

GOD'S ANSWER TO MAN'S SIN

by

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CHAPTER SIX

SCRIPTURAL CHRISTIANITY

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

SCRIPTURAL Christianity is the greatest need of the day in every way and in every place— Scriptural Christianity— not the brand of Christianity most of our church-members have, but Scriptural Christianity; not the Christianity that social gospel people would have us practice, but Scriptural Christianity; not the Christianity you can put on on Sunday morning when you go to Sunday-school and church and take off when you get home, to hang up until next Sunday.

First of all, Scriptural Christianity denotes possession. Show me a Christian, living the Bible, and I will show you a person who has Scriptural Christianity. Show me a person, no matter how long he prays, how well he looks or how loudly he shouts, who doesn't live out the practices, the precepts of the New Testament, and I shall show you a person who is not in possession of Scriptural Christianity. Living out Scriptural Christianity shows that you have the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you are born again, that you have been washed in the blood, that your name is written in the Book of Life.

Then Scriptural Christianity assures possession. It: assures it to ourselves. If you were to ask me, "How do you know that you are a Christian?" I should say I know I am a Christian for two reasons. First, because the Bible says so, and second, my life (to God's glory and praise) is aimed toward God and heaven. I hate the things I once loved, and I love the things I once hated. I am trying to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. I am trying to deny the world, the flesh, Satan, trying to obey my Redeemer, longing in my heart to satisfy my Master. That is Scriptural Christianity.

Scriptural living assures our possession of salvation to others. With our lives reflecting the Christ, our actions illustrating the indwelling Spirit, our conduct exemplifying the gospel experience, others are constrained to know we have been with Jesus. Our lives become epistles of righteousness "**known and read of all men.**"

Scriptural Christianity deepens possession. We need that. Not only does it denote possession, assure possession, but it deepens possession.

You know, after all, there is just one way to get what we call feeling in Christ, in Christianity, in the church, in the service of the Lord, in our religion. There is just one way to get feeling and that way is by service. There is just one way to be a happy Christian; there is just one way to be a joyous, shouting, singing, praying Christian, and that is by service. By service! No matter how often you may lisp it to yourself, the Doctor Coue shibboleth, "Day by day in every way I am getting better and better," will not work in Christianity. You must take that religion and live it out. When you live it out, it sends a song through your heart, your soul, your mind, your life. You know you have it. You show to the world you have it. That wonderful feeling deepens, throbs, sounds, rings in your entire being.

But, what is Scriptural Christianity? To tell you the truth, I don't exactly know, but this I do know; I know how it works. I know what it does. I have seen it work. I have seen it in action, and you know they say, "An ounce of example is worth a ton of precept," or "An ounce of example is worth a storehouse of advice." Now, Scriptural Christianity works out in three ways.

First of all, if you have Scriptural Christianity, you are going to be a saint.

Now, a saint is a twofold kind of person.

First, a saint is a saved person, a man or woman or child who has accepted Christ Jesus as his personal Saviour, who has repented of his sins, who has put his faith in the Son of God, who has had the application of the blood of Jesus, who has been regenerated by the Holy Ghost. You know what I mean. I do not have to dwell on that much. Now, that is God's part. There is just one thing we can do to be saved, and that is to accept the salvation of God as the free gift of God's love.

- We can't make ourselves saved.
- We can't study ourselves saved.
- We cannot exercise ourselves saved.
- We cannot trouble ourselves saved.
- We cannot toil ourselves saved.
- We cannot give ourselves saved!

But, thank God, we can take ourselves saved! That is God's part. We have little to do with it except as we come humbly and penitently to the feet of Christ, to the cross, and cry, "**Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.**"

But the second part of that sainthood applies to us.

Not only is a saint a saved person, but he is separated.

Not only is the Scriptural Christian saved, but he is separated.

He is separated from the world, the flesh, and the devil. He is separated to God, to Christ, to the Holy Spirit, to the church, to the kingdom, to the Great Commission, to the service of fellow Christians, and to the service of the lost world all around.

A Scriptural Christian is separated. That is what Paul, the apostle, meant when he said, **“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”** (Romans 12: 1-2).

That is what the writer of Hebrews meant in the twelfth chapter when he said, **“Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”**

Yes, a saint, a Christian, a Scriptural Christian is separated.

I had a dear friend in Oklahoma by the name of George Murray. He was seventy-some-odd years old when he died. He came from Georgia. You know, they have a lot of religion in that old State of Georgia. That man was one of the most religious Baptists I have ever known in my life. One night the singer and I had gone to bed in the home where we were staying during the revival, and “Uncle George” came walking into our room. We were sleeping in separate beds. He woke us up and said, “Boys, it is too late for me to go anywhere else. I wonder if you would mind doubling up and letting me sleep in one of your beds.” The singer said he would be glad to, and he walked over and got into my bed. “Uncle George” sat down on his bed and took off his shoes and started to undress. Before he moved to get into the bed, he turned to us and said, “Boys, have you had prayer tonight?”

“Yes, we surely have.”

“Would you mind praying with me again?”

“No, not at all,” we said.

We got out of bed; got down on each side of that old man. He stretched out his great old arms and embraced us. The singer prayed. He prayed. Then I prayed. We went back to bed about eleven o’clock. That old man began to talk to us about what he had seen and heard. It was a blessing to hear it. When those old-time Christians get started, they surely can warm your heart.

Some will not have much to tell when they get old. It is going to be a barren old age. Thank God, I have a great deal to think about. I have much to praise God for. Anyway, “Uncle George” said, “Did you ever hear about the walking Christian?”

Fred said, “I have.” Fred was the singer.

I said, “I haven’t, Uncle George. I think Fred won’t mind your telling me.”

“All right, I’ll tell you. Out yonder in Georgia where I came from, there was a little village at a cross-road. About a half mile along the right-hand road there was a little hill. The road went over the hill. Right there at that crossroad lived an old bachelor. He was the last one of his family. He didn’t have any more kinsfolk left, and he was an atheist. He was an absolute infidel.

“In that village there lived a shoemaker. Every Saturday morning about eleven o’clock that shoemaker would walk from the village store to the crossroads, turn to the right, walk past the infidel’s house, top the hill, cross over, disappear. Year after year, every Saturday morning he would go out, and Monday morning he would come back. The infidel watched the man constantly, and greeted him once in a while.

“One time he saw the shoemaker come along, take the right-hand road, start up that hill, and continue out of sight. Monday came, and the shoemaker didn’t come back. Tuesday, he didn’t come back; Wednesday, he didn’t come back; Thursday, he didn’t come back; Friday, he didn’t come back; Saturday, he didn’t come back; and the infidel couldn’t stand it anymore. He drove to the village and walked into the shoe store. A young woman greeted him.

“Do you have a pair of shoes here?”

He said, “No.”

“Do you want to leave a pair of shoes?”

“No. I want to see the man in charge.”

“You mean my daddy?”

“I guess he is your daddy. I want to see the man in charge of the store.”

“Well, he is not here. He won’t be back until next Monday.”

“Where is he?”

“You see it is like this. My daddy belongs to a church of which there is no organization in this little town. About two miles from the crossroads on the other side of the hill, there is another little town, and there is a church there of our denomination. My daddy goes out there to meeting. He goes out every Saturday and comes back every Monday. He goes to service Saturday night, Sunday morning, Sunday afternoon, and Sunday night.”

“Where is he now?”

“They are having a revival there, and a great preacher has come there to preach. My daddy is too old to walk there every morning and come back every night, so some kinsfolk of ours asked him to come and stay for the two weeks and go to the meetings. That is where he is.”

“Thank you, Sister,” he said.

He walked out of that door and went home. All that afternoon he studied and mused over the matter. He couldn't understand it. He just couldn't understand it. He had been associating with Christians all his life, but he couldn't understand any man having that much religion. He got into his buggy and drove out to the village across the hill. When he got there, he asked the first man he met, “I have heard there is a revival in town. Where is it?”

“You go down past the post-office, turn the first block to the right, and go out to the edge of town. There in a meadow you will see a great big brush arbor, and that is where the meeting is.”

By that time it was dark. He drove past the post-office, turned to the right, and came to the brush arbor where the services were being held. The people sang and prayed. The evangelist preached, gave the invitation, and the first man to come down the aisle to the mourner's bench was the infidel. Everybody knew him, knew his reputation, knew his age, knew he was an atheist. They began to weep and praise God. When the service was over, the preacher came up to him and asked, “Brother, we know you have been a hard case. We'd about given you up. Thank God, you are saved. But tell me, what was there about my sermon that moved you?”

The man looked at him and said, “Brother, I don't suppose I could even tell you about what you preached.”

The preacher looked as if somebody had dashed cold water in his face and said, “What was there about the singer's song that moved you?”

He said, “Well, as a matter of fact, I have heard better singers than he is many times.”

“Well, what was there about the service?”

“Listen,” he said, “if you will let me alone, I will tell you what it was. Do you see that old man right there, standing by that buggy? He is a shoemaker in my town, and for twenty-three years he has walked Christ.”

That is what it takes. That is being a Scriptural Christian.

Now, just close your eyes for a minute and think about how many you have in your town like that. How many walking Christians do you have in your town? Yes, sir. How many do you have? Oh, wait a minute, don't get excited. Don't think I am scolding you. I am not saying you have adulterers and murderers in your church. Don't misunderstand me. I don't mean that. I mean you have too many negative Christians. What we need is positive Christians, walking Christians.

Second, a Scriptural Christian is a soldier.

Jesus said, “**Let him take up his cross.**”

A cross-bearing Christian is a soldier. I served in the United States army after the war. I was too young during the war. I was a staff sergeant in the Medical Department. I know what it takes to be a soldier. There are two things that make up a soldier, there are two things that make up a U. S. Army soldier, two things that make up a Christian soldier. A Scriptural Christian, a soldier, is one who is trained. He is trained. You say, "What application is there in that to Scriptural Christianity?"

I shall tell you.

I believe every Christian who has been a Christian for any length of time ought to be able to pray in public.

I believe that every Christian who has been a Christian for any length of time ought to be able to lead a prayer-meeting.

I believe that every Christian who has been a Christian for any length of time ought to be able to teach a Sunday-school lesson.

I believe a Christian who has been a Christian for any length of time ought to be able to tell a lost sinner out of the Bible what he has to do to be saved.

I would hate to give most Christians an examination. I would hate to give the officers and leaders of this church an examination. Yet a Scriptural Christian should be trained in the Word of God. That is our weapon.

I remember when I came to the United States Army during the war. I was in college, in the Student's Army Training Corps. They gave me a rifle. I didn't know its parts. We were ordered to spread a blanket on the floor and take that rifle apart and put it together again, it seemed to me a hundred times.

We would get our hands greasy and dirty taking it apart and putting it together again. But I became familiar enough with it so that after taking it apart in the dark I could put my hands on that bunch of metal, pick up this piece or that, and tell exactly what it was and where it belonged. I was trained. I believe a child of God ought to be trained that way in the Word of God and in the work of God.

Then a soldier, whether you are in the army of a nation or in the army of Christ, ought to be trustworthy, obedient, ready at any time by day or night to serve his captain, to serve and obey his officers, to go out at the drop of the hand to battle against the enemy.

Now, just think how little there is of that in our churches. It is a heart-breaking fact. Think of the Christ- crucifying fact, think of the soul-sending-to-hell fact that even after two weeks of revival the average church has not even awakened out of its sleep. After the revival is over and scores of souls have been saved and baptized into the membership of the church, the majority of the members of the average church have not even been aroused to their duty. Are they trustworthy?

Think of the fact that in a revival, which is a definite battle of the hosts of God, of the army of God, against the host and army of Satan, the commissioned and non-commissioned officers, deacons, superintendents, teachers, young people's leaders, women's officials, have not even put fingernail to fingernail together to help the soldiers of the Lord to win the battle against the soldiers of the devil. Isn't that generally tragically so? It ought not to be.

I say Scriptural Christianity means that every Christian-trained child of God, born again, washed in the blood, is studying the Book and knows portions of it by heart so that even when the Book is not available he can point an unsaved soul to the fact that he is lost in sin and to the Lamb of God, Who stands ready to take away his sin. I say again, every Scriptural Christian has to be trustworthy. Are you trained? Are you trustworthy? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your condition to yourself.

Third, Scriptural Christianity is one more thing: a Scriptural Christian is a witness.

Not only is a Scriptural Christian a saint, saved and separated; not only is a Scriptural Christian a soldier, trained and trustworthy; a Scriptural Christian is a witness. **"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."** Every Christian ought to be a witness. Now, you know what I mean. I don't mean that you and I can save souls, but let me give you an illustration.

I was in a revival in Denton, Texas. The Lord gave us a mighty victory. There were wonderful crowds, wonderful results. God was so blessedly good to us. The last night of the meeting came. The pastor had baptized. He had me stand in line to shake hands with the people as they walked out. After a while there came in that line a young student from T. C. W., the college for women. Her hair was still stringy wet from the baptistry. She took my hand in hers and, pumping it up and down, said, "Brother Appelman. I surely thank you for saving me."

I knew what she meant, and she knew that I knew what she meant. I didn't save her, but here is what happened. One night she raised her hand for prayer. I went back to her and plead with her, kneeling on the seat in front of her until she finally walked down the aisle and gave her heart to Christ. I had helped bring her to Christ. Do you see what I mean? Do you see what she meant?

Yes, every one of us ought to bring souls to Jesus— to be a witness.

To be witnesses involves several essential qualifications.

First, we must be purposeful. We must make up our minds that soul-winning is the work we are going to do; that fishing for men is the task God called us to; that it is our responsibility, our obligation, our duty. I sat in the pulpit of a church the second week of a revival as the singer asked how many had had prayers answered the day before. Not half of the people present raised their hands. They hadn't prayed. The singer asked how many were burdened for souls. Not half their hands were raised, not half. They were not burdened. They had no purpose. It is just that they were Christians, saved, going to heaven—maybe. "Not everyone who says heaven is going to get there." One has to be a Scriptural Christian before he can get to heaven. It has to be burned into one's heart, mind, soul, and life before he gets to heaven.

Some people have an idea that faith means coming down the aisle and saying, “I trust Christ to save me.” The devil knows more about Jesus than all of us put together, but he is still the devil. Faith means taking yourself, lock, stock, and barrel, and saying, “Jesus, here I am. Take me over.” Until you do that, you may shout and screech and sing and sound all you please, but you are a candidate for hell. You are not saved. There must be a purpose—passionate, powerful, a Christ-like purpose.

Do you want to be a soul-winner? Do you want to be a witness? Do you want to have the privilege of leading precious souls to Jesus Christ, the greatest privilege God can give to men? Why, the angels in heaven covet and envy the joy and opportunity of telling the story of Christ and bringing men and women and children to Jesus.

Why, folks, the humblest Christian in this town who is a saint, a soldier, a witness, who is trying to win the lost; the humblest Christian in this town is doing more for God, more for Christ, more for the world, than all the presidents, all the kings, all the educators, all the legislators, all the philosophers, all the philanthropists, this world has ever seen put together. One immortal soul is worth more than all the world beside. When you realize that, it gives you a purpose.

Second, a witness has to be not only purposeful but persistent. Soul-winning is an art. Soul winning is an art. You have to practice it to become proficient in it.

First, we must be persistent in right living. Our lives must be clean. God cannot use an unclean vessel. Our testimony will ring untrue unless our lives are clean. Sincerity of life, surrender of life, devotion of life, cleanness of life, beauty of life, are first requisites in this persistence in being witnesses.

Second, we must be persistent in loyalty to Christ. I don't believe a Christian who has not loved his Saviour is going to win many souls to Christ, do you? I don't believe he will. He is not interested enough. His testimony is not true; his life just doesn't back up his testimony. He is just not going to do it. Loyalty to Christ engenders in our souls a fire, a compassion that God uses, a grappling-hook, as it were, in the hands of the Holy Ghost, to rescue these souls as brands from the burning.

He must be persistent in his loyalty to Christ, to the Bible, to the church. He must also be persistent in witness-bearing. You do not need me to tell that to you. You know that. Like any other art, the art of soulwinning becomes greater, more effective, more efficient, with practice. We must keep on keeping on, trying to win the lost to a saving acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must, before the revival, during the revival, after the revival, three hundred sixty-five days in the year, look for opportunities, make opportunities, use opportunities to tell the story of Christ and Him crucified. You will know that same joy of the harvest, the peace that “Uncle George” Murray was talking about. You will be a walking Christian. I had a preacher friend with me once, leading the singing in a revival in south Texas. He came from Georgia. The meeting was not going well. One day we were praying, and I said, “Lord, if it is Your will, if it is all right with You, let us close this meeting tonight and go to the next place where they are waiting for us. These people don't want a revival at all.”

It didn't look as though they did. When I got through praying, the singer reached into his pocket and pulled out a post-card and said, "Look at this."

I read it. It said, "Tell that Jew boy that every day your mother goes to Gethsemane and prays for you two preacher boys."

I said, "What does she mean? Do they have a place called Gethsemane up there?"

It was my first year in the ministry. I had been a Christian five years, and I had studied my Bible very little up to that time. I didn't get the Gethsemane connection. He said, "No, we don't have a place up there called Gethsemane."

"What did she mean then? Where does she go?"

"I will tell you," he said. "We live in a double farmhouse, with a corridor in the middle and rooms on both sides. In back of the house, from the kitchen door to milking barn, is a brick path. Back of the milking barn is the barn lot. Beyond that is the cotton patch. A little farther is a stand of timber. My mother goes out to that stand of timber and prays. She calls it her Gethsemane."

I understood it then.

"When does she go there? How long does she stay? Does she go there every day? Does she go alone?"

He said, "I will tell you all about it if you will not interrupt." He said, "Listen, my mother goes out there all alone. She never takes anybody with her."

"How often does she go?" I asked.

"She goes out there every day. Hyman, I have seen my mother put on Dad's hip-boots and rubber slicker and go out in the driving snow or rain and pray. She goes there right after dinner. Sometimes it is thirty minutes, sometimes an hour, sometimes it is dark, and we are doing the chores when she comes back. Sometimes she comes back smiling. Sometimes she comes back crying. Sometimes she comes back singing. Sometimes she is patting her hands. Sometimes she is walking slowly. Sometimes she is walking fast."

I said, "Do you mean she goes out there every day of the year?"

He said, "Listen, a tree fell and crippled my Daddy. He spent fourteen months in bed. Every day my mother would call in one of the children to sit by that bed while she would go out to her Gethsemane and pray."

"Let me pray again. I want to add a postscript to my prayer. I would like to change it." I said, "Lord, I have changed my mind. Forget what I have just said. Lord, You use us two preachers to answer that Georgia woman's prayer."

He did. He broke that community apart for Christ. It is all different now. There is a good church out there with regular services.

The years went past. In 1936, I was at the Navarro County Association meeting. Another preacher friend, one of the singer's and my prayer partners, came up to me and said, "Hyman, I have been to see Fred's mother."

"Tell me about her."

"Let's sit down here between these automobiles where we can't be seen."

"Tell me what she looks like."

He said, "Fred and I and Ellen (that's Fred's wife) and David (that's Fred's boy) went to Atlanta. We stopped at his home. His mother was expecting us. We shook hands, talked for awhile, then she went into the kitchen to get dinner ready. I walked around that place. I looked at the chickens and the pigs. I looked at the barns. I came back into the house and walked into the kitchen again. I thought I would go in there and see the lady. She told me to get out, that she was too busy to 'mess around' with any preachers. I went around that house, and I went into a room. It seemed like a kind of parlor. There was an old-time organ. There was some old-time music on a stand. It made me homesick for my own Mamma."

He said he walked across the hall into the bedrooms. There were four of them in a row, the last one looking out toward the fields. It must have been the mother's room, he said, because it had an old-time four-post bed in it. Did you ever see one of them—the kind with a roof on it? It had curtains tied to the posts. Did you ever see one? I was born in one in Russia. Right by the side of that bed was an old-time, round table with a great big slab of blue-veined marble on it. Did you ever see one of those tables with a fat slab of marble on top as a cover? It had one leg underneath that spread out like lions' claws on the bottom. On the top of the table was an old kerosene lamp with a chimney and a wick. By the side of that lamp on that table was a Bible, a Georgia Baptist magazine, a teacher's quarterly.

He said, "It broke my heart. I got down on my knees by the side of that bed, bowed my head on that bed, and wept my heart out in prayer. After awhile the call came for supper. About six o'clock we sat down, fifteen of us. We ate and ate and ate and ate. It was the best Georgia dinner I had ever eaten in my life. It got to be around eight o'clock.

One of the boys stood up and lit the kerosene lamp on the mantel. There was no electricity out there. After awhile the mother turned to me and said, "Brother Nelson, I know you are from the city." She didn't know I was just a country preacher. But if she wanted to think I was a 'city slicker,' I didn't care. 'Now, you know, we go to bed early here. If you want to stay up, that is all right, but I am going to bed on time. Before we go to bed, let's all move our chairs to the fireplace and have our evening prayer-meeting.' The fireplace, of course, didn't have any fire in it. It was in July.

“The mother sat down in a great big arm-chair with her children and grandchildren around her. She lifted up her hand toward the mantelpiece and, without looking (she knew right where it was) brought down her Bible. She reached up her hand and didn’t even look. She just got hold of that old Bible and pulled it down onto her knees and began to look around for something. She looked in her pocket, she looked in the Bible, and passed her hand over the mantelpiece, searching for something. After awhile, one little grandchild in a kind of disgusted voice said, ‘Grandma, they are on your forehead.’

“Grandma pulled her glasses down. She grinned a bit, fitted them on, and opened her Bible to one of the Psalms, and in that soft, gentle, sweet, warm Georgia voice, she read some Scripture. Then she said, ‘Children, the Lord understands. I am too old and too heavy to kneel. I will sit here, and the rest of you kneel around and pray. Brother Nelson, you begin, and I will close.’”

He said, “I prayed. The next one prayed. The little children prayed. Everyone of them said about the same thing as if they had memorized it. It got to be the mother’s turn. The room got quiet, very quiet. She didn’t say anything for a long while. After some minutes, we began to hear her hands pass across the Bible, loving it and petting it.”

Have you ever done that? I have. I have come to the end of my row a great many times. I’ve said to God, “Lord, I am doing the best I know how. If I am doing wrong, straighten me out.” And I have gotten peace out of this old Book. I always get it. It has never failed me yet. After a while, he said, the mother began to pray. It seemed that the ceiling spread open and the starry night disappeared. Heaven itself opened wide as God bent down from glory to catch the whispered syllables of that old saint.

The story-teller put his arm around me, drew me to himself, and said, “Hyman, that widow raised a family of six children. Five of them went to college. One was sacrificed. The oldest one had to stay at home and work. She has taught a Sunday-school class in that one-room church at her home for years. During the forty-some-odd years she has taught that Sunday-school class, sixty-three young men and young women have gone out of her class to become denominational leaders in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Think of it! a Georgia town with not three hundred people at any time there, a widow, a saint, a soldier, a witness, and her influence reaching out and out until it touches God, heaven, eternity. See what you and I could do with our advantages. With our added opportunities; with our greater openings; with our wider responsibilities; consequently privileges, how much more ought we to do for Christ. God give each of us the grace to make a greater impact on the world by living out our Scriptural Christianity for the glory of Jesus. Amen.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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