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The Death of Selfishness Or, Understanding How God Prevents Sin

"If ye fulfil the Royal Law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well"
(James 2:8).

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Preface

Christianity may differ about what things are considered sinful, but never can it honestly resolve that neither they nor God cares whether sin stalks His Kingdom or holds His people captive. "15 But as He which hath called you is Holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am Holy" (1Peter 1:15-16). Bondage to sin and sinning means that self is enthroned in the human heart, but *Christ is crowned the Rightful King of Our Soul every time we choose to lovingly obey His precepts and walk in His Light-- which is the death of selfishness.* "63 I am a companion of all them that fear Thee, and of them that keep Thy Precepts... 105 Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psalm 119: 63, 105). The legitimate concern of all True Christians then, is how to preserve and promote the Reign of Christ in our hearts by preventing the resurrection of selfishness. "2 Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a Sweetsmelling Savour. 3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Ephesians 5:2-3). We, who promote the Eternal Reign of Christ as King, seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness, and seek also the death of selfishness in all, but especially in everyone that "nameth the Name of Christ" (2Timothy 2:19). The purpose of this article is to advance the understanding that will equip every willing Christian to promote and sustain the death of selfishness and nurture the Reign of Christ in their heart. "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the LORD God Omnipotent reigneth" (Revelation 19:6).

The Dilemma of Selfishness Is Overcome by Understanding

The sheer force of our understanding is never as weighty as the Commandments of the King of Heaven (Daniel 4:37), but "through Wisdom is an house builded; and by Understanding it is established" (Proverbs 24:3). In the Wisdom of God, it is reasonable that the "Blessed and Only Potentate, the KING of Kings, and LORD of Lords" (1Timothy 6:15), Who is the "King of Saints" (Revelation 15:3), would have a Royal Law. "If ye fulfil the Royal Law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well" (James 2:8). And, as lowly as any Saint is, we have, nonetheless, been elevated by an act of God into the royalty of His family, "and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the Earth" (5:10). But, how could God be so willing to do such honor to those who still struggle with themselves as whether they or Christ should be the king of their lives? "Not that we

are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our Sufficiency is of God" (2Corinthians 3:5). His Royal Law is Just, because He is Just. "There is no God else beside Me; a Just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me" (Isaiah 45:21). We know that it is right to obey such an Edict, because it summarizes the whole of our obligation to both our King and to our fellow man. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore Love is the fulfilling of the Law" (Romans 13:10). Every time we shame ourselves by elevating ourselves above our King, His Law, and our neighbours, we must "repent, and do the first works" (Revelation 2:5). This satisfies our King and His Law of Love; however, if we could have but Greater Understanding of our God, His Word, and His Ways, could we not better cooperate with our Royal God in preventing such selfishness from raising its ugly head? "23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in The Way Everlasting" (Psalm 139:23-24).

Self-Interest vs. Selfishness

Even before man arrives at the moral agency of knowing right from wrong-- and *only* the rejection of the Truth makes him a sinner-- man has the capacity of self-interest. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it" (Ephesians 5:29). Before and after one has come to moral agency, avoiding pain (e.g., pulling your hand away from a hot object) and seeking pleasure (e.g., drinking when you're thirsty) are self-interests that may be compared to homeostasis, which is the body's physiological mechanism for maintaining its internal equilibrium. This was true of Christ in His human body, while upon Earth ("I thirst" [John 19:28]) and equally true of His spiritual relationship now to the Church ("No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the LORD the Church: For we are members of His body" [Ephesians 5:29, 30]). But, of course, once a moral agent understands that his duty requires a certain amount of pain to accomplish his obedience to God, then neither pain nor pleasure must interfere with his loving obedience to God. "6 I [Christ] gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting. 7 For the LORD GOD will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed" (Isaiah 50:6-7).

So intrinsic is it, this instinct for physical self-interest, that unless the mind is altered by drugs or other physical means, an individual cannot be alive without a healthy measure of physical self-interest. "15 Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the Good. 16 For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the Good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings" (Isaiah 7:15-16). And yet, even Lucifer-- before he fell-- as an holy angel in God's Heaven, was capable of exercising the selfishness that is characteristic of all sin. "12 How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. 15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to the sides of the pit" (Isaiah 14:12-15). It becomes apparent that self-interest *is* selfishness *only* when we refuse to conform to the Truth that we know obligates us. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). For this reason, the nineteenth century evangelist [Charles G. Finney](http://whatsaiththescriture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html) -- <http://whatsaiththescriture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html> -- said, "Selfishness is sin." To do what we know we shouldn't or to refuse to do

what we know we should, is sin. Even if the forbidden activity is delectably inviting or the commanded action is unpleasantly disagreeable, we engage in sin, i.e., "sin is the transgression of the Law" (1John 3:4), when we walk contrary to the Moral Law of Love. "Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Love-- an unselfish Love, which "seeketh not her own" (1Corinthians 13:5)-- is the whole of what God requires of man. "37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the First and Great Commandment. 39 And the Second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40).

Sin willfully, selfishly chooses to walk contrary to the Truth. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the Law: for sin is the transgression of the Law" (1John 3:4). How, then, can we see the continued death of selfishness? "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Well, if you mean that we should have no more physical self-interest-- that will never be until we get to Heaven. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1Corinthians 2:9). The natural limitations of being a moral agent clothed with flesh, place us in the position of being **always with the capacity to sin** without necessarily the bent, inclination, or tendency to sin; therefore, holiness or godly living, manwardly speaking, must simply be our **willingness to obey** God and our **commitment to refuse all temptation to sin**, i.e., *we cannot sin because we will not sin*.

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1John 3:9). Godwardly speaking, Holiness is God spiritually cleansing and thereby separating man from his sin, while giving him an aversion to sinning. "5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of Hosts. 6 Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (Isaiah 6:5-7). "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 11:9). But, if you mean that **we can live without the bondage of continually sinning**, then "thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Corinthians 15:57)! Wonderful provision has been made to keep us from walking in selfishness! "1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 2 For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2).

Love Breaks the Cycle of Selfishness

The exercise of True Love is the immediate death of selfishness, i.e., "[love] seeketh not her own" (1Corinthians 13:5); and yet, much of Professed Christianity will confess that sinning and repenting is easier than preventing the subsequent repetition of that sin. "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto Thee; for Thou art the LORD our God" (Jeremiah 3:22). Remember, however, Scripture teaches us that much of what is called repentance is not repentance. "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to Salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2Corinthians 7:10). Consequently, with so many false and questionable repentances, returning to a former vice or sin would then be relatively easy. "We know that whosoever

is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1John 5:18). The Truth is that no man will ever do as he is able to do or ought to do without the intervention of the Grace of God. "But by the Grace of God I am what I am: and His Grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the Grace of God which was with me" (1Corinthians 15:10). For this reason, when we ever do choose to repent, believe, and obey, we may trust that it is "God which worketh in [us] both to will and to do of His Good Pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). **Since obedience to God is the unselfishness of Love, then selfishness dies the moment we choose to obey.** "He that hath My Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him" (John 14:21). On the other hand, *we resurrect selfishness, when we choose to disobey.* "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (Proverbs 14:14). We must then continually entrust the LORD as the Keeper of Our Soul to deliver us from sin and sinning. "O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in Thee" (Psalm 25:20).

What Is Baggage From a Formerly Sinful Condition?

Humanly speaking, we may prefer to forego the pain of the pruning, but we are the branches of Christ the Vine. "I am the True Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman" (John 15:1). Just as vines must be pruned, the sin which we committed before Salvation and during backsliding has left a negative impact upon our lives, affecting the way we treat our LORD and one another. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Sin is like a trap of quicksand that deceives us-- when we should have known better-- and sucks us down to complete our destruction, as we powerlessly struggle, while we are neglecting the understanding that even the youngest of the children of God has been given. "And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation through Faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2Timothy 3:15). If we would only remember that it is a "Faith which worketh by Love" (Galatians 5:6), we would firmly hang on, while the Spirit of God wisely guides us to a better understanding that would keep us from stumbling into sin, again. "24 Now unto Him that is able **to keep you** from falling, and **to present you** faultless before the presence of His Glory with Exceeding Joy, 25 to the Only Wise God Our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and ever" (Jude 24-25).

The following discussion of "baggage from a formerly sinful condition" is a key point in the understanding of the death of selfishness. Though we have walked honestly before God since last repenting, our Heavenly Husbandman *must* wisely choose the time and circumstance to make the incision to remove the vestiges of that baggage from a *formerly sinful* condition-- which if we refuse to cooperate becomes a *presently sinful* condition. "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2). And, what is implied by this phrase, baggage from a *formerly sinful* condition? Rest assured that Scripture unequivocally pronounces a Unity of Moral Action for any Moral Agent, i.e., you cannot be both holy and sinful at the same time. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). The question of how God accounts man holy or sinful is answered in the Proverbs, where it is demonstrated that the thought and intent of the heart is what God measures, i.e.,

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee" (Proverbs 23:7). Jesus, further, clearly repeated the same principle that God determines our moral position by our heart intent, when He gave His explanation of the true nature of adultery in the Sermon on the Mount. "27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). Once we have been regenerated from a lost condition or restored from backsliding, we are considered holy and clean. "If we confess our sins, He is Faithful and Just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1John 1:9). This perfection in the eyes of God, of course, cannot mean that we need no further change or growth in holiness, for we are still commanded, "Grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Peter 3:18). That holiness or perfection must mean only that we, the finite creature, are accounted by God to be entirely clean in our *heart intent*, just as He, the Infinite Creator, is Clean, Pure, and Holy in His heart intent. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is Perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Returning to the phrase, baggage from a *formerly sinful* condition, since God accepts the repentance of lost sinners and backsliders in whatever condition they repent, i.e., "him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37), we will still have all the baggage that we obtained and produced in our previously sinful condition-- unless, of course, God *miraculously and mercifully* removes some of their evil effects, especially if they are points of our contention with Him, e.g., addiction to drugs inexplicably taken away at the time of repentance. A few examples of the negative baggage that a Saint may carry over from his past sinful days are:

(1) a preoccupation with self that embarrasses even the definition of a lawful self-interest, e.g., inattention when others speak, but with the swift tendency to respond: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19),

(2) evil habits, e.g., habitual cursing and swearing: "My brethren, swear not, neither by Heaven, neither by the Earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (James 5:12),

(3) mistaken opinions, flawed ideas, and incorrect conclusions, e.g., expecting to eat without a commensurate willingness to work: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2Thessalonians 3:10),

(4) the continued physical effects from previous sinful conduct, e.g., a physical addiction to alcoholic beverages: "31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright... 35 They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again" (Proverbs 23:31, 35),

(5) being tempted from the lingering material circumstances of previous sin, e.g., possession of drugs, pornography, stolen property, etc.: "Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the LORD; Behold, LORD, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8), and

(6) the unavoidable contact with former associates in sin, e.g., colleagues at work with whom you shared profane or questionable conversation: "Be not deceived: evil communications [Greek, *homilia*, companionship, intercourse, communion] corrupt good manners" (1Corinthians 15:33).

Concluding such a negative list of the weighty baggage from our past sin, it is good for us to be reminded that God's Exceeding Great and Precious Promises are meant to *more than counter* any and every ill effect of the "sin which doth so easily beset us" (Hebrews 12:1) and to give us the *ascendancy* of His Divine Nature over our past. "Whereby are given unto us Exceeding Great and Precious Promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2Peter 1:4).

Trusting God to Prevent Sin

The simplicity of actively trusting God to accomplish and maintain us in holiness was not a foreign thought to the godly Saints of the Old Testament, i.e., "LORD, Thou wilt ordain Peace for us: for Thou also hast wrought all our works in us" (Isaiah 26:12). Why should we think it strange that God may accomplish as much in us under His New Covenant? "And I will put My Spirit within you, and **cause** you to walk in My Statutes, and ye shall keep My Judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:27). Though your willingness, resolve, and good intentions are absolutely essential to your holiness, God alone can prevent the future outbreak of sin-- which He will do in response to Faith. "Sow to yourselves in Righteousness, reap in Mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till He come and rain Righteousness upon you" (Hosea 10:12). If you still desire to change, to believe, to learn, to grow, to bear fruit, to not give up, to do it God's way, then that is high evidence that the Spirit of God is still striving with you, i.e., He has not given up on you. "The LORD said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man" (Genesis 6:3). You can see the futility of trusting yourself to prevent the recurrence of your sin by simply reflecting on your past outbreaks of sin. "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD" (Jeremiah 17:5). Previously, you did not sufficiently feel and believe the depth of God's admonition about sin. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (17:9). However, be careful not to fall into the common misconception that sin is constitutional to man, i.e., man is born with a naturally sinful nature. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth" (2Timothy 2:15). This Doctrine of Sin Nature has a tendency of explaining and placing the responsibility for sin upon a bent or fallen nature given at the time of physical birth, and was even a mistaken position of some of the Pharisees during the ministry of Christ. "They answered and said unto [the blind man whom Jesus healed and who then stood up for Christ], Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out" (John 9:34). Though we discuss at greater length in another article, "[Must We Then Sin? Or, A Response to the Doctrine of Sin Nature or the Doctrine of Original Sin, Or, A Clarification of What is Sin, Why We Sin, and How Not to Sin](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Must.We.Then.Sin.html)" -- <http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Must.We.Then.Sin.html> --, suffice for the present to say that the Psalms describe the birth of David: "I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art my God from my mother's belly" (22:10), while comparing the birth of the wicked: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (58:3), technically proving neither the holiness nor sinfulness of the unborn fetus.

Innocence is a much better word to describe the pre-Moral Agent, i.e., "before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good" (Isaiah 7:16). In point of fact, even Jesus the Sinless Lamb of God would have sinned had He not trusted the Father to overcome the temptations He faced after "forty days and forty nights" (Matthew 4:2) in the wilderness-- as witnessed by His resistance to the Tempter *only* through the Scriptures, i.e., "it is written" (4:4, 7, 10). "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is Faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (1Corinthians 10:13). *The pivotal concept is the deceitfulness of trusting in yourself, even to overcome temptation.* "Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD" (Jeremiah 17:5).

It should not surprise us that the Creator of our human nature, the Saviour of sinful man, is also the Sanctifier of Justified Saints. "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are Sanctified, but ye are Justified in the Name of the LORD Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1Corinthians 6:11). *Sanctification is the death of selfishness, while selfishness is the death of holiness.* "No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Luke 16:13). In other words, every time God works in us to choose holiness, that is the death of selfishness. "12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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. 13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). Holiness must be the proficient choice of the confessed people of God, or how can we call ourselves Christian? "Why call ye me, LORD, LORD, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Only so much of our attempt to walk apart from selfishness can be solved by accumulating greater understanding-- though it helps-- but, holiness (which is the death of selfishness) *must inescapably* go beyond teaching to everyday practice. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). But, just as the "Way of Holiness" (Isaiah 35:8) will be the blessed highway of the Millennium, we should *now* by Faith be able to experience the one great effect of the giving of the Holy Spirit to the Believers of the New Testament dispensation-- *not* simply a charismatic gift of tongues, but more importantly-- an unfaltering, holy, and loving obedience. "31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My Covenant they brake, although I was an Husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 but this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Instead of relegating the Promises of the Final Perseverance of the Saints *only* to our ultimate translation to His Heavenly Kingdom, why should we not *also* claim in Faith those same Promises for our **present safekeeping in Righteousness**? "According to your Faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). If God's hand does not embrace and treasure sin, then Christ's Promise should be actively and joyfully claimed by Faith to preserve us in holiness: "28 And I give unto them Eternal Life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. 29 My Father, which gave them Me, is

Greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:28-29). Every personal limitation or deficiency that would resurrect selfishness, God has more than countered by some aspect of His limitless Character and Grace. "And all the inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His Will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the Earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4:35). If we are concerned that we cannot possibly be watching for the things that we cannot see that would stumble us back into sin, then we have been assured that the One we trust is also the God of the Rear Guard, who watches in the place that our eyes cannot see. "For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the LORD will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your Rereward [Hebrew, *acaph*, rearguard]" (Isaiah 52:12). If we are concerned that we will not walk worthy of Him at the time of the raptured translation of the Saints, i.e., "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36), then we have another Promise of preservation in holiness: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a Good Work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

Continuing with this theme of using the Promises traditionally employed for the Final Perseverance of the Saints to do double duty to keep us from sinning as well, if we are tempted to doubt our deliverance from evil now, we have both a Promise of present deliverance with the future bonus of His Heavenly Kingdom: "And the LORD shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His Heavenly Kingdom: to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (2Timothy 4:18). If we are having difficulty believing that the Almighty will actually take away the formerly sinful baggage that would keep us returning to selfishness and sin, then we have been assured by Omnipotence that He "removed [our] shoulder from the burden: [our] hands were delivered from the pots" (Psalm 81:6), and so we can safely claim that we are "kept by the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation ready to be revealed in the Last Time" (1Peter 1:5). Any concern that our physical safety may jeopardize our spiritual rest can be allayed with Hannah's prayerful assertion: "He will keep the feet of His Saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail" (1Samuel 2:9). Almighty Superintendence extends not simply to our person, but to our providential circumstances, all of which God designs to defeat selfishness and maintain us in holiness: "He keepeth the paths of Judgment, and preserveth the way of His Saints" (Proverbs 2:8). God is not satisfied with changing just *our* heart and direction now, ongoing, and forever, but He has designed to give *our children and successors* the **same** blessing! Will we actively trust Him to do it? "39 And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me for ever, for the good of them, and of their **children** after them: 40 and I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them Good; but I will put My Fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jeremiah 32:39-40). Even when He was occupied with the unimaginable burden of atoning for our sins, His Gethsemane prayer remembered the necessity of our present and ultimate overcoming of evil, that the Father would keep us: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil [literally, the Evil One]" (John 17:15). *Hallelujah! What a Saviour!*

Conclusion

Christianity today suffers *not* from lack of understanding that there is a God, Who has spoken to us

His Word, giving us His Law, which we have wretchedly broken, necessitating an Atoning Sacrifice to be offered, which the Messiah His Only Begotten Son has already made, graciously offering Forgiveness, Acceptance, and Heavenly Mansions to "whosoever believeth in Him" (John 3:16). Instead, the sometimes hot, sometimes cold, lukewarm Professed Church ails from the inconsistency that afflicted Reuben-- "unstable as water" (Genesis 49:4)-- tripping over self-interest, grasping for selfishness, and bound down by sin. O Church, Church, Church, "when will ye be wise?" (Psalm 94:8). Jehovah has not withheld from us His Only Begotten Son, He has sent us His apostles, He rescued His Church from that Jezebel of Rome, He blessed us with the "little strength" (Revelation 3:8) that enabled Philadelphia's quest to bring the Gospel "unto all nations" (Matthew 24:14) before the End should come, and still the Church falters into the Laodicean quagmire of stops-and-starts! "3 And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. 4 What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" (Isaiah 5:3-4). Worse yet, she has begun to call her failures successes and her sins holiness. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the Righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3).

Only the radical change of Repentance can transform the Professed Church; but, even with the best of intentions, that Repentance will be repented of, unless the Spirit of God infuses into us the Calm Understanding that makes selfishness odious and obedience a delight. "28 Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am Meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find Rest unto your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

In summary,

- *First*, selfishness dies the moment we willfully choose to obey God. "19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20 but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isaiah 1:19-20).
- *Second*, the self-interest that all men properly have, becomes selfishness only when we refuse to conform to the Truth that we know obligates us. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).
- *Third*, the baggage from a *formerly sinful* condition that resurfaces to tempt us, only becomes a *presently sinful* condition, when we refuse to immediately relinquish what is now plainly obvious. "For sin, taking occasion by the Commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me" (Romans 7:11).
- *Finally*, maintaining our holiness and keeping us from being overpowered by sin is too important a task to entrust to ourselves, instead, our supreme confidence, faith, and trust must be in the Living God to accomplish it for us, i.e., "in God have I put my trust" (Psalm 56:11).

Jesus demonstrated the position that we must take with the Father to achieve and maintain the worthy walk of holiness, namely, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). "I will cry unto God

Most High; unto God that performeth all things for me" (Psalm 57:2). The only wise thing to be done with the Free Will of our Moral Agency is to immediately lay our will down in Faith with Promise to our Faithful Creator, Who alone is able to make and keep us willing to forever see the death of selfishness. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy Power" (110:3).

Amen, and Amen.