,<sup>84</sup> many of our Master's presumed disciples left us,<sup>85</sup> and so we also began to hear, "This is a hard saying. Who can bear it?"<sup>86</sup>

He didn't run after them and try to get them to stay on His membership role. He was doing something much greater than trying to look impressive by having lots of followers: He was training apostles for the Kingdom. He knew that "even greater works" would they do than He, in the future, if they would remain loyal to Him. If they were willing to pay the price to be His followers, and leaders and shepherds, they

its ugly head, and love for this world, the life we presumed they had forsaken for our Master.<sup>89</sup> But you cannot serve two masters.

Yahshua said one must count the cost to follow Him and be His disciple.<sup>90</sup> So our Master had only a handful of followers left, and asked them, "Do you also want to go away?"<sup>91</sup>

*But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Only you have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68-69)*

Yet, after hearing these words from His disciples, He began to instruct them all the more about His suffering and

willing to shoulder the weight of responsibility without complaint or grumbling, since their earnest concern was to serve their brothers and seek *their* welfare, not their own.<sup>95</sup> They were content to be the least or last of all because they were the very ones who *promoted* everyone else, not looking out to make a name for themselves, or seeking their own glory, but rather the well-being and welfare of others,<sup>96</sup> seeking the Kingdom first.<sup>97</sup> He said, "The last shall be first and the first shall be last."

If there was ever any selfish pursuit in anyone, desiring prestige or honor for himself, he would be short-lived as a true disciple. To a significant degree, this is how we came to realize the difference between being called *disciples* rather than *Christians*. Disciples

are those who follow Yahshua by the daily laying down of their lives for the sake of others, doing only the works prepared for them to do in building up the Body.<sup>98</sup> This is how Messiah taught and referred to those willing to follow Him.

Being a disciple meant you were a constant

attendant — one under the discipline and authority of another. As disciples of Yahshua, the apostles were called out and separated from the religious society of their day — Judaism. They were no longer numbered among those who were engaged in the affairs of the world, but were constant companions, attending to the needs and purposes of their Master in all things.<sup>99</sup> They were separated from civilian affairs,<sup>100</sup> as those called to accomplish a specific task or purpose in keeping with the One they followed.<sup>101</sup> They

would become fit for the kingdom to come. It would cost them *everything*. So, in the Vine House days, those who were not fully persuaded and determined to follow Him eventually fell by the wayside.<sup>87</sup> Many became Judases and were exposed as *accusers* or slanderers (which, by the way, is all that the word *devil* means in the Greek language), as Judas held on to an appearance of piety, until what he loved more overtook him.<sup>88</sup> Greed would often raise

death. These apostles-in-the-making had to learn a lot from their teacher.<sup>92</sup> They bickered among themselves about who would be the greatest in the kingdom.<sup>93</sup> But they soon learned from their Master that the greatest among them was the least or last and *servant of all*.<sup>94</sup> So they took it on for their Master, to be the ones

47-49; John 18:2-9

<sup>89</sup> Luke 9:57-58; Matthew 8:21-22; Luke 9:59,60,62

<sup>90</sup> Luke 14:33; Mark 10:21;

Matthew 19:21; Luke 18:22

<sup>91</sup> John 6:67

<sup>92</sup> Matthew 16:22-23; Mark 8:33;

Luke 22:24-30; John 13:1-2

<sup>93</sup> Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-

5; Luke 9:46-48; Mark 10:35-37;

Matthew 20:20; Mark 10:41;

Matthew 20:24; Luke 9:51-54;

Mark 10:13

<sup>94</sup> Mark 10:44; Luke 9:48

<sup>95</sup> Matthew 6:31-33

<sup>96</sup> Philippians 2:3-4

<sup>97</sup> Matthew 6:31-33

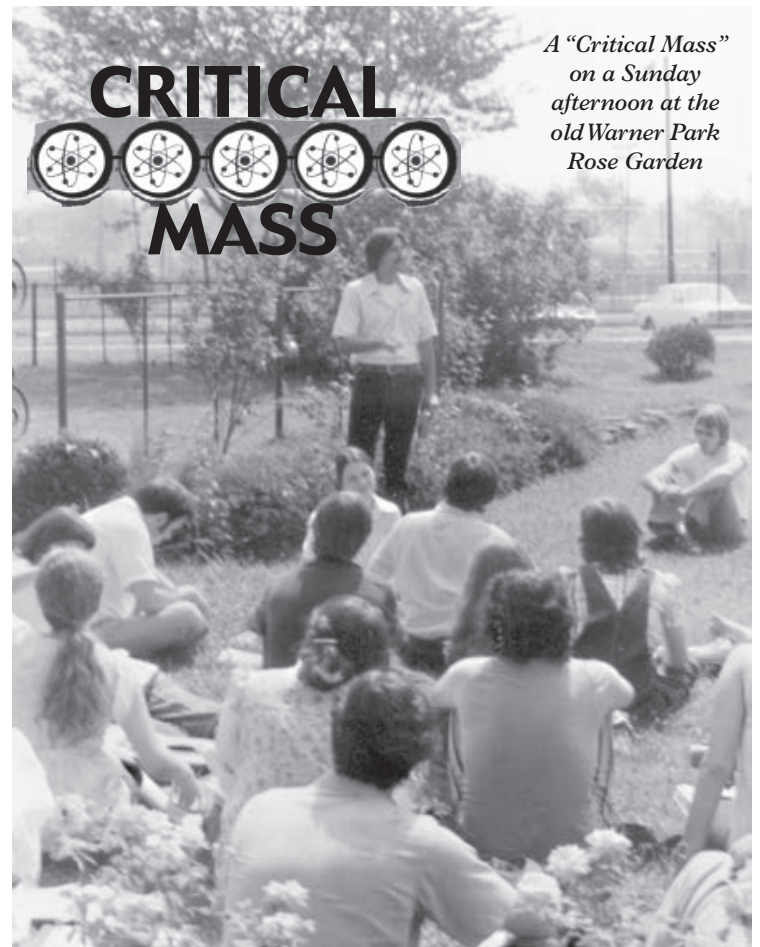
<sup>98</sup> Ephesians 2:10; 4:16

<sup>99</sup> Mark 3:31-35; Matthew 10:37

<sup>100</sup> 2 Timothy 2:4

<sup>101</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:2,10; Acts

## In the Vine House Days



*A "Critical Mass" on a Sunday afternoon at the old Warner Park Rose Garden*

*More than just forsaking the confines of church buildings, our free expressions of worship and faith represented something far deeper than we could understand at first. Gradually we came to understand who and what we were becoming as His Body. We stopped going to church and started being the church.*



were in the world, but not of it.<sup>102</sup>

Having been baptized into the Body of Messiah,<sup>103</sup> the Commonwealth of Israel,<sup>104</sup> anxiety for material things is no longer an issue, since we are free to seek first His Kingdom, trusting that He will care for us through our brothers and sisters.<sup>105</sup> Our Master

2:44; 4:32

<sup>102</sup> John 17:15-17

<sup>103</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13

<sup>104</sup> Ephesians 2:12

<sup>105</sup> Matthew 6:31-33

said, "Woe to you who are well off and have more than you need."<sup>106</sup> There is no concern for the things the whole world seeks after, since we who are in Messiah's Body live no longer for ourselves, but for Him who died and went to death on our behalf.<sup>107</sup> As disciples of Yahshua we were learning to walk as He walked.<sup>108</sup>

When we started call-

<sup>106</sup> Luke 6:24-26; 1 Timothy 6:8

<sup>107</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

<sup>108</sup> 1 John 2:6

*A typical Saturday meeting by Chickamauga Lake*



would become fit for the kingdom to come. It would cost them *everything*.

So, in the Vine House days, those who were not fully persuaded and determined to follow Him eventually fell by the wayside.<sup>87</sup> Many became Judases and were exposed as *accusers* or slanderers (which, by the way, is all that the word *devil* means in the Greek language), as Judas held on to an appearance of piety, until what he loved more overtook him.<sup>88</sup> Greed would often raise

<sup>84</sup> John 6:25-59

<sup>85</sup> John 6:66

<sup>86</sup> John 6:60

<sup>87</sup> See the parable of the sower in Luke 8:5-15, especially verses 5 and 12.

<sup>88</sup> Mark 14:10,11,43,44; Matthew 26:14-16; 47-50; Luke 22:3-6;



## In the Vine House Days

ing ourselves *disciples* (those responding to the commands of the gospel), we suddenly appeared unconventional — as fanatics with a strange, religious cause — as if obedience was completely detached from the commands of the Jesus of the Scriptures. But Christians are completely detached from His commandments.<sup>109</sup> Since we were living the only

<sup>109</sup> 1 John 2:4

way disciples could live,<sup>110</sup> we were soon branded by Satan's servants<sup>111</sup> and liars<sup>112</sup> as a *cult*.<sup>113</sup>

But we simply wanted to follow the One who said we must deny ourselves, pick up our cross daily, and follow Him in order to be His disciples.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>110</sup> Acts 2:44; 4:32

<sup>111</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

<sup>112</sup> Proverbs 17:4

<sup>113</sup> John 15:18-27

<sup>114</sup> Luke 9:23



We knew that true disciples of Yahshua are the only ones who have eternal life, and cannot do otherwise than John 13:34-35 and Luke 14:26-33.

Thus, it was at this time, in taking a stand for Yahshua and the gospel's sake, that we began to receive persecution — not so directly from the secular society, except for the city officials who supported kidnappers who forcefully carried disciples away to “deprogram”

A Twelve Tribes Freepaper

them. The workings of the Church and State in cahoots allowed the anti-cult kidnapers to not be hindered.<sup>115</sup>

Most of the persecution we experienced was from the sanctimonious,<sup>116</sup> Pharisaical,<sup>117</sup> Christian reli-

<sup>115</sup> See “Cult Scare in Chattanooga,” on page 10

<sup>116</sup> *sanctimonious* – making a hypocritical show of religious devotion, piety, righteousness

<sup>117</sup> *Pharisaical* – practicing or

## The Only Way the Church Can Be by Gene Spriggs

In the Light House and the Vine House days we did only one thing — the only thing we knew to do: we loved each other and talked about our Master and His love for us, and the forgiveness He gained for us by His sacrifice for us — and we wanted to tell the world about it, too.

We began to live together and share all we had with one another. We would go to every event in town to tell others of the good news and hand out free-papers. This was how it was in Chattanooga until we were run out of town. We all believed as John 3:16 and Acts 2:44 said.<sup>1</sup> We knew we were not believers until we believed His word *and* obeyed it. The two always go together: belief and obedience (although the preachers failed to make that connection for us growing up). Acts 2:44 — All who believed *did* live together and share all things in common.

So we were raising quite a ruckus just because we believed that all who believed would live together in community, as the Holy Spirit led the first believers to do, too. We raised a ruckus by the good news, but the preachers of Chattanooga raised a ruckus against us and started to believe lies from the liars in town and the Judases among us, just as Proverbs 17:4 says. The lies started when we started to baptize believers into the Body. We were seeing that our good news was different from their good

<sup>1</sup> They use the same word for *believe* in both verses (#4100), so all who believed in the Son lived together and shared all things in common. And it's still that way today.

news.<sup>2</sup> It had to be, because the fruit was *so much* different.

### Baptism

*To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: (1 Corinthians 1:2)*

Unless one is baptized (immersed) into this place where the Body is set apart from the world, which is what *sanctified* (#37) means in 1 Corinthians 1:2, there is no hope of becoming holy — a *saint* (#40). *Sanctified* in 1 Corinthians 1:2 means to make or become *holy*. This can only happen in the set-apart environment of community. Becoming holy can only happen as we speak the truth in love to one another, allowing us to grow up into the Head, who is Messiah.<sup>3</sup>

This must happen in every aspect of our personality. We must grow up under His headship, His authority, but this takes being sanctified, which means we must live and reside together in a place as Acts 2:44 says, a place one is baptized into.<sup>4</sup> Living together is the only way one can be in the Body in order to *become* holy. This cannot be accomplished without one separating himself, withdrawing from fellowship with the world. He must do this by first gaining fellowship with Messiah (not going off in the woods by himself), as John 12:25-26 says we

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthian 11:4

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 4:15

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthian 12:12-13

must serve Him *where He is*.

And He is where He is honored and obeyed as King, where true community, as Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-37 describes, is a reality. It is only there that His commandments can be and are obeyed. This is where all the gospel, all the so-called “hard sayings” are obeyed by those who love Him (including Luke 14:26,33; Matthew 10:37-39; and John 14:15,21).

The only way and the only place we can have fellowship with God is to be immersed into the Body of Messiah along with your brothers and sisters, and serve Him *there*, where He is. This is what it takes to be honored by God:

*If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. (John 12:26)*

There, as 1 Peter 2:12 says, all can have the behavior befitting those who are separated in order for the world to see it and believe, which they can only do as those who *believe* walk out John 13:34 and John 17:21-23. *This is the restoration back* Acts 2:44 and 1 Corinthian 12:12 — the way the church was when the church was *The Way*.<sup>5</sup>

It takes synergy for all this to happen — the combined, effective action of every part of the Body working together. The Body is the *only place* one can do the works of Ephesians 2:10 and 4:16 to bring about God's dwelling place among men,<sup>6</sup> to

<sup>5</sup> Acts 9:2

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 2:19-22

give Him the glory and honor He deserves over all of creation.<sup>7</sup> This is the *cause* every true believer is devoted to, body and soul.

### The Only Way the Church Can Be

*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. (Acts 4:32)*

Christians don't realize, and most don't *want* to realize, that Acts 4:32 is the only way the church can be in every place or township. This is how it was in the Church or Community of Jerusalem, the archetype or model, the very pattern of God for all churches, not just those believers who “feel led to live together.” The Community in Jerusalem was the result of the Holy Spirit being present in each disciple, thus fulfilling the prayer and command of their Master before He was crucified.<sup>8</sup>

To Paul, it was unthinkable that the church — that is, if it is the Body of Messiah — could be divided,<sup>9</sup> for Messiah is the Head of the Body.<sup>10</sup> Paul knew the only way the Body of Messiah could be, having witnessed it in Judea when he was going from town to town persecuting the saints in their clusters (which were all just like Acts 2:44-45). Paul knew that all believers lived together — how could they do otherwise?

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 1:21-23

<sup>8</sup> John 13:34-35; 17:11,20-23

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthian 1:2,10,13

<sup>10</sup> Colossians 1:18

That is why he commended the Thessalonians for following the Judean pattern.<sup>11</sup> So Paul could not see that it could be any other way and still be “The Way,” which they called themselves because of Genesis 18:19, which speaks of the way of Yahweh, which is doing righteousness and justice and commanding your children, your household, and now, your community after you, to keep also.<sup>12</sup>

“Let them be one” was His heartfelt, passionate prayer to His Father, so how could it be any other way than the way it was when it was *The Way*? So can the church be any other way than *The Way*?

So if the church is as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:2, it can't be any other way. If it is not this way in every place, as verse 10 says all must “speak the same thing,” be undivided, and “perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment,” then the church is just what 2 Corinthian 11:3,4,13-15 says it is — the place where the servants of Satan rule and reign. Long ago Satan's servants took over and it all became a Nicolaitan system,<sup>13</sup> the true name of the clergy-laity system where one man speaks for God and all the rest are silent for God. It is the thing God hates.<sup>14</sup>

Paul admonished the church

<sup>11</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:14

<sup>12</sup> Acts 26:14; Colossians 1:18; Acts 19:9,23; 18:25-26; 2 Peter 2:21; Acts 22:4 and 24:14,22

<sup>13</sup> The word *Nicolaitan* comes from two Greek words, *nikos* (#3534), meaning conquest, triumph, or victory; and *laos* (#2992), meaning people. The Nicolaitans were victorious over the people. Nicolas, from which *Nicolaitan* comes, is #3532 in *Strong's Greek Dictionary*.

<sup>14</sup> Revelation 2:15



gious system of our day. So, in many ways, it was a spiritual parallel to the very beginnings of the first-century church.<sup>118</sup>

Those among us who desired glory for themselves were soon exposed as to what was at work within them. There

advocating strict observance of external forms and ceremonies of religion or conduct without regard to the spirit; self-righteous; hypocritical

<sup>118</sup> 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16

must be an inward preparation before our Father can use anyone to build His Kingdom. It is a necessary work, required by our Father, in order that we would be healed<sup>119</sup> as true disciples and as leaders who are living examples for others to follow.

The witness that must go to the ends of the earth before our Master can return,<sup>120</sup> is

<sup>119</sup> Matthew 13:15

<sup>120</sup> Matthew 21:43; 24:14

the reality of this salvation in people's lives — a living demonstration of His love working in, and overflowing from, the hearts of those who make up His holy nation.<sup>121</sup> Then those who have a will to do the will of God,<sup>122</sup> and desire His salvation,<sup>123</sup> can see with their eyes and hear with their ears,

<sup>121</sup> Isaiah 49:6; Acts 13:47; Acts 5:20

<sup>122</sup> John 7:17; 1 John 2:17

<sup>123</sup> Luke 1:77-79

and know where to turn for true healing.<sup>124</sup>

The future establishment of the communities by those leaders from the early beginnings of the Vine House demanded that this work be done, in order to have a solid foundation based on love, not self-interest. The inner motivation of all who follow Yahshua and serve in leadership must be love for Him and

<sup>124</sup> Matthew 13:15

for His purpose.

As Yahshua was with His first disciples, so He is with those who desire to follow Him today. He patiently deals with each one of us, despite all of our shortcomings. At one point, some of those early disciples went back to their old fishing business,<sup>125</sup> but that breakfast by the sea with Yahshua described in John 21

<sup>125</sup> Mark 1:16; Matthew 4:18; Luke 5:2-5; John 1:35-42

in Ephesus in Ephesians 6:24 to love Him with an undying love, yet thirty or so years later, the Savior had to say what He did in Revelation 2:4-6 (about removing their lampstand) since they had already left their first love. So later they succumbed (gave in to) the pressure the Nicolaitans put on them to compromise and join the growing movement of the powerful clergy, called *bishops*. They ended up loving what they had once hated after the lampstand was taken out of "the way." They did not realize that *He*, their Savior, *still* hated the way of the Nicolaitans. He still does.

No more love meant no more lampstand in that town. In one town there can only be one Church, which can't be divided into denominations. If the church in a town is not as 1 Corinthians 1:10 and Acts 4:32 then *the lampstand is gone*. No one can, from that time on, be saved. They can't be saved without the love of God pervading the disciples' hearts and souls. It is the reality of John 12:25-26 — there, where He is, is the only place one can *serve Him*.<sup>15</sup> There, where He is, where the light of salvation shines forth to all,<sup>16</sup> is where He can be served. It's the only way.

What do they see in Chattanooga, Tennessee, with its 750 different or exclusive fellowships on Sunday morning listening to rote sermons practiced all week? 1 Corinthians 1:2,10 is the very antithesis, the diametric opposite of this. It is speaking of "a place" (town), namely Corinth, where the disciples were set apart in clusters all over that town *in order to become holy for Yahweh*

<sup>15</sup> John 14:18

<sup>16</sup> 1 Peter 2:12

the ages to come.

Such a lampstand<sup>17</sup> was to be in every *place* as Malachi 1:5,11 says.<sup>18</sup> It is the same word in Deuteronomy 12:5,11, and it is the same idea as the words for *place* in the New Covenant.<sup>19</sup> It is a place where all who believe are one in essence.<sup>20</sup>

### Counterfeits and Hypocrites

But Paul again admonished the Ephesians in Ephesians 6:23-24 to love with the love from God the Father and their Master Yahshua. He told them grace would be with all who love our Master Yahshua in sincerity and truth or with an incorruptible love — an undying love (verse 24).<sup>21</sup> But some thirty years later, Yahshua told the Ephesians, "Nevertheless, I have this against you [corporate or plural *you*], that you have left your first love."

You must do, He was saying, as David told Solomon in 1 Chronicles 28:7-9, to seek Him and keep His commandments. All this would be useless to even try if the first two commandments are not kept, which we must seek Him to even have the grace to do. Unless we are loving Him with all of our heart, soul, and strength, as Matthew 22:34-

<sup>17</sup> Proverbs 8:1-11; Matthew 5:13-16

<sup>18</sup> *Place* in Malachi 1:11 is #4725 in *Strong's Hebrew Dictionary*, meaning a locality.

<sup>19</sup> Revelation 2:5; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 1 Timothy 2:8; and 1 Corinthians 1:2 all name a definite place in a city or village, as the spiritual can discern — 2 Corinthians 2:14

<sup>20</sup> The Greek word #1520; 4:4-6; John 17:11,21-23

<sup>21</sup> It is #861 in the Greek, meaning incorruptible, unending, undying (immortality), and sincerity.

40 say, we are just hypocrites.

By the time of Revelation 2, the church in Ephesus was the Ephesian Counterfeits.<sup>22</sup> A counterfeit disciple is not obeying all the rest of His commandments in sincerity. A counterfeit is not genuine.<sup>23</sup> Counterfeits (or hypocrites) are those who keep the law *under the law*, but who do not keep the greatest commandments.<sup>24</sup> A counterfeit is an imitation passed off as genuine.<sup>25</sup> So 1 Timothy 1:5 is un-hypocritical love; it is pure, coming from a sincere faith. Idle talk, useless chatter, have turned many away from such love (verse 6).

The law does not condemn the righteous who do as Matthew 22:37-40. So if Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and Genesis 18:19 will never be done unless we have the grace to obey the greatest commandment first, all who don't keep His commandments, especially Genesis 18:19, will not be part of those who produce Matthew 21:43 for Abraham's seed.<sup>26</sup> They don't keep Genesis 18:19 because they do not obey the greatest commandment of all, and so could be counterfeit disciples who do not even love their own children.<sup>27</sup>

*For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness*

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 6:2,5,16; 7:5 and 16:3; Luke 6:42 and 12:56

<sup>23</sup> John 14:15,21; 1 John 2:4,15

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 22:36; Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12; 30:6

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 22:38; 19:19; Mark 12:30-31; Deuteronomy 6:4;

Luke 10:27-30; Romans 13:10; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8;

Matthew 22:4 and 7:12,

1 Timothy 1:5

<sup>26</sup> Genesis 15:18

<sup>27</sup> Proverbs 13:24

*and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him. (Genesis 18:19)*

### Love is the Direction of Your Will

*Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."* (Matthew 22:37-40)

*Love* in these verses is the direction of your will,<sup>28</sup> as in 1 John 3:14. So, when any of us break the law of commandments, it is because we do not love our Father with all our heart, soul, and strength, nor do we love our brothers and sisters as ourselves. Daniel 12:3 — The one who loves Him and does His will is, as Mark 3:31-35, part of His family.

So, how can you tell that you don't love our Father, whom you can't see? The answer is simple: you won't love your neighbor whom you can see.<sup>29</sup> 1 John 4:20 is the litmus test, as not loving your brother is hating him, and this is true in exactly the same way for one's own child.

Religions who say they believe in the God of the Bible and do not love God as the Bible commands make it obvious by their lack of bearing the fruit of love in accordance with the Scriptures.<sup>30</sup> They are condemned by

<sup>28</sup> #25 in *Strong's Greek Dictionary*

<sup>29</sup> 1 John 4:12,20-21; John

14:15,21,24

<sup>30</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:35-40; 1 John 3:16; Hebrews

3:6,13; Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32-

the Bible they believe is God's word, because they cannot obey His commands, which reveals that they do not love Him as John 14:15,21 says.<sup>31</sup>

So who are the ones that all men will know are Yahshua's disciples by their love and unity?<sup>32</sup> If we obey Yahshua's commands it means we love the Father, as Deuteronomy 6:4-5 says, with all of our heart, soul, and strength, and this means obeying all the laws and commandments. So how can you tell that you do not love or are not loving your brothers and sisters, but are hating them instead?<sup>33</sup> Because you are not laying down your life for them, because we know love by this, that we lay down our lives for the ones we love.<sup>34</sup>

So how can you tell if you are not laying down your life for your brothers and sisters? You can tell by not doing it — if you live in the Body, that is, and have been saved, and have the love of God in your heart.<sup>35</sup> But 1 John 2:4,15 tells us who (or what) we really love. So what are His commandments that we do not keep, and what are the things of the world that we love, showing that the love of the Father has not been poured out into our heart?<sup>36</sup>

Love is the direction of your will toward the ones whom you love, so name some things that those who have not received the love of God or the Holy Spirit love more than their brothers — if they are brothers at all. ✿

37; Luke 14:26,33; and Matthew 13:44-46, and many other verses as well.

<sup>31</sup> 1 John 3:14,23,24

<sup>32</sup> John 13:34-35 and 17:21-23

<sup>33</sup> 1 John 4:20

<sup>34</sup> 1 John 3:16

<sup>35</sup> Romans 5:5

<sup>36</sup> 1 John 2:15-17



by Eddie Wiseman

**I**N THE VINE HOUSE DAYS, as we fell in love more and more with our Master Yahshua and thus increasingly obeyed His teachings, our popularity with the local churches slowly waned to the point of branding us as a cult. For us, the “Cult Scare” began in the mid ’70s when the Christian parents of five young women who lived at the *Vine House*, and pastors in the Chattanooga area, were seemingly threatened and offended by the fact that their daughters’ Savior meant more to them than anything, even their own possessions and family.

The message of anti-cult crusader, Ted Patrick, was received without question, and his message was: “The *Yellow Deli* is a cult! Beware!” The parents received it mostly because they didn’t understand their daughters’ radical departure from mainstream religion. It was received by most pastors in the area because the message of fear was an easy explanation that helped scare young people into staying in their dead congregations. And in one blatant example, at least, some city officials joined forces with the parents and pastors to promote Patrick’s plan to end the cult by kidnapping and deprogramming!

These parents paid thousands of dollars to Patrick for his help to “rescue” their adult children from the group at the *Vine House*. It was a plan that not only parents, but religious leaders and even government officials could get behind. Patrick’s message injected fear of brainwashing and mind control into parents about any group outside of mainstream Christianity. But for the time being, the *Yellow Deli* was his specific target. What our Master Yahshua called *love* (having His commandments and obeying them) was interpreted by Patrick and the Christian pastors as *cultic*, and as evidence of being under mind control. The local media, and especially the *Chattanooga Times*, were willing players in fanning the cult scare fire.

Rebecca Westbrooks was the fifth person Patrick kidnapped and attempted to deprogram in Chattanooga. By the time she was whisked away to be deprogrammed in January, 1980, the cult scare was well under way. She had graduated from Central High School in the early-to-mid ’70s, and her father was a detective with the Hamilton County Sheriff’s Department. She came to us as a disillusioned Christian who wanted to find a place where she could devote her whole

# CULT SCARE in Chattanooga

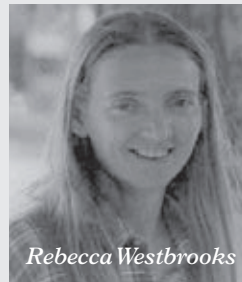
life to Jesus. All the different doctrines in Christianity were confusing to her because what she read in the New Testament was so clear about the fruit of following Him — living a life of love and unity as the only way the Church can be (unless Christ is supposed to be divided, as the apostle Paul asked the rhetorical question in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13). When she met us at the *Vine House*, she saw people living a pure life together, striving to obey the Word of God in peace.

However, even after she was baptized and began to find the reality of what she had read about in the Scriptures, her father received a lot of pressure to “do something” about his daughter being in a cult. He couldn’t understand it, but the pastors had an easy answer from Mr. Patrick: “Your daughter is brainwashed!” He listened to the horror stories in the newspapers and from the pulpits around town. He made his decision and thus undertook a scheme to kidnap his daughter. Given his position as a detective, he could arrange for someone to make a false criminal charge against her! She was arrested on a fabricated drug charge and brought to the city jail. Her father’s friends posted her bond and released Rebecca to him.

Once released, Detective Westbrooks put her in the back of his cruiser and whisked her away to Centre, Alabama, as if he was taking care of official business, at taxpayer expense. Rebecca had no idea what was going on. When they arrived she was locked in a room where the windows were screwed shut. She was treated like a criminal and held against her will. She could not go to the bathroom alone, and two ex-members slept on either side of her night after night. Her arrest by the police was just a means of getting her into the hands of deprogrammers.<sup>1</sup>

Not only did Detective Westbrooks have help from his buddies in law enforcement, but more surprising is the fact that two judges knew what was going on and willingly participated in this abuse of official authority. While

<sup>1</sup> Read her story at: <http://twelvetribe.org/controversy/westbrooks-kidnapping>



Rebecca Westbrooks

Rebecca was held captive in Alabama, her court date came and went three times. In her absence she was convicted of the drug offense.

Sometime later, after Rebecca had escaped from the hands of her captors, we hired a lawyer to look into

the record of her court case, conducted without her being there. He found a revealing piece of paper, a docket entry with a note from one judge to another judge. The handwritten note from Judge Cox to Judge Meyer said, “Doug, this is the case of Detective Westbrooks’ daughter that I told you about. He is having her deprogrammed in Alabama and she won’t be here for the hearing.”

After seeing this note, I personally went to see Judge Meyer. I reminded him about the case, and let him know that I knew that he and Judge Cox were involved in this whole scheme. He stood up from his desk and said, “Are you trying to blackmail me?” I responded by saying, “Judge Meyer, I know that you know that what I am saying is the truth.” He sat back down and asked, “What do you want me to do?” I told him that Rebecca Westbrooks was not looking for revenge, but only wanted her name cleared from this injustice. I made it clear that she wanted the record expunged, which means destroyed, as if it had never happened. Judge Meyer got up from his desk and I followed him to the clerk’s office. I watched as he told her to produce the file of Rebecca Westbrooks and to expunge the entire file. And so, the false conviction of Rebecca Westbrooks was erased from the record forever.

As I reflect on this event thirty years later, I have a much clearer picture of what was going on spiritually then, and even how it has progressed up until now. The Christian religion has had a historic relationship with the State ever since Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire 1700 years ago. That alliance has produced massive bloodshed and injustice for centuries. It is because of this history that our Founding Fathers erected a wall of separation between church and state to protect religious freedom in this country.

This easily forgotten event of Rebecca Westbrooks’ illegal deprogramming in 1980 was our first encounter with the awesome power of this dangerous alliance between government and religion. Her story is a classic scenario with modern-day facts: She is not satisfied with mainstream religion. She joins a group that is radically different and begins to follow her heart and finds her created purpose in living a life of loving and serving others in obedience to the gospel. Her Christian parents are bewildered and offended by her choices. So are the Christian pastors. They persuade government officials to cooperate in this deprogramming scheme. Anti-cult players like Ted Patrick inject the “cult scare” fear as a catalyst. They pull it off flawlessly... almost.

It is an age-old pattern orchestrated by the prince of the power of the air — Satan himself. It has been going on for a long, long time, and now, in these last days, it is gaining momentum around the world. The alliance of church and state is forming in a way never before seen. The goal is to establish an ecumenical unity that pressures non-mainstream religious groups into “joining the fold” or being marginalized to the point of extinction. The anti-cult agenda fits hand-in-glove with this scheme of the evil one. The ecumenical “body” of the Harlot holds the reigns on the government, exerting an ever-increasing influence on officials at every level. This is prophesied in the Bible as how the Man of Lawlessness will come into power.

Rebecca Westbrooks’ story from the *Vine House* days is but a microcosm of the plan and scheme to destroy the true witness of the kingdom, the corporate expression of the life our Master lived that proves God’s love to all mankind. It parallels what it was like for our Master during His life. There were countless attempts to discredit Him and to destroy His life, from the time He was born to the time the religious leaders trumped up charges against Him and pressured the Romans to crucify Him. We have learned that if we are true to Him, we will be treated the same way He was treated.

So far, in our 35-year history, this scheme to discredit and destroy us has followed us all over the world. Hopefully, those in Chattanooga who were affected negatively by the “cult scare” can begin to see through what is happening and join with us to build this wonderful life of love as a witness of the kingdom to come.✿

Please visit [www.cultscare.com](http://www.cultscare.com)



## In the Vine House Days



*With increasing intolerance at the hands of local religious leaders and town officials, we found it increasingly difficult to practice our faith according to the dictates of our consciences. With an invitation from several sincere families to establish a community in New England, in 1978 several pioneering couples moved northward to establish the same life in Vermont.*

is when they finally realized what it was He was calling them to do: “Leave your nets behind.” As our Master asked Peter, “Do you love Me more than these [nets]?” Those nets represented the life he was to leave behind in order to carry out the Master’s business: “If you love me, feed My sheep.”

And that is what all the difficulties we went through in the Vine House days and afterward were preparing us for: to feed the tender sheep He loves and is saving out of the world. Many in the early days of the Vine House would not give themselves to this task of purification with the same humility and determination as Peter had. Those who left us left with the same Jesus they came in with.

*They went from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us they would have stayed with us. But they went out from us that they might show that they were never of us. (1 John 2:19)*

How could we ever know who the “us” is unless we are together,<sup>126</sup> allied in the same cause?<sup>127</sup> In the Christian Church who knows who the “us” is, for when one leaves or goes on a vacation or moves to take another job, who would

know? Would the “Body of Christ” have any say in their movement, since there is no independent movement in the Body? We planned to always stay together in the covenant we made with our Master and one another, and to be subject to one another in the fear of Messiah.<sup>128</sup> So it was always surprising and painful when people would leave. We always hoped they had just lost their way, and would soon return.

But, praise God, many others did endure together<sup>129</sup> through the winnowing process, on the threshing floor of the Community — the purifying fire of our life, which eliminated the dross in us that worked to separate us. So a movement began to form in Chattanooga, Tennessee — a movement to restore all the things that have been lost since the early church (which can by no means be found within the churches of Christianity today). Those Vine House disciples went on to help establish many communities worldwide, and are experiencing a growth that is from God.<sup>130</sup> Their fervent desire is still to reach out to find His lost sheep around the globe in order to form that witness of His Kingdom which will

herald their Master’s coming again.<sup>131</sup> Does that hope of doing His will still burn in your hearts? Then come back and see and hear and understand with your heart, and be healed, and be born again this time into a brand new life and culture.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Matthew 24:14

<sup>132</sup> Matthew 13:15

*Gene Spriggs*



**Gene and his wife Marsha**



*Soon, the call of the gospel again came to us to leave everything behind. This included our seven successful Yellow Delis within a 100 mile radius of Chattanooga and a dozen households. We had to ask ourselves, “Did we love Him more than these Delis?” YES!*

<sup>128</sup> Ephesians 5:21

<sup>129</sup> Acts 2:44

<sup>130</sup> Colossians 2:19

<sup>126</sup> Acts 2:44

<sup>127</sup> Proverbs 17:17; Psalm 133

**May 1978**



*With love, your friends from the Vine House*





# *In the Vine House Days*

**We ate together,  
laughed together,  
cried together,  
and shared our  
struggles together.  
Through it all,  
we understood  
very deeply the  
importance of the  
verses we read  
in the Bible:**





*"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common." (Acts 2:42-44)*

**"...All those who believed were together and had all things in common..."**

*"They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness. And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them. And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all. For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need." (Acts 4:31-35)*



*still*  
**IT TAKES A COMMUNITY.**





# Receiving the Sent Ones by Arthur Nunnally

**I**T WAS THE SUMMER of June 1974 and I was seventeen years old — going on seventy. Though my age qualified me as young, my life and experiences had aged me well beyond my years. Alone, in the dark stillness of the night, a stream of tears kept falling upon my arms that were spread out in front of me. I felt frantic. I prayed earnestly on my knees that my cry would be heard.

*“God help me! Lead me to your people. I don’t know where to go, or what to do. I need to find those who love you and need you just as much as I love and need you. How will I know? Where should I go? What should I do?”*

Unexpectedly, I had come to sincerely believe in Christ a month or so earlier, during a church revival, being convicted of my moral degradation and the fact that Christ had died for my sins. But I knew something was desperately lacking, and that what I needed could not be found in the church system I had known my whole life. That was clear to me even by the lackluster response from other Christians as I told everyone, “Jesus is real! He’s alive! It’s all true!” The undeniable truth of this was met with a disappointing, “So what?” attitude of complacency and disinterest.

Nevertheless, I could not be deterred. I was desperate and determined to find answers. Unfortunately, growing up in the Christian faith and going to church did not provide that for me. If anything, it created more confusion and gave me

no solutions to what I longed for and was perplexed over deep within my soul: how do I come to know Him and serve Him? It wasn’t until I came to this place of brokenness and utter humiliation that a tiny ray of hope began to shine within my heart. The next day I found myself in a little restaurant called the *Yellow Deli*.

Prior to this time, my life could be summed up in one word: rebellion. But I deeply yearned now for a new start, not a temporary fix or filler, but something permanent that I could give my whole heart to and know the treadmill of my old life was behind me. Behind those rustic, barnwood doors leading inside the *Yellow Deli*, unbeknownst to me, would be an encounter that would forever change my life and answer exactly what I had prayed for the night before. Somehow, the God of heaven knew my heart.

A few days later I was again walking up a flight of steps leading to a large brick house with a sign above the foyer entrance saying *The Vine House*. After having been given a warm invitation to visit the community that operated the *Yellow Deli*, I knew I had to go to one of their “rap sessions” to find out more. My heart was pounding. I was not accustomed to doing something of this nature completely alone. I felt so small and insecure, but somehow, I was resolute to find out what was going on.

As I approached the glass doors and peered inside, I couldn’t believe it. The large gathering room was filled and brimming over with men and women sitting on the stairs, on benches, and cross-legged on the floor. There must have been over fifty people all crammed together in this one room. Now I was really intrigued, but still a bit apprehensive. I slowly turned the doorknob, trying to be as quiet as I possibly could so as to enter unnoticed. Taking only a step inside the doorway, I managed to squeeze through,

but could go no further. You could have heard a pin drop.

I decided I’d better sit right down, and I used the glass door as a backrest. A young woman who was on the floor next to me warmly greeted me. I began to relax. I gazed around the crowded room excitedly. I watched intently as every eye was fixed on those speaking, in particular a man who seemed to be leading the discussion. In those moments it seemed as if time stopped. Never had I been in such a unique setting. I was completely dumbfounded by people’s reaction to what was being said. Their warm faces seemed to glow with the radiance of a good conscience — something I had not had for a very long time.

I turned to listen as one after another spoke freely from their hearts with such conviction and honesty. It was compelling. My first impression was that whatever was going on here seemed to be the most important thing taking place on earth. I was spellbound and listened with my whole heart to what was being said. After the “rap session” was over, I was suddenly engulfed in a stream of new friendships and love that completely disarmed me. Was I in a dream?

During that summer of 1974, I visited the community continually. I came to understand the gospel and witness the lives of those who daily loved one another. The *Vine House* community was quickly capturing my heart. “Love, love, love, love...” was the anthem that we sang, arm-in-arm, to each other and to the One we all desired to follow — Jesus. Deep inside, I knew this was my home. My earnest prayers had been heard. God knew I was willing to do His will, and somehow He had led me to where I could authentically walk that out in obedience to His commands.<sup>1</sup> Here was the

life of the Son of God, even as the apostle John declared it in 1 John 5:12. In this place, I felt confident I could come to know the True One, the Savior of the world!<sup>2</sup>

Despite my parent’s bewilderment and persistent urging of me to continue my education, in June of 1975 I decided I could bear it no longer. I was tormented inside because I knew in my heart what I had to do. I wanted more than anything to follow Jesus and be a true disciple. I was now 18 years old and felt spiritually bankrupt after an obligatory year in college. My parents respected my decision, sensing that deep things were going on in my heart. So, despite my 4.0 grade point average at school, I dropped out and moved into the Vine House that June. I desired more than anything to be where I could tangibly and genuinely live for Jesus, serving Him day and night, “where He is.”<sup>3</sup> Four years later, I met my wife, Judith, who was a fellow member of the community in Chattanooga. We were married and over the intervening years were given four precious children.

## The Early Years

During those first years of living in community at the *Vine House*, many local, national, and overseas travelers and hitchhikers were moving in or visiting with us all the time, almost around the clock. There were so many needs to attend to and people to care for. We were all untrained in these areas, spiritually and physically, being so young and inexperienced. But we had a heart to love, and that was the most important asset we possessed. We had energy and momentum and were quickly moving forward, but our direction also needed to be clear. We had a strong sense that spiritually we were returning to something that was lost

and needing to be restored. We began to understand that the requirements of the gospel and the cost of discipleship involved obeying Jesus’ commands fully. It would require everything from us. In fact, it always had, but we never knew it and no one had ever told us before.

Another thing that would profoundly affect our spiritual development in those early days was discovering the accurate name of our Savior. How startling to find out that the name *Jesus* was a corruption of a Greek name *Iesous*, which was in turn a corruption of His original Hebrew name, *Yahshua*. In fact, even the letter “J” and its pronunciation didn’t creep into the English language until the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Since we are speaking of the name above all names, you would have thought that the church leaders would have taken pains to preserve the proper name of the Savior of the world. But they didn’t, and along with the corruption of the name came a corruption of the church and its structure and nature.

But for us, with the restoration of His true name came also a greater confidence to call upon the One from whom we could receive forgiveness, mercy, and salvation in our lives. It was fundamental to know who we should call upon for this purpose and who *not* to call upon. In the culture of old Israel, names were not mere tags to label a person. One’s name in the Hebrew language described his identity and purpose in life. And how true this was pertaining to our Savior, for His name meant “Yahweh’s Salvation” — mighty and powerful to save. Wow! What a contrast to the English name, *Jesus*, which has no meaning of its own. This was quite revealing, because we knew that the Spirit we had received from our heavenly Father (which had formed our community) was also quite different from anything we knew in conventional Christianity.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; John 4:15,21

<sup>2</sup> 1 John 5:20

<sup>3</sup> John 12:25-26



Could it be, we wondered, that there was something unreal and actually false about the way the Jesus of Christianity was portrayed?

It was as if the gospel had been veiled in many ways — hidden, like a mystery waiting to be revealed.<sup>4</sup> It could only be understood by someone who would have a heart like David, whom God said was “a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.”<sup>5</sup> I was firmly convinced we had that heart through Gene and Marsha Spriggs to help lead us in this way. And over all the years, although many scores of other leaders have been raised up to shoulder the weight of responsibility, Gene and Marsha were the ones our Father could use to initiate the work that was necessary in establishing us as a spiritual nation of Twelve Tribes. They had the heart to bring it about, and I have never felt otherwise about them. As a matter of fact, that realization and respect for them has only deepened over the subsequent years.

## The Story of Nehemiah

As part of our spiritual foundation in building the Body of Messiah in those early days, we looked to the story of Nehemiah, who zealously built and restored the walls of Jerusalem in fifty-two days.<sup>6</sup> He worked night and day with other men, women, and children who came out of the Babylonian captivity. They were forging their lives together out of the dust and ruins of that ancient city. It was our spiritual “blueprint” in learning the deep significance of maintaining our unity of will, fighting back-to-back the spiritual battles (not giving ear to the enemy’s accusations) and pulling together “as one man” in building the kingdom of God. Examples such as this helped to make the gospel more real to us, revealing the essence of discipleship, the New Covenant, and God’s eternal purpose for the Church. We

actually came to understand that the whole concept of merely “going to church” was erroneous, and that the original pattern *was* and *would always be* living together in community.<sup>7</sup>

The choking confinements of traditional Christianity, with its prescribed liturgy and professional clergy, were abandoned as obsolete and inapplicable to our new-found spontaneity, freedom, and faith. We even met in refreshing and delightful settings such as Warner Park and Chickamauga Lake for Sunday celebrations, where any and all were welcome to join in. “If God be for us, *who* could be against us?” we sang at the top of our lungs. And then came the resounding, “*Nobody!*” (often led by the booming voice of Clay Corder). Everything was fresh and exhilarating. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John came alive and gave us detailed accounts of His commands to His followers and the essential requirements for becoming disciples of Yahshua, the Messiah. Those who accepted its terms sealed it with their lives, and the evidence of it is apparent to this very day. The love of God having been poured out into our hearts<sup>8</sup> by the Holy Spirit compelled us to lay down our lives daily for one another — just as He laid down His life for us.<sup>9</sup>

Some could, but others could not accept this. We learned that a person’s willingness to obey the gospel was foundational to receiving faith and revelation in the heart.<sup>10</sup> Over time, the people in our midst gradually began to be tested. A few even began to leave us, offended by the standards and demands which the gospel placed upon their lives. At first, I couldn’t understand how anyone could just *leave*.<sup>11</sup> And go where? And do what? The Community was the spiritual environment for

everything that any sincere disciple would need in order to become like our Master. It was troubling to see the contrast between the sincere ones and the false ones who only feigned obedience.<sup>12</sup>

But then we realized what was happening. It wasn’t possible to serve Yahshua while holding onto one’s own independent, rotten, stinking, selfish life. The two were incompatible.<sup>13</sup> In those days, we often said a “shaking” was going on, referring to Hebrews 12:25-29. We understood that the things that could be shaken in us had to be removed in order to be truly united and for our Father’s



kingdom to come. If we stood the test, we would be purified and made ready to serve our Master when He returned. We began to actually see the gospel and the purpose for the Church in a new light, and appreciate the purifying process in our lives. It would be essential for what lay ahead.

## Two Kinds of Belief

Our perception of the gospel was broadening and we realized there was a huge difference between those who claimed to know Him and those that actually knew Him.<sup>14</sup> Many, including myself, had come into the Community with previous concepts and preconceived notions of who they thought Jesus was and what the gospel required. All of this had to be re-learned and re-taught with the objectivity of the Word of God. This is something that Gene and Marsha diligently

labored to understand from the Scriptures. When the standards for discipleship began to be contrasted with the typical Christian experience, according to the commandments of Christ, many could not take it. Rather, they preferred to hold onto a religious façade that made them feel as if they were still serving God, when in fact they refused to face the reality of their own inner rebellion and rejection of the gospel.<sup>15</sup>

During those foundational years, many said they had believed, but their belief did not cause them to forsake their old life and readily embrace the new life in Messiah Yahshua through His embodiment,<sup>16</sup> the Community.<sup>17</sup> Those who left us in the beginning evidently followed *another* Jesus — a mystical, phantom spirit that masqueraded as the Real One, Yahshua.<sup>18</sup> Those disloyal to the covenant, who had said, “Yes,” to Messiah, but their “yes” was actually “no,” tried to cover up their guilt and appease their consciences with a superficial, religious air about them, thus camouflaging their hatred for His commandments.<sup>19</sup> This exposed the fact that they were indeed unwilling to obey Him, and their religious pretense was a mask of deceit in an attempt to conceal the true, inner reality of their rejection of the gospel.<sup>20</sup> The spirit of the Pharisees in the days of Yahshua was exactly like this, and why our Savior said they were like white-washed tombs, carrying about them the stench of death.<sup>21</sup> Those who left convinced themselves that

they were still following Jesus.<sup>22</sup> But as Paul the Apostle said,

*“I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by His craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Messiah. For if he who comes preaches ‘another’ Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received (from us) or a different gospel, which you have not accepted, then you may well put up with it! ...For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself is able to transform himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no great wonder if His ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.”<sup>23</sup>*

What a dangerous thing — to claim that you see, when in actuality, you are blind!<sup>24</sup> Many people have “believed” upon Him to a degree (just as those in John 2:23-25), but have never *actually* entrusted their lives to His authority. Although the word *believe* used here does not distinguish between *believing in the mind* and *believing in the heart*, Yahshua made that distinction. That is why it says, “On His part, Yahshua would not entrust Himself to them, for He knew what was in the heart of every man and needed no one to tell Him.” *Believing in the heart* is synonymous with entrusting one’s life to the authority of another over you.<sup>25</sup> Those in John 2:23-25 may have *mentally* believed in Him because they saw the miracles He did, but Yahshua knew that kind of belief was not true faith at all. Interestingly enough, John 3 goes on to say, “*But*, there came a man by night...” It was Nicodemus, who genuinely sought the truth in his heart to know whether Yahshua was indeed the one *sent* by God — the Messiah.<sup>26</sup> Christians today may

<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 29:29; Matthew 11:25; 16:17; Luke 10:21; 1 Corinthians 4:1; Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 3:3-11; 4:11-16; Colossians 1:26  
<sup>5</sup> Acts 13:22  
<sup>6</sup> Nehemiah 6:15

<sup>7</sup> Acts 2 and 4;  
1 Thessalonians 2:14  
<sup>8</sup> Romans 5:5  
<sup>9</sup> 1 John 3:14,16,17;  
1 Corinthians 5:14-15  
<sup>10</sup> John 7:17-18  
<sup>11</sup> 1 John 2:19

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 66:3; John 5:39-44; 8:47  
<sup>13</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:11-20  
<sup>14</sup> 1 John 4:20-21; 5:13

<sup>15</sup> John 12:48; 14:24; 1 John 2:23  
<sup>16</sup> *embodiment* — the incarnation of His Spirit in a people, the Body of Messiah.  
<sup>17</sup> Matthew 25:41; Romans 6:4; Acts 9:4-19 (“*Me*” in verse 4 is actually in reference to the disciples in Damascus, yet Yahshua identified Himself completely with them in addressing Saul); Eph 1:22-23  
<sup>18</sup> John 5:43; 1 John 5:20  
<sup>19</sup> Matthew 5:37; 12:30; John 14:24;  
<sup>20</sup> Matthew 16:24-26; 22:3; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 9:23-26; 1 Peter 4:17; Romans 2:8; John 12:48; 1 John 2:4-6  
<sup>21</sup> Matthew 6:2,5,16; 23:25,27; Mark 7:6; Luke 20:46

<sup>22</sup> 1 John 2:4-6  
<sup>23</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:3,4,13-15; Galatians 1:6-9  
<sup>24</sup> John 9:41  
<sup>25</sup> Luke 10:16; John 13:20  
<sup>26</sup> John 3:1-2



## Receiving the Sent Ones

have believed in Jesus in their minds, and even acknowledged Him for His works, but Yahshua cannot entrust Himself or the Holy Spirit to anyone who does not obey the gospel.<sup>27</sup>

### Recognition of Authority

In Chattanooga back in the early '70s we received Gene and Marsha Spriggs as those who were sent by God with this gospel message. Their lives attested to the fact that they were *sent*, bearing the fruit of love<sup>28</sup> and having the authority to call others to obedience in the same way they had obeyed the gospel.<sup>29</sup> They were right in there with us, living as we did, pouring out their lives just as any true disciples would. As a matter of fact, they were doing so much more — they were carrying the burden of raising all of us up so we could accurately represent and call others to the obedience of the gospel.<sup>30</sup> This was no small matter.

Gene believed in the gospel, knowing it would be compelling if represented by a life that backed up those words. It could *not* be words alone. And that was where *obedience* to the gospel came in — in order to produce a visible demonstration of it, as the veritable truth and fruit of earnestly receiving the good news of salvation. We have sometimes used the example of a *play* and its *narration* to explain the gospel — both go hand in hand to give the audience an accurate perception and understanding of what they are *seeing* and *hearing*.<sup>31</sup> Faith comes by hearing, but faith produces works that are *seen*. Otherwise, according to James 2:17, that faith is dead.<sup>32</sup> But we know the gospel is not. That is why Paul said, “The gospel is the power of God” to save men.<sup>33</sup>

This was how the gospel was originally proclaimed, and it took a person believing and trusting

<sup>27</sup> John 3:18,36 (NASB); Acts 5:32

<sup>28</sup> John 13:34-35; Romans 5:5;

1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 3:14,16,17; 4:7-11,16,17,19

<sup>29</sup> John 14:15,21,23; Romans 6:17

<sup>30</sup> 1 Corinthians 4:15; 2

Corinthians 11:27; Galatians

4:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:2-14;

Colossians 1:28-29

<sup>31</sup> Acts 2:33; 5:20; 28:27

<sup>32</sup> James 2:17,26

<sup>33</sup> Romans 1:16

the sent one (*messenger*),<sup>34</sup> in order to entrust themselves to the gospel (*message*). Without the messenger, there was no recognition of God’s authority, since there was no ambassador from God to speak on His behalf the words of salvation — the good news.<sup>35</sup> Those who receive those who are sent receive the One who sent them, and thus, they receive God’s eternal purposes through them.<sup>36</sup> Many think they can come to Yahshua without having to submit themselves or entrust their life into the hands of another person. However, there are many examples in the Scriptures that speak to the contrary.<sup>37</sup>

*When Yahshua was about to send out His disciples, He taught them saying, “whoever receives you, receives me, and whoever receives me, receives Him who sent me.”<sup>38</sup>*

So, according to what Yahshua commanded His disciples, to receive the gospel, you must first receive those who are sent in Yahshua’s name.<sup>39</sup> To *receive* means you are able to recognize the authority they come in, who they are representing, and entrust your life to those “sent ones.” Upon receiving their word, you believe what they tell you and are persuaded with conviction deep within your own heart and conscience (which is an inner witness to you). *Their* word is taken for what it is, the *Word of God*, and it causes you to be cut to the heart — desiring the forgiveness and new life that comes through the proclamation of the gospel.<sup>40</sup> Receiving them is like receiving salvation itself. You know you owe your life to them, for if it had not been for them, you would never have

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 18:4-5; Romans 10:14-15; Acts 2:37-47; 10:24-48 (Cornelius); Romans 13:1

<sup>35</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20-21; 6:1-2

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 18:5; Ephesians 1:4-14; 2:20-22; 1 Timothy 2:7

<sup>37</sup> John 13:20; Hebrews 13:7,17;

1 Corinthians 14:37-38; 2

Corinthians 13:10; 2 Timothy

2:24-26; 3:8-10; 2 Thessalonians

3:14-15; Philippians 2:12

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 10:40,42; Mark 9:41;

Luke 9:48

<sup>39</sup> John 15:16-24

<sup>40</sup> Acts 2:36-37; 10:33,44;

1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews

4:12-13

known the way of forgiveness — the way of salvation.

A person who is willing to do God’s will is going to be able to recognize those sent to him, and he will gratefully obey every word they speak, knowing if he does, his sins and all his guilt will be washed away. Thus, he entrusts his life to them as he would to Messiah Himself. Sound impossible? It would be, unless the one who is sent is a true disciple, under authority, and is representing the good news by a life that is shared in common by “all who believe.”

This is the same gospel that Peter preached, along with the rest of those early disciples, to those gathered in Jerusalem during the Feast of Pentecost. All who received their message were baptized and lived together, caring for each other. And all their needs were provided for them, because selfishness was not the dominating or controlling factor in that community, but the love of God had been poured out into their hearts. The community that was established through those messengers that day was a demonstration of the gospel. This is what God’s intent is through the gospel to all who believe. It is only possible through those who are *sent*, who themselves have obeyed the good news.

The apostles had authority to command and to teach the gospel<sup>41</sup> because they were men *under* their Master’s authority. They had lived right with Him, being obedient to what He taught, and they were trained in accordance to that gospel. Remember, the gospel is a demonstration of God’s life being lived out in a people. It is not mystical. It is *community* — where all things are shared in common for the benefit of all. The good news is that we do not have to live any longer for ourselves, under the power of the evil one who once ruled and controlled our lives. So, a person’s salvation has everything to do with being able to *recognize* Yahshua through the one who is *sent* in His name.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Matthew 28:18-20;

1 Thessalonians 4:8

<sup>42</sup> Acts 4:13; Matthew 10:40,42;

Mark 9:41; 2 Corinthians 5:20;

John 3:29,30,39-42

Consider what the Roman centurion said to Yahshua when his servant was sick and dying:

*The centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that you would come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, “I say to you, not even in Israel have I found **such great faith.**” And Jesus said unto the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, let it be done unto you.” And His servant was healed in the exact same hour. (Matthew 8:3-13)*

You can see that the centurion recognized Yahshua as a man under authority as himself; otherwise, He could not do what He was doing, or have the power to call others to obedience to the gospel He proclaimed. The centurion understood authority, and he understood the absolute need for representation and delegation of that authority.<sup>43</sup> His military service was based on command, and the results were obvious. “Such great faith” Yahshua said He had never seen in all of Israel. Could there be a link, then, between *faith* and the recognition of authority in one who is sent (as a delegate of that authority)? Our Master said, “As you have believed, let it be done until you.” So, faith comes by *hearing* the word of the gospel.<sup>44</sup>

In the early 1970s, we *heard* the word of God spoken through those sent to Chattanooga, whose whole motive was love — for God and for others.<sup>45</sup> All that Gene and Marsha wanted to do was to love, as they had

<sup>43</sup> John 3:27; Matthew 7:21; 8:9;

9:6,8; 10:1; 28:18; Mark 1:22;

Luke 4:32; 7:8; 2 Corinthians

10:8; 2 Corinthians 13:10; Titus

2:15; Hebrews 13:17

<sup>44</sup> Romans 10:8-17

<sup>45</sup> John 14:21

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received that love themselves. The gospel they preached resulted in what you see today among our people — a life in the Spirit, where love is demonstrated daily. And our goal is still the Kingdom of God. As in the words of John the Apostle, so we proclaim to all who will hear and believe:

*What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life — and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us — what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Yahshua the Messiah... And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son, Yahshua the Messiah. This is the true One and in Him is eternal life.<sup>46</sup>*

So also, what *we* have seen with our eyes and what *our* hands have handled concerning the “Word of Life,” we declare to you. That in Him, the True One, is eternal life. And we have come to know and believe that His witness is *real*. Whoever hears and has learned from the Father comes to Yahshua, the Messiah, to serve Him “where He is.”<sup>47</sup>

One for whom He died,

*Arthur Nunnally*



<sup>46</sup> 1 John 1:1-3; 5:20

<sup>47</sup> John 6:44-45; 12:26; Psalm

133; Ezekiel 48:35; Deuteronomy

12:5; John 14:3; Rev 1:20; 2:1





by Gene Spriggs

# The Water of Life (and Faith Itself) Is the Holy Spirit

**You Believe in Him?  
What if He Doesn't  
Believe in You?**

*Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, beholding His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to bear witness concerning man for He Himself knew what*

*was in man. (John 2:23-25, NKJV)*

What did He know that those around Him couldn't see — that they couldn't see about themselves? There's a "secret meaning" hidden in these words of the Savior that we must find to *know* what He knows. Part of the answer lies in the misleading translation of the same Greek word in the above verses in *two* different ways. The first time it is translated "believe" and the second time "entrusting." Even the

King James Version is guilty of such subtle manipulation of meaning — it translates the two words as "believed" and "commit." It would make the meaning much clearer to translate the same word the same way, wouldn't it?

So, they believed in Him, or *thought* they did, but He did not believe in them. Or, to reverse the translations, if they entrusted themselves to Him, why did He not entrust Himself to them? Or to use the King James translation, He did not commit Himself to them even though they committed themselves to Him — or *thought* they did. Very odd, isn't it, when all your life in church you are taught that all you have to do is "believe"? According to the Gospel of John, though, your belief has to stimulate or evoke the response of *His* belief in you. No wonder they obscure the meaning of John 2:23-25 — it points to another understanding of salvation than what you get from every pulpit. It points to the *response* of the faith one receives that is required for salvation.

This is what we have seen in our midst since our earliest days in Chattanooga. So many *thought* they believed, but it became evident that He did not believe in them. They had not made the proper response; they had not seen His all-surpassing worth. So, as the Scriptures say, He knew what was in their hearts, just as He knows what is in all of our hearts. He knows who is willing to do His will and who is not — and, as He taught His disciples, this willingness determines who receives revelation from heaven.<sup>1</sup> Those who are willing as they were are given the kind of insight and revelation that Peter was given when he proclaimed Jesus the Messiah.<sup>2</sup>

Why is it so hard for us to face what is in our hearts? Why is "true belief" argued about so much? So many thought they found the answers in the simple, clear message they heard at rap sessions in the *Vine House*, after asking about "the fruit of the Spirit" at a *Yellow Deli*, or outside a concert as

<sup>1</sup> John 7:17-18

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 16:16-18

they got their first freepaper.

Finally, there was something greater and more sincere than doctrine, theology, and tradition! We responded to the message we heard because we were sick of how the radical new life we read about in the Bible was watered down into the stupefying "easy believism" of just going to church on Sunday. That was all we had to do after "accepting Jesus into our hearts." Of course, we didn't *have* to do that, either. We didn't have to do *nuthin*. We never considered, and the preachers never told us, that He might not believe in us if our belief was no deeper than that.

Yet, deep down we knew (from painful experience) that a compromised gospel produces a compromised life, which was certainly what we had. So our hearts were primed to read those early freepapers about the uncompromising gospel. It gave us the hope of living an uncompromising life of love, of true faith. But for many, something happened along the way. What was it?

## The Love of God (is the Holy Spirit)

There will always be a category of people who are like the believers in John 2:23-25. They are confused with true believers who have entrusted themselves to Messiah, and to whom He has also entrusted Himself. And they are confused inside themselves, too, wondering why life gets (or got) so hard at times. ("It wouldn't be so hard if it weren't for self regard.") This kind of "believer" was spoken of in the parable of the sower and the seed:

*And those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. (Luke 8:13)*

These "believers" in Luke 8:13 appear to be saved, or at least they were "baptized" and made a confession, but they "have no firm root." Therefore, just as the Master warned us all in His parable,

they don't endure. They revert or change back to the same old way they were before they were "saved." This is seen in turning back to the same old things of the world they seem to like or even love. But can you love the world and love the Father, too? Not according to the Apostle John!

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

*(1 John 2:15)*

So it would seem as if the love of the Father in heaven (which is the Holy Spirit) was never imparted to them.<sup>3</sup> Yes, just as Luke 8:13 says, they *seemed* to have received the gospel with joy, but no one realized they had no root. They did "believe," but only as those "believed" in John 2:23-25 — the ones the Savior could not trust. Why was that?

Luke 8:11-15 — Some of these "believers" stay in the community for various reasons, such as family ties. They may be married to a disciple, or have parents or siblings who are disciples, but they themselves do not produce the fruit of love and faithfulness to Yahshua. That, you know, can be detected, because those who love Him walk as He walked — keeping His word.<sup>4</sup> Obviously their life was not transformed; though their doctrine was correct, their attitude was not in keeping with His attitude. While they *professed* faith, they did not *possess* Messiah. They were not willing to go all the way down in humility, as He did.<sup>5</sup>

So the word *believe*<sup>6</sup> means *to entrust, to commit*. But all over the world, the word *believe* is used to describe mere mental assent or persuasion, but one not reaching the heart. That is what the salvation spoken of in Romans 10:9,10,13 is referring to, where the person is *fully persuaded* by the Holy Spirit in his spirit and soul.

*That if you confess with your*

<sup>3</sup> Romans 5:5

<sup>4</sup> 1 John 2:4-6

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 6:1-6; 1 John 3:6-9; Philippians 2:5-8

<sup>6</sup> #4100 in *Strong's Greek Dictionary*



# The Water of Life

mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation... For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." (Romans 10:9-10, 13)

## Three Categories of People

So how can you tell the one who is persuaded in his heart from the one who is only mentally persuaded? Is it obvious? It's as obvious as the continuous craving for the news, sports, and knowledge — all the things of the world that keep affecting the one who was only persuaded in his mind. These things touch him.<sup>7</sup> Even so, he may be able to speak elaborately and intellectually, and it is hard (even for a long time) to distinguish the natural-minded in our midst from the foolish virgin. It takes time to see that the natural man was never fully persuaded, but embraced the truths of the gospel in his mind only. Eventually, he came (or comes) to a point where his logical thinking can no longer follow the leading of the Holy Spirit in the Community. So he must follow one or the other!

There are always three categories of people in the Community: the natural, the carnal, and the spiritual. The natural are as the believer with mental assent only. The carnal are the foolish virgins, and the spiritual are the wise virgins. Paul shows us all three in his letter to the Corinthians:

*But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, they are spiritually discerned. He who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is judged rightly by no one. (1 Cor 2:15)*

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you*

*with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, even now you are still not able; you are still carnal. For where there are strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? (1 Corinthians 2:14-15; 3:1-3)*

## "That Ye May Believe"

*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13, KJV)*

This verse unlocks a wonderful secret. One can still believe unto Messiah if he can see and understand why First John was written. He has to grasp, if he can, the whole life of faith this letter surveys. He must take in its comprehensive understanding of the gospel and how it serves as the gospel's litmus test<sup>8</sup> to determine who has truly believed. It was written for the very purpose stated in 1 John 5:13 — that those who believe may know that they have eternal life, or that the reader may learn that he has not passed out of death and into eternal life. And this he can know with confidence by his manner of life among God's people:

*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death... By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

*...and this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in*

*Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. (1 John 3:14,16,23,24)*

If he comes to the conclusion that he has not passed out of death and into life, as 1 John 3:14 says, then he can now believe, since he continued to be thirsty<sup>9</sup>... even after all these years. Only if one thirsts again and again, and then after reading First John, comes to know why he still thirsts, can he now truly believe and entrust his life to Him, by calling on His name.<sup>10</sup> Then Yahshua can entrust His life to the one who only thought he believed in Him before.<sup>11</sup> Only when



Romans 10:17 is real, and the Holy Spirit comes to him and rests upon him, can he cry out to be saved:

*So then faith comes hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)*

Now is the time to hear! For this is what faith is — the persuasion of the Holy Spirit to believe on Yahshua, the mediator between God and men.<sup>12</sup> So, the water of life is faith, and faith is the Holy Spirit:

*On the last day, that great day the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has*

*said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." This He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (John 7:37-39)*

To truly believe in Him<sup>13</sup> means that one will never thirst again because he is sealed with the Holy Spirit eternally.<sup>14</sup> He is secure with the confidence that comes from the belief and from the love John speaks of in 1 John 3:23-24.

## The Coward and the Conqueror

The coward, who is the unbeliever that will not entrust his life to Yahshua, or who believes but will not obey Him so as to do what He says to do, is first on the list of those who will be cast into the lake of fire (in verse 8):

*And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.*

*He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:6-8)*

The one who drinks "freely" is just like the merchant seeking fine pearls in Matthew 13:45-46. In the riches of the gospel he found a cause overwhelmingly greater than his own, a reason to live far surpassing anything he had ever encountered or dreamed of. And for this, the kingdom of heaven, "he went and sold all that he had and bought it." He did this gratuitously, meaning without any reason, cause, or justification to hold back. He had no way to pay for it except to give all that he had.

## A Twelve Tribes Freepaper

This is the worth and value that Mary of Bethany saw in Him, too, anointing Him before His crucifixion, doing all that she could. This is why what she did in breaking the precious "alabaster flask of very costly oil" will always be spoken of wherever and whenever "this gospel" is proclaimed, for in giving Him her very best she did all she could do — she gave all she could give.<sup>15</sup> The New Covenant can be entered into no other way than by giving all you have, a life for a life — your life forsaken for His life gained.

When someone actually sees what the Savior did for him, what was gained for him, and at what a high price, there is no appropriate response of the heart less than giving all. This is the clear and simple meaning of such verses in the gospels as Luke 14:26-33, "Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple," and of such verses in the epistles as:

*For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)*

It is just as the rich young ruler who "believed" and said he wanted eternal life, but was unwilling to go beyond mere mental assent. He was certainly not willing to go so far as obedience.<sup>16</sup> He had a cause not to drink of the water of life — a reason, whatever hold his possessions, his family, his status in society had on him — that kept him from drinking. Therefore, as Revelation 22:17 says, he could not drink "freely" of the water of life, for another cause in life held him back from life eternal. What a terrible trade he made!

The last thing recorded in the whole Bible about the water of life, which one must drink in order to have eternal life with Him, is in Revelation 22:17:

*And the Spirit and the bride*

<sup>15</sup> Mark 14:1-9, Matthew 26:13  
<sup>16</sup> Matthew 13:46; Mark 10:17-22-30; 2 Thessalonians 1:8

<sup>7</sup> 1 John 5:18 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> A litmus test is a test for a single factor, which has only two outcomes, positive or negative.

<sup>9</sup> John 4:13-14

<sup>10</sup> Romans 10:9-17

<sup>11</sup> John 2:23-25; 6:47-69.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>13</sup> John 6:35; Revelation 21:6-8; 22:17

<sup>14</sup> Ephesians 1:13



say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:17)

So he that wills, let him take the water of life *gratuitously*, without any cause greater than the gift of the Spirit. Let him do so with no cause to reject the free gift of life.<sup>17</sup> For, note this, the Bible records that many reject the offer (see John 3:18 and 36, Luke 10:16, Mark 10:17-22, and Matthew 10:34-39).

*Freely* in Revelation 22:6 is the same word in the Greek as *freely* in Revelation 22:17 — *gratuitously*. Whoever would drink of the water of life (i.e., whoever would receive the Spirit, for He is the water of life<sup>18</sup>) must do so *gratuitously*, without any reason or cause *not* to drink it. And it is Matthew 13:44-46 which shows us the essence of what it is to drink that precious water — to give up all one has for the greater cause of His kingdom, to which nothing else can compare in the heart of the one who believes unto eternal life.

The bride of the Lamb at the end of the age is the restored twelve tribes, and she becomes His wife. Before the end of this age, however, she and the Holy Spirit will call all who have ears (and can hear) to drink of the water of life *gratuitously*<sup>19</sup> — the meaning of the word translated *freely* in Revelation 22:17. This means drinking without reason, cause, or justification to *not* drink. Indeed, drinking freely here is the overflowing joy the Savior spoke of in the parables about the pearl of great price and the treasures hidden in the field.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-22, 28-30 had reason, cause, and justification to *not* drink the water of life (which is the Holy Spirit). Yes, the merchant in Matthew 13:44-46 and the overcomer in Revelation 21:7 had the same heart — they had

no cause whatsoever to keep them from drinking freely.

These overcomers overcame anything that could cause them *not* to drink freely. The Spirit knew this was in their hearts to do, just as the Savior knew in John 2:23-25 what was in each man’s heart. To those who drink freely, *gratuitously*, our Father gives *gratuitously* to them who thirst and who are willing to do His will.<sup>21</sup> This means He gives without a cause *to not give* as He had good cause *not to give* to the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-30. For one cannot drink the water of life with any hindrances. God gives freely and the one He gives to drinks freely. Both do so without a cause to hold back.

So John 3:16, the most famous verse in the world, and Acts 2:44, where “all who believed were together and had all things in common,” use the exact same word for *believe*. Acts 2:44 is the “reality check” on the belief of John 3:16. Without the one, you can’t have the other. You can’t know the “love of God” while living by yourself in the world that He came to save you from! You can only know the love of God where He is, in the Community of those being saved.<sup>22</sup> So in John 3:16 and Acts 2:44, *together* is believing in the heart. John 3:16 is the good news, and Acts 2:44-45 is the *result* of obedience to this good news. Remember, it *wasn’t* good news to the rich young ruler in Mark 10. Forsaking all, as Luke 14:33 commands, which according to Him is the way to become His disciple, was very *bad news* to him. The *obedience of the faith*<sup>23</sup> is the very thing the rich young ruler would not do.

This is why Peter could so confidently say that the Holy Spirit is given to those who *obey* Him.<sup>24</sup> Only such heartfelt obedience to the Savior, keeping His words about giving up all and leaving every-

thing behind<sup>25</sup> actually brings you into His Body. Where else would you go if you have nothing, except to be where He is, for whom you gave up everything, living among your brothers and sister who did the same. Just as anyone’s spirit dwells in his body — and nowhere else<sup>26</sup> — so it is that His Spirit dwells only in His Body. This is the truth that Colossians 1:18 and 2:19 tells us, as well as Ephesians 2:19-22 and 4:16.

### Gratuitously

Matthew 13:15 — It is possible that a person who may see and hear, but still not understand, will even give up all his own material possessions and yet accomplish nothing at all. For the Holy Spirit would still *not* be given to him, since his  *motive* for giving up all his things was to receive eternal life while *still* holding on to his own life. Thus he will eventually leave and demand all his possessions back.

This is the same kind of “bargain” people make with God all over the world, in every religion. It is usually made in times of extreme danger or stress, even facing the loss of one’s own life, or that of a loved one, or in times when he is especially sensitive to the guilt of sin on his conscience. But, oh, how often such vows are forgotten! In the end, it is only what is done freely from one’s own heart, a covenant made and kept, that matters.

The Greek New Testament uses the word *gratuitously* in Revelation 21:6 and 22:17, but the translators take away the meaning of the gospel of the water of life (and substitute their own) by translating it as “without cost.” Thereby they suggest that the surrender of possessions and family have nothing to do with the drinking of this water or receiving the Holy Spirit or faith to *obey* the gospel. Finally, they suggest, in keeping with Christian theology, that there is nothing one must do, no command one must obey, not even a heart one must have, to enter the New Covenant. But every covenant a man makes is costly, and

entails, absolutely, that he keep the word he has heard and that he has given. How much more when it is the Son of God who is speaking to a man’s heart!

*Gratuitously* has everything to do with Revelation 21:6-8 and John 7:37-39 (quoted above) and John 4:13-14:

*Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”*

The man in Matthew 13:46 drank without a cause to hold him back from the faith, finding in it the pearl of great price or eternal life. It is to him the water of life, and he will never thirst again after *hearing* and *obeying* the gospel. *Gratuitously* is to drink without any reason or cause or justification to hold back, regardless of his possessions and family.<sup>27</sup> The first time the gospel was preached in Acts 2:36-45, the terms of peace were made very clear, just as in the story of the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-30. He was one who justified himself, having great possessions. His question in verse 17, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” clearly introduces the story. It sets the stage for the Master’s words in Mark 10:29-30, which explain what anyone must do in order to drink from the water of life (quoted below). Only if he *obeyed* the Savior from his heart, because of his utter need for forgiveness and true life, would he be saved.

The rich young ruler had many reasons, many justifications for not doing what the Son of God said he must do to be able to walk with Him (follow Him). But the gospel then and also today, as Galatians 1:8 says, makes no room for compromise:

*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.*

“Only believe,” Christians say in their gospel, but it is *another* gospel. All who espouse such a gospel that leaves out and denies obedience to the Savior they boast about serving are *accursed*.<sup>28</sup> Obviously, those who have other causes, justifications, or reasons that hinder them from freely drinking from the water of life do not realize the far-surpassing value of eternal life. They have something better to live for than Messiah and the cause of His kingdom and gospel. Thus, they will be dreadfully disappointed in the end to find that Mark 10:29-30 is utterly strange to them, a promise far away:

*So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time — houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions — and in the age to come, eternal life.”*

Along with these words of the Savior in Mark 10 go His words in Matthew 19:29 and Luke 19:28-30. That is why all these things in Luke 14:26-33 must be given up *in faith*. *Faith comes by hearing*, just as it came to the believers at Pentecost to form the First Church in Acts 2:40, 41, and 44.

Once, following Jesus seemed “hip enough,” since it was then a style or trend. There was no shame to it, as it was the “in thing” (like the hippie movement). We would march downtown in Chattanooga, singing and handing out freepapers at Memorial Auditorium. But what happened when following Him was no longer hip, but meant being part of a “cult”? Many found out in the first century also, when the beautiful movement they’d joined turned out to be the “sect spoken against everywhere.”<sup>29</sup>

<sup>17</sup> As John 7:17 tells us, this willingness to do His will opens to the seeker revelation from heaven.

<sup>18</sup> John 7:38-39

<sup>19</sup> #1422 in Strong’s Greek Dictionary

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 13:44-46

<sup>21</sup> Revelation 21:6, 22:17, and John 7:17-18

<sup>22</sup> John 12:24-26; Acts 2:47

<sup>23</sup> Romans 1:5; 16:26; 10:16, and Hebrews 5:9.

<sup>24</sup> Acts 5:32; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, John 3:18 and 36 (NASB)

<sup>25</sup> Luke 14:26-33

<sup>26</sup> While they are alive, that is.

<sup>27</sup> Luke 14:26,33; Matthew 10:37

<sup>28</sup> #331 in Strong’s Greek Dictionary

<sup>29</sup> Acts 28:22



by Gene Spriggs

# For This Cause

*“The cords of death encompassed me and the terrors of Sheol came upon me... You have rescued my soul from death... What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me? I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD. I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people!” (Psalm 116:3,8,12-14)*

**Y**AHSHUA did not die because He sinned, but on the contrary, He died to *not* sin.<sup>1</sup> He died because of our sin.<sup>2</sup> His death was the greatest act of love and obedience ever, perfecting Him in His humanity.<sup>3</sup> All who really understand this great act of love will know in their hearts that they owe a great debt of love to the One who went to death for them and rose again on their behalf. They will want to spend their whole lives repaying that debt by leaving their old lives behind and joining His cause. Messiah Himself said, “For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.”<sup>4</sup> His *cause* was to establish a witness of the kingdom to come<sup>5</sup> — a holy nation made up of His special forgiven people who demonstrate the love of Messiah by loving one another the way He loved them.<sup>6</sup>

The only proper response to what He did for us is to wholeheartedly join His cause and become a part of the life that demonstrates His love daily, loving each other as He loved us, thus becoming a true light to those who are sitting in darkness<sup>7</sup> under the sentence of death.

This life is the restoration of a new culture that sprang forth 2000 years ago for a short time after the resurrection. This new

culture is re-emerging today and stands above the increasing decadence of society. It waves its banner of love high! We who are part of this new culture want the whole world to see that there is a *movement* taking shape, a people being formed to give hope of a *real* kingdom that is coming!

## Our Response

We are the Communities of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and we are waving that banner all across this land and in many places around the world. We, just as the Jews that heard the gospel on the Day of Pentecost, have been cut to the heart by realizing that it was *our* sins also that killed Him and plunged His soul into death.<sup>8</sup> Our response has been to give our whole lives to follow Him. Obeying His word is saving us from the decadence of this perverse, abnormal society<sup>9</sup> in which we live, as well as saving us from the things inside of us that hurt our families, our friends, and our fellow man, replacing that alienation with relationships of peace and unity.

Our love for our God and for one another is forming us into a commonwealth of communities<sup>10</sup> in which we share a common life of love.<sup>11</sup>

With all our hearts we are laboring to cultivate a life, a culture, a place to belong for all who want to serve Him<sup>12</sup> by the grace and strength He provides,<sup>13</sup> giving all *their* passion in response to *His* passion in dying on the cross and suffering in death on our behalf. Now all the disillusioned and disgruntled ones can put their trust in Him and join with us in building this spiritual nation of Twelve Tribes, the Israel of God,<sup>14</sup> so that His light and His salvation will reach the ends of the earth.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Acts 2:37

<sup>9</sup> Acts 2:40

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 2:12

<sup>11</sup> Acts 2:44-45

<sup>12</sup> John 12:25-26

<sup>13</sup> 1 Peter 4:11

<sup>14</sup> Galatians 6:16

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 49:6; Acts 26:7; James 1:1; Revelation 21:9,12; Matthew 21:43; 1 Peter 2:9-10

**“Why was I born? Would it have been better for me to have never been born, than to live and die without ever fulfilling the cause I was born for?”**

*You were born for “this cause.” The Holy Spirit came into the world to dwell in our Master Yahshua, and now in His people, to accomplish the will of God. (Mark 3:35)*

**T**HE GREATEST CAUSE is being carried out by the holy ones of Israel. They are the wise who understand (Dan 12:10). In Jn 18:37, “for *this* cause,” the two speak as one: Yahshua who was *born*, and the Word that *came into the world* (Heb 10:5). For this *cause*, the human and divine were one in our Master Yahshua, just as Paul says of us in 1 Cor 6:17 and 1 Cor 12:13. So no one until Messiah was sealed with the Spirit in them. No one was one spirit with God — the human spirit one with the Holy Spirit — and this speaks of the communion of 1 Peter 4:11 and 2 Peter 1:4.

“This cause” is #5124 in Jn 18:36-37, “For *this* cause I was born, and for *this* cause I have come into the world.” The *Man* Yahshua and the Word of God had the same cause. There was no hope for Yahshua to fulfill the cause He was born for without the Holy Spirit, as there was no hope for the Word to fulfill the purpose He came into the world for apart from the *Man* Yahshua (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 10:5). In the same way, there is no hope for us to live the life and cause we are called

***If love is lost, the cause is lost and the church ceases to be the light of the world.***

to apart from the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:17; Eph 5:27; Col 1:22). What would a person do “for this cause” (Mk 3:31-35) to reach its goal?

The same Greek word is used to emphasize *this* gospel in Mt 24:14 and 26:13 (“*this* gospel of the kingdom” and “wherever *this* gospel is preached”). The word is *this* (#5124), meaning this particular one, not a *different* cause or a *different* gospel.

A *cause* is what one is devoted to, doing whatever it takes to bring it about (1 Jn 2:17; Mk 3:31-35), or to produce a specific result: to be the *cause* of. This cause is brought about in a joint effort — the synergy of God and man together as one, and in one cause. A *cause* is also a controversy that attracts great public attention.

“This cause” will be accomplished by “this gospel” — and by *no other gospel* (2 Cor 11:4). The word *this* in Mt 24:14, Mt

26:13, and Mk 14:8 is a definite article used for emphasis, even an indication of what it would *cause* if *this same* gospel is preached as a witness of *what it causes*, which is Acts 2:36-45 and 4:32-37, etc.

Mt 21:43, Isa 49:6, and Acts 26:7 — These are the ones who cause it to be fulfilled. They are born for the same cause (Pr 17:17). Rev 22:17, Mt 26:13, and Mk 14:8 all speak of a cause. A *cause* (#5124) is a goal to reach and attain to, a movement we are all dedicated to accomplish (Phil 3:14), a goal we all have to reach together (Pr 17:17; Jn 17:22). We are no better than what we pray to be for Him.

Rev 2:4-5 — Love is the compelling force which keeps a community from disaster, and that which causes the cause to reach its goal (Mt 24:14). If love is lost, the cause is lost, and the lampstand is removed. They are no longer a light to the world.

**Gratuitously (Freely) Drinking — Revelation 22:17**

One drinks of this water of life *gratuitously* — without any other cause whatsoever to not sell all he has to gain the pearl of great price. This the rich young ruler did not do; he did not fulfill the very essence of the gospel, as Mt 13:44-46 defines it for us.

This is how the Word came — *gratuitously* — and why our Master was born: to fulfill the cause that He came for (Jn 18:37). This is how we are to drink of the water of life (Jn 7:37-39; 4:13-14) in Rev 22:17, as #1432 says: *gratuitously, freely, without a cause* to not “Join the Cause!” He came and was born for.

1 Cor 6:17 is what the gospel calls one to by obeying Lk 14:26-33, Mt 10:34-38, and in the story of the rich young ruler in Mk 10:17-22 and 28-30. This is how the rich young ruler could have obtained the pearl of great price (Mt 13:46).

*Gratuitously* (#1432) is giving over all for “this cause” without any other cause to reject it or to say, “No.” Rev 22:17; Jn 3:36; 4:14; 7:37-38; Rev 21:6-8 — It

<sup>1</sup> Romans 6:10

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 5:8-9

<sup>4</sup> John 18:37

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 24:14

<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter 2:9; John 13:34-35

<sup>7</sup> Luke 1:79



is the cowardly and unbelieving who reject this cause to devote their lives to when they hear the good news (Lk 10:16; Jn 3:18; Mk 10:21-22; Mt 13:46), since nothing else can be compared to eternal life and being saved from eternal death (*torment*, Lk 16:28). Such gratuitous drinking is defined even as (seeming to others) without spiritual and logical reason, cause, or justification to do anything else.

Many of us have come in with sins such as are listed in Rev 21:8, but we have been forgiven and are a new creation (2 Cor 5:15,17). But know this: no liar can fake it, (Jn 9:39-41), and if anyone remains a liar (1 Jn 2:4), there is nothing left for him except eternal death in the Lake of Fire. The greatest sin is listed first in Rev 21:8 — the cowardly and unbelieving, who rejected water of life (the Holy Spirit, Salvation) offered gratuitously to him.

*Then He said to me, "It is done I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost [gratuitously]. He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Revelation 21:6-8)*

The water of life in Rev 21:6 is received by those who overcome anything and everything that would cause them to *not* drink. Those who do not overcome in this way are the cowardly and unbelieving in Rev 21:8. Those who refuse to overcome those things, choosing some other cause over the cause of Messiah, are as the rich young ruler who would not overcome the cause he loved more (Mk 10:17-22).

They are the cowardly and unbelieving who are judged already, as Messiah Himself said (Jn 3:18).

### The Essence of the Gospel

For what reason do you think Yahshua told the parable in Mt 13:44-46? It's the essence of the gospel. The essence of the gospel is the basic or fundamental nature of what it takes to be saved, forgiven, and given eternal life (Mk 10:17-30). The *essence* of a thing is the concentrated substance of it, or the constitution of it. The essence of "this gospel" is opposite to that *other* gospel that Christianity has espoused, adopted, and embraced as real (2 Cor 11:4) for almost 1800 years, at least since Constantine took the sign of the Sabbath away (Ex 31:12-17). So is it all a lost cause? Can it be restored? Will the lost cause ever be found again without the restoration of love? (Rev 2:4)

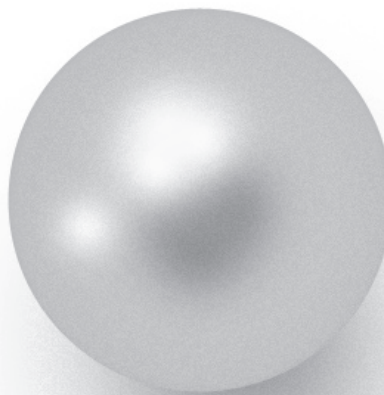
Mt 13:46 is the essence, which is absolutely essential and crucial to salvation, thus it is of vital and critical importance to anyone who wants to be saved, as in Jn 2:23-25 and Mk 3:31-35.

Mt 13:44-46 is the **essence of the good news of salvation**. And again, the *essence* of a thing is the basic and fundamental nature that is required for it to be that thing. The essence of the gospel is what is required to believe in the Savior (who is the pearl of great price), the Savior of this world of lost people. That Savior is Yahshua, the Son of Yahweh, and He is what that pearl represents in the parable.

To see the worth of the pearl of great price means to recognize that all that you have, all that you are holding on to, is worth nothing in comparison to the *pearl* of eternal life. Indeed, all is freely, gratuitously given, just as Mk 8:36-37; 10:17-30; Lk 14:26-33; etc., etc., etc., to gain the pearl of great price.

Unless a person of this world for whom He died and went into death believes and obeys the very essence of "this gospel" (as Mt 26:13 and Mk 14:8, and so proves the reality of Rom 5:5), then he is in for a great disappointment because of the false hope he has (Rom 6:3-11; 4:18; 5:2).

If Rom 5:5 is not a reality in our hearts, then we still need to be saved, as the KJV says in 1 Jn 5:12-13,<sup>1</sup> since



***All that you have, all that you are holding on to, is worth nothing in comparison to the pearl of eternal life.***

we have not yet believed unto Him (Jn 3:15) as Mt 13:46 says. We have not given all to Him *gratuitously* (#1431, 1432, and 1435), as Rev 22:17 says. *Freely* (#1432) means gratuitously, without any cause or reason or justification not to drink of the water of life. It means there is no cause to reject the water of life, which is taken gratuitously.

2 Pet 1:4-11 is the road to the Kingdom. Our Father in heaven cannot entrust His divine nature to anyone who has not entrusted or will not entrust all his being, all his own possessions, and leave all

<sup>1</sup> *He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

his relations as Mk 10:25-30 says — all that the rich young ruler would *not* do to gain eternal life (Mk 10:17-22). All these things they forsake or give up as they gratuitously respond to Him.

### The Giver or the Receiver?

So who is the word *freely* applied to in Rev 22:17? The giver or the receiver? The word is *gratuitously*: without cause to reject, without justifying themselves, or for no greater cause. Phil 3:8 — Yes, it is all dung in comparison to gain Messiah. Paul counted everything as dung (#4657), and all who believe must do the same. This word describes things one throws to the dogs as refuse, or what one flushes down the toilet.

This is what Rev 22:17 means: to count all things as dung, rubbish, refuse *compared to eternal life*. Mk 8:34-38 — What can be compared to eternal life? What does it matter if a man gains the whole world and all its possessions and loses his own soul to the Lake of Fire? (Mt 19:16-29; Mk 10:17-30; Lk 18:18-30; Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37).

The water of life is given gratuitously, without a cause not to give it, unless the one to whom it is offered has another cause which would keep them from drinking, like the Rich Young Ruler, who had a greater cause than Messiah. Rev 22:17 speaks of the one who *drinks* freely, *not the one who offers the drink* (Mk 10:17,22). The one who drank (or who drinks now) without cause to refuse is as the man in Mt 13:46. This is the opposite of Jn 3:18, the one who refused to drink. This one justified his not drinking because he had a cause not to.

### The Earnest of our Inheritance

So, if one "believes" as the word *believe* means (#4100), he will do all that Yahshua commands in order to have eternal life (Mk 10:17,22; Jn

2:23-25; Lk 18:22-23), which was demonstrated in Acts 4:32-37. *Believe* unto eternal life is #4100 in the Greek (Acts 2:44; 4:32). They were *persuaded* (#4102) by faith from the Holy Spirit, which they received by a sent one or a righteous disciple (Mt 10:40-41; Jn 7:17-18; Lk 10:16; Jn 3:18,36).

So, if Acts 4:32 is not the result or response of a believer, one's belief is just mental faith that does not result in a new heart. Believing is *of the heart* as Rom 10:9-10,17 says. *Believe* is the result of receiving faith, hearing and responding to the voice of the good shepherd (Jn 10:27; 10:14-16). Jn 10:27 — "I know them." Eph 1:11 — We were predestined because we who believe were willing to do His will (Jn 7:17). Eph 1:13 — After we believed we were sealed at baptism by the laying on of the hands of the Body — whoever represents the Body (1 Cor 12:12-13).

Do you understand Eph 1:13-14? It tells us that those who believed in Him — who trusted in everything after they heard the truth, the word of truth (as Acts 2:40), the goodness of salvation — were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of their inheritance.

*Earnest* is #728 (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-14), the Holy Spirit that believers receive from God Himself in this present life, along with His divine nature (2 Pet 1:4-11; 1 Pet 1:4-9; Phil 2:10-14). Heb 4:1-3 — The Holy Spirit is not in the Christian gospel, but another spirit is (2 Cor 11:4,13-15).

*Earnest* is #728 (Eph 1:13-14). The Holy Spirit which God has given believers in this present life is to secure, to assure, us of our future and eternal inheritance (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:14; Col 1:22-23).✠

For more on this subject, see:  
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# Two Kinds of Gospels Two Kinds of Messengers Two Kinds of Recipients Two Kinds of Belief

by Gene Spriggs

*If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the teaching, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him. (John 7:17-18)*

THESE VERSES give us light and understanding as to why so many left us in the beginning.<sup>1</sup> Some stayed with us and some left us; both heard the same gospel. Some were willing to do our Father's will and some were not willing. Most of those who came in had already received a gospel from those seeking their *own* glory in Christianity, but they came to us because they were not secure in the love they had for their "brothers" at all.<sup>2</sup> Many of these were saved by the gospel they heard from us.

They were willing to do our Father's will, and renounced the gospel they heard from their glory-seeking pastors at their altar calls, and the Jesus they espoused. But others were deceived into thinking they were saved already, and their baptism in the Vine Community was like joining another denomination in Christianity, but they left when the going got tough. They left when the sun came up.<sup>3</sup> But as 1 John 2:19 says, they were never of us, receiving our gospel, and our Master, and being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.<sup>4</sup>

So the two different messengers in John 7:18 appealed to the two kinds of recipients in John 7:17 with the two kinds of gospels in 2 Corinthians 11:4 (quoted below). And those

<sup>1</sup> 1 John 2:19

<sup>2</sup> 1 John 3:14

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 13:6,21

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 1:13-14

who heard (the recipients) had two kinds of belief, as we see in John 2:23-25. And they heard two kinds of voices calling them, as John 10:1-5 and John 10:27 says. Some listened to the voice of the shepherd who loved them, who had entered in through the gate himself, and others listened to the stranger, the one who didn't care for the sheep. That is what John 10 is all about, how sheep follow the shepherd in the flock, which is the community of believers where all who believe are together and share all things in common.<sup>5</sup> It is there that they find security and safety.

All this helps us understand the "why" of 1 John 2:19. Why do people go out from us? Why do others abide and prosper? The answer lies in what happened to the real gospel, the one the Messiah and His apostles preached so long ago. It's the one that produced a startling life of love in Jerusalem.

Yet within such a short time, another gospel, a false one, began to be preached by another spirit, proclaiming another Savior. It's all written down for us to see:

*For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which*

<sup>5</sup> Acts 2:44-45

*you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. (2 Corinthians 11:4)*

Imagine how things went in the 1900 years after Paul wrote these things! He warned the Corinthian church *back then* that a little leaven would leaven, or defile, the whole loaf of their life together.<sup>6</sup> After 1900 years of leavened growth in the hothouse of deception, the church grew utterly beyond recognition.<sup>7</sup> A hothouse is where you can grow something outside its natural environment. It's artificial. That's Christianity, growing outside of a community environment, outside the only way the church can be, which is Acts 2:42-45.

When they lost their way, when they left their first love, their lampstand (the revelation they had from heaven, which produced the light of their life<sup>8</sup>) was taken away, too.<sup>9</sup> The apostles had told

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

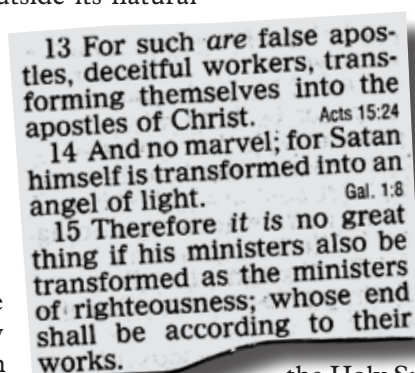
<sup>7</sup> As historians such as Tony Lane in the *Lion Book of Christian History* testify: "Between the years AD 100 and AD 500, the Christian Church changed almost beyond recognition. ... [At first] the organization of the church was still fluid... there were no creeds to be recited, no set forms of worship... [By AD 500] the worship of the church was entirely liturgical with fixed, set forms of prayer..." (Lion Publishing Company, Batavia, Illinois, 1984), page 8. It didn't stop mutating at AD 500 either!

<sup>8</sup> John 1:4

<sup>9</sup> Revelation 2:4-5

them not to lose their first love, not to show partiality, but meet the needs of all... but they hadn't listened.<sup>10</sup> They became lukewarm.<sup>11</sup> They left their Hebrew Savior and King behind, but kept a Greek form of His name. All the while they didn't realize or recognize that they were becoming just like the world around them.<sup>12</sup>

So it was an *abnormal* growth all those years, producing the abnormal fruit of war, persecution, and inquisition. It was nothing less than



a genetically modified growth during all those centuries. The "seed" in Christianity was (and is) one that won't bear the fruit of

the Holy Spirit. You can't pass the Holy Spirit on from that seed. It is the fruit that can't bear fruit.

So the *Vine House* was "hip enough" for so many Christians who didn't like churchgoing. They joined us in the fading Jesus Movement after 1972. But our gospel required more than just going to church on Sunday morning; it required the works of Ephesians 2:10, and not just the grace and faith of verses 8 and 9. You are saved, truly saved, by grace through faith, but for good works, which is what verse 10 says, as Ephesians 4:16 describes their working in the Community. This is, as Colossians 2:19 says, "a

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 6:24; 1 Corinthians 11:25; James 2:1-3,9

<sup>11</sup> Revelation 3:14-16

<sup>12</sup> James 4:1-4

growth that is from God."

The good works became laborious to them, as if it were mere works, or maybe even "works salvation." What is laborious requires much work, exertion, and perseverance, and effort, and all diligence. We are to never get weary — not if we are in communion with the One who gives power to the weak.<sup>13</sup> How many of our youth, even as the prophet Isaiah warned, grew weary and left?

All of this happened through history, beginning in the waning days of the early church and continuing to the present, through what Paul boldly calls "Satan's servants." These are deceitful men seeking their own glory. They seek and get the praise of men, but not of God.

## Whose Servants?

*For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)*

2 Corinthians 11:4 and 13-15 are speaking of Satan's servants, who give you a phony bill of goods, deceiving you. Someday you'll wake up and find that you're not in heaven, sitting on a cloud. They promise what they can't deliver. So they can only pass on another or a different spirit than the servants of the True One.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Isaiah 40:21,28-31

<sup>14</sup> 1 John 5:20



The whole letter of 1 John is talking about deception: thinking you are saved when you are not. Read John's letter and see whether you are or not. If you're not, you *can* be saved. That's the great hope of 1 John 5:13.

*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13, KJV)*

1 John and this freepaper are not letters of condemnation, but of hope. If you find out that you are not loving your brothers, and you don't have any place to love them, or if you don't know who is and who isn't a brother (which is what 1 John labors to make plain), then you can be saved by coming to that place, repenting, and being truly immersed (baptized) into Messiah's Body, where all your brothers interact and live together.

Satan's servants are those who deceive and are being deceived.<sup>15</sup> They leave you in the world to fend for yourselves in every way. The servants of the True One pass on the Spirit that separates a person from the sway of the evil one, under whose power the whole world lies.<sup>16</sup> They bring them into a sanctified place.<sup>17</sup> In that place, one can grow up into every aspect into the Head, who is Messiah. We do so by doing the works that were prepared for us to do. They cause us to grow up in every aspect into the Head, who is Messiah. Ephesians 4:11-16 and Colossians 2:19 tell us the growth is from God when every ligament and every part is doing its job. And these works have a purpose, a great goal, and that goal is our cause.

### The Eternal Abode of the Triune God

These works are all done to build up the eternal abode of the triune God. The eternal abode is the Body of Messiah. Messiah Yahshua is the Head of His Body, His wife — the wife of the Lamb.<sup>18</sup> Together, they make up the body of the triune God in eternity. They will rule forever and ever<sup>19</sup> over the men of the nations, those who "persisted in doing good" in this life,<sup>20</sup> but never had a chance to receive or reject the good news.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, their names will be found written in the Book of Life that Revelation 20:12-15 speaks of. This is

<sup>15</sup> 2 Timothy 3:13

<sup>16</sup> 1 John 5:19

<sup>17</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:2

<sup>18</sup> Revelation 21:9-12

<sup>19</sup> Revelation 22:5

<sup>20</sup> Romans 2:6-16

<sup>21</sup> John 5:24,25,28,29

not the Lamb's Book of Life, but the Book of Life for the *nations*.<sup>22</sup>

Certainly, the wages of their sins is death,<sup>23</sup> but not the eternal, second death. They weren't perfect, but they honored the natural law in their hearts, and by that law they were justified.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, at the judgment, they were judged righteous, who would "still practice righteousness" — meaning forever and ever.<sup>25</sup> So the meaning of His tabernacle being among men in Revelation 21:3-4 is a mystery that can only be unlocked when you see that tabernacle is now being built, as a dwelling place of God in the Spirit, according to Ephesians 2:19-22. That is the cause we are devoted to, and that is the only cause truly worth living for.

### The Hard Sayings are Impossible to Obey outside of Community

Such verses in the New Testament concerning the gospel as Luke 14:26-33 and Mark 10:28-30 would be absolutely impossible to obey except for the only way the church can be, which is Community.<sup>26</sup> So the gospel can be obeyed so that the true disciples must live together as Acts 4:37 and Matthew 6:33. The Christian cannot make room for these verses that the first disciples heard on Pentecost in Acts 2:40,44. They could have believed and gone back to the daily grind of life of job or school — life in the world "on the grid" — but they obeyed the gospel instead<sup>27</sup> and moved in with one another<sup>28</sup> because they loved one another.<sup>29</sup>

Remember, Matthew 28:18-20 were the last words the apostles heard from their Master before He ascended into heaven: "Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you." Forty days later, they preached "the many other words"<sup>30</sup> — meaning Peter probably went on for two or three hours, telling them about all the commandments and about leaving their nets — their whole life behind. It *wasn't* that after they were baptized they were told they had to give everything up. They heard the good news comprehensively explained to them, and they embraced it with all of their heart. Their Savior and His salvation was worth it all to them, and to us, and we hope to you, too. ☁

<sup>22</sup> Revelation 21:24

<sup>23</sup> Romans 6:23

<sup>24</sup> Romans 2:12-14

<sup>25</sup> Revelation 22:11, NASB

<sup>26</sup> Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37

<sup>27</sup> Matthew 28:18-20

<sup>28</sup> 1 John 3:16,23

<sup>29</sup> 1 John 3:14

<sup>30</sup> Acts 2:40

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