It would probably come as a surprise, if not a shock, to most New Testament Christians to be told that the doctrine of purgatory is actually a Biblical doctrine. Just as some Christians have difficulty in remembering that the church that our Lord built has a holy priesthood – the priesthood of all believers, it is also difficult for many to accept the doctrine of purgatory because it is a doctrine that is most often believed by and associated with the Roman Catholic Church. But the association of this doctrine with the Roman Catholic Church is a grave mistake to make for this doctrine did not originate with the Roman Catholic Church. It originated in the mind of the holy Godhead a very, very long time before the Roman Catholic Church evolved their false, erroneous concept of a place called purgatory. To give the Roman Catholic Church “credit” for introducing this doctrine to the church some eleven to fourteen hundred years after the Holy Spirit revealed and recorded it in holy writ is a very serious error; it robs from God His Divine sovereignty and the glory that belongs to Him, and only Him, in designing the only plan for saving men from the consequences of their sins.

Roman Catholic doctrine says that purgatory is the state in which or the place where those who die in God’s grace, but short of receiving absolute, complete forgiveness, receive their final, complete purification from sin by their suffering a personal, temporary punishment. It isn’t heaven but neither is it really hell. Again, this is erroneous Roman Catholic theology and certainly not Holy Spirit inspired truth. But, don’t be guilty of throwing out the baby with the bath water. Let us not be guilty, as are those who subscribe to this and other false Roman Catholic suppositions, by diminishing the sacred truth of purgatory only because it has been distorted by an apostate religious priesthood.

The Holy Spirit doctrine of purgatory is in the New Testament and it is most often found written in the book of Hebrews. In fact, this doctrine appears no less than four times in this sacred volume. It is fitting that its first appearance is associated clearly with the Son of God who Himself experienced purgatory, not for His sake but for ours. In fact, He is the only one ever to do so as far as making it possible for men to be
purified from their sins. The superiority of Christ over every person and every thing is articulated very clearly in the opening verses of Hebrews 1. The sixth of seven Divine attributes attributed to our Lord in these opening verses is that "He had by Himself *purged* our sins..." Some translations read "purified our sins" rather than "purged our sins" but the meaning of either rendering is without any meaningful distinction. He alone, "by Himself" "purged," purified, cleansed our sins. It is difficult, if not impossible for those who seriously study the Word of God not to be reminded of Hebrews 9:22 at this point. "...almost all things are *purged* with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission."

Again, the Roman Catholic Church’s doctrine of purgatory is that it is a state in which and a place where the souls of the dead who died in God’s grace must *personally* expiate, or atone, for their sins for an indefinite period of time through a netherworld experience. But the New Testament doctrine of purgatory is quite to the contrary. It is not a place in a netherworld where the dead do something to finally merit their acceptance by God. This is salvation by or through one’s own works, the work of enduring punishment for a season to earn complete forgiveness. That is heresy, for it is "...by grace [we] have been saved through faith, and that not of [ourselves]..." There is nothing that anyone can do or not do to purge his own sins, including enduring for an undefined period of time in a nonexistent purgatory in the afterlife where one earns or pays one’s debt to God that eventually will result in one’s full acceptance by God.

On the contrary, nothing could be more evident in the New Testament than that the purging of our sins is through the work and only through the work of our Savior Jesus Christ. Or, perhaps stated more fully and accurately, we are saved from our sins because of Christ’s obedience to a plan that was designed and established by the holy Godhead from before the foundation of the world. That plan was fulfilled in and by Christ; and, that plan was realized when He endured a purgatory not in a netherworld to which He went after His death and burial, but while He was on the cross. His purgatory was from the third hour unto the ninth hour on the day of His crucifixion. It was when He was nailed alive to the cross and His blood was spilled that the sinless blood offering for the forgiveness of our debt to God was offered. It was here that "He... by Himself *purged* our sins." The sins "*purged*" were ours, not His, for though He "*was in all points tempted as we are, yet [He was] without sin*" so says Hebrews 4:15. He alone purged our sins alone; He alone experienced and endured the purgatory of the New Testament – not that of Roman Catholic theology.

When we come to Christ’s Table on the Lord’s Day we remember the personal purgatory to which Christ went in our place and on our behalf. It was He who died on the cross. It was He who shed the only blood that had any efficacy for forgiveness of sins. It is by His blood that our sins are "*purged.*" "*For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins,*" said the Lord. As we "*eat*" the "*loaf*" we remember His "*body*" that suffered purgatory. As we "*drink*" the "*cup*" we remember His "*blood*" that suffered