

## Is The United States A Christian Nation? (Part 2)

Based on Doctrine and Works We Are Not  
John W. Ritenbaugh  
Given 06-Dec-08; Sermon #913

On October 11, 2007 journalist David Kupelian launched his article titled, "How Atheism is Being Sold to America" with the following dramatic "in-your-face" quote from a fellow journalist and author Christopher Hitchens. Hitchens said,

Religion, including Christianity and Judaism, is violent, irrational, intolerant, allied to racism, tribalism, and bigotry, invested in ignorance and hostile to free inquiry, contemptuous of women, and coercive toward children.

That quote was taken from a book which at the time was No. 1 on *The New York Times* non-fiction best-seller list, titled, "God is Not Great: Why Religion Poisons Everything," by Christopher Hitchens.

Kupelian continued in this manner:

Besides Hitchens' book, which has dominated nonfiction bestseller charts for months, there's the popular "Letter to a Christian Nation" by atheist author Sam Harris, and another book authored by Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins, titled "The God Delusion." . . . "How can this be?" you might wonder. Hasn't America always been a Christian nation? No question about it. America was founded by Christians. Its very purpose for being was the furtherance of biblical Christianity, according to the Pilgrims and succeeding generations. Our first school system was created expressly to propagate the Christian faith. Almost all the Founding Fathers who drafted and signed the Constitution were believers. Even the Supreme Court Justice David Josiah Brewer, in the High Court's 1892 "Church of the Holy Trinity v. United States" decision, proclaimed the obvious: "This is a Christian nation." "

Atheism is not my topic, but Mr. Kupelian's comments bear weight for many people. He is a respected American writer for a respected conservative American news magazine who sincerely believes this commonly accepted myth, such as did Justice Brewer.

The question of whether America is or ever was a Christian nation is my concern. For us to assume that America has always been a Christian nation is dangerous to our growth. That concept provides misleading examples and standards for one who truly *is* a Christian. These misleading examples subtly hinder the growth of the image of Jesus Christ in us. This subtle perversion is similar to what happens within one when one is gently persuaded that movies depict reality in their themes. America is not, and never has been, a Christian nation. It is, and has been following, a false *concept* of Christianity.

In my previous sermon in this series, we began examining evidence as to whether the United States of America was ever a Christian nation as the Evangelicals claim and almost everybody involved more seriously in religion assumes.

The evidence leaves no doubt that the Founding Fathers certainly intended religion and morality to be taught in public schools. However, it is also clear that they desired that only general teaching of universal agreement be taught. The Founders left evidences in their speeches of their support of State laws designating what can or cannot be taught in schools. They also gave evidence in letters written to each other, or in letter responses to inquiries from other interested parties that it was the tenets of Christian denominations they had in mind.

What the Founders had in mind was that only the most general of religious beliefs be taught—teachings that all of the various major denominations agreed upon. Their concern was to not permit any single denomination to ever become the official State religion. For example, they desired that neither the Church of England nor the Catholic Church so dominate public life. If one or the other had the backing of the Federal government, they *could* or *would* become a source of persecution to other Christian denominations. The Founders desired free expression of religious preferences for all.

I am using the term "Christian denomination" because there is no evidence whatever that the Founders even considered any other religion's teaching, like Islam, which certainly existed at the time. Thus I believe that the Founders' thinking all the way through their deliberations on this issue was of Christianity.

Many of the Founders were deists. Deists hold that God indeed created the Earth, but then more or less walked away from it, allowing it to continue on its own without His active intervention. However, despite their belief in a Creator God and in some of His principles of morality and responsibility that are taught so strongly in the Scriptures, none of this made the United States a Christian nation, whether officially or unofficially. The fact is, brethren, people do not know what real Christianity is.

Let me make this clear. A Christian is characterized, distinguished, identified, and sanctified by the combination of what he believes and how he lives his life. It is evidence gathered from these two elements that reveals whether America was ever truly Christian as it claims. Now why? What are the flaws here? The first is the fact that the Christian churches in the United States *never* had the correct body of beliefs. *Never*. Second is the fact that the American people collectively have never acted as a Christian *must* if they are truly following Jesus Christ.

**Jude 3-4** Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness [licentiousness] and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first factor is that in verse 3 it says "*the* faith," using the definite article. In such a construction, that means or indicates a specific body of beliefs. The key word is "specific." It is just not faith in general. It is *the* faith. The faith that Jude refers to was most assuredly not merely a general group of teaching, but the collection of specific teaching upon which Christian lives are lived. This is emphasized in verse 4, which states that those specific beliefs were being twisted into something anti-Christian, anti-law, and anti-grace—something radically different from what the church was originally given by Christ and the apostles.

For those of you who have a *King James Version*, the second factor is this. The term in the *King James* says "once delivered to the saints." This is a poor translation. The *New King James* translates it correctly. It should be translated as "once for all time." What that means within the context there is that the body of beliefs—*the* faith—given by Jesus Christ and the original apostles was sufficient unto itself. It is to be passed on unaltered from what was originally given. It was given *once for all time*.

When you put these two verses together, it means that even before the original apostles died, people perceived the original body of beliefs in the same manner as some Americans perceive the Constitution. They perceive the Constitution as a *living* document that needs to be reinterpreted in light of current conditions and circumstances. Brethren, that is not so with God's doctrine. God's law is perfect, converting the soul, regardless of *when* a person lives.

Sometimes this specific teaching may be difficult to discern solely from what is written. Even Peter said that some of the things Paul wrote are difficult. However, one cannot go wrong by following what Jesus and the apostles actually practiced during their lifetime as recorded in the Scriptures; for example, keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days. People really get confused on that just from the writings, but how can you go wrong if you follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and the apostles who *kept* the Sabbath and who *kept* the Holy Days? That was their example.

Now we are going to take a look where this specific "*the*" is reinforced in the book of Acts.

**Acts 9:1-2** Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of *the Way*, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

**Acts 8:4** Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching *the word*.

**Acts 11:19** Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching *the word* to no one but the Jews only.

You can see there the definite article "*the*" appearing in each of these verses defining what the Christians were practicing and what they were preaching. So the conclusion from these verses is that Christians are converted to and live their lives following a very specific body of beliefs, not merely *universal* beliefs that everybody calling themselves "Christian" agrees upon.

We must understand that just because historians, and ordinary people for that matter, call the various groups "Christian," does not make those groups Christian. The Bible must define that.

The general collective beliefs of the American people clearly *do* have a Christian doctrinal base. I am not contradicting myself here. It is clear that there is a Christian base. People believe in God as Creator, that the Bible is God's word, and that Jesus Christ is mankind's Savior. But biblical Christianity does not consist of only these three principles. As true as these are, there are many more. The image of Jesus Christ makes up much more than that. It is a complete package of definitive teachings that sets it apart from all other religions.

This entire process of sanctification is devoted to impressing this distinctiveness of belief and practice upon our character. Jesus Christ is not a cutout silhouette. He is a full-bodied individual with a mind that knows no end. For us to be in His image, at least the most important things are given in His word so that we can be in many, many, many more areas of life like He is.

**Philippians 2:5** Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

This specific package of beliefs describes the mind, and thus the faith, of Jesus Christ. It is by *this* we are being formed into the image of Jesus Christ. In this context Paul was using the phrase "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" to refer to a specific attitude of humble service. In the way Paul was using this in this context, today we might say, "Now this is Jesus' perspective." It means the way we look at things and how we react results from what we believe.

Let us go back in thought to the relationship between the Jews and Christ and the Jews and the Christians as shown in the narrative that runs through the gospels and in the book of Acts. Those relationships show that what one believes determines perspective and conduct. This is where "Let this mind be in you" becomes very important. For example, right in the context of those verses we read in the book of Acts the story involved Christianity and Judaism, which had many beliefs in common. It is true that they both arose from the same family of people and from the same Old Testament roots. However, closer examination reveals that they did not share common beliefs in everything, and *that* is what determined the differences in the way they acted or reacted in given circumstances.

Though they had common roots, they were nonetheless so different in their complete package of beliefs, and therefore in attitude and conduct, that the Jews, in order to change individual Christians' beliefs, started to persecute them, and in some cases to kill them. They *surely* had different beliefs than the Christian. Is there any example in the Bible of the Christians persecuting the Jews? But the Jews' body of spiritual beliefs *allowed* them to persecute their rival.

Somebody who has the faith of Jesus Christ will act like the Christians did, and not like the Jews did, because they had the mind of Christ, and He did not persecute anybody. So in plain words, the package of beliefs the Jews held led them to injure and sometimes to kill the ones they perceived as rival. They did this to Jesus, to Stephen, and to James. And besides this, the Jews scattered Christians, through fear of pain, all over the Middle East.

Individual belief determines conduct, and centuries-long historical evidence of America as a nation, when compared to biblical truths, proves beyond a shadow of doubt, that despite all claims to the contrary by Evangelicals, America is not and never has been a Christian nation. We do not act like Christians when we act on our beliefs. There are both sides to the equation: belief and conduct. So in short, what people (including historians and researchers) are calling Christianity is *not* Christianity. It is many counterfeits, which have been wrongly *called* "Christianity" for so long, and so many times that people ignorant of biblical truth accept it as truth.

Let us look at it from a little bit different angle. Recall that Jesus warned in Matthew 24 that false Christs and false prophets would arise and deceive many. Now just as sure as the rising of the sun, those false Christs and those false prophets attract followers, and that means false churches with false doctrines calling themselves "Christian" would *also* arise.

I want us to look at this yet at another angle. This is a simple biblical principle. Here we will see something Jesus said. It is just as true today as it was then.

**Matthew 7:13-14** Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

In terms of religion, "the many" Jesus advises, choose the broad easy way. This is what happened to the false ministry Jesus spoke of. They went the way that was broad, not the narrow way He programmed.

We will add a bit of evidence to this by going to Luke 12:31-32. Remember, in Matthew 7:13-14 He said that *few* would find the narrow way.

**Luke 12:31-32** But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, *little flock*, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

We are narrowing in on something, and that is "the many" will not be Christians. It is only going to be "the narrow few" who actually have the right way.

**Matthew 16:18** And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Now let us put some of this together. Jesus clearly stated in these last two or three verses that His church would exist right up to His return, and that it would remain small. It was the *little flock*.

Now a question. Today, in our time, how many people do you think would follow Jesus into a Sabbath service? Brethren, they would not do it in the days of the nation's Founders, and they will not do it today either. Now why? Because they are conditioned to believe, through a combination of ignorance and deception, that the Sabbath does not need to be kept.

I only mention the Sabbath because it is so easily seen as something that they do not do. But there are many, many almost countless things that they do not do, which are contained within this body of beliefs of teachings that make up "*the faith*." So there are many things besides the Sabbath that they do not keep. Though undoubtedly sincere, these people have not been called, and because the same body of beliefs and false doctrines existed then, as today in what people think is Christianity, they would not choose to follow Christ.

I am going to give you a quote from a famous religious personality who was of the Catholic persuasion. He has since died. He was a very intelligent man, and a sharp observer. He was G. K. Chesterton. He said, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult, and left untried." That is why Jesus said people prefer the broad easy way rather than the narrow difficult way. And even when they are given truth, there is a very, very strong influence in their minds existing already to reject it.

Here is another quote. You have probably never heard of this man either. His name is Neil Postman. He was a prominent American educator, media theorist, and cultural critic. He authored many books. He died in 2003. In his books, in his writings, his main concern was he felt Americans are amusing themselves to unhappy, unproductive lives to death. He said, "Christianity is demanding that a

serious religion, that it is delivered as easy and amusing, it is another kind of religion altogether." And this is what people are getting. They are getting just what Neil Postman said—another kind of religion altogether.

It is not often that the world agrees with Jesus, but they do. Jesus said Christianity is difficult, and that it is narrow. It hedges a person in. Why are these religions out there so popular? It is because religion is something people like and they will give themselves to. It is not really demanding of them things that they are willing to sacrifice.

When we compare American history with biblical truth, we see a people meshing the Kingdom of God with a patriotic love of country, and creating a form of idolatry consisting of political ideals and agenda with religious overtones.

Let us put a cap on this part of the sermon in James 2:18.

**James 2:18** But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

James had the right mind of Christ, the right body of beliefs in mind, and he worked at it.

Let us put a clincher on this. John was the apostle of love. He defined love. He said it is keeping the commandments. He said keeping the laws of God *is* love. Look what he said in I John 2:6.

**I John 2:6** He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk [to live] just as He walked [or lived].

America's "Christians" are showing by their works that they do not practice "the faith once given to the saints" because they do not believe what the saints believed. The conclusion on this basis alone proves that the United States of America is a kingdom of this world, and true Christians are commanded by our King Jesus Christ to come out of it.

As my previous sermon ended, we were just beginning to touch on one of the very important points of "the faith" that Jude mentioned. It is a point that commands how a Christian must live his life in relation to the broad subject of government. We will eventually see that false Christians do not follow this precept. Whether one thinks of government in relation to the Kingdom of God is national, or local, or family, or for that matter governance of himself, how must the Christian use his powers in the conduct of his life? In other words, how must he govern himself? How must he conduct his life under government, and govern himself?

Let me tell you that nothing distinguishes the difference between God's kingdom and the world's kingdom more clearly than when the dominant approach of each is compared in the business of life. Kingdoms of this world seek to establish and advance their ideals and agendas, but so does the Kingdom of God. On the surface there is nothing unusual about that statement, but how each accomplishes and establishes its ideals is decidedly different, because kingdoms of this world are driven by the same human nature that all have unwittingly given themselves over to.

All governments seek to establish and advance their agendas by force. Every national government on earth is competitive and adversarial by nature. They all rule by the "might makes right" principle. They all operate and rule by the "tit for tat" principle. The dominant means human nature uses to

advance its causes, whether individually or as a nation, is by exercising its intelligence, authority, rank, political, economic, or military powers. Human government is manipulative. They will manipulate any way they can to get what they want.

Now we are going to see the reason why this is so; why they are so competitive and adversarial; and why this is a reality a Christian must deal with. I think you already know that reason is Satan the Devil. He is the adversary of God, and man. He is the destroyer.

We are going to go through a number of scriptures that lays this out for you very clearly so that you will have them in a package. It is not everything we could possibly use by a long shot, but it is enough to show you what is guiding this earth's governments.

**Jude 6** And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

The word "domain" means "realm," or that over which angels rule. Angels have rule, and they left it. That domain of theirs they left was Earth. Of course you know they did that to attack God, and God defeated them and threw them back down to Earth. But what I want to get to at this point is, "Hey! They were here first!" As far as we know, long before man was created. The angels had a structure of government. They had a hierarchy.

**Ephesians 6:12** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, [That far we understand that the principalities and powers are not human beings. They are not flesh and blood.] against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Principalities and powers is the term Paul used to designate these unseen angelic beings who rule over men on earth.

**II Corinthians 4:4** . . . whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

Satan is the "principalities and powers" leader, and it is he who is unknowingly worshipped as god by the world's human beings who are not Christians.

**II Corinthians 11:3** But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

This is important because Paul is telling us we can be deceived by this great archangel. Satan deceives, and he is fully capable of deceiving Christians, so we have to be wary of this at all times.

**Luke 4:5-6** Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish."

There is a lot of information there. Rulership of the Earth was *given* to him, and he has the right, the privilege, and the power to give it to whomsoever he wishes. We can extrapolate on this a little bit

and say he can give worldly *government* power to whomsoever he wishes as well. I am talking about as king, as dictator, as president, as whatever. You name it. That is within his authority to do so.

**John 12:31** Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

There is something else that is unsaid here. Two things. The first is that he cannot be cast out of a position that he does not have. It is his. He is ruler of the Earth, of the world, under God. The second is that he will not be cast out until the *rightful* Ruler casts him out. Jesus has the authority to do it, but He has not exercised it yet, and He will not exercise it until He returns. He will return crowned "King of kings and Lord of lords." Till then He shares His Father's throne. This is weaving together quite a picture of the kind of world we live in.

**I John 5:19** We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

Brethren, it is his manipulative, controlling, competitive, destructive and adversarial spiritual influence that undermines every ruler and all bodies of rulership on this earth, and that includes the United States of America.

**Ephesians 2:1-2** And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.

Brethren, Satan is the active CEO of all earthly kingdoms. What all this shows is that, while God is sovereign over all, for His purposes He permits a strong, ever-present demonic influence to pollute every earthly government. It is their influences that Christians must reckon with, resist, and overcome in their own lives. Therefore, one cannot assume that any nation, including our own despite its wonderful roots as being part of the Israel of the Bible, has always or ever has been aligned with God. Always, or ever? Which is it? We have to wonder. Is it *ever* aligned with God?

Those principalities and powers are actively working their own agenda in order to retain their position, and they are fighting in whatever way God will permit them to do so. They are fighting hard, and you and I are the enemy. So we have to be aware of them. They are influencing the governments of this world to go in the direction that they want the governments to go.

The Greeks have given the world a witness of this invisible reality in their myths as written or perhaps collected by Homer in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. In the myths the gods are shown interacting with people. I wonder who revealed that to the Greeks. But they *knew*. The myths show they inflamed some people with passions that sometimes led to human bloodbaths while the gods are being used by the effect of their deceitful efforts. And even when the myths showed that the humans received the benefit, it was always at a deceitful, enslaving cost.

By way of contrast, Jesus—the Lamb of God who described Himself as meek and lowly—*never* exercised His powers or gifts in order to forcefully impose His ideals or agenda on others. Jesus did not manipulate and control by threat. These two ways are totally opposite of each other—180 degrees from the one side—the way of Satan, on the other side—the way of Jesus Christ.



**Matthew 26:50-56** But Jesus said to him, "Friend, why have you come?" Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him. And suddenly, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?" In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled.

Jesus exercised His powers by governing Himself to submit to the Father. I want to show you two more Scriptures that are helpful.

**John 8:29** And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please *Him*.

**Matthew 26:39** And He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as *You* will."

Jesus always did those things that pleased the Father. Jesus completely and totally submitted His life to the will of God. He did not exercise self-will in any area that might lead to breaking a commandment of God. Do you know what this does? It demonstrates to you and me the level of His faith. He *always*, without fail, submitted to the Father's will.

Now let us turn this toward you and me. We are going to go to John 1 to see if we can get something practical for Christian life out of this.

**John 1:12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

Let us know what He said here in relation to Christian life. The *King James* translates the term "right" as "power." Your Bible may have an adjustment to that in the margin. Most Bibles do. Not that the use of the word "power" is wrong—it is a good translation—but the word can also be translated as "authority" or "privilege." Now regardless of which word is used, the verse is showing that those who receive Him are given a gift—power, right, authority—that enables them to *choose*. It is not imposed.

The submitting to God, submitting to the Kingdom of God, is not imposed. It is a right given so that we can *choose* to submit. That is very important. So choose what? Choose to submit to God as their spiritual Father as spiritual children should, and choose to submit to God as Jesus demonstrated by His life. This is exactly what the governments of this world will never do, and it is this act that distinguishes—sanctifies—the converted from the unconverted.

In a number of places it directly states within God's word, and sometimes it implies that the Christian submits to, or is subject to, or yields to, or defers to, or does not give place to carnal action. The Christian exercises his God-given gift and powers by disciplining himself to come under the authority of God's will like Jesus did. The world will not do this. The Christian voluntarily gives his life over to the Creator and the King of the kingdom.

Another way of saying it is that the Christian sacrifices his human nature in obedience to the will of God in all of his personal relationships and issues of life. He spends his life submitting himself, not imposing on others.

Government is nothing more than a system of management whether in regard to a nation or to the self. The system might be called a democracy, a republic, socialist, communist, or fascist. All of them are systems that bear rule over and impose the use of their power.

By way of contrast, Christian government's main theme is to submit to the Kingdom of God and to human rulers which God, by the exercise of *His* will, has placed Christians under. That ruler God places us under might be called president, governor, mayor, police chief, or maybe on-the-job supervisor. However, human nature, though, interprets this submission as weak, and thus for its own purposes and convenience always wants to be in control, and that guarantees warfare both small and great.

Why does not the Christian act like that? Why does the Christian submit? Because with his God-given power, the Christian envisions a greater purpose in life, and so he submits. He does not have to control at this time. So on what basis does he do this? Well, the Christian may not submit to an order that would cause him to break one of God's laws, but in such a case he still submits to the penalty the authority imposes. Now why does he do that? He does it because of God's calling, and the miracle of education that is taking place in his mind.

A Christian knows, he believes, he understands, and makes use of the reality that what God seeks to accomplish in him through his submission cannot be forcefully imposed for it to be effectively internalized as a part of his character. In order for this to take place we have to cooperate with God by submitting to Him voluntarily. He leaves the choice to us.

**II Corinthians 5:20-21** Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

**II Corinthians 6:1** We then, *as* workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

At first glance it seems to apply only to the ministry as being workers with God. But then Paul uses the word "also" to include all to whom the epistle is written. *All* Christians are co-workers with God. The co-worker's responsibility is to submit.

**I Corinthians 3:8-10** Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which was

given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it.  
But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

The same thought is here as was in II Corinthians 5. At first it seems only to apply to the ministry, but Paul then expands by stating "But let each one take heed how he builds on it," thus showing that all to whom he writes are coworkers with God. Again, submitting is a major part of the building process.

**Philippians 2:12-13** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

God is working. Paul commands the Philippians to work. He exhorts each person to work out his salvation. This term "work out" means "carry it out." It means to manifest or exhibit what you have received from God. Thus Paul is showing a cooperative effort between God working from within, and the Christian submitting to what God is doing in order to manifest it.

Godly faith, hope, love and character cannot be imposed from one person to another any more than skill at playing the piano by one person can be imposed on another. Each person has to individually develop the skill by submitting to the process that builds the skills. What are we aiming for? Skill in living as Jesus Christ lived. This will glorify God.

Knowledge, wisdom, and understanding are biblical skills that can be taught, but they do not become part of the hearer unless the hearer cooperates by using them, yielding to them by faith, thus making himself part of the process. Skill in living God's way cannot be imposed. It must be voluntarily built from within each person. It is creation from the inside out.