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Easy Believism: Are You a Pretend Christian in the Capitol?



Universalism is the theological belief that everyone will go to heaven. In other words, when all is said and done Universalists believe that God rejects no one. But why then does Jesus say to some in Matthew 7:23, ***“I never knew you, DEPART FROM ME”***? Universalism is a flowery humanistic idea that carries no biblical underpinnings.

There are many who profess to be Christians in the capital community, but lodged in the back of their minds is more of a Universalist’s understanding of theology than a biblical one.

What does the Bible have to say about being truly saved? Do you know what it teaches regarding this critically

Continued on next page

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Former Cabinet Members / White House Senior Staff: Wednesdays 7am, Zoom.

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■ MINISTRY UPDATE

Oregon and Washington Ministries in the Spotlight

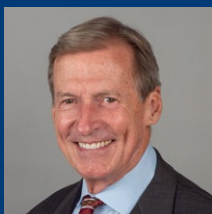
CapMin Ministry Leaders Frank Carpenter and Greg Wooldridge have been lauded for trusting in the Lord to open doors for their respective discipleship ministries to legislators and staff in the Oregon and Washington State Capitols.

“All Frank Carpenter and Greg Wooldridge need to launch their respective new Christian outreaches is a couple of literal open doors — one in Salem, and one in Olympia,” wrote John Fortmeyer, publisher of Christian News Northwest, a monthly tabloid newspaper that serves the evangelical Christians in dozens of communities through western and central Oregon and southwest Washington.

“Once COVID-19 pandemic restrictions are lifted at the State Capitol buildings for both Oregon and Washington, and the general public allowed back in, the two men can fully begin to minister to legislators and staffers



**FRANK
CARPENTER**



**GREG
WOOLDRIDGE**

Continued on page 4

important subject? In this week’s study, I attempt to bring to light what God’s Holy Book teaches about salvation. Nothing could be worse than thinking you’re a Christian—but aren’t—and ultimately hear Jesus say, **“I never knew you.”** Make sure you are biblically informed about salvation! Read on.

Ralph Drollinger

I. INTRODUCTION

The Bible is clear that there will be and are many people who say they are Christians who in reality are not—according to the biblical definition of a “Christian.” Notice this idea as Jesus encapsulates it in His own words as recorded by Matthew (7:20–23).

“So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”

The word *lawlessness* is synonymous with the idea of habitual sin, those who routinely sin. Even though habitual sinners may say they are Christians, Jesus says they are really not saved. In other words, **“so then you will know**

them by their fruits.”¹ That is to say, one’s actions are the real indicator of true salvation, rather than what a person might say. Notice the parallel ideas that are repeated in Ephesians 5:5–7:

“For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them...”

In basketball, Coach Wooden used to say that when playing defense, you need to concentrate on the offensive player’s jersey and not his head. I have always viewed this physical picture as a good metaphor specifically pertaining to this spiritual truth: In order to discern true salvation in another, concentrate on the manifestations of his heart, not what comes out of his mouth. That’s the only way you can keep from getting faked out.

In addition to what Jesus and Paul



have stated in Matthew and Ephesians, notice what the Apostle John states in this regard in 1 John 3:8–9:

“The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

When a person is truly saved, the Holy Spirit dwells in him or her and prevents them from habitual sin. He convicts and will not lead His redeemed into habitual sin. When the spiritual dimension of rebirth is taken into consideration, habitual, continual sin is an impossible scenario. The seeming license to sin, which stems from a salvation that is a gift-in-total by God, is absolutely foreign to those who are truly saved. The Apostle Paul foresaw and halted such thinking and conclusions in Romans 6:1–2 stating:

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”

II. PRETEND CHRISTIANS: MARKED BY EASY BELIEVISM

There is a form of “salvation” that is rampantly taught today throughout evangelicalism appropriately (unofficially) titled, “easy believism.” It is a belief in “Jesus” with insufficient consideration for a biblical definition of who He is. Therefore one “receives” Jesus according to whom they think

Jesus is—versus the Jesus described in the Bible. For instance, Romans 10:9–10:

“That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”

In other words, to be truly saved one must believe in **Jesus as Lord**. The Greek word for **Lord** (*Kurios*) means “sovereign,” “master,” or “boss.” Accordingly, this biblical definition of Jesus requires the believer to allow Jesus to rule over his life. To be saved we must be willing to transfer ownership of our lives to Him; there needs to be a quitting or an end to self, a turning of 180 degrees to Jesus! In biblical language, this idea of a volitional turning is referred to as repentance. Repenting of self and acceptance of Christ are the two necessary elements: Think of them as two sides of the same coin of salvation.

Interestingly, likened to having the faith to believe in Jesus, which is not by personal merit or works but is rather a gift of God (per Ephesians 2:8–9), repentance is also not by personal merit or works, but is a gift from God. This is evidenced in the following passages:

Repentance:

It is not a human work,
but a gift from God,
synonymous with saving faith.

*“When they heard this, they
quieted down and glorified*

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

Romans 10:9

“... if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”



Repenting of self and acceptance of Christ as Lord are the two necessary elements of salvation.





through California-based Capitol Ministries.”

The story explained that Carpenter ministered independently in the Salem Capitol from 1985 to 1996, and then continued there with Capitol Ministries until 2005.

“It will mark a return to outreach in Salem after two decades. For Wooldridge, a former Oregon resident who moved in recent years to Vancouver, Wash., it will be his first involvement with Capitol Ministries.”

“Carpenter, 75, lived in Arizona from 2005 to 2012, when he moved back to Hillsboro. He is part-time on the pastoral staff at First Baptist Church in Hillsboro and is founder of Hillsboro Huddle, a ministry for community leaders. Carpenter received a Master of Divinity degree from Western Seminary and has been in pastoral ministry for more than 43 years.”

“Wooldridge, 73, served in the U.S. Navy 27 years. During the final decade of his career, he served on three occasions as the flight leader and commanding officer of the Navy flight demonstration squadron, the Blue Angels. In 2018, while still an Oregon resident, he ran for governor in the GOP primary, losing the nomination to Knute Buehler, who eventually lost to Democrat Kate Brown in the general election.”

“Wooldridge hopes in Olympia to have morning meetings and Bible studies with interested legislators and staffers: ‘We want to build an incredible amount of trust, camaraderie and relationships.’”

God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life” (Acts 11:18).

“For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death” (2 Corinthians 7:10).

“... with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth...” (2 Timothy 2:25).

The reason I have specifically detailed this (a bit of “inside baseball” in a theological sense) is that there are those in the “easy believism” camp who reject the need for repentance as a prerequisite for receiving Christ because, they reason, it is a form of works. And since salvation is not by works (Ephesians 2:8–9) a non-repentant understanding of salvation is supposedly necessary. Conversely, if biblically, Jesus grants both the faith to believe and the volition to repent, then salvation is not based on personal merit, or works; it is all a gift from Him!

One can discern true belief by the existence of humility over personal sin. That is a telltale sign that the Holy Spirit is in the process of saving or sanctifying His called-out ones. Conversely, if there is no brokenness over sin and a lack of contrition, then one’s salvation should be rightly questioned. In contrast, these are the earmarks of

“easy believism.”

In James 2:19, Scripture indicates that the kind of “belief” a person possesses is profoundly important. Notice what James states to his deceived-about-true-salvation audience: *“You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.”* James is saying that the demons certainly understand, know, and possess a correct doctrine about who Jesus is—but to agree intellectually is insufficient because regardless, their hearts remain unrepentant and they continue to rebel against the lordship of Christ.

It is possible to acknowledge or “believe” in the lordship of Christ without bowing, but a desire to bow is always evident when God has granted an individual saving faith.

James’ point is that “easy believism” does not save a man’s soul. Christ will say to them, *“I never knew you; depart from Me.”* What then are further signs of false belief? I would be doing you an eternal disservice, for allowing you to think incorrectly about this. So let’s delve into Ephesians 5:5–7 and examine characteristics of false belief.

That way no one will *deceive you with empty words*—and you will not be misled by “easy believism,” i.e., lest you become partakers with them.

**III. PRETEND CHRISTIANS:
MARKED BY
IMMORALITY, IMPURITY,
AND COVETOUSNESS**



At the start of our Ephesians 5 passage this week, these three words all point to self-centeredness. **Immorality** (*porneia*) relates to pornography, prostitution, fornication, and adultery, all aberrant forms of sexual fulfillment that have no regard for another person. **Impurity** (*akatharsia*) relates to mental immorality, i.e., the fantasy life and other forms of mental/sexual/selfish lusts. **Covetousness** (*pleonektes*), or translated elsewhere as **greed** refers directly to the self-gratification orientation of the individual, an “I want” attitude that overrides and eclipses other more noble considerations. These are descriptive of an “it’s all about me” mentality. In an omnibus sense, these words describe someone who thinks the world revolves around him. On the other hand, the truly saved depict a mental outlook that is quite to the contrary. They are dead to self (Galatians 2:20) and are increasingly more concerned about others (Philippians 2:3). Summarily of these first three words, Paul is saying those who display a continual self-absorbed lifestyle—**know with certainty**—they are not inheritors of Christ’s kingdom.

The word for **certainty** (*ginosko*) is translated as “ascertain, come to know, comprehend, perceive and recognize” elsewhere in the New Testament (NT). In 1 John 5:13, God states that He wants believers to be **certain** they are saved: “**These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know (ginosko) that you have eternal life.**”

**God wants you to know
for certain if or not
you are saved.**

When these identifiers of “genuine belief negations” are combined with a similar list provided in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, one’s certainty is increased all the more. Scripture states:

“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.”

Take note of the aforementioned passage in this regard, “**Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.**” Apart from the descriptor **sons of disobedience**, the passage we are studying, Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is a subset to the larger parallel, more comprehensive portrayal of pretenders that he sent to the Corinthian believers. (I have italicized the words found in both).

Free of condescending, pharisaical or judgmental attitudes, genuine believers can ascertain with **certainty** who the mission field is in the capital—regardless of verbal allegiances to Christ one might or might not profess. Again, come to realize this: “**you will know them by their fruits**” regardless of what one might say.

IV. PRETEND CHRISTIANS: MARKED BY IDOLATRY

To further determine true saving faith, believers should also examine

John Jay



“Mercy and grace and favor did come by Jesus Christ, and also that truth which verified the promises and predictions concerning Him and which exposed and corrected the various errors which had been imbibed respecting the Supreme Being, His attributes, laws, and dispensations.”

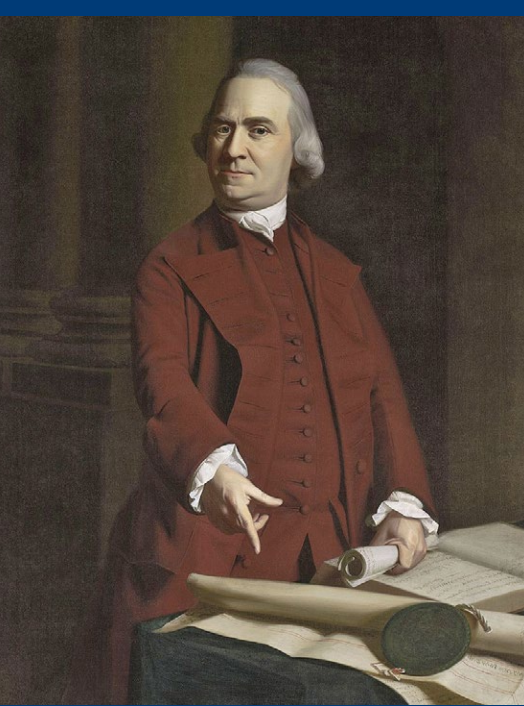
— John Jay, President of Congress, diplomat, author of *The Federalist Papers*, original Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Governor of New York.

William Jay, *The Life of John Jay* (New York: J & J Harper, 1833), Vol. II, 386, to John Murray, April 15, 1818.





Samuel Adams



“I conceive we cannot better express ourselves than by humbly supplicating the Supreme Ruler of the world ... that the confusions that are and have been among the nations may be overruled by the promoting and speedily bringing in the holy and happy period when the kingdoms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ may be everywhere established, and the people willingly bow to the scepter of Him who is the Prince of Peace.”

— Samuel Adams, signer of the Declaration of Independence, “Father of the American Revolution,” ratifier of the U.S. Constitution, Governor of Massachusetts.

From a *Fast Day Proclamation* issued by Governor Samuel Adams, Massachusetts, March 20, 1797; see also Samuel Adams, *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, Harry Alonzo Cushing, editor (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1908), Vol. IV, 407, from his proclamation of March 20, 1797.

themselves to determine if they possess the poisonous characteristic of *idolatry*. *Idolaters* are those who worship something over and above Jesus Christ to the detriment of Him—that is, their primary occupation in life is something that supersedes their concern and loyalty to the **LORD**. Habitually and continually, something else is always more important to them: be it one’s non-biblical philosophies toward life, or vocational fixations (i.e., one’s political career), recreational pursuits, or selfish obsessions with such things as money and fame. When these kind of things compete with and diminish one’s trust and dependence in the **LORD**, then that person is manifesting *idolatrous* behavior. It is no coincidence that the first two of the Ten Commandments are prohibitions relating to *idolatry*.² This was the recurring big sin of Israel: Repeatedly falling into worshipping something other than The **LORD** God. Notice that in the home passage of study that *idolatry* is used to further define *covetousness*. Again, that word, better translated as *greed*, refers directly to the self-gratification orientation of an individual. *Idolatry*, therefore, further defines *greed*, in that there exist some kind of self-orientation over and above a God orientation. The Greek word for *idolaters* is *eidololatres*. It is defined, “To lack acknowledgment of God and of gratitude to Him.” “An *idolater* is a slave to the depraved ideas his idols represent.”³

**Be rightly skeptical
of those who say they
are Christians but are
habitually committed
to things over and
above Jesus Christ.**

Conversely and sobering, God states in Isaiah 48:11, “*My glory will I not give to another.*” In Exodus 34:14, He states, “*For you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.*” Accordingly, believers who are recipients of the indwelling Holy Spirit at the point of their salvation are acutely sensitive to giving their *Utmost for His Highest* (as Oswald Chambers titled his book). Beloved, we who are believers in the capital community need be sensitive to “*flee from idolatry*” reads 1 Corinthians 10:14. It is because of the existence of *idolatry* and the other characteristics listed herein that *the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience*. If God judges unbelievers for their idolatry, may those of us who genuinely name the name of Christ in the capital avoid partaking of anything that even hints of idolatry. The consequences are serious. Repeatedly throughout the Old Testament (OT) is this sin that invokes the wrath of God on His chosen people—to the point that they lost their nation and were taken captive by Assyria and Babylon.

Lest there be any doubt about the salvation of those who are habitual idolaters, both Revelation 21:8 and 22:15⁴ make it lucidly clear that no idolater will inherit the Kingdom of God. Idolatry is simply uncharacteristic due to the indwelling, convicting Holy Spirit of those who are, in fact, redeemed.

V. PRETEND CHRISTIANS ARE MARKED BY DECEPTION

Another characteristic of pretenders is their propensity toward *deceiving* true followers of Christ. States our home



passage, *“Let no one deceive you with empty words.”* Since Paul is addressing believers in this Ephesian epistle, he is saying that imposters will tell believers just the opposite, in this case that God will not exclude unrepentant sinners from His Kingdom. But note that *deceivers* possess *empty words*. As you ponder their statements it will dawn on you that what they’re saying runs contrary to Scripture! The Greek word that Paul uses here for *deceive* is *apate*. It means, “that which gives a false impression, whether by appearance, statement or influence.” The difficult thing about *deception* is that you may not realize the fallacy. It is only by knowing the Word of God and what it says that you can keep *deception* far from you via biblical wisdom and discernment. States Colossians 2:8:

“See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ....”

False Christians do not match up with Scripture. What they say will not mesh with the Word. You will have a *certainty* about their invalidity. For those who lack discernment and do not care to gain it, Proverbs states, *“How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded?”* (1:22). States Proverbs 14:15, in part, regarding those who think (like Universalists) that everyone is a Christian, *“The naive believes everything, but the sensible man considers his steps.”*

VI. PRETEND CHRISTIANS: MARKED BY DISOBEDIENCE

The last characteristic uncovered by this passage that illustrates Christian pretenders is habitual *disobedience*, or rebellion. Scripture is clear that those who are saved will place themselves in submission to legitimate spiritual leaders—men whom God has given to His Church (cf. Ephesians 4:11–12). Hebrews 13:17 states, *“Obey your leaders and submit to them ...”*⁵ True believers enjoy submitting to humble Christian leaders, whereas false followers will habitually despise legitimate spiritual leaders.

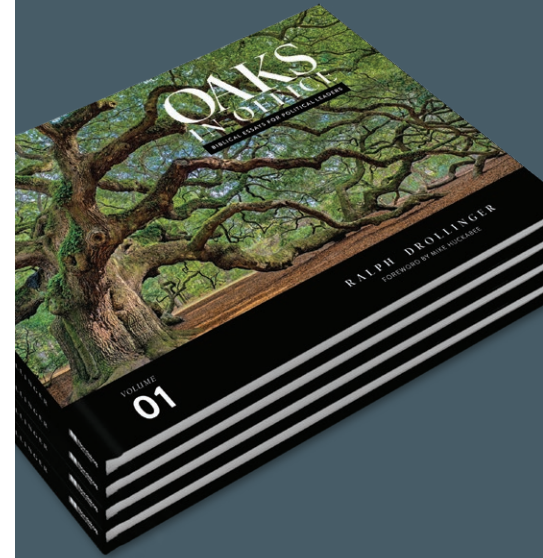
Whereas the true follower of Christ has a contrite and broken will in submission to Christ’s Lordship, and His ambassadors, pretenders prefer to rule their own life, do their own thing, and disobey God’s precepts. An attitude of spiritual *disobedience* is yet another telltale sign of fake belief. In verses 16–17 of Jude the following descriptor is added:

“These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Keep an eye out for supposed “believers” who have a track record of jumping churches and have difficulty following legitimate Christian leaders. Again, *“You will know them by their fruits.”*

VII. SUMMARY

It is important to consider what this passage is not teaching: Commenta-



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tor O'Brien says it best, "The apostle is not asserting that the believer who ever falls into these sins is automatically excluded from God's kingdom. Rather, what is envisaged here is the person who has given himself or herself up without shame or repentance to this way of life."⁶ Having clarified that, do not otherwise be naive: Many in the capital who state they are Christians in fact may not be. Scripture provides you with the ingredients so that you may be discerning about such things—first and foremost regarding your own salvation. Note 2 Corinthians 13:5 in closing: *"Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?"*

1. Cf. James 1:22; 2:26; 1 John 1:4; 5:20.
2. *"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me"* (Exodus 20:3–5).
3. W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1952), 575.
4. *"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."* *"Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying."*
5. First Peter 5:3 provides insight into what kind of spiritual leaders genuine believers should submit to. Peter says to church leaders, *"Shepherd the flock of God among you ... nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."* That's to say there exist spiritual leaders in churches who view themselves as above the law. Genuine believers need not submit to such autocrats.
6. Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1999), 363.

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