

## The Most Important Part

We spend a lot of our lives learning about, talking about, writing about and building saddle trees. Our aim is that our product is the best we can possibly produce, that we will build what is good for both the horse and the rider, and that we help our saddle maker customers do a good job for their customers. But ultimately, our saddle trees will not last. Oh, they will last for decades, and maybe a even a century (or two?). But then they will be gone. So if building trees was the whole point of our existence, then our lives would count for nothing in the long run.

But there is something that does last for eternity: the people we are and the people we deal with. This is why we wanted to tell you about the most important part of our lives - our relationship with Jesus Christ.

We firmly believe the Bible to be true in all that it says, both about this world and the people in it (the natural part), and about God, Who He is and His plan for reuniting Himself with us (the supernatural part).<sup>1</sup> Our belief in the Bible is not based on hopeful wishes, but on facts.<sup>2</sup> The historical accuracy of the Bible is total. Archeologists use the Bible to locate ancient cities - and it has always been correct. The manuscript evidence for the accuracy of our Bible today compared to the original writings is overwhelming. The dating of those original writings, both New and Old Testament, is also overwhelmingly more solid than any other ancient historical documents. The writings in the Old Testament, confirmed to have been written hundreds of years before Jesus, gave numerous very specific predictions about His life (for example, that He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver.)<sup>3</sup> The probability of all these events occurring in the life of one person is literally astronomical (statistically more than the number of atoms in the entire universe.) Yet these events actually happened and were recorded with simplicity in the four gospels of our New Testament. Based on the fact that we have found that we can trust the Bible in all areas that can be checked out, we have decided that we will also trust the Bible in the areas that we cannot check out with our natural senses - the areas such as Who God is and

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<sup>1</sup>II Timothy 3:16-17

<sup>2</sup>The following books are good places to start investigating the facts behind the Christian faith: "A Case for Christ" by Lee Strobel, "More Than a Carpenter" by Josh McDowell. For a real in depth study, we recommend "The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict" by Josh McDowell.

<sup>3</sup>Predicted in Zechariah 11:12, written approximately 480-470 BC. Fulfilled in Matthew 26:15, approximately 30-33 AD.

how we can be right with Him. This is the Biblical definition of faith.<sup>4</sup> Faith is not just a mental agreement, but an active commitment to what cannot be proved, based on the reliability of what can be proved. We have chosen to have faith in the Bible, and the God it teaches us about.

The Bible teaches that God is good, loving, gracious, and generous. The Bible also teaches that He is right, just and holy – pure, unblemished, absolutely clean and perfect.<sup>5</sup> It teaches that we, in ourselves, are none of these things.<sup>6</sup> In fact, as good as we may try to be, we are the opposite. Just as any contact between used motor oil and a white towel will permanently stain the towel, any wrongdoing, which the Bible calls sin, stains us. We know that we all do wrong, in our minds and intentions as well as our actions. It is never a question of the amount of “good” we do being weighed against the amount of bad. The Bible teaches that even one small stain of sin is enough to keep us out of the presence of God<sup>7</sup> Who, because of His holy nature, cannot abide sin. The Bible teaches that once we are stained, we cannot make ourselves clean again.<sup>8</sup>

So we are in a dilemma. We sin, and can't make ourselves clean, which means we cannot be in a right relationship with God. And God, who is holy, cannot abide sin, so cannot allow us into His presence and still be true to His nature. Except...

God is also love, and in His love He provided a way to allow us to be with Him.<sup>9</sup> A substitute – Jesus Christ, God's Son and also God Himself – was sent as a sacrifice. It was on Jesus, at the cross, that all the sin of everyone in the whole world was placed. And Jesus took the penalty of all of our sin.<sup>10</sup> In trade, He gave us the opportunity of having His righteousness (being totally right with God) given to us.<sup>11</sup> So it is by this incredible trade that we can be totally right before God, able to be His friend, to walk into His presence and talk with Him at any time.<sup>12</sup> And we get to be with Him in heaven for eternity.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Hebrews 11:1

<sup>5</sup>Deuteronomy 32:4, I John 4:16

<sup>6</sup>Romans 3:23

<sup>7</sup>Romans 6:23

<sup>8</sup>Isaiah 64:6

<sup>9</sup>John 3:16

<sup>10</sup>Romans 5:8

<sup>11</sup>II Corinthians 5:21

<sup>12</sup>Ephesians 3:12

<sup>13</sup>John 5:24

But God doesn't force this on us. There is a part for us to play. The sacrifice has been made by Jesus. The offer of the trade of sin for righteousness, sin-stains for purity, is open before us all. But we need to decide if we want that trade or not. If we take the trade, we are giving ourselves to God to be His follower for the rest of our lives - not to follow a bunch of do and don't rules, but to serve Him as a friend, and enjoy His company and presence forever. It also means that we give up the right to ourselves, to follow our own ways and always do as we wish.<sup>14</sup> We now have the ability and responsibility to do as God wants us to do.<sup>15</sup> Our culture tells us that doing what we want at all times is true "freedom", but the Bible tells us that we are really a slave to sin.<sup>16</sup> So to choose to follow Christ means recognizing that we, ultimately, are sinners at heart. It means changing our mind and heart, wanting to hate the wrong that we do, and wanting to love and serve God with all of our being. The Bible calls this repentance. It means accepting His death as a sacrifice for us, so that we can be in a good relationship with God. And then it means following Him, learning about Him and choosing to obey what He wants for the rest of our lives.<sup>17</sup> This is true freedom.

And this is what we have chosen to do with our lives. It makes a difference. It makes a difference in how we think, how we act, how we make decisions. It makes a difference in how we treat people, and how we work. It makes a difference in how we enjoy the good things in life, how we view the hard things of life, and how happy we are. We sure aren't perfect. Far from it. But we know that when we blow it, we can walk into the presence of Almighty God and say, "Daddy, I am sorry for what I did wrong. Will You forgive me?" And He promises that His answer will always be "Yes". Then we pick ourselves up and keep on going. And in the final analysis, long after our last saddle tree has hit the rubbish heap, we will be in heaven with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And that is the most important part.

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<sup>14</sup>John 13:13, Colossians 2:6-7

<sup>15</sup>John 2:3

<sup>16</sup>John 8:34

<sup>17</sup>John 14:21