

## *What Saith the Scripture?*

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# Sound Doctrine Archive

Articles by Tom Stewart

*"Holding fast the Faithful Word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by Sound Doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers"*

(Titus 1:9).

Sound Doctrine is more crucial to the health of the True Saints and to the identification of the Antichrist than has been emphasized by the shepherds of the Flock... Why the aversion to Sound Doctrine? Since doctrine is the foundation and marching orders for all conduct, then Sound Doctrine must be hated by those who are unwilling to change their conduct... It will not be possible to take the professed people of God captive without their first departing from Sound Doctrine.

-excerpt from "Antichrist Shall Come"

## **He Will Subdue Our Iniquities**

Or, How God Makes Normal Christians to Walk Without Sinning

Or, How Anyone Can Be Ready to Meet God at Any Time

"He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea"

(Micah 7:19).

by Tom Stewart

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### **Preface**

How can anyone speak of walking without sinning, without being completely out of touch with the human condition? The Son of Man, the LORD Jesus Christ, did exactly that. He said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). No one can truthfully say that the Sinless Son of God was out of touch with humanity. "For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

But, it may be said, Jesus lived a sinless life on earth because He was the Son of God, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1Peter 2:22). That is certainly true; however, could we be neglecting the fact that what He accomplished by becoming a man was to prove that a human being-- by the power of God-- could actually walk **without** sinning?

"Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17).

Jesus came as the "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). By living a sinless life, the LORD Jesus vindicated the Creator's Wisdom in designing man as a free moral agent. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). Our Wonderful LORD left us THE example of how to walk without sinning. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1Peter 2:21).

### **Sin: The Sad Truth About So Many Professing Christians**

Unfortunately, self-deception and hypocrisy are easy to find in the professed Church. "And why call ye me, LORD, LORD, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). It should be said to these, Look into the Mirror of the Word of God and repent of your hypocrisy. "For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (James

1:23-24).

However, most who read this probably understand that the Spirit testifies of our sonship by our obedience. "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). How often have we all fallen into sin? "For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief" (Proverbs 24:16). If we did not know that the LORD Jesus made a special point about how often He was willing to forgive us when we truly repent, we would despair of ever repenting. "Then came Peter to Him, and said, LORD, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22).

Our beloved brother Paul testified in Romans 7 of the so-often-defeated condition of those of us who name the name of Christ. Remember, this is not how it should be, but how it so often is. This is how a Backslider approaches Christianity. Notice the frustration and the complete lack of victory. "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:15-24).

Like the Apostle Paul, I "thank God through Jesus Christ our LORD" (Romans 7:25) that Jesus has not only "delivered us from the wrath to come" (1Thessalonians 1:10), but has also assured us that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). Romans 8 is the exact opposite of Romans 7. Victory belongs only to those who walk after the Spirit. If walking without sinning is the same as walking after the Spirit, then I am sure that there is hope for any who see walking without sinning as humanly impossible. "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

## **The Foundation of Moral Obligation: Everyone Ought to Be Like Jesus**

Everyone ought to be like the LORD Jesus Christ. What a wonderful world this would be, if everyone truly followed the example of the LORD Jesus Christ! "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1Peter 2:21). However, only the children of God will actually follow the example of the LORD Jesus. "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15).

The very Foundation of Moral Obligation for all mankind is tied to Who and What God is. For example, why should we be holy? Because **God is** holy. "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1Peter 1:15-16). Why should we be perfect (i.e., walk with a perfect heart)? Because **God is** perfect. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

Like mindedness to our LORD Jesus Christ is the argument of the Apostle Paul for why we ought to walk humbly. In other words, we ought to walk humbly because the LORD Jesus walked humbly. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:3-8).

To discover to our hearts the very nature of God is the purpose of the Indwelling Holy Spirit. "But when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me" (John 15:26). We, the Body of Christ, should **not** look at these necessities to be like the LORD Jesus as an overwhelming, crushing burden, **but as an opportunity to enter into His joy**. "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

## **The Unity of Moral Action: No Man Can Serve Two Masters**

If we would conduct our Christian walk with our iniquities subdued, we need to more intelligently understand the anatomy of

the Christian walk. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). The LORD Jesus clearly defined the Unity of Moral Action, that we could not serve two masters at the same time. Yes, there is something as clear as black and white, when it comes to whom we really serve. "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 [literally, treasure or riches]" (Matthew 6:24). [Please read "[Unity of Moral Action](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html)" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html -- by Charles G. Finney]

Whom we choose to serve, colors everything else about us. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light" (Matthew 6:22). We are either good or evil, light or darkness; but, not both at the same time. "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:23). Why so strong a warning against serving mammon (treasure)? Because "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). God is not satisfied with anything less than our whole heart. "Blessed are they that keep His Testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart" (Psalm 119:2).

**Gray** is the color of **ungodly compromise**. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity [literally, hatred or hostility] with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4). Gray areas are the breeding ground for sinful doubt. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). Gray is the tone that questions the commands of God. "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1). Gray permeates the Church of Laodecia. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15-16).

Separation from the wrong and cleaving to the right is the only preservation for the Righteous. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?... Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, **saith the LORD**, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:14,17).

Toward the End of the Tribulation Week, God will reaffirm the need of His people to separate themselves from the Harlot Religion of the False Prophet. "And I heard another Voice from Heaven, saying, Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4). This is the final call for the last train out to the Pre-Wrath Rapture. Separation from sin is not just a good idea, but it is **essential** to participate in this Second and Final Rapture event. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

Remember that God's name is Jealous. "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is **Jealous**, is a jealous God" (Exodus 34:14). Consequently, He will not tolerate any attempt to make Himself simply another God on the shelf of the human heart. "Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and His redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside Me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6).

He designed man's heart with only a single function-at-a-time capability. For this reason, we say that there is a Unity of Moral Action, or singleness of supreme choice for the human heart. If the inward heart is clean, then the outward life will be clean also. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:25-26). Likewise, if the inward is unclean and impure, then no amount of cosmetic effect on the outward life will hide from God the spiritual dirt.

## **Abiding in Christ: The Secret of the Christian Walk**

He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1John 2:6). Unquestionably, we who profess the LORD Jesus Christ to be our LORD and Saviour, ought to walk as Jesus walked. But, what does it mean to Abide in Christ? The Greek word for "abide" is meno. It has been translated as "abide", "continue", and "endure".

The Gospel of John, Chapters 14 and 15 are a feast for God's children to read, understand, and savor. The LORD Jesus is giving His last instructions to His disciples the evening before His crucifixion. "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). He mentions the concept of "mansions" in His Father's house. These "mansions" are literally dwellings or abodes. Here, He begins a discourse on abiding-- the secret of the Christian walk.

Our LORD masterfully answered Thomas' query about how the disciples would know the way to those heavenly mansions. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6).

Confused about Jesus' reference to the fact that they "have seen" the Father (14:7), Philip asks to be shown the Father. The Master responds that the works that the disciples see Him do are accomplished because "the Father dwelleth in" Himself (14:10).

Again, the Greek word *meno* is used. This time, it is translated "dwelleth" (14:10). The LORD Jesus shared the secret of His walk. The Father dwells in the Son; likewise, the Son dwells "in the Father" (14:10). Jesus set the example for the Christians' abiding. When the Saints abide in their LORD, it is God that performs the works. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the Words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (John 14:10).

Jesus proceeded to teach the disciples about the Holy Spirit. "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever" (John 14:16). We can never abide in Christ without the continual help of the Holy Spirit. But, what is the condition of this continual help? Jesus said, "If ye love Me, keep My Commandments" (14:15) immediately before promising to pray for the Holy Spirit's abiding. Obedience to God is the condition for the Spirit's abiding. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My Words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23).

Jesus commanded us to abide in Him. "Abide in Me, and I in you" (John 15:4). That we could abide in Christ is critically important, but that He would in turn abide in us is monumentally of the greatest importance! "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the Heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less" (2Chronicles 6:18) are we to be the place of Christ's abiding? "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1Corinthians 3:16-17).

When we abide in Him, we can be certain that He abides in us (John 15:4). But, what happens if we do not abide in Christ? "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (15:6). It is certain that the LORD Jesus designed this statement to offer no eternal comfort to those desiring to shirk the command to abide.

When we do not abide in Christ, we lose the Source and Power of the Christian walk. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me" (John 15:4). Not only do we lose the fruit that could have been produced, but we lose the Spirit's testimony of our sonship. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him" (1John 2:4).

What else is the Word of God than the voice of the Holy Spirit? "For the Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2Peter 1:21). We may intellectually remember the event in our spiritual history that we recall as the time of our Born Again spiritual experience, but only the testimony of the Spirit establishes the reality of that experience. "And he that keepeth His Commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1John 3:24).

Church members and others professing Christ, who have never been converted to the LORD Jesus, may intellectually remember events in their religious history that correspond to what they feel is a Born Again spiritual experience. They may have responded to an Invitation at the end of an evangelistic message at a church service, been baptized, received the ordinance of the LORD's Supper, have attended Sunday School, attended weekly Prayer Meetings, have brought the unchurched to special Revival Meetings, etc. and still NOT have the testimony of the Spirit. "Many will say to Me in that day, LORD, LORD, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" (Matthew 7:22). Yet, one thing they lack-- the testimony of the Spirit of God, that they have been received as a child of God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit Itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:14-16).

But, some may object that requiring the testimony of the Spirit to our sonship, would cause many, who have been truly converted but are now stumbling in sin, to doubt their salvation. Further, they would feel themselves to be rejected by God. "Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not My Way equal? are not your ways unequal?" (Ezekiel 18:25). If the testimony of the Spirit is only "given to them that **obey Him**" (Acts 5:32), why should God comfort and assure disobedient rebels-- the Backsliders-- for their prodigal walk?

There has been a great mistake in the Church to give the comfort of Heaven to those who walk in disobedience-- the never saved as well as the deceived backslider. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). The Good Shepherd assures us of the Security of the Abiding Saint. "And I give unto them eternal

life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28). Likewise, the Judge of All the Earth (Genesis 18:25) also assures us of the Insecurity of the Sinner-- the Lost as well as the Backslidden. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in Him" (1John 2:4). "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and ALL LIARS [not just lost liars, but **all** liars], shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

There is a difference between a Non-Abiding Backslider and a Never-Been-Saved Sinner. "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) applies to the Saints and not to the Sinners. The Backslider can have no assurance of this promise from the Holy Spirit, but God will justify His Word by performing it nonetheless. Though the Backslider has lost all right to the Spirit's testimony of his sonship, God still remembers the Good Work which He has begun, and finishes it. "If his children forsake My Law, and walk not in My Judgments; If they break My Statutes, and keep not My Commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I **not** utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail. My Covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips" (Psalm 89:30-34).

Backsliders always and ultimately repent before dying. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" (Hebrews 12:7). Only a Lost Sinner can die in his sins. "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go My way, and ye shall seek Me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye **cannot** come" (John 8:21). If they die in their sins, they never were a Backslider-- only another deceived, future occupant of the Lake of Fire. "And whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

With this understanding of abiding, we can read and understand a passage such as Hebrews 6:4-6: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the Good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; **seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame**" (Hebrews 6:4-6).

The impossibility of Hebrews 6:4-6 is to renew to repentance those who are **not abiding** in Christ. It is impossible to be crucifying (present tense) the Son of God afresh and putting (present tense) Him to an open shame, **while** repenting at the same time-- consistent with the Unity of Moral Action. Those "who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the Good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come" are easily describing someone who has been truly converted.

It is painful to note that our lack of abiding is called crucifying "the Son of God afresh" (Hebrews 6:6). If Jesus died on the cross to redeem us from our sins, why should we think it strange that Scripture describes those, who have been truly converted but are now presently sinning, as crucifying Jesus **afresh**? If ever we had a powerful argument to learn the secret of abiding in Christ, **our revulsion at the thought of lifting a hand against our Saviour should be enough!** "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?... There is therefore now **no** condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, **who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit**" (Romans 7:25;8:1).

## Abiding in Christ: What Must I Do?

Abiding in Christ is the secret of the Christian walk, but that is not supposed to make the word "abide" mystical. "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (1John 2:24). Abiding is continuing to do what you did in the beginning of your walk with the LORD Jesus Christ. What did you begin to do when you first met the LORD Jesus? Keep doing it.

Continue in faith. The Apostle Paul confirmed "the souls of the disciples" and exhorted "them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:22). Continuing in faith is a condition of receiving the benefits of the reconciling work of the LORD Jesus on the cross. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight: IF YE CONTINUE IN THE FAITH grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister" (Colossians 1:21-23). If it was necessary for us to repent and believe the Gospel (Mark 1:15) to begin the Christian walk, should it be thought strange that it is necessary to continue in faith to continue our abiding in Christ?

Continue in the grace of God. "Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes

followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43). Again, the Apostle Paul gave us the example. Grace is literally the help of God. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Only as the Holy Spirit persuades us of our neediness, do we cry out for the grace of God.

Continue in the Word of God. "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (John 8:31). We are what we have been commissioned to make of the world-- disciples of the LORD Jesus (Matthew 28:19)-- if we continue in His Word. This is encouragement to not be a forgetful hearer. "But whoso looketh into the perfect Law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a **doer of the work**, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

Continue in prayer. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). We know that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). If we continue in the Word, we have been given assurance of answers to our prayers. "If ye abide in Me, and My Words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). The Exceeding Great and Precious Promises connect the Word to prayer. "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).

Continue in the love of God. "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love" (John 15:9). Jesus demonstrated His love of the Father by His obedience to the Father. "If ye keep My Commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's Commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:10-11). Continuing in obedience is continuing in love. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous" (1John 5:3). Again, we have the agency to choose to be kept in the love of God. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our LORD Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21).

Continue in brotherly love. "Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1). The Church of Philadelphia (literally, brotherly love) represents the Church of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture. We not only know that we are the children of God, but that we will leave at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture because we continue in brotherly love. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1John 3:14). Couple this with Philadelphia's promise to escape the Tribulation. "Because thou hast kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Revelation 3:10). Brotherly love is a further proof of our discipleship. "A new Commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35).

Endure to the end. "Endure" is the same word translated as "abide". "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 24:13). Does our necessity to abide or endure to the end detract from the fact that God's Almighty Power keeps the Saints unto Heaven? "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Peter 1:5). Certainly not. Our abiding or enduring no more detracts from God's power in keeping, than did the LORD Jesus' earthly works diminish the Father's Heavenly Help. "But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5:17). Abiding or enduring is cooperating with God.

It may seem that abiding in Christ has now become a tribute to the force of the Moral Agency of man to will it, but that would be a great mistake in understanding. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Whenever we have a good thought to act upon, God is the Author of it. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). So complete a title does God have on all good actions that anyone could will, that Scripture authoritatively declares Him to be The Only Good. "And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is, God" (Mark 10:18).

In abiding, Jesus set the example of how to use the human will-- unconditionally submitted to God. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8); even so, we are to submit ourselves to the will of God as reasonable service. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

## **Abiding in Christ: To Appropriate Christ by Faith in All His Offices, Capacities, and Relations**

With the understanding that obedience to Christ's command to be "perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), is part of abiding in Christ, we can seek after this kind of Christian perfection without stumbling over the very words. Christian perfection is to appropriate Christ by faith in all of His offices, capacities, and relations to meet our every need in life. For example, Jesus desires that we look upon Himself as our Saviour. "Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus literally means Saviour. He came to save us from **not only our sins but from sinning**. Jesus told Paul His purpose in sending Paul to the Gentiles was "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me" (Acts 26:18). Jesus can only be appropriated in His office, capacity, or relation of Saviour by faith to meet our need of salvation.

The LORD Jesus Christ is Our Redeemer From All Our Iniquity. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:13-14). Jesus redeems us from all iniquity. Like the Apostle Paul, we seek to be delivered from "the body of this death" (Romans 7:24), i.e., from being in bondage to sinning. Also, like Paul, we "thank God through Jesus Christ our LORD" (7:25) for the deliverance from sin and sinning that Our Redeemer From All Our Iniquity can accomplish in us, when we trust Him to do it.

Is not the LORD Jesus the One Who Cleanses Us From All Unrighteousness? "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). Certainly we are talking about the confession of all known sin. God will never forgive us for any sin, until we are willing to give up all known sin. God is not so desperate as to negotiate for anything less than complete agreement with Himself about the despicableness of our sin, the justness of His anger and punishment, and the magnanimity of His mercy. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). As the One Who Cleanses Us From All Unrighteousness, He maintains a holy people. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2Peter 3:14).

Jesus is the One Who Is Able To Subdue All Things To Himself. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:21). Our wills are included in this listing of things which the LORD Jesus is able to subdue. Either man voluntarily submits to the One Who Is Able To Subdue All Things To Himself now, or the confession that Jesus is LORD will be taken later at the White Throne Judgment. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

The Subduer of Our Iniquities is an appropriate title for the LORD Jesus. "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). Many of these promises have been relegated to someone else at some other time. "For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 8:11). Without a confidence that the LORD Jesus came to obliterate the works of the Devil, the professed Church will be willing to wait for the next Millennium to come before we come to grips with how to walk without sinning. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1John 3:8).

Our LORD Jesus is Our All In All. "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1Corinthians 15:28). The goal of God is that He would be Our All In All. He knows that He already is the supply for all the needs of all who trust Him. "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). When all rebellion has been put down and all sin has been judged, then all will be subject to the KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 19:16). If the professed Church would only practice now what all will confess later... "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11).

## Conclusion

Charles G. Finney, an American evangelist from the 1800's, noted, "When we sin, it is because of our ignorance of Christ." We would be more inclined to drink deeply from the Living Water, if we believed that there was anything we could do to be free from sin or sinning. There is. Believe the "Exceeding Great and Precious Promises" (2Peter 1:4) of the LORD Jesus to make us "partakers of the divine nature" (1:4). Every title, office, or capacity of the LORD Jesus is an implicit promise of

what Jesus will do for us. "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2Corinthians 1:20). We do not lack because God will not supply. We lack because we do not have the understanding or faith to ask. "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2).

The Church is in its present Laodicean condition, not because of any inability on God's part to sanctify the Church with His promises, but because Laodicea sees no need of sanctification or the promises. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). This is inexcusable blindness. This is sin, with only one remedy-- repent. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

But, "at this present time also there is a remnant [Praise God] according to the election of grace" (Romans 11:5) that "do know their God" and who will "be strong, and do exploits" (Daniel 11:32). I especially pray for you. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:14-19). Amen.

"He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19).

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## **He That Endureth to the End Shall Be Saved** Or, The Biblical Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints Or, Endurance is Necessary for Eternal Salvation

"And ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake: but he that **endureth to the end** shall be saved"

(Matthew 10:22).

by Tom Stewart  
5-28-99

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### **Preface**

Those are stern Words, especially to those who are ready to confess faith in Jesus Christ or who have already confessed that they have trusted Jesus Christ for Eternal Salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). You may ask, "Don't you believe in the Eternal Security of the Believer?" Most certainly, I do. "And I give unto them Eternal Life; and they shall **never** perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28). But, **we are nowhere to confuse the Security of the Believer with the Insecurity that Rightfully Belongs to ANY Sinner. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him"** (1John 3:6). *The self-deception of sin persuades the one who professes to know Jesus Christ that they have already been saved, even though they presently continue in unrepented sin.* "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: **whosoever** doeth not righteousness is **not** of God, neither he that loveth not his brother" (1John 3:10).

### **Who Then Can Be Saved?**

- Is faith necessary for Gospel Salvation? Yes. "30 Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31 And they said, **Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ**, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:30-31).
- Is repentance of **all** sin required for Salvation? Again, yes. "Except ye repent, ye shall **all** likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Also, "**Repent ye therefore, and be converted**, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the LORD" (Acts 3:19).
- Is it necessary to confess or admit that Jesus Christ has saved you from your sins? Absolutely. "9 That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth** the LORD Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and **with the mouth confession is made**



**unto Salvation**" (Romans 10:9-10).

Faith, repentance, and confession... one, two, three... Is that all that is required to be saved? What about water baptism? Is it necessary to be baptized to become a Christian? Not necessarily, or else how did the penitent-but-unbaptized thief on the cross receive the assurance from the LORD Jesus, "To day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43)? But, for those **who do have opportunity**, Believer's Baptism is COMMANDED by our LORD and **necessary** for all those who would confess that Jesus is both LORD and Savior. "Repent, and **be baptized** every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). And also, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).

If we are saved by grace through faith, aren't all conditions that go beyond **simple** faith, adding works to Salvation? No. "8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 **Not of works**, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). All conditions for Salvation must be consistent with **grace through faith**, or they are the "works of the Law". "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:2). Since Evangelical Faith is **simply receiving** the Unmerited, Free Grace of God, any action by one who has truly received that grace, must be a **demonstration** of True Faith. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and **I will shew thee my faith by my works**" (James 2:18). Or, it can be said that all works that can be properly connected to Salvation are **part of Saving Faith**. "He that **believeth** on the Son hath Everlasting Life: and he that **believeth** [literally, obeys] not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

*Whatever and whenever the Spirit of God draws attention to any given condition to be fulfilled for Evangelical Salvation, it becomes a real **part of Saving Faith**, for example:*

- (1) Baptism, i.e., "He that **believeth and is baptized** shall be saved" (Mark 16:16),
- (2) Not taking the Mark of the Beast, i.e., "9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man **worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark** in his forehead, or in his hand, 10 The same shall drink of The Wine Of The Wrath Of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb" (Revelation 14:9-10), and
- (3) Not denying the LORD Jesus Christ-- even under torture, i.e., "Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, **not accepting deliverance**; that they might obtain a Better Resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35).

Remember the rich young ruler who asked Jesus, "Good Master, **what good thing shall I do**, that I may have Eternal Life?" (Matthew 19:16). He obviously viewed himself as having kept the Law; and thus, accepted by God. However, the LORD Jesus knew better and met the rich young ruler's misconception with the piercing command, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and **sell that thou hast**, and **give to the poor**, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come and **follow Me**" (Matthew 19:21). Realizing that the young man loved his riches more than he loved God, the LORD had to **demonstrate that whatever stands in the way of complete submission of our heart and lives to God must be given up for us to be saved**. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (16:26). Even if the thing to be relinquished is humanly difficult, Gospel Faith will be-- first of all-- **demonstrated by a willing heart**, before any attempted action. "For if there be first a **willing mind, it is accepted** according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2Corinthians 8:12).

## He That Endureth to the End

In our enthusiasm to promote God's Simple Plan of Salvation, we have made anathema any suggestion that the Scripture demands anything beyond the simple requirement to believe. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? **can faith save him?**" (James 2:14). The desire to protect Gospel Salvation from the Judaizers, who **wrongly** made the keeping of the Ceremonial Law of the Old Testament necessary for Salvation-- "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1)-- has caused **the Gospel requirement** of persevering in faith, continuing in Christ, holding fast our confidence in Christ, or enduring to the end, to be laid aside from the claims of the Primitive Gospel. "We are made partakers of Christ, **if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end**" (Hebrews 3:14).

If the repentance that brings Salvation is solely the work of man, then we can glory in saving ourselves. But, it is not. Though

repentance is a necessary condition of Salvation, **men never do repent unless God grants it to them.** "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; **if God peradventure will give them repentance** to the acknowledging of the Truth" (2Timothy 2:25). Similarly, if the faith that saves us is simply a demonstration of sheer human will power, then we can rightfully take credit for our own salvation. But, **faith is not simply the product of man's will.** Though man is commanded to believe on the LORD Jesus Christ in order to be saved, **men will never believe without the Holy Spirit working it in them.** "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Also,

- "No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44).
- "...despisest thou the riches of His Goodness and Forbearance and Longsuffering; not knowing that the Goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4),
- "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not" (Revelation 2:21).

**Persevering to the end is part of Saving Faith;** and therefore, **it is a condition of Eternal Salvation.** "And ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake: but **he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved**" (Mark 13:13). Holding fast our faith (or, "confidence") is the same as enduring. "But Christ as a Son over His own house; Whose house are we, **if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end**" (Hebrews 3:6). Continuing in the faith is **not** optional to those who will partake of the Saints' Inheritance. "12 Giving thanks unto the Father, Which hath **made us meet** to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in Light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son: 14 In Whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins... 23 **If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel,** which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under Heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister" (Colossians 1:12-14, 23).

Unfortunately, the misunderstanding of the nature of Gospel Faith has caused many in the Evangelical Community to adamantly maintain that Eternal Salvation is in opposition to **any** works, such as enduring to the end. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Truly, since any attempt **to save ourselves** (apart from turning in faith to the LORD Jesus Christ), is negatively, "works of righteousness which we have done", then those works must be rejected as **Filthy Rags Righteousness.** "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6). **But, Gospel Faith cannot be separated from the works of faith,** such as enduring to the end or overcoming the world. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even **our Faith**" (1John 5:4). And properly, all the **works of faith** are a part of and conditions for Gospel Salvation. "**What doth it profit,** my brethren, though a man say he hath faith [the passive, intellectual perception of the Truth that even the devils have], and have **not** works? can faith [the antinomian belief that cries out against any works] save him? 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:14,19). Also,

- "Remembering without ceasing your **work of faith,** and **labour of love,** and **patience of hope** in our LORD Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father" (1 Thessalonians 1:3), and
- "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the **work of faith** with Power" (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

The faith that believes that it is **not** necessary to endure to the end as a condition of Eternal Salvation **prepares the Church for the Apostasy or Falling Away of the End Times.** "1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the Coming of our LORD Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the Day of Christ is at hand. 3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that Day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2Thessalonians 2:1-3). **A cardinal tenet of faith is: "According to your faith be it unto you"** (Matthew 9:29). **And, if we allow and prepare ourselves to fall away from the faith-- ever so briefly-- we will fall away! "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he"** (Proverbs 23:7).

Just the opposite is true for those who would "continue in the faith" (Colossians 1:23). Those who do not "give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27), will not grieve the Spirit by believing the lie that they may not cease to endure to the end. "And

grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (4:30). Not only is it necessary for the Saints to endure or persevere to the end; but at the same time, **both the Father and the Son have promised to preserve those who "continue in the faith"**. "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). **This relationship where the Saints Endure While God Preserves was best expressed by the LORD Jesus: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"** (John 5:17).

## How to Endure to the End

- *First, obedience to the command to "have faith in God" (Mark 11:22) is the beginning of persevering in faith to the end.*

If God never gives an impossible, grievous, or burdensome command, then the very fact that we have been **commanded** to "have faith in God" is the highest proof that it is possible. "For this is the Love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous [literally, burdensome]" (1John 5:3). And, if it is possible to begin with faith, then it is possible to continue in faith. "...to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight: **if ye continue in the faith** grounded and settled, and **be not moved away** from the hope of the Gospel" (Colossians 1:22-23). If the God of Love has wisely designed His vast system of Salvation to draw us "with bands of Love" (Hosea 11:4), then anyone who is ever saved, must be saved by the Love of God. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life" (John 3:16). Our "obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26) is a necessary condition of Salvation, *but it is the fulfillment of the New Covenant that God gives us a new heart that causes us to walk in His Statutes*. "26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 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 36:26-27).

- *Second, confidence that God will overcome our iniquities, is a necessary part of our enduring to the end.*

"He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; **He will subdue our iniquities**; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). If the Spirit of Truth can only show us how this mighty act can be accomplished, even before we are translated into His presence and transformed into His likeness at His Coming for us, we would be truly humbled before Him. "**He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself**" (Philippians 3:21). The plague of sin and sinning shall not come nigh us when we dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. "1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty... 10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (Psalm 91:1,10).

The LORD Jesus taught us this truth of abiding, which is *the key to enduring to the end*. "5 I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for **without Me ye can do nothing**. 6 **If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch**, and is withered; and men gather them, **and cast them into the fire, and they are burned**" (John 15:5-6). *Abiding or enduring in Christ causes us to walk in holiness*. "Whosoever abideth in Him **sinneth not**: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (1John 3:6). In fact, **it is impossible** to be both abiding or enduring in Christ and sinning **at the same time!** "**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).

- *Third, the Promises of God are intended to be the means of obtaining the sanctification in us that causes us to endure to the end; and so, we ought to rely upon the Promises of God for everything in our Christian Walk.*

"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). We underestimate the Covenant Keeping God, when we relegate the Promises of the New Covenant to some future time, i.e., Heaven only, or with Israel only. "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).

The very argument of the New Testament Book of Hebrews is that the LORD Jesus Christ brought in the New Covenant by His death on the Cross. "19 For the Law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a Better Hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God... 22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a Better Testament" (Hebrews 7:19,22). And, if the New Covenant **guarantees the Believer that he no longer needs to be a slave of sin**, then why does the Church spend so much time moaning under the load of a multitude of sins? "1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same Mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1Peter 4:1-2). *Remember, we are not the servants of God when we obey sin.* "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of **sin unto death**, or of **obedience unto righteousness**?" (Romans 6:16).

Again, if the Spirit can only reveal it to us, we could see that "all the Promises of God in Him are **yea**, and in Him **Amen**" (2Corinthians 1:20). This makes the **certainty** that **the LORD will deliver us from the "sin which doth so easily beset us"** (Hebrews 12:1) so **immediately real** that we could not imagine ourselves ever dwelling in sin. Of course, that state of mind **can only be maintained while we abide in His Word**. "1 Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the LORD. 2 Blessed are they that keep His Testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. 3 They also **do no iniquity**: they **walk in His ways**" (Psalm 119:1-3). While we are abiding in the Promises of His Word, would it not be prudent to plead the Promises that He would **preserve us in His holiness**? "Order my steps in Thy Word: and let not **any iniquity** have dominion over me" (Psalm 119:133). *If we are those who believe in the grace of God, then it will be demonstrated by our dominion over sin-- and not sin's dominion over us.* "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the Law, but under Grace" (Romans 6:14).

- ***Fourth, confidence in the character of God is implied in any attempt to endure to the end.***

"**Faithful** is He that calleth you, Who also **will do it**" (1Thessalonians 5:24). The very essence of God is Love. "And we have known and believed the Love that God hath to us. **God is Love**; and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1John 4:16). Our Eternal Salvation is based upon the foundation of the Love of God. "Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sin" (1John 4:10) and, that Love is a hallmark of God's character. "But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His Great Love wherewith He loved us" (Ephesians 2:4). Love was the motivation for God to reclaim us from our sins. "Behold, what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" (1John 3:1). Likewise, *our motivation to Love God is because He loved us.* "We Love Him, because He first loved us" (1John 4:19).

**Love is the motivation to endure to the end, but faith is the means to carry it out.** "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but **faith which worketh by Love**" (Galatians 5:6). *Faith or confidence in the character of God is the only thing we can do to please God.* "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God **must** believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). **How can we ever mature without an ever increasing confidence in the character of God? And, how can we increase in confidence, if we do not persevere?** "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established" (Isaiah 7:9). **Considering what the LORD Jesus did for us on the Cross, how can we justify sinning against Him?** "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest" (Psalm 51:4). Further, if we cannot bear to offend the Lamb of God, would it not be unreasonable for the LORD to preserve us in holiness? "The desire of the righteous is only good" (Proverbs 11:23). And, "The desire of the righteous shall be granted" (Proverbs 10:24).

- ***Fifth, repenting of and separating from any known sin is absolutely essential to enduring to the end.***

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The LORD knoweth them that are His. And, Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ **depart from iniquity**" (2Timothy 2:19). Hypocrisy is to confess one sin while holding on to another. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess" (Matthew 23:25). **Incomplete obedience is really no obedience at all.** "And why call ye Me, LORD, LORD, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Even the Old Covenant Saints understood the duplicity of proclaiming love for God while refusing Him entire obedience. "And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice**, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1Samuel 15:22).

Is it possible for the Saints to be actually free from sin? It must be, or else, why do we have the plain Promise of God that He

will cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness? "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). Not only that, but we have been assured that it was His very intention to **defang** "that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan" (Revelation 20:2) by His First Advent and His Atonement; but first, sin and the "works of the devil" must be cleansed from His own people. "**He that committeth sin is of the devil**; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might **destroy the works** of the devil" (1John 3:8).

- *Sixth, obedience to ALL the known will of God is a vital part of enduring to the end.*

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God**, which is your **reasonable** service. 2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, **that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God**" (Romans 12:1-2). It is impossible to know the will of God without first the willingness to do all the will of God as fast as it is revealed to us. "If any man **will do His will**, he **shall know of the doctrine**, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John 7:17).

If we attempt to separate obedience from faith, then we will have no better faith than that of the devils. "33 And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, 34 Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God" (Luke 4:33-34). **So, intellectual assent to the Truth without accompanied obedience is not Saving Faith!** "20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead**? 21 Was not Abraham our father **justified by works**, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how **faith wrought with his works**, and **by works was faith made perfect**? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham **believed God**, and it was **imputed unto him for righteousness**: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that **by works a man is justified, and not by faith only**" (James 2:20-24).

- *Seventh, the Baptism of the Spirit or enduement with Power from On High is essential to persevering to the end.*

"And, behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be **endued with Power** from On High" (Luke 24:49). After all, was it not a fulfillment of this Promise that the 120 received at Pentecost? "But ye shall **receive Power**, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the Earth" (Acts 1:8). And, was not this baptism the enduement of Power for mighty witness and Christian service? "18 And on My servants and on My handmaidens I will **pour out in those days of My Spirit**; and they shall prophesy: 19 And I will shew wonders in Heaven above, and signs in the Earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the LORD come: 21 And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever** shall call on the Name of the LORD **shall be saved**" (Acts 2:18-21). The same Spirit that empowers also seals us **to the end**. "In Whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your Salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise" (Ephesians 1:13). **For this reason, we desire not to quench the Holy Spirit's work within us. "Quench not** [literally, **extinguish not**] the Spirit" (1Thessalonians 5:19). Also, "**Grieve not** the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the Day of Redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

## Conclusion

Evangelical Faith is **not a passive act**. It is **not a mere intellectual assent** to the Truth. If it does not **demonstrate itself in works-- where opportunity affords--** it was never Saving Faith. "18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith **by my works**. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:18-19). *Without the works of faith, i.e., the works that accompany faith, only self-deception can abide.* "23 For if any be a hearer of the Word, and **not** a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But **whoso looketh into the Perfect Law of Liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.** 26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but **deceiveth** his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (1:23-26).

Why is it necessary for God to require **perseverance** in grace and faith, if all who claim to be Christian will naturally persevere? Because **only the True Saints actually do persevere**. "Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, **persuaded them to continue** in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43). **It is necessary for God to require our perseverance to keep us from becoming *sinfully***

**presumptuous-- as opposed to peacefully certain-- about our Eternal Salvation.** "But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities" (2Peter 2:10). *For our own good*, the LORD not only seeks us to be Entirely Sanctified, but to continue in that way until He comes for us. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be **preserved blameless** unto the Coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23).

Again, do **all** True Saints persevere to the end? Yes, most assuredly! "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). If **endurance** is indeed a necessary condition for our Final and Eternal Salvation, then we ought to "give the **more earnest heed** to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:1). Let us continue to lay hold of the Promises of God as those who would **endure** until He comes for us. "Having therefore these Promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Corinthians 7:1). And again, "**Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it**" (1Thessalonians 5:24).

May God **confirm us** in the faith and **cause us to stand**. May the LORD **make us to be like the Rock that He is**. Amen, and Amen.

Maranatha!

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## **Is Faith the Only Condition for Eternal Salvation?**

Or, The Biblical Doctrine of Justification by Faith

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath Everlasting Life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from Death unto Life"

(John 5:24).

by Tom Stewart

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### **Preface**

The question, "Is faith the only condition for Eternal Salvation?", is crucial to the Body of Christ, because the answer on one extreme leads to antinomianism (the concept that faith alone, *WITHOUT obedience to the Moral Law of loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself* (Matthew 22:37-39), is all that is necessary for Salvation), while the other extreme results in the "unfruitful works of darkness" (Ephesians 5:11) as seen in the sacramental salvation of the Church of Rome. The antinomian declares anathema against any works in Salvation, as a type of legalism. But, they forget that **the LORD Jesus Christ declared faith to be a work** that man was to perform. "28 Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? 29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:28-29). In addition, the Apostle Paul exhorted the Philippian Christians to be personally active in their own Salvation. "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" (Philippians 2:12).

The "other extreme" is represented by Roman Catholicism, which has traditionally been Babylon the Great (Revelation 17:5). It has, more than any other false cult, made "works" a dirty word. Our response is that Rome's salvation depends upon faith in Rome, while Christ's Salvation depends upon faith in Christ. "To whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey" (Romans 6:16). So then, faith in Christ is the great work we are called to do. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John 6:29).

The appropriate response to the question, "Is faith the only condition for Eternal Salvation?", is JESUS SAVES. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Though it is true that faith saves, i.e., "Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31), faith saves only because JESUS SAVES. **And, yes, there are Other Conditions for our Justification; but, the keeping of all the conditions in the world does not truly save us.** JESUS SAVES! "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy **He saved us**, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). If we can focus upon the real issue of our Eternal Salvation-- that JESUS SAVES-- then we can settle the question, "Is faith the only condition for Eternal Salvation?", with satisfaction. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Name of our LORD Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no

divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1Corinthians 1:10).

## A Historical Note

When Martin Luther raised that blessed cry against the errors of the Church of Rome, Evangelical Christianity renewed its commitment to the doctrine of justification by faith. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our LORD Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). What freedom, to be justified by faith in Christ, than to be bound by the uncertainty of Rome's salvation! "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men" (1Corinthians 7:23). As a consequence, what Bible Believing Christian today cannot recognize the quotation, "8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9)? And, so great is our certainty concerning justification by faith, that the undoubted sentiment is that only a religious cult would desire to add a single condition to Eternal Life than faith. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14).

However, what may be neglected in professing Christianity's understanding of the faith that justifies is that **faith works**; or, as Charles G. Finney phrased it in his "Systematic Theology" (1851):

"[Faith] is not a feeling of any kind; that is, it does not belong to, and is not a phenomenon of, the sensibility. The phenomena of the sensibility are passive states of mind, and therefore have no moral character in themselves. Faith, regarded as a virtue, cannot consist in any involuntary state of mind whatever. It is represented in the Bible as an active and most efficient state of mind. It works and 'works by love.' It produces 'the obedience of faith'" (from Lecture 55 on "Faith and Unbelief").

Faith is anything but passive, for "by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the Promises offered up his only begotten son" (Hebrews 11:17). **Faith is so bound up in the Other Conditions for our Justification, that to knowingly omit those other conditions, would declare our faith to be dead.** "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). **All the Other Conditions of our Justification are part of Evangelical Faith and are conditions for Eternal Salvation.** These conditions may properly be called the Works of Faith, such as, perseverance (which is a description of those who follow Jesus to Heaven). "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed" (John 8:31).

## What is Faith? Faith is Substance.

- **God Requires Us to Have Faith in Him.** Faith in God is not optional, because we cannot please God without it. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Faith is the committal of ourselves to the Invisible God (Colossians 1:15). "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is leaning upon the Everlasting Arms (Deuteronomy 33:27) with the complete confidence that "what He [has] promised, He [is] able also to perform" (Romans 4:21). Though faith is cultivated and engendered by God, it is what man must do. "Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). **Evangelical Faith implies the presence of ALL the Other Conditions for our Justification, i.e., repentance, present obedience, full consecration, perseverance, etc., with each manifested as the Spirit gives opportunity.** "5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience Godliness; 7 And to Godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our LORD Jesus Christ" (2Peter 1:5-8).
- **Faith Begins With an Intellectual Perception of the Truth.** The Gospels are replete with stories about demons acknowledging Jesus to be the "Son of God" (Matthew 8:29), the "Holy One of God" (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34), and "Son of the Most High God" (Mark 5:7). The enemy knows who Jesus is; but, that does not make them Christian. In fact, without the motivation of Love for God, even our faith is accounted as "nothing". "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Charity [Love], I am nothing" (1Corinthians 13:2). But, Evangelical Faith cannot believe what it does not understand, e.g.,

"I must first understand what a proposition, a fact, a doctrine, or a thing is, before I can say whether I believe, or whether I ought to believe, or not" (Charles G. Finney from his "Systematic Theology", Lecture 55 on "Faith and Unbelief").

"And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the True God, and Eternal Life" (1John 5:20). Scripture does not tell us **how** Jesus is both God and man, only that He is. For this reason, we are not required to believe how He can be both, only that He is both-- by the statement of Inspired Scripture. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

- **Evangelical Faith Implies a Personal Appropriation of the Truths of the Gospel.** Jesus Christ saves mankind, only so far as He saves individuals. "And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time" (1Corinthians 15:8). Each one of us must heed the Word of God for our own circumstances. "Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O LORD God of Hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16). After the LORD Jesus thoroughly interrogated the Apostle Peter concerning his love of Himself, Peter asked the LORD about the Apostle John's future, i.e., "LORD, and what shall this man do?" (John 21:21). Our LORD appropriately replied to Peter that it was more important what Peter would do with he had just been told. "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me" (21:22). Not only must we individually appropriate the Truths of the Gospel for ourselves, but we cannot do it for someone else. Just so it is with our sin and rejection of the Truth-- we can only bear the burden of our own faith or unbelief. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20).
- **Faith Implies Repentance Towards God.** It is morally impossible to trust in the LORD Jesus Christ while continuing in known sin. "**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). This Unity of Moral Action [Please read "[Unity of Moral Action](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html)" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html -- by Charles G. Finney] necessitates that all those who truly confide in Jesus Christ for Salvation, must repent and turn away from their sins, or they have not genuinely been saved by faith from their sins. "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). If someone tells you that Repentance is not a part of Saving Faith or that Repentance is not a condition of Salvation, then you must evaluate their words in light of the Word of God. "37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? 38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37-38). Also, "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our LORD Jesus Christ" (20:21). And, if these who maintain a Salvation By Faith Without Repentance use Acts 16:31 literally-- "Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"-- then they would be claiming Household Salvation, not just Individual Salvation. (This, by the way, is a fine Promise for the Salvation of loved ones; but, it must be first understood and then claimed by faith in believing prayer to God.)
- **Faith Renounces Self-Righteousness.** It is impossible for a good person to be saved, because the LORD Jesus Christ came only to save sinners. "When Jesus heard it, He saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17). Until a sinner comes to believe that his own righteousness is unacceptable before God, he cannot be saved. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6). If the Scriptures reveal to the sinner, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), then it would be the height of unbelief for the sinner to continue to maintain his own righteousness. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). Self-righteousness is the mark of a man that knows not the "righteousness which is of God by faith". "And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith" (Philippians 3:9).
- **Gospel Faith Points to Perfect Love of God and Man.** Even the Old Covenant Saints understood the necessity of perfect love to God. "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deuteronomy 6:5). The concept that our neighbor ought to be loved as ourselves is also Old Covenant. "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as



thyself: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18). "For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:14). Do we claim to believe God? Then we ought to receive His Word concerning the Moral Law. "36 Master, which is the great commandment in the law? 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" (Matthew 22:36-39).

- **Faith Implies the Reception of All Known Truth.** The LORD Jesus declared that *a willing heart is the requirement to know and understand the teaching of His Word*. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John 7:17). That same willing heart will receive in faith all the Truth that is understood from the clear teaching of Scripture, e.g., "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth" (Genesis 1:1). Therefore, faith receives as a Truth that God is the Creator of Heaven and Earth. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). We deceive ourselves that we are dwelling in Evangelical Faith, if we can look at the plainly revealed Truth of the Word of God on any subject, and reject it. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are Spiritually discerned" (1Corinthians 2:14).
- **The Faith of the Gospel Implies a Present State of Sinlessness.** Holiness and sin are opposites, just as are faith and unbelief. "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your **most holy faith**, praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20). It is impossible to see God without faith or holiness. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which **no man** shall see the LORD" (Hebrews 12:14). *Faith cannot entertain the presence of known sin, any more than sin can abide in the presence of God.* "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (1John 3:6). The holiness of the Saints is more than a theoretical imputation of righteousness that some theologians ascribe to even Professed Christians dwelling in known sin. "7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. 8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 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 3:7-9). Evangelical Faith demands that we believe that **anyone** walking in known sin, is a liar. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth" (1:6). Later, in the Revelation, the Apostle John declares by inspiration that "**all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the Second Death**" (Revelation 21:8). We are reckoned, accounted, or imputed as righteous before God **only for faith**-- the same faith that caused hundred-year-old Abraham to glorify God for a yet-to-be-born son to ninety-year-old Sarah. "20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:20-22).

Charles G. Finney comments in his "Systematic Theology" that the Doctrine of Sin Nature-- "In Adam's fall, we sinned all", or, "We are all sinners, some lost and others saved, but all are still sinners"-- is a mistake in theology that causes the erroneous position of an imputed righteousness

"**while** yet at least in some degree of sin". He wrote: "The relations of the old school view of justification to their view of depravity is obvious. They hold, as we have seen, that the constitution in every faculty and part is sinful. Of course, a return to personal, present holiness, in the sense of entire conformity to the law, cannot with them be a condition of justification. **They must have a justification while yet at least in some degree of sin.** [WStS emphasis] This must be brought about by imputed righteousness. The intellect revolts at a justification in sin. So a scheme is devised to divert the eye of the law and of the lawgiver from the sinner to his Substitute, who has perfectly obeyed the law. But in order to make out the possibility of his obedience being imputed to them, it must be assumed, that he owed no obedience for himself; than which a greater absurdity cannot be conceived. Constitutional depravity or sinfulness being once assumed, physical regeneration [WStS explanation: Finney reasoned that the proponents of "constitutional depravity" (or, the Doctrine of Sin Nature) teach that sin or human depravity is passed on physically from Adam to us; and so, all of their theological remedies for sin would erroneously but necessarily involve the physical.], physical sanctification, physical divine influence, imputed righteousness, and justification, **while personally in the commission of sin** [WStS emphasis. Finney rightly opposed any teaching of an "imputed righteousness... **while** personally in the commission of sin".], follow of course" (from Charles G. Finney's "Systematic Theology", Lecture 56 on "Justification").

It appears that the Pharisees during Christ's earthly ministry believed in this same mistaken notion that men were born sinners, i.e., "32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. 33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing. 34 They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out" (John 9:32-34). [For a fuller discussion of this concept that the Doctrine of Sin Nature is **not** Scriptural, please see our exposition, "An Urgent Call to Christian Perfection". Of course, Charles G. Finney's "Systematic Theology" is offered to those who are committed to the "strong meat" of the Word of God, i.e., "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).]

## What is the Defining Characteristic of Faith? Faith Works.

- **Faith and Life as Present Possessions.** The LORD Jesus explained the relationship of His Word, Evangelical Faith, and Eternal Life. "He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath Everlasting Life" (John 5:24). Evangelical Faith-- "believeth on Him that sent Me"-- comes by hearing the Word of God-- "He that heareth My Word". "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). When anyone **truly believes** on the LORD Jesus Christ, then they **presently possess Eternal Life**, i.e., "hath Everlasting Life" (John 5:24). "We know that we have passed from Death unto Life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1John 3:14). Also, "He that believeth on the Son hath Everlasting Life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see Life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). In fact, the entire Gospel of John is dedicated to producing the Evangelical Faith that possesses Eternal Life. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have Life through His name" (20:31).
- **Hearing is Necessary, But Only Believing Saves.** But, if **ONLY** hearing the Word of God is Evangelical Faith, then Judas Iscariot, Pontius Pilate, and even Satan himself would be Christians! "24 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a Rock.: 26 And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand" (Matthew 7:24, 26). Reading the Word of God and hearing the claims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ are necessary and good, but embracing Christ by faith gives blessing only on account of your *keeping of those things heard and read*. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep [literally, to attend to carefully or to hold fast] those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3).
- **Intellectual vs. Evangelical Faith.** A clear distinction must be made between Intellectual Faith and Evangelical Faith. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). Intellectual Faith is a clear understanding and apprehension of the Truth that may even affect the hearer emotionally, but it does not produce Evangelical Fruit, i.e., "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without **works** is dead also" (James 2:26). History is littered with multitudes who have heard a clear presentation of the claims of Christ, but have chosen to withhold repentance, trust, and obedience from the Son of God. "24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. 26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him" (Acts 24:24-26).
- **Faith That Does Not Work is Not Evangelical Faith.** "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17). Since faith cannot be humanly separated from works, we must *evaluate faith-- or the lack of it-- by one's works*. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). Dear Martin Luther achieved such a victory for the cause of Christ to direct so many away from the darkness of Rome's Christless salvation, that it was difficult for him to reconcile the Epistle of James-- "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14)-- with the Pauline epistles-- "by grace ye are saved" (Ephesians 2:5). Though Luther asserted that the Epistle of James was a "right strawy epistle" ("eine rechte stroherne epistle"), he still included it as an inspired book in his German translation of the New Testament. Bless his heart! But, Rome subverted the words of the Epistle of James-- "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24)-- to bulwark their claims to a false representation of justification by works. "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully" (Jeremiah 48:10). Instead of teaching Faith's consistency with the Works of Faith, Rome used James simply to promote the keeping of Rome's sacraments. "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage" (2Peter 2:19). Rome did not desire that her children would lean in faith solely upon the Word of God and the Christ revealed therein; and so, Rome's justification by works is really a justification by the deeds of the Law. "Therefore by the deeds of the

Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

- **Faith is an Act of the Will.** Evangelical Faith, according to Charles G. Finney, is a

"phenomenon of will. It is an efficient state of mind, and therefore it must consist in the embracing of the truth by the heart or will. It is the will's closing in with the truths of the gospel. It is the soul's act of yielding itself up, or committing itself to the truths of the evangelical system. It is a trusting in Christ, a committing the soul and the whole being to him, in his various offices and relations to men. It is a confiding in him, and in what is revealed of him, in his word and providence, and by his Spirit" (from Lecture 55 on "Faith and Unbelief" of Finney's "Systematic Theology").

Though God gives Himself and His Word to be believed upon, *faith must be an act of the human will*, or there is no more virtue in believing than not believing. "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22).

This embarrassment and de-emphasis of the will of man in the exercise of Evangelical Faith has been a traditional position of Professed Christianity. Sadly, the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)-- used currently, as well as with the Presbyterians of Charles G. Finney's day-- confessed that the Believer's Justification was **not** Imputed by Faith:

"Those whom God effectually calleth, **he also freely justifieth**: not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and **by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous**; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; **not by imputing faith itself**, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, **as their righteousness**; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; **which faith they have not of themselves** [WStS emphasis], it is the gift of God" (excerpted from Chapter 11 "Of Justification" of the Westminster Confession of Faith [1646]).

But, "What saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted [literally, imputed] unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3).

- **Faith Works.** The "righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7) cannot separate itself from works. "5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but **faith which worketh by Love**" (Galatians 5:5-6). In the Old Testament, it was understood that faith manifests itself in the lives of the Just. "The just shall live by his faith" (Habakkuk 2:4).
- **Faith is the Medium, But Love is the Motivation.** "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by Love" (Galatians 5:6). The Faith Chapter of the New Testament is Hebrews 11. Throughout the annals of the History of the Saints, we find that the people of God have been active like their LORD:
  - (1) Abel **offered** a "more excellent sacrifice" (11:4),
  - (2) Noah **prepared** an ark" (11:7),
  - (3) Abraham **went out**, not knowing whither he went" (11:8),
  - (4) Sarah **received strength** to conceive seed" (11:11),
  - (5) Moses **forsook** Egypt" (11:27),
  - (6) Rahab **received** the spies with peace" (11:31), and
  - (7) multitudes of others... "32 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith **subdued** kingdoms, **wrought** righteousness, **obtained** promises, **stopped** the mouths of lions... 38 (Of whom

the world was not worthy:)" (Hebrews 11:32-33,38).

Love caused God to send us His Only Begotten Son. "9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His Only Begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1John 4:9-10). Likewise, our obedience to the Son is urged on by our Love for Him. "If ye Love Me, keep My Commandments" (John 14:15).

- **Moral, Civil, and Ceremonial Law.** Law can be divided into the following classifications:
  - (1) Moral Law, which has always been in force, is a rule concerning moral actions for men of all times coupled with sanctions for disobedience. "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" (Matthew 22:37-39).
  - (2) Civil Law or national ordinances, which vary from place to place and time to time, are required by a secular nation-state to preserve its autonomy. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers" (Romans 13:1). Circumcision was required by Old Testament Israel to preserve its national identity. "This is My Covenant, which ye shall keep, between Me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised" (Genesis 17:10). And,
  - (3) Ceremonial Law, which governed Old Testament Israel's worship, was the rule of action that taught Israel about Jehovah, and-- by typology only-- teaches us today. "For the Law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect" (Hebrews 10:1). Christ fulfilled-- and not abrogated-- the Ceremonial Law, so that we have no need to keep the ordinances of the Ceremonial Law. "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17).

The Apostle Paul condemned the Judaizers who would make circumcision necessary for Salvation. "1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. 2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question" (Acts 15:1-2). Circumcision was a national ordinance or law for Israel, but Israel's Laws were unnecessary and without authority for the Church. "Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the Law: to whom we gave no such commandment" (15:24).

## The Ultimate Ground of Gospel Justification is the Love of God

- **What is the difference between the Ultimate Ground of Gospel Justification and the Conditions of Gospel Justification?** The Ground is the foundational argument or the fundamental reason, while the Conditions are the qualifications and provisions based upon the Ground. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1Corinthians 3:11). The necessity to distinguish between the Ground and the Conditions of Gospel Justification is to prevent the theological confusion that will ensue from an unstable foundation. "26 And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: 27 And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:26-27).
- **Love is the Ground of Gospel Justification.** God is love. "And we have known and believed the Love that God hath to us. **God is Love;** and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1John 4:16). All of God's actions toward mankind in the giving of the Gospel, are an expression of His Love. "9 In this was manifested the Love of God toward us, because that God sent His Only Begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation [the appeasement of an Offended God, as accomplished at the Mercy Seat] for our sins" (4:9-10). Of all the Moral Attributes of God, that He is Love, best describes why He has troubled Himself with providing a Sinning World with the means of

pardon, reconciliation, and justification through the Gospel. "The LORD is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11). Who, but a God of Love, would care if anyone was ever saved? "But is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2Peter 3:9).

- **Holiness is not the Ground of Gospel Justification.** God is also holy. "Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). God's holiness seeks man's conformity to His idea of right, i.e., conformity to His Moral Law. "For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the Earth" (Leviticus 11:44). As an attribute of Love, God's holiness seeks to promote man's happiness by conformity to His Moral Law. "Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (Psalm 97:12). Also, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: Thou hast the dew of Thy youth" (Psalm 110:3). So, holiness is not the Ground of Gospel Justification; rather, **holiness is an attribute of Love-- and, only a Condition of Gospel Justification**, i.e., "Present Sanctification or Full Consecration to God"-- that seeks our conformity to the Moral Law. "14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: 15 But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1Peter 1:14-15). And, that Moral Law is the sum of all that God requires of man, which the LORD Jesus Christ summarized as the Perfect Love of God, and Perfect Love of our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). *God's Moral Law is still binding upon the Saints*; and, we rejoice in keeping it as the Perfect Law of Liberty and the Royal Law. "But whoso looketh into the Perfect Law of Liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25). "If ye fulfil the Royal Law according to the Scripture, Thou shalt Love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well" (2:8).

- **Love and Hyper-Calvinism.**

"This love [the Ground] made the atonement [the Condition], but the atonement did not beget this love" (from Lecture 56 "Justification" of Charles G. Finney's "Systematic Theology").

If we were to mistake the Atonement and Vicarious Sufferings of Christ as the Ground of Gospel Justification, then we could incorrectly conclude with Hyper-Calvinism or Universalism. Hyper-Calvinism understands the world for whom Christ died, to be only the Elect; since, Love-- they would say-- did not originate redemption at its source. However, Scripture plainly declares: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life" (John 3:16). Also, they incorrectly argue that Christ's Atonement satisfied an exact payment-- of punishment or reward, i.e., a Retributive Justice-- where Christ purchased Gospel Salvation for only the Elect, and did not obtain a pardon for "whosoever will". But, the Scripture clearly states: "Whosoever will, let him take the Water Of Life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

- **Universalism's Misuse of the Love of God.** Universalism is the belief that all will be saved-- in direct contradiction to the LORD Jesus' Words, i.e., "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:14). Also, "23 Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them, 24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:23-24). Universalism bases its conclusion of Universal Salvation upon its reaction to Hyper-Calvinism's flawed argument that the Atonement was an exact payment for the Sinners' Salvation-- a Retributive Justice. But, unlike the Hyper-Calvinist, the Universalist views all mankind as the world for whom Christ died. Hence, a salvation that is an exact payment for the sins of all mankind purchases a Universal Salvation-- which is a lie. "Say unto them, As I live, saith the LORD GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 33:11). Universalism today bears little resemblance to Christianity-- only a few claim even to be Christian-- and, the sentiment of Universal Salvation more nearly describes much of Mainline, Denominational Professed Christianity today. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph" (2Samuel 1:20).

## Faith is the Predominate Condition of Our Justification

- **Faith Saves, Only Because Jesus Saves.** Even in the days of the Old Covenant, our God has gone on record as offering Himself as a Saviour for "all the ends of the Earth". "There is no God else beside Me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside Me. Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the Earth: for I am God, and there is

none else" (Isaiah 45:21-22). The New Testament records the initial reaction of the Believing Jews to the advent of Jesus as their Messiah was that the Saviour had appeared for Israel-- with no thought of the Gentiles. "68 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, 69 And hath raised up an horn of Salvation for us in the house of His servant David; 70 As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: 71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us" (Luke 1:68-71). But, the greater light of the New Covenant showed that Jesus came to save the world, not just the Jews. Hallelujah! "For the grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appeared to **all men**" (Titus 2:11).

- **Justification by Faith Goes Back to the Beginning.** God has always justified man by faith. "**By faith Abel** offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he **obtained witness that he was righteous**, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). The Apostle Paul's monumental epistle to the Romans attests to the Doctrine of Justification by Faith. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3). Self-righteous works are in opposition to the Works of Faith. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God" (4:2). The obedience of the LORD Jesus Christ does **not** take away our need to obey God; and so, in that regard, Christ's obedience is **not** imputed to us-- **not** taking away our necessity for obedience. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" (1Peter 4:17).
- **Our View of Man Affects Our Understanding of Justification by Faith.** If man does not possess the free will agency to repent and believe the Gospel, then man would be condemned without the opportunity of choice. "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" (Romans 9:14). Regrettably, we usually underestimate the goodness and kindness of God toward us in describing His actions toward us. "7 That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is The Gift of God" (Ephesians 2:7-8).

"This doctrine [of a sinful nature] is a stumbling-block both to the church and the world, infinitely dishonourable to God, and an abomination alike to God and the human intellect, and should be banished from every pulpit, and from every formula of doctrine, and from the world. It is a relic of heathen philosophy, and was foisted in among the doctrines of Christianity by Augustine, as every one may know who will take the trouble to examine for himself. This view of moral depravity that I am opposing, has long been the stronghold of universalism. From it, the universalists inveighed with resistless force against the idea that sinners would be sent to an eternal hell. Assuming the long-defended doctrine of original or constitutional sinfulness, they proceed to show, that it would be infinitely unreasonable and unjust in God to send them to hell. What! create them with a sinful nature, from which proceed, by a law of necessity, actual transgressions, and then send them to an eternal hell for having this nature, and for transgressions that are unavoidable? Impossible! they say; and the human intellect responds, Amen" (from Lecture 40 "Moral Depravity" of Finney's "Systematic Theology").

"But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing" (Galatians 4:18).

## Other Conditions of Gospel Justification-- in Addition to Faith

- **1- The Grace of God.** "By grace ye are saved" (Ephesians 2:5). God's Grace is the First Condition of our Justification, and *is entirely the work of God*. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Romans 11:6). God's grace is the unmerited favor, **so richly undeserved** by all men. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). Unlike the Limited Atonement of Hyper-Calvinism, where grace appears only to the Elect, the "grace of God that bringeth Salvation **hath appeared to all men**" (Titus 2:11). But, sadly, not all men have willingly received the grace of God. "For all men have not faith" (2Thessalonians 3:2). We ought not take for granted the Matchless Grace of God. "Receive not the grace of God in vain" (2Corinthians 6:1). Since God's Grace is key to our Justification, we should be careful not to frustrate His Grace in us, e.g., not seeking out the LORD's help through Promise and prayer to overcome the "sin which doth so easily beset us" (Hebrews 12:1). "I do not frustrate the grace of God" (Galatians 2:21).
- **2- The Atonement and Vicarious Sufferings of Christ.** The Atonement and Vicarious Sufferings of the LORD

Jesus Christ-- also, completely the work of God-- are the means by which God is able to reconcile the legal requirement that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4) with the pardoning of guilty sinners. "6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8 But God commendeth His Love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6-8). Rather than to allow God's Moral Government to collapse from the lack of enforcement of His Law, i.e., Supreme Love for God, and Love of your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39), either the sinner is to be executed, or a Sinless Substitute must be offered in the sinner's place, i.e., the "Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1Peter 3:18). But, Christ's Substitutionary Atonement does not satisfy the literal payment of the penalty for all men's sins, i.e., a Retributive Justice; or, all men would be necessarily saved-- which is Universalism. "For all men have **not** faith" (2Thessalonians 3:2). Instead, His Atonement satisfies the righteous demands of the Law, i.e., a Public Justice, while making it appropriate for Him to mercifully pardon the sinner that repents. "1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity" (Psalms 32:1-2). Without the Vicarious Suffering and Voluntary Sacrifice of the Son of God, it would be unnecessary to discuss faith, repentance, etc. as Conditions of Gospel Justification. "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Corinthians 15:57).

- **3- Repentance.** Changing the heart's preference away from selfishness to Love, from sin to holiness, from a state of consecration to self to a state of consecration to God, is Evangelical Repentance, which is a definite Condition of Gospel Justification. David repented of his adultery with Bathsheba. "1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalm 51:1-4). The Apostle Peter's famous Pentecost sermon gave clear instructions to his hearers to repent. "37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, **what shall we do?** 38 Then Peter said unto them, **Repent**, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37-38).

The wonderful response that the Apostle Paul and Silas gave to the Philippian jailer's question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30) is an example of Spirit-filled directions. Instead of entering into a discourse on all possible Conditions of Evangelical Salvation, they were led by the Spirit to give the jailer the instructions that would remove the obstacle from the jailer's path to Eternal Life. "Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). It is an oversimplification to say that the correct instructions to an anxious sinner must ALWAYS be, "Believe"-- just look at Peter's instructions to the Pentecostal converts. It would be just as erroneous to conclude that ALL anxious sinners must be told, "Repent". Wisdom will dictate just what needs to be emphasized to bring the sinner "from the power of darkness" and "into the kingdom of His Dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). "He that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). But, just as the "fruit of the Spirit" manifests itself in "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22-23), as the opportunity arises; just so, **the Saints will fulfill-- as Providence allows-- all the Conditions of Gospel Justification that will bring them safely to Heaven.** "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2Corinthians 8:12).

- **4- Present Sanctification or Full Consecration to God.** Most have probably been taught that we are first justified, then sanctified, and finally glorified; but, sanctification is actually a condition of our justification. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which **no man** shall see the LORD" (Hebrews 12:14). *Confession and repentance of all KNOWN sin renders us pure in the sight of God.* "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). The Holiness of God **demand**s a holy people. "But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1Peter 1:15). And, if (as some say) holiness is only the LORD adjusting His perception of us, why does He **command** us to be holy, if it is not also our willful cooperation with Him? "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end Everlasting Life" (Romans 6:22).

The Apostle Paul prayed for the Present and Entire Sanctification of his readers with the assurance that such a thing was possible. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your **whole spirit and soul and body** be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23). This Entire Sanctification corresponds to our LORD's command to keep the Moral Law: "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**... 39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt Love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matthew 22:37,39). And, lest we conclude that our obedience alone must be

relied upon for our Salvation, the Saints of the New Covenant have been promised and given the Spirit of the Living God to "will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). This is the New Testament's "Promise of the Spirit" (Galatians 3:14). "26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 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 36:26-27). So, God has assured to the end, the obedience of all that will lean in faith upon Him. "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). [For a Scriptural examination of our necessity to be Entirely Sanctified, see our exposition, "An Urgent Call to Christian Perfection".]

- **5- Perseverance in Faith and Obedience.** The faith that does not persevere to the end, is not truly Gospel Faith. "And ye shall be hated of all men for My name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22). The outcome of a "patient continuance in well doing" is Eternal Life. "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, Eternal Life" (Romans 2:7). Even the Apostolic Church of Ephesus was warned, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7), with the understanding that those who did not overcome, do not partake of the Tree of Life. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the Second Death" (Revelation 2:11). Those who do not persevere in faith and overcome the wicked one (1John 2:13,14), shall experience Eternal Damnation, i.e., the Second Death in the Lake of Fire. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the Second Death" (Revelation 21:8).

Godly repentance is not repented of. "For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to Salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2Corinthians 7:10). Since the Saints do not repent of their repentance, they will persevere to the end. "4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1John 5:4-5). A morbid dread of not overcoming the world, is not Gospel Faith. "There is no fear in Love; but Perfect Love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in Love" (4:18). Instead, an Active Faith lays hold of the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17), and boldly pitches camp upon the Promises of God, that are specifically designed to make us "partakers of the Divine Nature" and to help us escape the corruptions of the world. "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). The Living God has a Promise to match our every necessity of life. "According as his Divine Power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (1:3).

Quite the opposite of a uncertain and fearful pilgrimage to the Celestial City, the True Saint is to advance by faith, overcoming all obstacles, while persevering in faith and obedience. "37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our LORD" (Romans 8:37-39). The faith of the True Saints cannot be stopped because it is actively and continually placed in the person of the LORD Jesus Christ. "30 But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the LORD" (1Corinthians 1:30-31). Better to stand with the Son of God in the "burning fiery furnace"-- "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Daniel 3:25)-- than to fail to persevere because of the "pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25). May God bless you, the reader, with the faith that endures. "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (1Thessalonians 5:24).

## Conclusion

"Faith in Christ is, in the same sense, another condition of justification... I fear that there has been much of error in the conceptions of many upon this subject. They have talked of justification by faith, as if they supposed that, by an arbitrary appointment of God, faith was the condition, and the only condition of justification. This seems to be the antinomian view. The class of persons alluded to speak of justification by faith, as if it were by faith, and not by Christ through faith, that the penitent sinner is justified ["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)]; **as if faith, and**



**not Christ, were our justification** [WStS emphasis]. They seem to regard faith not as a natural, but merely as a mystical condition of justification; as bringing us into a covenant and mystical relation to Christ, in consequence of which his righteousness or personal obedience is imputed to us. It should never be forgotten, that the faith that is the condition of justification, is the faith that works by love [Galatians 5:6]. It is the faith through and by which Christ sanctifies the soul ["That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me" (Acts 26:18).] A sanctifying faith unites the believer to Christ as his justification; but be it always remembered, that no faith receives Christ as a justification, that does not receive him as a sanctification, to reign within the heart. We have seen that repentance, as well as faith, is a condition of justification [Acts 2:38]. ...perseverance in obedience to the end of life is also a condition of justification. **Faith** is often spoken of in scripture as if it were the sole condition of salvation, because, as we have seen, **from its very nature it implies repentance and every virtue** [WStS emphasis]" (excerpted from Lecture 56 on "Justification" from Charles G. Finney's "Systematic Theology").

"He being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4).

We must resist the orthodoxy of Laodicea in succumbing to a salvation by antinomian faith-- that worketh not by love. Instead, we ought to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the Saints" (Jude 3) by insisting upon a Gospel Salvation that worketh, and that, by love.

Amen, and Amen.

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## **That Ye May Know That Ye Have Eternal Life**

Or, The Biblical Doctrine of the Assurance of Salvation

Or, Only Those Who Abide in Christ May Know That They Have Eternal Life

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have Eternal Life, and that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God"

(1John 5:13).

by Tom Stewart

7-12-99

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### **Preface**

The God of All Comfort (2Corinthians 1:3) takes great delight in assuring His children that they belong to Him and He belongs to them. "And he that keepeth His Commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And **hereby we know** that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1John 3:24). In fact, the First Epistle of John is the **only** book of the Bible *written for the express purpose of giving the Children of God the Assurance of Salvation*. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have Eternal Life, and that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God" (5:13). **Only those walking in loving obedience to the LORD Jesus Christ are assured of their possession of Eternal Life**. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, **if** we keep His Commandments" (2:3). And, the opposite is also true, that those walking in disobedience, do not know Jesus Christ. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him" (2:4).

### **How Can This Be?**

The Holy Spirit, Who is the Blessed Comforter (John 14:16), *always and only assures the obedient of possessing Eternal Life-- never* the disobedient. "6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 7 But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1John 1:6-7). The prized knowledge of the possession of Eternal Life is given by He Who is the "Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:2). He has chosen to give us that knowledge of the possession of Eternal Life through the Divinely appointed Word of God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God [literally, God breathed, i.e., by the Spirit of Truth]" (2Timothy 3:16). That the Spirit speaks through the Scriptures, is the universal testimony of the Bible. David, the Psalmist, said, "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and His Word was in my

tongue" (2Samuel 23:2). The Godly must limit their knowledge of the possession of Eternal Life to only what the Spirit reveals, i.e., our sonship is based upon the Spirit's present testimony to our present abiding in obedience, because that is the method and manner of the Spirit's revelatory work through the Scriptures. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He Power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name" (John 1:12).

In our ignorance, it is difficult for us to comprehend that **we cannot know what the Almighty does not reveal to us**. "8 For My Thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My Ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are My Ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9). In particular, **the knowledge that we have Eternal Life cannot be verified without the witness of the Holy Spirit**-- Who has chosen to reveal this knowledge through His Living Word. "**These things have I written** unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; **that ye may know that ye have Eternal Life**" (1John 5:13). Only those who are convinced of the Truth of God's Word may comprehend their possession of Eternal Life. "But whoso looketh into the Perfect Law of Liberty [the Word of God], and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

Unfortunately, we have not always evaluated our Christian experience in light of the Word of God; instead, we have often relied upon our faulty recall of events, i.e., "went forward at the invitation", and emotion, i.e., "felt so relieved", to assure ourselves that we possessed the Eternal Life of the Gospel. But, the Doctrine of the Assurance of Salvation **is based upon the Holy Spirit's infallible acknowledgement of our sonship through the testimony of the Word of God**. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His Commandments" (1John 2:3). Because the common concept of conversion to Christ is so "event and emotion" oriented, the knowledge of the possession of Eternal Life has become more a function of how well we recall the event or emotion than "what saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3).

A real problem of this Laodicean Age is that the disobedient have demanded the same Assurance of Salvation as those who abide in Christ. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him" (1John 2:4). And, Scripture is absolutely clear about the destiny of **all liars**. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and **all liars**, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the Second Death" (Revelation 21:8). God's Spirit is unequalled in His Comfort of those that "dwell in Him" (1John 4:13); but, His Distress of disobedient, professing Christians is unrivaled for the condemnation and stress He places on them for their walking apart from Him. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth" (1:6).

## The Faith That Saves Is More Than A Passive, Intellectual Persuasion

All who have been "born again" (John 3:3) into God's "family in Heaven and Earth" (Ephesians 3:15) by the Incorruptible Seed of the Word of God (1Peter 1:23), are the children of God. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He Power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name" (John 1:12). Regardless of any lack of drama in the conversion experience, turning in faith to the Saviour *away from our sins*, is Salvation. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). Gospel Faith is **alive with works**, i.e., the Works of Faith. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17). "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38).

However, the Laodicean spirit of the present Church Age has divorced the Works of Faith from the meaning of Evangelical Faith. "They profess that they know God; **but in works they deny Him**, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Titus 1:16). In the name of upholding Salvation By Faith Without Works, they deny the necessity of anything outside of a passive, intellectual persuasion concerning the Truth for Eternal Salvation. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14). Laodicea's passive, intellectual definition of faith would satisfy even the demons. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (2:19).

How unlike Laodicea's antinomianism was the Apostle Paul's "obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26)! The same apostle who was inspired by the Spirit to write, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9), finished the thought with the assertion that, "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should **walk in them**" (2:10). Anyone abiding in Evangelical Faith must be walking in "good works" (2:10), which are the Works of Faith. Without that walking in "good works" (2:10), they do **not** possess Evangelical Faith. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and **I will shew thee my faith by my works**" (James 2:18).

Paul asserted that those who are **presently committing sin** shall **not enter Heaven**, i.e., "they which do [literally, are doing-- present tense] such things shall **not** inherit the Kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21). "19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, 21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which **do** such things shall **not** inherit the Kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21). The Apostle John agreed with Paul that those who were **presently committing sin** could not enter and defile Heaven. "And there shall **in no wise** enter into It **any thing** that defileth [literally, defiling-- present tense], neither **whatsoever** worketh [literally, practicing-- present tense] abomination, or maketh a lie" (Revelation 21:27).

## Can Eternal Life Ever Cease?

No, for Eternal Life to be eternal, it can never cease, for Jesus absolutely promised us, "I give unto them Eternal Life; and they shall **never** perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10:28). **But, our right to lay claim to Eternal Life can cease.** Let me explain. The Gospel of John was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of promoting Gospel Faith in the reader, i.e., "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have Life through His Name" (John 20:31). Likewise, the Apostle John's first epistle to his Little Children (1John 2:1) is the Holy Spirit's follow-up to the New Born Believers to give them the Assurance of Salvation, i.e., "that ye may **know** that ye have Eternal Life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (5:13). Therefore, the entire epistle is to be read searching for the theme, "that ye may know" (5:13) that you are a Christian.

Again, how can we lose our right to claim that we have Eternal Life? Let us examine a prime example of this concept in the second chapter of the epistle. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him" (1John 2:4). Or, "He that saith [literally, is saying-- present tense], I know [literally, I have known-- perfect tense] Him, and keepeth not [literally, is not keeping-- present tense] His Commandments, is [present tense] a liar, and the Truth is [present tense] not in him" (2:4). To paraphrase the verse, 'He that is saying that I have known Him, and is not keeping His Commandments, is [presently] a liar, and the Truth is [presently] not in him'. This is the Holy Spirit's Infallible Guide to teaching His people *how He takes away our right to claim that we have known Him, when we are walking in present disobedience.* "6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and **do not the Truth:** 7 But if we **walk in the Light**, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1:6-7).

Why should the Father give us His gentle assurance of our acceptance and forgiveness, while we are willfully, knowingly disobeying Him? "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" (Isaiah 1:4). We would no more reward a dog in obedience training for wrong behavior than the Father would reward us with His loving assurance of our Salvation, *while we abide in stubborn and willful disobedience.* "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" (1:19-20).

Since our willful sinning is the same as re-crucifying the LORD Jesus afresh, do we think it is unreasonable that the Father would withhold from us His assurance that we are "accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6)? "4 For it is impossible... 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify [literally, are crucifying] to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put [literally, are exposing] Him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:6). The impossibility of renewing them "again unto repentance" is that it is **impossible** "to renew them" **while they are presently** crucifying the LORD Jesus, i.e., still unwilling to repent, and unwanting of the Father's forgiveness. But, the Father has promised even the prodigal, "**Return** unto Me, and I will **return** unto you, saith the LORD of Hosts" (Malachi 3:7). "Behold, what manner of Love" (1John 3:1) is this that the Father would faithfully discipline the profligate children! "6 For whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth **every** son whom He receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is He whom the Father chasteneth not?" (Hebrews 12:6-7).

In fact, the "deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13) is so great, that many who consider themselves as simply Backslidden, have **never truly** "tasted that the LORD is gracious" (1Peter 2:3) and have never been "born again" (1:23). For this reason, the human memory of events that are supposed to have been our Evangelical Salvation, *cannot be verified without the testimony of the Spirit.* "The Spirit Itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). On the other hand, the Spirit warns **the Saints** that "if we **sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the Truth**, there remaineth **no more** sacrifice for sins, 27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27). This is not only withholding assurance, but it is also the **certainty** of Judgment

to those walking in disobedience. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath **trod under foot the Son of God**, and hath **counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing**, and hath done **despite unto the Spirit of Grace?**" (10:29). Take care not to **tempt** the Living God, for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (10:31). The reaction of the Righteous to such a warning only causes them to trust the LORD more soberly. "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (10:39). "11 For the grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appeared to all men, 12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, **we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly**, in this present world; 13 Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:11-13).

## How to Know That You Know

The Holy Spirit has established immutable rules of evidence for the knowledge of sonship that no human court can rightfully overturn. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19). Let us examine another verse, which is adjacent to the previous example-- "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him" (1John 2:4)-- of losing the right to claim our sonship; but, this time, the same rules of knowledge and evidence **prove the sonship of the obedient Saint**. "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His Commandments" (1John 2:3). Remember, also, that all the good works attributed to the Saints are not only our "reasonable service" (Romans 12:1) to God, but are made possible by the grace of the Spirit of Christ (8:9) working in us. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

- **Our Sonship is Made Known to Us by the Spirit of Adoption (Romans 8:15) Through Our Obedience.** Just as it is altogether proper for the Holy Spirit to *withhold any kind of Assurance of Salvation to those who are not presently walking in obedience*, it is just as consistent for the Spirit to *bestow upon the obedient, tokens of sonship*. "And hereby we **do know** [literally, we are knowing-- present tense] that we know [literally, we have known-- perfect tense] Him, **if we keep** [present tense] His Commandments" (1John 2:3). Since Gospel Salvation is a **willing** submission in faith to Jesus Christ, then those who **are presently** submitted to Him, are those to whom the Spirit testifies that they "know Him". This same theme is outlined in the Gospel of John, where loving obedience results in further manifestations of the LORD Jesus to His brethren. "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).
- **The Perfection of Love by Our Obedience is How the Spirit of the New Covenant Shows Us That We Are in Him.** "But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the Love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him" (1John 2:5). Our **obedience is a sign** that the promised Holy Spirit of the New Covenant **is dwelling within us**. "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). This prophecy should be presently fulfilled in us, for the Apostle Paul has instructed us that we are the temple of God. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of **the Holy Ghost which is in you**, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1Corinthians 6:19). And, anyone possessing not the Holy Spirit cannot be Christian. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:9).
- **The Holy Spirit Uses Our Righteous Living to Demonstrate to Us the Knowledge That We Are in Him.** "If ye know that He is Righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (1John 2:29). God forbid that we take credit for our Righteous Living! "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). Not only were the good works the LORD's idea in the first place, but the LORD subdued "our iniquities" (Micah 7:19) by the Power of the Gospel. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16). It is egotism for man to think that he accomplishes obedience just because the Moral Agent must will it, for all Power belongs to God. "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that Power belongeth unto God" (Psalm 62:11). Scripture reveals that whenever good is willed by man, it came from God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father Of Lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). And, all praise to His Name, "He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:21)!
- **Abiding in Christ is Diametrically Opposed to All Sinning, by Which the Spirit of Christ Teaches Us That We Are in Him.** "Whosoever abideth in Him **sinneth not**: whosoever sinneth hath **not seen Him, neither known Him**" (1John 3:6). Charles G. Finney used the expression, the "Unity of Moral Action" to express the idea that "**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). [Please read "[Unity of Moral Action](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html> -- by Charles G. Finney] James graphically illustrated the concept that it is **impossible** for man *to serve God and the devil, to be holy and sinful, to abide in Christ and sin, at the same time*. "11 Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12 Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh" (James 3:11-12). Therefore, if we abide in Christ, not only WILL we not be sinning, but we WILL have the testimony of the Spirit through His Word that we are "born of God". "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). He cannot sin because he WILL not sin.

- **The Holy Spirit Uses Our Love of the Brethren to Demonstrate to Us the Knowledge That We Have Passed From Death to Life.** "We know that we have passed from death unto Life, because we Love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death" (1John 3:14). This may seem too simplistic of a test, but "knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth" (Proverbs 14:6). "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). If the unchanging Moral Law has always required of us supreme Love of God and an equal Love of our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 24:34-36), then how can anyone truly profess to know God without loving his brother? "If a man say, I Love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he Love God Whom he hath not seen?" (1John 4:20).

During our LORD's earthly ministry, He restated the Moral Law-- of loving all men-- with the added perspective that our particular Love of our Christian Brethren would uniquely indicate that we are His disciples. "34 A new Commandment I give unto you, That ye **Love one another**; as I have loved you, that ye also Love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have Love one to another" (John 13:34-35). At times, rebuking a sinning Christian is an expression of what our LORD commanded in loving one another. "1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2). [See our article, "[How to Deal With Backsliders](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/How.to.Deal.with.Backslide.html)" -- <http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/How.to.Deal.with.Backslide.html> --, for an expression of this thought.]

- **The Comforter Assures the Obedient That the Father Abides in Them.** "And he that keepeth His **Commandments dwelleth in Him**, and He in him. And **hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit** which He hath given us" (1John 3:24). The Apostle Paul closed his epistle to the Romans with the assurance that the readers of his presentation of the mystery of the Gospel would respond with the "**obedience of faith**" (Romans 16:26). *For any modern presentation of the Gospel to give the hearer the impression that their believing does not require their own obedience for their Salvation, leaves the hearer with no better faith than the Intellectual-Only-Faith of devils.* "14 **What doth it profit**, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have **not works**? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; **what doth it profit?** 17 Even so faith, if it hath **not works, is dead**, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and **I will shew thee my faith by my works**. 19 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. 20 But wilt thou know, O **vain** man, that **faith without works is dead?**" (James 2:14-20).

The deception of much of the Professed Church in this Laodicean Age is so great *that faith has become conveniently divorced from obedience in the name of Salvation By Faith Plus Nothing*, while casting a blind eye to the fact that **faith works, and that, by Love**. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but **faith which worketh by Love**" (Galatians 5:6). Is it any wonder that Laodicea can loudly proclaim that it is "rich, and increased with goods, and [has] need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17), while being morally bankrupt and destitute of loving obedience, i.e., "thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (3:17)? And, the Laodicean method of assuring its own of possessing Eternal Life relies more upon EXPERIENCE and EMOTION than the testimony of the Holy Spirit. "And he that **KEEPETH HIS COMMANDMENTS dwelleth in Him**, and He in him. And **HEREBY we know that He abideth in us, BY THE SPIRIT** which He hath given us" (1John 3:24). Do not feel alone, though Laodicea crowds around you. Instead, rest confidently upon the LORD, Who alone can comfort you. "For this is the **Covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the LORD; I will put My Laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people" (Hebrews 8:10).

- **We Know That We Know the Spirit of Truth Because We Hear Those Who Are of God.** "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby **know** we the Spirit Of Truth, and the spirit of error" (1John 4:6). But, what about all the "good" people in the churches, couldn't we say that we are Christian because we listen to their teaching, preaching, and counsel? Not necessarily. The LORD Jesus Himself said, "And why call ye me, LORD, LORD, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46); therefore, we know that no professed Christian is truly good who does not consistently show a "pattern of good works" (Titus 2:7). "They profess that they know God; but **in works they deny Him**, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (1:16). Those who **live "by EVERY Word** that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4) *are those we ought to hear*. And, then our hearing of them demonstrates that we are of God. "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby **know** we the Spirit Of Truth, and the spirit of error" (1John 4:6). Conversely, **not** heeding the teaching of those who instruct contrary to the Word of God, *is also evidence that we are of God*. May we be appropriately encouraged by the former of these Words, and not needing the rebuke of the latter of these Words... "He that is of God heareth God's Words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47).
- **The Holy Spirit of Promise (Ephesians 1:13) Assures Us That to Truly Love is to Truly Know God.** "7 Beloved, let us Love one another: for Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. 8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for **God is Love**" (1John 4:7-8). True Love is the theme of many a story or song of this world, but **True Love is plainly that we obey God**. "*For this is the Love of God, that we **keep His Commandments**: and His Commandments are not grievous [literally, burdensome]" (1John 5:3). God manifested His Love to us, while we were still sinners. "But God commendeth His Love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Love is the very essence of God. "And we have known and believed the Love that God hath to us. God is Love; and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1John 4:16). His Love was the motivation for sending His Only Begotten Son to die for us, to which we ought to respond in Love, by believing upon Him, i.e., a "faith which worketh by Love" (Galatians 5:6). **The LORD Jesus judges our Love of Him by our obedience to Him**. "15 If ye Love Me, keep My Commandments... 21 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 14:15,21).*

The Love Chapter of the New Testament describes the "nothingness" of any and all Christian service without True Love. "1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Charity, I am NOTHING" (1Corinthians 13:1-2). The faith of Laodicea-- which is not accompanied by love-- is worth NOTHING in the sight of God, while the "little strength" (Revelation 3:8) works of Philadelphia, which is True Love, are acknowledged by the Spirit of Prophecy's (19:10) Promise of a Pre-Tribunational Rapture. "Because **thou hast kept the Word** of My patience, **I also will keep thee FROM** the Hour of Temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the Earth" (3:10). Be assured that the Spirit of God offers His assurance of our **present possession** of Eternal Life, **if** we Truly Love God and one another. "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1John 4:7).

- **Our Possession of the Spirit of Grace (Hebrews 10:29) is Our Acknowledgement That He Dwells in Us.** "Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit" (1John 4:13). Again, obedience in Love is the indicator that the Spirit of God dwells within us. "And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also **the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him**" (Acts 5:32). Whatever compliment paid to our spiritual character, if it is true that we are those in whom the "Spirit of God is" (Genesis 41:38), then we could rejoice with Joseph. What a privilege that we should be chosen by the Living God to be His dwelling place on Earth! "19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1Corinthians 6:19-20). *If the Spirit of God possesses us, and we Him*, then we have His acknowledgement that He dwells in us. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). The perfect peace of the "full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22) that we "dwell in Him" (1John 4:13) would be ours, because the Holy Spirit has chosen to take up tabernacling within us-- in response to our faith in Him. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isaiah 26:3).
- **Our Walking Without Sinning is Used by the Spirit of Holiness (Romans 1:4) to Persuade Our Hearts That We Are Born of God.** "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). **If holiness was only a SYMBOLIC declaration of God that contradicts a presently disobedient walk in the professed Christian, then it would be of no use** that we claim the following Promises for victory over sinning, e.g.,

- "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). Or,
- "Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them **not have dominion over me**: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the Great Transgression" (Psalm 19:13). Or,
- "9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? **by taking heed** thereto according to Thy Word. 10 With my **whole** heart have I sought Thee: O **let me not wander from** Thy Commandments. 11 Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might **not sin** against Thee" (Psalm 119:9-11). Or,
- "17 ...I was **delivered** out of the mouth of the lion. 18 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 4:17-18). Or,
- "The LORD knoweth how **to deliver the Godly out of temptations**, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished" (2Peter 2:9). Or,
- "For whatsoever is born of God **overcometh the world**: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even **our faith**" (1John 5:4).

## Conclusion

"Vain is the help of man" (Psalm 108:12), especially in gaining the **assurance** of possessing Eternal Life. Perhaps the plainest statement of Scripture that any may use to determine their possession of Eternal Life, is the Apostle John's letter to his Little Children. "3 And **hereby** we do **know** that we know Him, **if we keep His Commandments**. 4 He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him" (1John 2:3-4). PRESENT OBEDIENCE MEANS YOU TRULY POSSESS ETERNAL LIFE, WHILE PRESENT DISOBEDIENCE MEANS YOU ARE A LIAR. "And ALL liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the Second Death" (Revelation 21:8).

Possibly, the most important thing about the faith which possesses Eternal Life, is that **faith works, and that, by Love**. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but **faith which worketh by Love**" (Galatians 5:6). Isaac Watts wrote an hymn with the words:

"Tis faith that changes all the heart,  
Tis faith that works by love,  
That bids all sinful joys depart,  
And lifts the thoughts above."

May the same heart be found, even in this Laodicean Age. "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is **perfect** toward Him" (2Chronicles 16:9). May you be among those whom the Good LORD **comforts** with the Assurance of Salvation. "Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it" (1Thessalonians 5:24).

And, may the Spirit of God teach you that

- "He which hath begun a good work in you **will perform it** until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6), that

- "He is able even **to subdue** all things unto Himself" (3:21), that
- "He is able also **to save** [you] to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth **to make intercession** for [you]" (Hebrews 7:25), that
- He has "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), and that
- He "is able **to keep you from falling**, and **to present you faultless** before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

Amen, and Amen.

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## 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

"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).

by Tom Stewart

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## Preface

Why do we need to discuss something so basic as man's propensity to sin? After all, if we are so close to the Rapture, the Tribulation Week, the Abomination of Desolation, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, etc., then shouldn't we more profitably be spending our time preparing not only ourselves, but those around us for these momentous events? "The time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3; 22:10). True, but our apparent lack of grounding in the basics, affects our ability to understand the more complex nature of prophecy, and necessitates a second look at this Doctrine of Sin Nature-- also, called the Doctrine of Original Sin. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the First Principles of the Oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12). Our understanding of why we sin affects not only how we reach the Lost, but how we promote Godliness in the Saved-- the same Godliness that many debate under the title of **worthiness**, 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).

## "In Adam's Fall, We Sinned All"

In this oft-quoted catechism taught to young children of days gone by, is the essence of a misunderstanding that has robbed Philadelphia of its "little strength" (Revelation 3:8) and given Laodicea its present brazen lukewarmness in sin. Possibly, you have heard a Sunday School teacher evangelize young children, preparing them for a presentation of God's Simple Plan of Salvation, that "There are only two types of people in the world-- Lost Sinners and Saved Sinners-- but, all of us are sinners." "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will **not** depart [or, not have departed] from it" (Proverbs 22:6). Though both your personal experience and past human teaching may initially revolt at the the thought that you were **not** born into this world as a sinner, the testimony of Scripture is plain for the origin of the Godly. "9 But Thou art He that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. 10 I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art my God from my mother's belly" (Psalm 22:9-10). The LORD Jesus, Who revealed to the Apostle John that "any thing that defileth" (Revelation 21:27) would **not** enter the New Jerusalem, was unmistakable that Little Children were **not** tainted with Original Sin or Actual Sin, and **would** enter Heaven. "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as Little Children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:3).



Sin nature was never a part of the LORD's explanation for why we sin. Pause for a moment, and realize that our LORD gives us to understand that Little Children **must be without any kind of sin**, to be able to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. "Suffer the Little Children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14). And, once we fully appreciate the fact that Little Children are only pristine humans in early development, we would banish the thought that man cannot ever be entirely and absolutely without sin. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Corinthians 5:17). Even Solomon confessed, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). But, sadly, man has sinned-- "they have sought out many inventions" (7:29). "Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them" (Psalm 106:29).

What, then, is this insistence that man is constitutionally sinful, that man is a natural born sinner? Unfortunately, *the commonly taught Doctrine of Sin Nature-- or, Original Sin-- most often results in an excuse for sin and sinning, and becomes an impediment to any attempt to live apart from sin.* This is the deplorable hallmark of the Laodicean Church of these End Times, i.e., "Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven". "But put ye on the LORD Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14). This flawed Doctrine of Sin Nature robs, drains, saps, and taxes those who receive it, making difficult the natural action of the True Saints, which is to lovingly obey the "Blessed and Only Potentate, the KING of kings, and LORD of lords" (1Timothy 6:15), who "purchased [us] with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). **After all, should not we that love the LORD most fervently desire to be different from the lukewarmness of Laodicea?** "15 If ye love Me, keep My Commandments... 21 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... 14 Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 14:15, 21; 15:14).

## A Warning to the Present and an Explanation About the Past

A caveat to those potential humanists and latent advocates of the Social Gospel, who would espouse the innate goodness of man, looking for a Divine spark that draws all men upward-- but, to the ultimate worship of a man sitting "in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (2Thessalonians 2:4)-- the infallible testimony of the Word of God is that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Those who can sin, have sinned. "There is none righteous, no, not one" (3:10). This dismal description of humanity is given by none other than the inspiration of the Spirit of God Himself. "For the wages of sin is death" (6:23). Is it any wonder that the God Who "is Love" (1John 4:8) would be so compelled to establish a way to rescue mankind by giving "His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life" (John 3:16)?

And, to the many great and good men who have espoused this mistaken Doctrine of Sin Nature, I am reminded of what a great preacher said of another who preceded him in time, with whom he disagreed: "*Peace to his ashes, death to his errors, life to all the truth he preached.*" "The memory of the just is blessed" (Proverbs 10:7). As finite and fallible man, we must look to the Almighty for whatever understanding we may attain, that we may not be numbered among **the ungodly, who will not endure sound doctrine**" (2Timothy 4:3). In the end, the goal for the Body of Christ is that "we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a Perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). We trouble ourselves about Sound Doctrine so that we, "speaking the Truth in Love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (4:15).

## What is Sin?

**Sin is the voluntary act of the human will entrenched against God.** The Greek word "*hamartia*", that the New Testament writers used for "*sin*", means "*to miss the mark*". "He that committeth sin is of the devil" (1John 3:8). Anyone that willfully aims at the wrong goal of selfishness, which is the ultimate choice of one's own gratification-- "*fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind*" (Ephesians 2:3)-- and thereby misses the mark of supreme love to God and an equal love to our neighbour as ourself (Matthew 22:37-39), is of the devil. "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" (Matthew 22:37-39). And, what would be the opposite of selfishness? Plainly, it would be seeking to please God, i.e., "Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and **for Thy pleasure** they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). A vital clue to this process of pleasing God, which is diametrically opposite to sinning, is our necessity to exercise faith in God. "But without faith it is impossible to **please Him**: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of **them that diligently seek Him**" (Hebrews 11:6). Further, that faith, which is a commitment to the Truth and to the God of Truth, comes **only** from the Word of God.

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). And, the stimulus to exercise that faith comes from the pre-eminent motivation of Love, i.e., a "faith which worketh by Love" (Galatians 5:6). "Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1John 4:10).

The LORD Jesus spoke of sin as a **voluntary** act of the human will. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant [Greek, "doulos", which means "servant" or "slave"] of sin" (John 8:34). Once the human will or heart **chooses to reject** the Precepts, the Examples, the Commands, the Promises, or the Warnings of the Word of God, then one falls into the snare and bondage of sin. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Romans 6:16). This **voluntary** entrenchment against the will of God is abominable sin, which is committed against the "Father of Lights, with Whom is **no** variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

To properly account for the reason we sin, we must first come to an understanding of the nature of sin; and, as True Saints, we need not fear that a discussion such as this cannot be undertaken without the advanced tools of theological training or instruction, because we have been Providentially provided with the infallible teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit. "But the Anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same Anointing teacheth you of all things, and is Truth, and is no lie, and even as It hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (1John 2:27).

Our Heavenly Paraklete will draw alongside His willing pupils and instruct us concerning this fundamental matter of why we sin, as well as the more advanced topic of "Things to Come". "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you Things to Come" (John 16:13). The LORD Jesus only requires us to be willing to put into practice the Father's will, if we are to be taught by His Spirit. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (7:17). Ours is to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1Thessalonians 5:21), "comparing spiritual things with Spiritual" (1Corinthians 2:13), by prayerfully measuring all things by the Infallible Word of God, for "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). "To the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

**Sin is first an act of the will, then, and only then, is it a description of one's nature.** Only *after we sin*, is it proper to say that we have a sinful nature. But, when we walk in faith, then we are partakers of the Divine nature. "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:3). The Apostle Paul affirmed to the Ephesians that their "conversation" or manner of living was "**in times past** in the lusts of [their] flesh", then as a result and that secondarily, they were most aptly described, "by nature [as] the children of wrath" (2:3). Both "willingness" and "refusal" are first, acts of the will; while "obedient" and "rebellious" are consequently, descriptions of the nature of a Godly man, and then an ungodly man. Isaiah instructed Judah and Jerusalem with the understanding that their "willingness" or "refusal" would be evidenced by their "obedience" or "rebellion". "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). Blaming sin upon one's nature and not upon one's will, is *disavowing personal responsibility for sin*. But, the truly penitent David placed the blame squarely on himself-- not his nature. "2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:2-3).

**Sin, like faith, is an act of the will, but in opposition to and to the exclusion of faith.** "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). It is an impossibility to be both holy and sinful *at the same time*, just as it is impossible to be dwelling in faith and sin *in the same moment*, e.g., Charles G. Finney labelled this concept, the Unity of Moral Action. [Please read "[Unity of Moral Action](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html)" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html -- by Charles G. Finney] "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). When the Philippian jailer cried out in despair, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30), Paul and Silas instructed him to first perform the act of the will that confides in the LORD Jesus Christ as its Complete and Only Saviour, i.e., "**Believe** on the LORD Jesus Christ" (16:31). The resulting condition of that act of faith is that "thou shalt be saved" (16:31). Our transformation, or metamorphosis, from being formerly "by nature the children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3), i.e., "And be not conformed to this world: but **be ye** transformed [Greek, metamorphoo] by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2), results in the opposite nature or condition of being "partakers of the Divine Nature" (2Peter 1:4). In fact, the ordained principle of the Almighty is that your actions determine His treatment of you as either the "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3) or as "partakers of the Divine Nature" (2Peter 1:4). The exercise of your faith in the Exceeding Great And Precious Promises of God causes

you to escape the corruption of the world, as well as transforms your very nature into that of His, "Who knew no sin" (2Corinthians 5:21). "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).

**Sin, like all moral action, requires first that we know what we ought or ought not to do.** "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). If it was possible for you to sin without knowing what you are supposed to be doing or not doing, then sin would be merely an unfortunate and untimely happenstance-- hardly a calculated or criminal act. But, the Judge of All the Earth has promised the most stern treatment of those who sin against Him. "And the LORD said unto Moses, **Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My Book**" (Exodus 32:33). The LORD keeps careful account of all who are physically alive, but He pays especial attention to those He numbers among the Righteous, as opposed to those who are the Wicked. "Let them be **blotted out of the Book of the Living**, and not be written with the Righteous" (Psalm 69:28).

Sin cannot be attached to our actions when undertaken ignorantly; but, actions undertaken *with the understanding that they are forbidden by God*, are sinful. "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:41). The LORD Jesus taught that knowledge is necessary for anyone to be judged guilty of committing sin. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin" (15:22). Paul reminded us that the world is judged guilty of sin before God and "without excuse" because the "invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are **clearly seen, being understood** by the things that are made, even His Eternal Power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20). Though honest ignorance may be accompanied with difficulty, the LORD judges us sinful only when there is previous "knowledge of the Truth". "For if we sin **wilfully** after that we have received the knowledge of the Truth, **there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins**" (Hebrews 10:26). Again, knowledge is necessary for an action to have any moral character, and sin requires that we first know what we ought or ought not to do. "For it had been better for them not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them" (2Peter 2:21).

Since knowledge is essential to all moral action, it becomes more apparent why the LORD has placed such a high premium upon our learning of His will and our teaching the same to the world. "19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:19-20). We cannot deceive God that we were honestly ignorant of the Truth, if we have *purposefully avoided learning that Truth*. "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the Commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them..." (Leviticus 4:2). Also, we are not to take lightly the knowledge that the Holy Spirit presents to us, as if we could take it up again later, if we chose not to receive it now. "Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, **from him shall be taken** even that which he seemeth to have" (Luke 8:18).

**Sin is a criminal act of the will, and not an unavoidable calamity of one's nature.** "Sin is the transgression of the Law" (1John 3:4). Even in modern usage, breaking the law is accounted as a criminal act, "for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). And, for law to be of any value, there must be knowledge of its injunctions coupled with appropriate punishment for its transgressions. "47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will [that is, he had knowledge of specific instructions, over and above the general knowledge of his fellow servants], and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with **many** stripes. 48 But he that knew not [those more specific instructions], and did commit things worthy of stripes [he did have general knowledge of his lord's will], shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47-48). God would be altogether unjust to punish those who had absolutely no knowledge of His will. "That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the Righteous with the Wicked: and that the Righteous should be as the Wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the Judge of All the Earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

**Sin is a moral choice, which is an obstinate refusal of not only obedience to the Almighty, but a rejection of Love to and a withholding of confidence in the LORD Jesus Christ.** "All unrighteousness is sin" (1John 5:17). If Scripture interprets Scripture, then another portion of the First Epistle of John must clarify the statement that "**all unrighteousness** is sin" (5:17). "If we confess our sins, He is Faithful and Just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from **all unrighteousness**" (1:9). If "all unrighteousness is sin" (5:17), then it would be correct to say, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from [sin]". And, contextually, to be cleansed from "sin" means to be cleansed "from all sin" (1:7). "But if we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanseth us from all sin**" (1:7). So then, "all

unrighteousness" (5:17), which is sin, is removed and cleansed by the "blood of Jesus Christ" (1:7), Who is "Faithful and Just" (1:9) to do so, on the condition of, and in response to, "if we confess our sins" (1:9).

That sin is a **moral choice** of disobedience to the Almighty, is plain. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1Samuel 15:23). "14 But if ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do all these Commandments; 15 And if ye shall despise My Statutes, or if your soul abhor My Judgments, so that ye will not **do** all My Commandments, but that ye break My Covenant: 16 I also will **do** this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. 17 And I will set My face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. 18 And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins" (Leviticus 26:14-18).

But, sin is also a rejection of love to and a withholding of confidence in the LORD Jesus Christ. "Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the Propitiation for our sins" (1John 4:10). So much is love a factor in our obedience that the Apostle John was inspired to write, "For this is the Love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous [burdensome or impossible to keep]" (5:3). Conversely, our disobedience is so reprehensible and hateful to God, that He inspired John to write, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him" (2:4). A "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6) is a confidence in the LORD Jesus Christ that is motivated by a love in us that began "because He first loved us" (1John 4:19). And, shamefully, our disobedience merely demonstrates that we did not trust God. "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of Me; and that cover with a covering, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin" (Isaiah 30:1). "24 Therefore will I scatter them as the stubble that passeth away by the wind of the wilderness. 25 This is thy lot, the portion of thy measures from Me, saith the LORD; because thou hast forgotten Me, and trusted in falsehood" (Jeremiah 13:24-25). But, "in the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and His children shall have a place of Refuge" (Proverbs 14:26).

## Objections Answered

For an attempt to answer objections, which have not been addressed in this article, against the position that I am espousing-- that sin is **only** an act of the will against God, and not a calamity of our nature-- please read the

- "[Back to the Basics: The Principles of the Doctrine of Christ](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Exposition.Perfection.html#Back%20to%20basics)"-- [http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Exposition.Perfection.html#Back to basics](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Exposition.Perfection.html#Back%20to%20basics) -- and
- "[Christian Perfection: 'Almost Thou Persuadest Me'?](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Exposition.Perfection.html#Almost%20Thou%20Persuadest%20Me)"-- [http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Exposition.Perfection.html#Almost Thou Persuadest Me](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Exposition.Perfection.html#Almost%20Thou%20Persuadest%20Me) -- sections of my article,
- "[An Urgent Call to Christian Perfection](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Exposition.Perfection.html)"-- <http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/Exposition.Perfection.html> --

where Christian Perfection or Entire Sanctification is our necessity for Godly living. Also, a more lengthy and definitive attempt to answer objections will be found in Charles G. Finney's

- "[Lectures on Systematic Theology](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html)"-- <http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html> -- on
- "[Moral Depravity](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE%2038)"-- [Lectures XXXVIII \(38\) through XLI \(41\)](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE%2038)-- [http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE 38](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE%2038) -- , especially
- [Lecture XLI \(41\)](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE%2041)-- [http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE 41](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE%2041) --

Keep in mind that Finney wrote about a century and a half ago, and that much of the weight for his reasoning would be found in the *previous thirty-seven lectures* of his "Systematic Theology". But, as always, "to the Law and to the Testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no Light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). And, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

## Why We Sin

**When We Sin, We Are Desperately Wicked.** If we can see that sin is a moral act of our will against God, i.e., "sin is the transgression of the Law" (1John 3:4), and not a calamity of our nature, then we can become better equipped to understand why we sin. "9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? 10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. 14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for Thou art my praise" (Jeremiah 17:9-10,14). The LORD understands how desperately wicked we are **when** we sin, and yet He graciously offers forgiveness and healing, **if** we would but repent. "Return unto Me, and **I will return unto you**, saith the LORD of Hosts" (Malachi 3:7).

**No Man Ever Yet Hated His Own Flesh.** At one time, Satan was known as "Lucifer", or light bearer, the "son of the morning" (Isaiah 14:12). He was the "anointed cherub that covereth [literally, guards]" (Ezekiel 28:14), before he committed the original or first sin, which was an ultimate commitment to himself in opposition to God. "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" (Isaiah 14:13-14). Though Lucifer did not have a fleshly body, as we know it, he was tempted by the desire to be just as good as and better than the Creator, i.e., which defines the "pride of life" (1John 2:16). Sadly, that "pride of life" had to emanate from the fact that all of God's creatures were properly created to have a certain amount of self-interest or self-preservation to exist, i.e., "no man ever yet hated his own flesh" (Ephesians 5:29).

**The Deceitfulness of Sin.** But, when Lucifer stumbled over this homeostatic (tendency to maintain an internal equilibrium), creaturely need for self-preservation, he sinned by substituting that end in place of the worship of the Creator, Who is "God blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 9:5). Lucifer accomplished all of this while residing in Heaven and without the baggage of a physical body, as we know it; therefore, we need to have the proper respect for the subtlety and power of sin, i.e., the "deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). But, "thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Corinthians 15:57), we do not need to repeat Lucifer's fatal mistake. "1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1Peter 4:1-2).

**Sin Is Possible, But Unlikely, to Even Those Who Are Holy.** Scripture reveals to us that Adam and Eve were the first humans to sin. "And unto Adam [the LORD God] said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:17). If Lucifer gave in to temptation while in Heaven, then it is not far-fetched that the Garden of Eden could be the locale of man's original sin. "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden [literally, pleasure] to dress it and to keep it" (2:15). The anatomy of their first sin follows the outline that the Apostle John gave to his Little Children in the First Epistle of John. "For all that is in the world,

[1] the lust of the flesh, and

[2] the lust of the eyes, and

[3] the pride of life,

is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1John 2:16).

**No Need to Repeat Our First Parents' Mistake.** Eve was tempted by Satan through his absolute denial of Adam and Eve's necessity to obey God, in the name of becoming "as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5), which was the same sin he had previously committed. "And when the woman saw that the tree was

[1] good for food ['lust of the flesh' (1John 2:16)],

[2] and that it was pleasant to the eyes ['lust of the eyes' (2:16)],

[3] and a tree to be desired to make one wise ['pride of life' (2:16)],

she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6). But,

again, we have no need to repeat the mistake of our first parents, because "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).

What happened when Adam and Eve sinned, is of vital importance to the explanation of why we sin, at this late point in the history of the Church. "6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should **not lust** after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 **Neither be ye idolaters**, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 **Neither let us commit fornication**, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 **Neither let us tempt Christ**, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 **Neither murmur ye**, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11 **Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come**" (1Corinthians 10:6-11). And, it is not mysterious how God intends for us to overcome sin and sinning-- through confidence in Him to keep us. "2 Blessed are they that keep His Testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. 3 They also **do no iniquity**: they walk in His ways" (Psalm 119:2-3).

**Adam's Sin Brought About Our Physical Depravity, And Only Indirectly Our Moral Depravity.** The LORD promised Adam and Eve that "of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Both spiritually and physically Adam and Eve died that day. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all **have sinned**" (Romans 5:12). But, before we enjoin that Adam passed on to all his offspring a sinful nature, i.e., which is the mistake of the Doctrine of Sin Nature or Original Sin, we need to consider the context of the Apostle Paul's inspired statement. "15 **But not** as the offence, so also is the free Gift. For **if** through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the Gift by grace, which is by One Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. 16 **And not** as it was by one that sinned, so is the Gift: for the judgment was **by one to condemnation**, but the free Gift is of many offences unto justification. 17 For **if** by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the Gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ.) 18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free Gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (5:15-19).

This packed and weighty portion of Scripture can be quickly read, but *it takes time to digest*. Here is a summary:

- (1) Adam's transgression, or "offence", is compared to Christ's "free Gift"., i.e., "But not as the offence, so also is the free Gift [a comparison]. For if through the offence of one [Adam] many be dead [Adam's sin, which is **moral** depravity brought about the resulting physical death, which is the **physical** depravity visited upon all succeeding generations of mankind], much more the grace of God, and the Gift by grace [the Gift of God is Eternal Life (Romans 6:23)], which is by One Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many [through faith]" (Romans 5:15).
- (2) Adam's sin resulted in condemnation, while Christ's Gift resulted in Justification, i.e., "And not as it was by one that sinned [Adam's transgression], so is the Gift [Christ's Atonement]: for the judgment was by one [offence] to condemnation [Adam's sin resulted in the curse of death and dying], but the free Gift [of Christ] is of many offences [the sins of all mankind] unto justification [Christ's Atonement justifies all who believe]" (5:16).
- (3) Death reigns by Adam's "offence", while Life reigns by Christ's "Gift", i.e., "For if by one man's offence [Adam's transgression] death reigned by one [Adam's moral depravity caused his physical depravity, which perpetuated moral depravity]; much more they [who believe] which receive abundance of grace and of the Gift of righteousness [justification by faith begins our walk of sanctification, which results in our final salvation] shall reign in Life [have dominion over sin] by One, Jesus Christ." (5:17).
- (4) Judgment comes upon all men through Adam's sin, while the free Gift comes upon all men through Christ's righteousness, i.e., "Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] judgment came upon all men to condemnation [they sinned and were condemned because they were drawn away by their physically depraved flesh]; even so by the righteousness of One [the Spotless Lamb of God] the free Gift [of Eternal Life] came upon all men [who believe] unto justification of Life" (5:18). And,
- (5) By Adam's disobedience many were made sinners, while through Christ's obedience many shall be made righteous, i.e., "For as by one man's disobedience [Adam's transgression] many were made sinners [because

Adam's sin produced the physical depravity through which many were drawn away to disobedience], so by the obedience of One [unto the death of the Cross] shall many be made righteous [if they repent and believe the Gospel]" (5:19).

**Moral Depravity is Sinning, While Physical Depravity is Death and Dying.** But, Adam's sin did not necessitate that everyone would be a sinner, anymore than did Christ's free Gift necessitates that everyone would be righteous, "for all men have not faith" (2Thessalonians 3:2). We need to define some terms:

- Moral depravity is the willful, volitional act of sinning. To be morally depraved is to be in sin.
- Physical depravity is the the non-moral, physical process of death and dying that occurs necessarily in cursed flesh and a cursed Earth. To be physically depraved is to be human.

Adam's sin, which is **moral** depravity brought about the resulting physical death, which is the **physical** depravity visited upon all succeeding generations of mankind until the New Heaven and New Earth see the Almighty remove the curse. "And there shall be no more curse: but the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him" (Revelation 22:3). What gravity there was in the Creator's warning that "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17)!

This Truth is seen throughout the Scriptures that man sins when he gives in to the temptation of fulfilling the desires of the flesh. "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap Life Everlasting" (Galatians 6:8). The damage to humanity through Adam's sin is great enough, because each successive human being is tempted by a progressively degenerating, depraved physical body, "to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Romans 13:14). "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (8:13). Physical depravity is sufficient to account for the relation between Adam's sin and the sin of his offspring, without necessitating man to possess a constitutionally sinful nature at birth, to account for his sinning. "5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the Earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" (Colossians 3:5-6).

**The Second Law of Thermodynamics Illustrates Physical Depravity.** Physical depravity may be demonstrated in that the overall disorder of the physical universe, i.e., entropy, is increasing over time, as postulated from the Second Law of Thermodynamics. "For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth" (James 1:11). A copy of a copy, as when something has been photocopied, tends to give a more degraded image with each successive copy. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (Job 14:4). *Sin always becomes progressively worse, no doubt in part to the degeneration of physical depravity.* "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2Timothy 3:13). Though physical depravity, which is synonymous with a diseased, fallen, and dying physical system, is **not** sin itself, and does **not** account for why Lucifer or Adam sinned, it does connect the effects of Adam's sin with the remainder of his posterity, i.e., "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19).

**Every Man is Tempted of His Own Desires.** James, the half-brother of the LORD Jesus Christ, recorded the most succinct account of why we sin. "14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust [Greek, epithumia, meaning "desire" or "craving"], and enticed. 15 Then when lust [Greek, epithumia] hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:14-15). Before we conclude that we sin because of an inborn, sinful lust; take into account that the desire or craving described by the Greek word "epithumia", is also used to describe a rightful desire:

(1) of the LORD Jesus, i.e., "And He said unto them, With desire [Greek, epithumia] I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15),

(2) of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians, i.e., "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire [Greek, epithumia] to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Philippians 1:23),

(3) of one desiring the office of a bishop, i.e., "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth [Greek, epithumeo, also meaning "lusteth"] a good work" (1Timothy 3:1), and

(4) of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians, i.e., "But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire [Greek, epithumia]" (1Thessalonians 2:17).

Now, "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust [Greek, epithumia meaning "desire"], and enticed" (James 1:14), relates that all moral beings are tempted by their own desires, as were both Lucifer in Heaven and Adam in the Garden of Eden, when both were yet in a sinless state. That desire may be compounded by the increasingly degenerative state of physical humanity, due to the effects of physical depravity. "Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Romans 2:6). And, at what time that desire becomes the supreme preference of the moral agent-- as opposed to the supreme love of God and an equal love of our neighbour as ourself (Matthew 22:37-39)-- then the desire becomes sin. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (James 1:15). The certain result of sin is always death. "And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (1:15). **Both physical and spiritual death result from sinning.** "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Therefore, we sin because we are tempted by our own desires, and most commonly by our physically depraved bodies. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24). But, thanks be to God for the victory, for "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (8:1)!

## How Not to Sin

**The Word of God Keeps Us From Sinning.** If the God about whom the seraphim declared, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of Hosts" (Isaiah 6:3), values sinlessness, then it would be consistent for Him to divulge to His creation how not to sin. This He has done, to His eternal praise! "According as His Divine Power hath given unto us **all** things that pertain unto life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2Peter 1:3). *Scripture is replete with the knowledge of how not to sin*, as evidenced by the Psalmist's praise of the excellency of the Word of God. "2 Blessed are they that keep His Testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. 3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in His Ways" (Psalm 119:2-3). Since it is **impossible** to serve both "God and mammon" (Luke 16:13) **at the same time**-- Charles G. Finney called this principle, the Unity of Moral Action-- then the Psalmist is declaring that *it is impossible to be sinning while at the same time walking "in His Ways"* (Psalm 119:3). The Word of God is truly the means to make the "man of God [to] be perfect, throughly furnished unto **all** good works" (2Timothy 3:17). More than a statement from a theological creed, our LORD's prayer in Gethsemane teaches us that the sanctification that keeps us from sinning, comes from His Word. "Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth" (John 17:17).

**Faith in God Keeps Us From Sinning.** It is apparent from Scripture that man cannot achieve a condition of holiness without Divine intervention; but, man must lend his finite cooperation to the Almighty by trusting God. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1John 5:4). When our faith resides in the Omnipotent God, it overcomes the world and all those things therein that tempt us to sin, i.e., "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (2:16). By faith, we are born of God, and do 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). Those who commit righteousness are "born of God". "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth [literally, committeth] righteousness is born of Him" (2:29). And, the reason that they commit righteousness, is that God Himself works it in them; but, still they must believe Him for it. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The "seed" that remains in those who are "born of God" (1John 3:9) is the Word of God. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of Incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1Peter 1:23). And, the "Seed is the Word of God" (Luke 8:11). **When we are committed to abiding in the Word of God, it is impossible to be sinning at the same time**, i.e., "His Seed remaineth [literally, abideth] in him: and he cannot sin" (1John 3:9).

**Our Love for God Keeps Us From Sinning.** Modern antinomianism is the concept of divorcing obedience from love, in the name of not being legalistic. But, Jesus said, "If ye love Me, keep My Commandments" (John 14:15). Jude, another half-brother of the LORD Jesus, by inspiration, commanded us to "keep [ourselves] in the love of God" (Jude 21). As those who believe that faith always actively engages in works, when given the opportunity, i.e., "shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18), *the True Saints keep themselves in the love of God (and holiness) by continuously relying upon the Character, Promises, and Precepts of Him whose "Name is called The Word of God"* (Revelation 19:13). "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). Satan, who is "that wicked one" (5:18) and the "tempter" (Matthew 4:3), cannot touch and tempt those who are keeping themselves by specially "watch[ing] and pray[ing], that [they] enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). As our Rock and our Fortress, we trust the LORD to deliver us from the seduction of Satan and sinning. "The LORD is my Rock, and my Fortress, and my Deliverer; my God, my Strength, in Whom I will trust; my Buckler, and the Horn of



my Salvation, and my High Tower" (Psalm 18:2). That the True Saint "sinneth not" (1John 5:18) is amazing; but, more importantly, it is a tribute to the Preserving Power of the Almighty. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved **blameless** unto the Coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23).

**Praying That We Would Not Enter Into Temptation Keeps Us From Sinning.** That Great Shepherd of the Sheep (Hebrews 13:20) carefully instructed His Sheep concerning this most important topic of how not to sin. In Christ's instructions to His disciples concerning the proper manner of prayer, He modeled the prayer, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13). As the Word of Life (1John 1:1), the LORD Jesus Christ implicitly understands that we sin because we are tempted, primarily by our own desires, i.e., "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust [literally, desire], and enticed" (James 1:14), and secondarily, by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Accordingly, He bulwarked His disciples against sin, by emphasizing our need to pray and trust God to not be led "into temptation" (Matthew 6:13). *Undoubtedly, there would be far less sinning, if there were more praying that we would not enter into temptation.* But, do we desire it as much as Jesus does? "And [Jesus] said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke 22:46).

**Suffering and Mortifying the Deeds of the Body Causes Us to Cease From Sinning.** Because "no man ever yet hated his own flesh" (Ephesians 5:29), we are quite prone to avoid physical suffering. But, *Scripture reveals that the Divinely appointed and allowed suffering of our flesh, i.e., disease, physical infirmities, persecutions, etc., has a surprising and beneficial effect-- our sanctification.* "1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; 2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (1Peter 4:1-2). If we allow the LORD to permit the affliction of our flesh, in faith, we know that the "trying of [our] faith worketh patience" (James 1:3). By faith, even our tribulations are only a means by which our Christian experience sees the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. "1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our LORD Jesus Christ: 2 By Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:1-5). How can sin abide in such a formidably holy circumstance, if we "through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body" (Romans 8:13)?

**The Hope That Our Present Moment of Sinlessness Will Multiply Into Continued Sinlessness Keeps Us From Sinning.** *If it is possible for the True Saint to be without sin for even a moment, then the door is open for even longer.* "5 And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. 6 Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him" (1John 3:5-6). [Please see our article, [That Ye May Know That Ye Have Eternal Life](http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/That.Ye.May.Know.That.Ye.html)-- <http://Whatsaiththescripture.com/Fellowship/That.Ye.May.Know.That.Ye.html> -- , for an explanation of the Biblical Doctrine of the Assurance of Salvation, where only those who abide in Christ may know that they have Eternal Life.] Even the Old Covenant understood the concept of the Just walking, growing, and increasing in the Light. "But the path of the Just is as the shining Light, that shineth more and more unto the Perfect Day" (Proverbs 4:18). The LORD Jesus shocked Nicodemus with the concept that he "must be born again" (John 3:7); and yet, once, by faith, the sinner has put off the "old man", and put on the "new", "he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Corinthians 5:17). "22 That ye put off concerning the former conversation the Old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24 And that ye put on the New Man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:22-24). Though our change into the image of Christ progresses with our knowledge, faith, and experience, i.e., "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Peter 3:18), it is a growth in greater and greater degrees of holiness, and not in shedding greater and greater amounts of inborn sin. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the LORD, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the LORD" (2Corinthians 3:18).

**The Promises of God Not Only Make Us to Be Like the LORD Jesus Christ, But Keep Us From Sinning.** Perhaps *the most neglected of the weapons in the Saints' arsenal for overcoming sin, are the Promises of God.* "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). The Promises are Covenants made by the Living God, Whose Word "shall not return unto [Him] void, but It shall accomplish that which [He] please[th], and It shall prosper in the thing whereto [He] sent It" (Isaiah 55:11). If the Holy Jehovah has given His Word on anything, we may bank on it. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19). In particular, if He has promised that He will give us a way to escape from sinning, then we are most grateful

for such an illustrious escape! "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). In fact, if the LORD designs the Promise of escape from the pitfalls and judgments of the Tribulation Week, e.g., a Pre-Tribulational Rapture, then we would, again, be most grateful! "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).

## Conclusion

Charles G. Finney made this interesting and helpful remark about the relation between sin and Christian sanctification.

"When we sin, it is because of our ignorance of Christ. That is, whenever temptation overcomes us, it is because we do not know and avail ourselves of the relation of Christ that would meet our necessities. One great thing that needs to be done is, to correct the developments of our sensibility. The appetites and passions are enormously developed in their relations to earthly objects. In relation to things of time and sense, our propensities are greatly developed and are alive; but in relation to spiritual truths and objects, and eternal realities, we are naturally as dead as stones.

"When first converted, if we knew enough of ourselves and of Christ thoroughly to develop and correct the action of the sensibility, and confirm our wills in a state of entire consecration, we should not fall. In proportion as the law-work preceding conversion has been thorough, and the revelation of Christ at, or immediately subsequent to, conversion, full and clear, just in that proportion do we witness stability in converts. In most, if not in all instances, however, the convert is too ignorant of himself, and of course knows too little about Christ, to be established in permanent obedience. He needs renewed conviction of sin, to be revealed to himself, and to have Christ revealed to him, and be formed in him the hope of glory, before he will be steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (from Charles G. Finney's "Lectures on Systematic Theology", [Lecture LXIII \(63\) on "Sanctification"](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE%2063)-- [http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE 63 --](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE%2063))

All that we need to keep us from sinning, as well as to make us "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29), is provided for us in learning of the LORD Jesus Christ. "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). The present, woeful ignorance of the Laodicean Church concerning the LORD Jesus Christ, has begotten a necessity to sin and to entertain all the worst sins of the world, while professing themselves to be "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17).

This Doctrine of Sin Nature or Original Sin has become an indispensable article of faith to the modern Church, but it has been, and still is, a refuge and excuse for sin and sinning, an unbearable "yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1), and an impediment to any attempt to live apart from sin. "For it had been **better** for them **not** to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, **to turn** from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them" (2Peter 2:21).

"The dogma of constitutional moral depravity, is a part and parcel of the doctrine of a necessitated will. It is a branch of a grossly false and heathenish philosophy. How infinitely absurd, dangerous, and unjust, then, to embody it in a standard of Christian doctrine, to give it the place of an indispensable article of faith, and denounce all who will not swallow its absurdities, as heretics. O, shame!" (from Charles G. Finney's "Lectures on Systematic Theology", [Lecture XLI \(41\) on "Moral Depravity"](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE%2041)-- [http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE 41 --](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html#LECTURE%2041)).

May the Merciful God allow you to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus 2:10).

Amen, and Amen.

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## According to Your Faith

Or, The Fundamental Rule of Conduct for the Kingdom of God

"According to your faith be it unto you"

(Matthew 9:29).  
by Tom Stewart  
11-18-99

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## Preface

The Exceeding Grace of God (2Corinthians 9:14) flowing from the fountainhead of the Infinite Love of God, elicits the response of a "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6) in the Saints. Manwardly, *all that is done acceptably in the Kingdom of God must be brought to pass by faith*. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). The Sovereign Grace of God demands the response of an Uncomplicated Faith from man. "For the Grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). Too long, an artificial distinction has been entertained in Christendom between Living By Faith and Being Simply Christian, when, in fact, all who call themselves by the Name of Christ are mandated to Live By Faith, or suffer the displeasure of God. "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him" (10:38).

Because of the lukewarm "love" of the Laodicean Church today, walking "by faith" (2Corinthians 5:7) has been replaced with a materialistic accumulation of goods-- "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17)-- which has been equated to a Sure Foundation. "11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this Foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1Corinthians 3:11-13).

This Laodicean conduct of striving for greater income, greater ease, more education, more health care benefits, more retirement benefits, etc.-- at the expense of living "by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)-- is the very reason for the "Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God" (Revelation 3:14) giving His scathing rebuke and warning. "15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth. 18 I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (3:15-16,18).

## Why Faith?

Why did the Almighty choose to use the medium of faith to justify the ungodly? Because "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24), faith must apprehend God "as seeing Him Who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our LORD Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). Since True Faith is simply our **confidence** in God that leads us to love and obey Him, then our reliance upon Him and His record justifies us. "10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the Record that God gave of His Son. 11 And this is the Record, that God hath given to us Eternal Life, and this Life is in His Son. 12 He that hath the Son hath Life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not Life" (1 John 5:10-12). Specifically, Saving Faith trusts not upon itself for salvation, but it trusts **solely** upon the LORD Jesus Christ to accomplish "So Great Salvation" (Hebrews 2:3) in the Believer. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1Timothy 1:15).

Only through the instrumentality of faith are we able to perceive God and realize the love that He has manifested to us through the atonement of the LORD Jesus Christ on the Cross. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His Only Begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1John 4:9). Once we have perceived by faith the "love of God, because He laid down His life for us" (3:16), then we respond with **the love that drives our obedience**. "For this is the Love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous" (5:3). Whether it was the Philippian jailer or the Church of Galatia, the Apostle Paul made it clear that to "believe on the LORD Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31) would justify and save the Believer. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the Faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the Faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law: for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

The Word of God is the foundation to all that we believe about God. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). If we take away the certainty of the Scriptures, we do not really know what to believe. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received

it not as the word of men, but as it is in Truth, the Word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (1Thessalonians 2:13). But, if we lean in faith upon what His Word has revealed to us, then we can be confident that He "is able to keep [us] from falling, and to present [us] faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24). "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have **committed unto Him** against that day" (2Timothy 1:12).

Whatever we lack in understanding and experience, our faith will yet overcome through the "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:19). God has ordained our faith to be the vehicle through which we overcome the world, instead of being consumed ourselves. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1John 5:4). Through faith in the Promises of God, we partake of Christ. "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). The very indwelling and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is accomplished through faith. "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the Promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14).

## The Vitality of Faith

Faith appeals to the very nature of man, "for in the image of God made He man" (Genesis 9:6). When we speak of the "grace of God that bringeth Salvation" (Titus 2:11), we emphasize the Godward side of our Salvation. But, when we accentuate faith and believing, we are stressing the manward aspect of the "common Salvation" (Jude 3). Grace highlights the Scriptural picture of a God Who is "worthy, O LORD, to receive glory and honour and power" (Revelation 4:11), i.e., a God Who is worthy of our trust. The greater a revelation that the Spirit graciously gives us of the LORD from His Word, the greater we are able to trust Him. "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). **Faith** only operates where the **Grace** of God can be found. But, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). Also, "it is of **faith**, that it might be by **grace**" (4:16). "By Whom also we have access by **faith** into this **grace** wherein we stand" (5:2). "For by **grace** are ye saved through **faith**" (Ephesians 2:8).

Faith is the amazing medium by which God accomplishes His work in the Saints, because:

(1) Forgiveness of Sins is received only through faith.

"To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).

(2) Gospel Justification is accomplished only through faith.

"And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses" (Acts 13:39).

(3) Salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ.

"Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31).

(4) True Light only comes through faith in Christ Jesus.

"I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:46).

(5) True Life is imparted only through faith in the Son of God.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

(6) Everlasting Life is only accessible through faith in the LORD Jesus.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me hath Everlasting Life" (John 6:47).

(7) Gospel Rest is enjoyed by the Saints now, but only through faith in God.

"For we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Hebrews 4:3).

(8) Spiritually Edifying or Building Up ourselves, comes only through faith in the Word of God and the operation of the Spirit.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost" (Jude 20).

(9) Spiritual Preservation comes only through faith in God.

"Who are kept by the Power of God through faith unto Salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1Peter 1:5).

(10) Our Adoption and Sonship only comes by faith in the LORD Jesus.

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26).

(11) Access to God is only made available through faith in Jesus.

"In Whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him" (Ephesians 3:12).

(12) The Promises of God are only given to them that believe Jesus.

"But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the Promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Galatians 3:22).

(13) Sanctification or Godly Living is accomplished only by faith in God.

"And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). And,

(14) The Blessed Holy Spirit's Presence to ensure obedience and victory comes only through faith in the LORD Jesus Christ.

"In Whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your Salvation: in Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of Promise" (Ephesians 1:13).

## A Saving Faith

The same advice that the LORD Jesus gave to Jairus, a ruler of the Capernaum synagogue, when someone informed him that his little daughter had just died, is appropriate for all who would be saved. "Be not afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36). Jairus and his wife cooperated with Jesus, when Jesus ushered all but a few out of the room, and then commanded, "Damsel, I say unto thee, arise" (5:41), with the result that the "damsel arose, and walked" (5:42). In particular, we are called upon to believe that our pardon for the sins that we have committed is tied to the LORD Jesus Christ's sacrificial Atonement on the Cross, i.e., "that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Eternal Life" (John 3:15). *Saving Faith rests only in the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Christ's death on the Cross rendered it honorable for God to pardon rebels for their crimes-- without setting aside the Moral Law-- on the condition of their repentance and faith. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2Corinthians 5:19).

If God's forgiveness of our sins was not tied to our repentance and faith, then future obedience to the still intact Moral Law of Supreme Love of God and an Equal Love of Our Neighbour would become meaningless, because the Moral Law would become only a Moral Suggestion without a penalty for disobedience. "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" (Matthew 22:37-39). Saving Faith is directly linked to trusting in Christ's Atonement, which enables God's remission or pardoning of our sins, when we repent and believe the Gospel. "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). The Atonement of the LORD Jesus Christ is the reconciliation that is made possible because Jesus died on the Cross, the "Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1Peter 3:18).

Saving Faith believes that:

(1) Our disobedience to God's Moral Law is sin.

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the Law: for sin is the transgression of the Law" (1John 3:4).

(2) Our punishment for our sinning is death.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4).

"For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

(3) Jesus Christ is the

"Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

(4) Christ's Once-for-All Sacrifice makes possible our Salvation.

"But this man [Christ Jesus], after He had offered One Sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12). And,

(5) A Faith Which Worketh By Love (Galatians 5:6) relies upon the Finished Work of Christ on the Cross for Eternal Salvation.

"9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the LORD Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 13 For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the LORD shall be saved" (Romans 10:9,13). In short, Saving Faith believes to the obtaining of "Salvation which is in Christ Jesus" (2Timothy 2:10).

## A Sanctifying Faith

In a sermon, "Sanctification By Faith", Charles G. Finney maintained that, "The doctrine of justification by faith produces sanctification, by producing the only true obedience to the Law." "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Further, Finney explained, "By this I mean, that when the mind understands this plan [justifying men by offering them the Free Gift of Salvation], and exercises faith in it, it naturally produces sanctification. Sanctification is holiness ["But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end Everlasting Life" (Romans 6:22)], and holiness is nothing but obedience to the law ["Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through **sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience** and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1Peter 1:2)], consisting in love to God and love to man." Not only has God appointed faith to be the medium of our salvation, but *faith in Christ is the instrument of our sanctification as well*. "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to Light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me" (Acts 26:18).

A Sanctifying Faith is a presently **alive** faith. "Being justified freely by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). Even the least of all Saints saved by Free Grace, must have exercised the requisite Common Faith (Titus 1:4) to "sit together in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke 7:50; 18:42), identifies the personal exercise of faith as the essential response of all those who are redeemed by the "manifold grace of God" (1Peter 4:10). We do not begin to live by faith at a future time in our Christian walk, but we are already walking by faith and "not by sight" (2Corinthians 5:7), if we are truly "in Christ" (5:17). We are not potentially going to live in the future by faith, but we are presently living by faith, if God has "translated us into the Kingdom of His Dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). "For therein [the Gospel of Christ] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17).

## As Thou Hast Believed

True Faith in Jesus, Who is the Word of God (John 1:1,14), is the essential rule of conduct for the Kingdom of God. "Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). On three occasions in the Gospel of Matthew, the LORD Jesus healed in response to the faith of the supplicants. A Roman centurion beseeched Jesus for his sick servant, "LORD, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented" (Matthew 8:6). When Jesus demonstrated His willingness to come and heal the centurion's servant, the centurion said, "LORD, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed" (8:8). The LORD Jesus marvelled at this Gentile's faith, and said, "Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel" (8:10). Then, Jesus enunciated clearly the Fundamental Rule of Conduct for the Kingdom of God. Jesus said to the centurion, "Go thy way; and **as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee**" (8:13), with the result that the centurion's "servant was healed in the selfsame hour" (8:13). The impression is that for the centurion to be truly motivated to believe, must mean that the Grace of God must have drawn him to believe, i.e., "by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). God's Grace draws us to believe Him, to take Him at His Word, and to receive the benefits of His Gifts. "For the grace of God that bringeth Salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:11). It is only left for man to receive by faith the Grace of God. "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

If True Faith was only what man originated in his own heart, then "he hath whereof to glory; but not before God" (Romans 4:2). Man can and must exercise Acceptable Faith, because the Everlasting God has already made all gracious provision for that faith. "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the Earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22). A second instance, in the Gospel of Matthew, of the LORD healing in response to the faith of the beseechers, occurred when two blind men followed Jesus with a heartfelt desire for healing. Expressing their confidence in Jesus' messiahship, they

cried, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us" (Matthew 9:27). After they followed Jesus into a house, Jesus finally turned and said unto them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" (9:28), understanding implicitly their desire for the restoration of their sight. They fervently replied, "Yea, LORD" (9:28)! Then Jesus touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it unto you" (9:29). **True Faith is simply trusting Jesus-- believing what He said He would do.** Or, as the Apostle Paul succinctly expressed, "I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25). The two blind men's desire for healing had never yielded them their sight before. "Vain is the help of man" (Psalm 108:12). *But, this time their faith was expressly in the LORD Jesus to open their eyes.* "And their eyes were opened" (9:30)!

Though True Faith is often dramatic, as in the healing of the Roman centurion's servant or restoring the sight of the two blind men, it must also be simple, or we would never be able to muster up the required faith to accomplish anything. "Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke 18:17). A third instance of the LORD healing in response to faith, was the case of the Syrophenician woman. She cried to the LORD Jesus, "Have mercy on me, O LORD, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil" (Matthew 15:22). Not for meanness, but to test her resolve and strengthen her faith, Jesus "answered her not a word" (15:23). Silence from the LORD does not necessarily mean "No"; instead, it ought to prompt us to be importunate. "Because of [our] importunity [shameless and repeated asking] He will rise and give [us] as many as [we need]" (Luke 11:8). Even Jesus' disciples said, "Send her away; for she crieth after us" (Matthew 15:23), giving even more cause to discourage the Syrophenician woman. In addition, Jesus said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24). Undaunted, she came and worshipped Jesus, saying, "LORD, help me" (15:25). Completing His testing of the desperate woman, Jesus answered and said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs" (15:26). Our LORD desires our faith in prayer to be bold and unwavering. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed" (James 1:6). Just as Jesus knew she would, she said, "Truth, LORD: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Matthew 15:27). With great satisfaction and love, Jesus answered and said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (15:28). "And her daughter was made whole from that very hour" (15:28). May our faith aspire to be as simple, humble, and importunate as this Syrophenician woman!

## Trusting Jesus Is the Essence of Christianity

Since man's Original Sin in the Garden of Eden was based upon questioning the love and integrity of the Creator, i.e., "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1), the LORD has gone to great extremes to bring mankind back to their Original Confidence in the Creator. "Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of Hosts" (Malachi 3:7). Our Rock can be trusted, unlike the rock of the heathen. "For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges" (Deuteronomy 32:31). Trusting the LORD for "all things that pertain unto Life and Godliness" (2Peter 1:3) is the practical application of faith to Christian Sanctification. More than a dusty theological doctrine or a quaint lyric to a Gospel song, "trusting Jesus" is the heart of True Christianity. "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham **believed** God, and it was counted unto him for Righteousness" (Romans 4:3).

The Professed Church has forgotten that True Faith "worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6), and has fallen into the trap of Antinomianism. While asserting their faith in Jesus has saved them, they deny any necessity to continue in the Covenant of Faith to receive the Promised Rest. "11 So I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My Rest. 18 And to whom swear He that they should not enter into His Rest, but to them that believed not?" (Hebrews 3:11,18). The Antinomian tendency of the Professed Church, cries loudly against works, and especially against the legalism that they confuse with the "obedience of faith" (Romans 16:26). "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?" (James 2:14). When James wrote against this same tendency in the Early Church, he, of course, meant that the Faith that could not save was an Intellectual Only Faith, and not the Genuine Faith that "worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). The only acceptable works in the eyes of God, are the works that are consistent with Faith. "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18).

Unquestionably, faith in the LORD Jesus Christ to save us from our sins-- past, present, and future-- is central to the Gospel message of Christianity. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He Power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name" (John 1:12). The Apostle Paul testified to the unconverted Jews that they could not be justified by their attempts to keep the Law, but only through faith in Jesus. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38). At the historic Jerusalem council, Peter agreed with Paul and Barnabas that Salvation for the Gentiles-- as well as the Jews-- was not accomplished by the keeping of the Law of Moses, but by faith. "But we believe that through the grace of the LORD Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they" (15:11). During our LORD's earthly ministry, He continually attested to the necessity and efficacy of faith in Himself for the forgiveness of sins, the gift of Eternal Life, and the assurance of being resurrected with the Just. "He that believeth on the Son hath Everlasting Life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see Life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Also, "this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have Everlasting Life: and I will raise him up at the last day" (6:40).

## The Promised Holy Spirit is the New Covenant's Means of Assuring Our Obedience

Faith in Christ not only saves us from our sins, but grants us the gift of the Holy Spirit, that causes us to walk in obedience. "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). The Promised Messiah would lead the way into the realm of walking in the Spirit, to model and demonstrate what we should expect from the Holy Spirit's powerful indwelling. "Behold My Servant, Whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in Whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth Judgment to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:1). Before the Almighty would actually affect a change in His Covenant with man, He would prophetically warn and advertise the coming change to those that "fear Him" and "hope in His mercy" (Psalm 33:18). "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour My Spirit upon thy seed, and My blessing upon thine offspring" (Isaiah 44:3). In particular, God's New Covenant, as noted in Ezekiel 31:31, is designed to give those who receive the Covenant by faith, both His Spirit and His Word, i.e., heartfelt obedience. "As for Me, this is My Covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My Words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever" (Isaiah 59:21).

It is both amazing and saddening that the advertised benefits of the Promised Holy Spirit of the New Testament have been so little understood and accepted. "25 Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 26 A New Heart also will I give you, and a New Spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27 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 36:25-27). Instead of the current debate concerning the efficacy of different manifestations of being baptized with the Spirit, **Loving Obedience is the prophesied purpose of the Spirit's indwelling in the Believer.** "31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a New Covenant [literally, New Testament] 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).

The concept has been lost to the Church that the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence in the Believer, is essentially to produce the sanctifying effect of True Obedience. "And he that keepeth His Commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1John 3:24). The blessing of the Holy Spirit securing us in a life of sanctification and obedience, comes through **believing** in Jesus Christ. "31 But these are written, that ye might **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that **believing** ye might have Life through His Name" (John 20:31). Clearly, *what we believe about the LORD Jesus Christ*, is what the Holy Spirit uses to enable us to overcome the temptations of the flesh, i.e., faith in Jesus as our Supply-- "my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19)-- keeps us from succumbing to the sin of worry. "1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Romans 8:1, 9).

It must be noted that the LORD Jesus told His disciples that "when the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, Which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me" (John 15:26). Then, "when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come" (16:13). So then, the Spirit gives us the benefit of helping us understand and believe Who and What the LORD Jesus is to us, i.e., believing in Jesus as our Wisdom-- "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption" (1Corinthians 1:30)-- keeps us from despairing of definite direction in our day-to-day lives. And, all of these benefits only come as we are taught by the Spirit from the Word of God. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).



## The Promises Encourage Us to Trust God

Which brings us to the Promises... "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). Truly, the Promises epitomize the fundamental idea of "according to your faith be it unto you" (Matthew 9:29). God does not penalize us for the exercise of even the smallest of faith, because it is impossible to be exercising the sin of unbelief at the same time. Charles G. Finney, in the 1800's, taught the Philadelphian Age Church the Biblical concept of the Unity of Moral Action, i.e., that we cannot be both holy and sinful at the same time. Either we will serve God or mammon, but not both **at the same time**. [Please read "[Unity of Moral Action](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html> -- by Charles G. Finney] "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). Whenever the smallest faith is exercised in the believing of the Promises, we become more like the LORD Jesus Christ, i.e., we become "partakers of the Divine Nature" (2Peter 1:4).

Like a Divine Cycle, faith in the Promises teach us to trust in God, because "all the Promises of God in [Christ Jesus] are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2Corinthians 1:20). Building Christian Confidence is not a humanistic confidence in self, but it is the confidence that God, "that cannot lie" (Titus 1:2), will do as He said. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19). The Apostle John wrote in his First Epistle that his purpose in writing, like a Divine Cycle, was to those who had already believed on the LORD Jesus, that they may further understand Him, that they would be encouraged to further trust Him. "These things have I written unto you that **believe** on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may **know** that ye have Eternal Life, and that ye may **believe** on the Name of the Son of God" (1John 5:13).

Faith is inescapably tied to the Promises. "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the Promises" (Hebrews 6:12). The LORD will take us at whatever level of Spiritual development that we possess, and He will give further revelations of Himself, His Word, and His character. "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). This growth "in grace" (2Peter 3:18) process is the Spiritual development of becoming "partakers of the Divine Nature" (1:4) that is brought about by the believing of the Exceeding Great and Precious Promises (1:4).

It may seem like we are not able to keep on trusting Jesus for our latest escape from difficulty; however, "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). And, it may seem, at times, that the Righteous are more subject to the difficulties that the wicked do not encounter, but their seeming prosperity is only for a moment, and our Spiritual development will follow us throughout Eternity. "3 For I was [wrongly] envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked... 17 Until I went into the Sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. 18 Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction" (Psalm 73:3, 17-18). But, our difficulties are indications that God loves us, because:

(1) Either we are being grown by the LORD through His testing of what He has already taught us, i.e., "3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:3-4), or

(2) We have stumbled into sin, and the Father must reclaim us through chastening, i.e., "6 For whom the LORD loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?" (Hebrews 12:6-7). So, the LORD will fulfill His Promise in us. "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).

## The Tribulation Demands a Special Promise for Escape

Which brings us to the Promises of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture... "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only He [the Holy Spirit] Who now letteth [restrains] will let [will continue to restrain through the Spirit's indwelling presence in the Believers], until He be taken out of the way [at the Pre-Tribulational Rapture]" (2Thessalonians 2:7). Though the issue of "Rapture - No Rapture" may seem to hinge only on the eschatological interpretation of when and if an event must take place, it is more than evident that the Faithful God has deemed it appropriate to make the event, a matter of faith and Promise.

"Because thou hast kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the Hour Of Temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the Earth" (Revelation 3:10). If the very reason that the LORD must bring to pass the Tribulation Week, is the unbelief of Wicked men, then the faith of the few Righteous is that much more crucial. "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the Earth?" (Luke 18:8).

If we live to do the will of God, then why should it be thought strange or unworthy that we desire to escape the coming Tribulation Week? "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). Wouldn't our escape from "all these things that shall come to pass" (21:36) during the Tribulation Week, be great tribute and praise to the Faithful God for making good yet another Promise? Earlier, did we reject His Promise of escape from temptation, because we felt that it was unrealistic to attempt to live without sinning? "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). If David the Psalmist petitioned the Almighty to deliver him, then why should we not do the same? "1 In Thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. 2 Deliver me in Thy Righteousness, and cause me to **escape**: incline Thine ear unto me, and save me" (Psalm 71:1-2).

The world and Worldly Professing Christians do not have any motivation to actively claim a Promise for a Pre-Tribulational Rapture deliverance from any upcoming Tribulation, because to them it is a fanciful, unrealistic dream. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1Thessalonians 5:3). How can we **not** claim Promises for escape from a Tribulation Week, if we see the Tribulation coming? "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished" (Proverbs 22:3; 27:12). If the Spirit of God is drawing our attention to the nearness of the LORD's Return, the Tribulation Week, and our Pre-Tribulational Rapture, then would it not be hypocritical to ignore His leading and not claim the Rapture Promises? "2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. 3 And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matthew 16:2-3).

And, are we not missing the point of the Tribulation Week, i.e., the Judgment that results from removing the Restraining influence through the sudden removal of the Righteous (2Thessalonians 2:7), if we do not claim Promises and pray for our miraculous, Pre-Tribulational Rapture removal? "2 Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you. 3 Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the Earth, which have wrought His Judgment; seek Righteousness, seek Meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger" (Zephaniah 2:2-3). After all, the Rapture represents more than a parochial deliverance of a few people who would not face up to the real world. "The time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3; 22:10). Ours is to beg the LORD for usefulness and faithfulness, until the moment is most pregnant for our Rapture. "20 Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. 21 For, behold, the LORD cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the Earth for their iniquity: the Earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Isaiah 26:20-21). (Just study the number of times that David asked for deliverance from the LORD because of his enemies.)

## Conclusion

Faith is the divinely appointed means for us to live our lives before God. "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2Corinthians 5:7). Trusting Jesus for all things in this life and hereafter is only fitting, because He is "worthy" (Revelation 5:12). "20 For our conversation is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the LORD Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:20-21). Since only Jesus is able to subdue "all things unto Himself" (3:21) and "because He laid down His life for us" (1John 3:16), He is worthy of our trust. We ought to exercise ourselves to trust God, because it is most certain that God is working to accomplish the growth of our faith. "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth" (2Thessalonians 1:3). Our faith will grow, as our perception of our Gracious God increases. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). It will always be in the best interests of God and our faith, that our understanding of just how great God is, increases. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2Peter 3:18).

The last test of our faith will come as we trust Jesus for our translation, either at our death or Rapture. "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). In the meantime, our spiritual life depends upon the grace and help of God. "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 50:7). It is with great confidence that we can follow in the steps of the Faithful God. "Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it" (1Thessalonians 5:24). May the LORD grant to us "grace to help" (Hebrews 4:16) in our "time of need" (4:16), that we may be found faithful. "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1Corinthians 4:2).

Maranatha!

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## The Amazing Humanity of Jesus Christ Or, The Benefit of Christ's Birth

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father,) full of Grace and Truth"

(John 1:14).

by Tom Stewart

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### Preface

The Second Advent of the Messiah has long been anticipated by the Church of Jesus Christ; and even more, the Godly have been enjoined to reverently hasten their LORD's return by faithful witness and believing prayer, i.e., "Come, LORD Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). "Looking for and hasting unto the coming [literally, hastening the coming] of the day of God" (2Peter 3:12). Even so, the conduct of the True Saints, who await the soon return of their Saviour, is inescapably linked to the events of the First Christmas. "And without controversy great is the Mystery of Godliness: God was **manifest in the flesh**, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1Timothy 3:16). Because the Son of God, Who is the "True God, and Eternal Life" (1John 5:20), has chosen to manifest Himself as Truly a Man, i.e., the Son of Man (Luke 19:10), **He left us "an example, that [we] should follow His steps"** (1Peter 2:21). "And the angel answered and said unto [Mary], The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

If Jesus of Nazareth was only a mere man, then His birth would provide no more than intellectual conversation for theologians, slight interest for historians, or unbalanced fascination for devotees. "And [Jesus] saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ" (Mark 8:29). And, if Jesus was only another New Age incarnation of the Christ Consciousness, and not the "fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9), then He rightly deserved to die on that Roman cross for the sin of blasphemy... "because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God" (John 10:33). Moreover, if Jesus Christ is only one of many in a pantheon of gods, and not singularly, the Only "Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6), then He would not be the Omnipotent God. "16 For by Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: 17 And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17). Further, if Jesus is not God Almighty, then the ancient prophecies predicted a lie. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

But, if Jesus is the "I Am" (John 8:58) that appeared to Moses on the backside of the desert (Exodus 3:14), then His Christmas Advent as a real, human baby, was necessary:

1. to fulfil prophecy, i.e., "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His Name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14),
2. to provide an atoning sacrifice for the sins of mankind, i.e., "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot" (1Peter 1:19),
3. to provide a mediator between God and man, i.e., "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1Timothy 2:5),

4. to provide us an example of how we can and ought to live, i.e., "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that ye should follow His steps" (1Peter 2:21), and
5. to give us the Spirit of the New Covenant to secure our obedience, i.e., "Nevertheless I tell you the Truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you" (John 16:7).

## Scriptural Proof of Christ's Human Nature

### His Miraculous Conception.

The very idea of having a human mother, but without a human father, is Jesus Christ's miraculous conception in the Virgin Mary's womb. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 1:18). Though the angel Gabriel explained the general idea of Mary's miraculous conception of Jesus, i.e., "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35), any more explanation than that would be impossible for the human mind to fathom. "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS" (Luke 1:31).

### His Miraculous Though Human Birth.

The birth of the LORD Jesus Christ is not a fanciful tale of angels breeding with the "daughters of men" (Genesis 5:4) to produce a hybrid race of "giants" (5:4); instead, Jesus was born as truly a man, while He was truly God. "16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, Who is called Christ. 25 And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn Son: and he called his name JESUS" (Matthew 1:16, 25). The explicit and honest statement of Scripture is that Joseph had no part in the human propagation of Jesus. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). The Wise Men searched for a Newborn Baby Boy-- a Boy that was born in a stable, bedded where animals fed, and excluded from the inn due to lack of vacancy. "7 And she brought forth her Firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn... 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the LORD" (Luke 2:7, 11).

### He Partook of Flesh and Blood.

Early Gnosticism denied that Jesus actually partook of flesh and blood, but only appeared to be human. But, Scripture is emphatic that Jesus, the Eternal Logos, became real, human flesh and blood. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father,) full of Grace and Truth" (John 1:14). It was necessary for Christ to have a human nature, so that His suffering and death on the Cross would "destroy the works of the devil" (1John 3:8), in that all who trust in Christ Jesus for Salvation would overcome the world, i.e., "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (5:4). "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

### He Possesses a Human Soul.

Though the Word of God alone is able to divide between "soul and spirit" (Hebrews 4:12), suffice it to say that the LORD Jesus Christ claimed to possess a human soul. "Then saith He unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me" (Matthew 26:38). The Spirit directed Luke to record that Jesus cried out to the Father to receive His spirit, i.e., soul, in the same way that the martyr Stephen cried out, "LORD Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost" (Luke 23:46). Recalling the words of David the Psalmist (Psalm 16:10), the Apostle Peter's Pentecostal sermon reminded his hearers that Christ's resurrection was prophesied, when the LORD promised not to leave the

Messiah's soul in the grave. "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:31).

#### Jesus Began Life With Physical Circumcision, And He Continued to Increase In Wisdom and Stature.

To demonstrate that the LORD Jesus was not to be treated any differently than any other Jewish young child, He was circumcised. "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (Luke 2:21). No doubt, a difficulty for Joseph and Mary, would be the tendency to forget the Divine Nature of their miraculous Son, because He had to physically grow and intellectually learn-- just like all the other children. "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

#### Christ Experienced Weeping and Hungering.

When Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, died, Jesus demonstrated His love for Lazarus through His tears, i.e., "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). But, even greater still, Jesus demonstrated that He is the "Resurrection, and the Life" (11:25) when He commanded, "Lazarus, come forth" (11:43)-- and, "he that was dead came forth" (11:44). Again, immediately before our LORD's Passion Week, Jesus, the "Great God That Formed All Things" (Proverbs 26:10), shed human tears when He contemplated Jerusalem's coming punishment (70 AD) for the rejection of Himself. "And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it" (Luke 19:41). It should not be surprising that the One who wept, would also physically hunger. "And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred" (Matthew 4:2). Hunger demonstrated that Jesus experienced the limitations of the human body, i.e., "in the morning as He returned into the city, He hungered" (Matthew 21:18); but, He used His hunger to teach His disciples the power of prayer. "19 And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away... 21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. 22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:19, 21-22).

#### The LORD Jesus Knew Thirsting, Sleeping, and Weariness.

Jesus used His thirst to provide an improbable opportunity to witness of His Messiahship to a Samaritan woman, i.e., "I that speak unto thee am He [the Christ]" (John 4:26). "There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink" (4:7). On the Cross, Jesus reminded us that His suffering, as witnessed by His thirst, was due to our sin, i.e., "Christ also hath once suffered for [or, because of] sins, the Just for the unjust" (1Peter 3:18). "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst" (John 19:28). Humanity is limited by the necessity of sleep; and so, Jesus slept. "And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but He was asleep" (Matthew 8:24). Again, Jesus' encounter with the Woman at the Well was at noon, following the weariness of traveling from Judea during the first part of the day. "Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour" (John 4:6).

#### He Was a Man of Sorrows.

It was the sincerest display of true sorrow when Jesus responded to Mary's weeping over the loss of her brother Lazarus. "When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled" (John 11:33). In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was so intensely sorrowful about the sins of mankind and greatly agonized over the ordeal of blood and suffering that would have to pay for our sins, that He sweat real, physical blood-- but, it was the "precious blood" of a "Lamb without blemish and without spot" (1Peter 1:19). "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). As humans, we understand being troubled about much smaller things, but Jesus sorrowed for the Salvation of the world. "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12:27). Isaiah's description of the Messiah, identified Him as a Man, Who is "despised and rejected"-- not because of His sins, but ours. "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and

acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not" (Isaiah 53:3).

#### The Pain of Buffeting, Indignities, and Scourging Were Endured By the Saviour.

What human being would enjoy being physically abused? Certainly, Jesus did not find any human pleasure in His mistreatment by the soldiers. "Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands" (Matthew 26:67). How often does the unreasonableness of man manifest itself in the physical abuse of the defenseless? Only by Special Promise can we be delivered, i.e., "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 54:17). "And when they had blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face, and asked Him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote Thee?" (Luke 22:64). "And Herod with his men of war set Him at nought, and mocked Him, and arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him again to Pilate" (Luke 23:11). The barbarity of scourging would be enough to kill a man, but the LORD Jesus must have been in robust enough health to survive it, only to be crucified. "Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified" (Matthew 27:26).

#### The Suffering of the Cross, His Death, and His Side Pierced, Were the Circumstances at the Close of His Earthly Life.

In retrospect, this Psalm accurately described (and prophesied) the crucifixion of our LORD. "For dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet" (Psalm 22:16). What other death is so largely chronicled in the Scriptures, than that of the LORD Jesus Christ? "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left" (Luke 23:33). Even as Jesus did "lay down [His] life, that [He] might take it again" (John 10:17), He-- not man-- chose the moment to give up His spirit to the Father. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30). Unlike the apparitions of a magician or sorcerer, the blood and water from Jesus' side were really His. "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34).

#### The Humiliation of His Burial and the Glory of His Resurrection Speak of the Necessity of His Human Nature to the Gospel Message.

Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb, belonging to Joseph of Arimathaea. "59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed" (Matthew 27:59-60). This Joseph of Arimathaea, a disciple of the LORD Jesus, boldly begged Pilate for the body of Jesus. "And he bought fine linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen, and laid Him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre" (Mark 15:46). But, Thanks Be to God, since Jesus died physically, He arose bodily-- just as the Saints will arise at the Resurrection of the Just, i.e., "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:21). "And killed the Prince of Life, Whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15). A prime feature of the Gospel, is the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, because, in like fashion, the resurrection of the Saints in real, glorified bodies, demonstrates Christ's powerful overcoming of death. "Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my Gospel" (2Timothy 2:8).

### Christ's Human Nature Fulfilled Old Testament Prophecy

The redemption of mankind from his sins, has been the intention of the God of Love from the beginning. "**And I will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel**" (Genesis 3:15). Much of God's redemptive program seems mysterious to us because His ways are so much higher than our ways. "For as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9). The "seed" (Genesis 3:15) of the woman makes embryonic reference to the Virgin Birth and Humanity of the LORD Jesus Christ. Even before we had confessed that we were sinners, the Father had been

preparing His Son to be the "propitiation for our sins" (1John 2:2). Satan bruised the heel of the LORD Jesus Christ on the Cross, but only temporarily. "Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the LORD of Glory" (1Corinthians 2:8). However, Satan's head was bruised by the LORD Jesus Christ, ultimately, for Eternity. "And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, where the Beast and the False Prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Revelation 20:10).

The LORD Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son (1John 4:9) of the Father, was always and eternally begotten in His person. **"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee"** (Psalm 2:7). But, the Son's manifestation in human flesh occurred only about 2,000 years ago. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law" (Galatians 4:4). The Humanity of Christ is part of the "Mystery of Godliness" (1Timothy 3:16). Only a man with a willing heart to do the will of God could understand such a puzzle. "If any man will do His will [literally, is willing to do His will], he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John 7:17).

When the LORD Jesus was confronted with the contentious and deceptive questions of the scribes and Pharisees, He proposed His own question to them, which if they answered, He would answer their questions. Jesus addressed the Messianic significance of the Second Psalm, which lends itself to the both the concepts of the Divinity and Humanity of the Messiah. **"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool"** (Psalm 110:1). Jesus addressed the scribes, who claimed to believe the Scriptures, with the seeming contradiction that the Messiah, who would be "David's son" (humanity of Christ), would also be David's "LORD" or Superior (divinity of Christ). "41 And He said unto them, How say they that Christ is David's son? 42 And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD [the Father] said unto my LORD [the Son] , Sit Thou on My right hand, 43 Till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. 44 David therefore calleth Him LORD, how is he [David] then His son?" (Luke 20:41-44).

The Virgin Birth of Christ was the appointed means to manifest God in human flesh. **"Therefore the LORD Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel"** (Isaiah 7:14). Since the Only Wise God (Romans 16:27) chooses the most suitable means to the end of redeeming mankind from his sins, the humanity of Christ was necessary. "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). As the "Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1) had to become a man to perform the high priestly duties of making reconciliation for our sins. "17 Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a Merciful and Faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 18 For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour [literally, help] them that are tempted" (2:17-18). If we view God's conduct toward man from the Creation until now, we will better appreciate that God's manifestation of Himself to us through the Son and the Holy Spirit, reveals that He is a God that is benevolently, personally interested in our welfare. "Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?" (Jeremiah 23:23). His presence on this planet through the humanity of the LORD Jesus, demonstrates His desire to give man rest from his sins. "And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14).

The Old Testament of the Scriptures is replete with clues of God's purpose to redeem and govern mankind through the human advent of the Divine Son of God. "6 **For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will perform this"** (Isaiah 9:6-7). What astounds us is that the Son of God condescended to **become a man**-- to suffer all the difficulties of the flesh and the human condition, "yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Heaven will surely be filled with the Saints' praise and admiration for so bold an act of love that the Son of Man would become human flesh and then "lay down His life for His friends" (John 15:13). "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (15:14).

## **Christ's Human Sinlessness Proves the Justice of God's Demand for Man's Sinlessness**

It is a forthright point of Biblical theology to state that Jesus is truly God Almighty and that He was truly born as a human baby nearly 2,000 years ago; but, the uniqueness of His person has caused many in the study of theology **to discount the value of His human sinless life**. "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin" (1John 3:5). "Sure," they may say, "Jesus did not sin while in human flesh, but that's because He is God." But, this misses the point entirely of why the Almighty had to resort to such a daring move as to allow His Eternally Begotten Son to become a defenseless babe in a manger. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1Peter 2:22). You can nearly see in

your mind the picture of the Father discussing with the Son that mankind would object to His demand of sinless living as unreasonable and unobtainable because no one could live without sin while in human flesh. But, then the Son said, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). The Son of God was willing to undergo all the difficulties, humiliations, and sufferings of the human condition, **if only the attainability of a sinless walk from man could be proved, then the Father's wisdom and justice of requiring it would be justified.** "5 But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. 6 He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1John 2:5-6).

The Son of God volunteered to become a man, because He desired to justify the Father's demand of loving obedience from all the children of men. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous" (1John 5:3). Since "grievous" Commandments are unbearable and impossible to obey, the Son had to demonstrate that man in human flesh **could** obey everything that the Father commanded of all men. "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" (Matthew 22:37-39). And, if Satan could stumble Jesus into sinning, then Satan would justify himself for his rebellion, *as well as humiliate the Father* for requiring more than He ought from His creation. **"If ye love Me, keep My Commandments"** (John 14:15).

If one must be the Son of God to obey completely the Father, then no one needs to feel himself rebellious for giving only the semblance of partial obedience. But, "whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Jesus came to destroy the arguments of self-justification that allow man to **hide behind physical flesh as his excuse for sinning.** Instead, the Son of God's manifestation in human flesh was to obliterate man's arguments of self-justification for why he sins, which arguments are the "works of the devil". "He that committeth sin **is** of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1John 3:8). Sin is so rampant in this world, and in the Professed Church, because excuse is found everywhere that our flesh made us to sin. "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12).

Man has transposed sin away from his **willful disobedience** of God and metaphysically made human flesh the residence of sin, as evidenced by the misunderstanding many have of the Apostle Paul's inspired reference to "sinful flesh". "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). **Flesh can only be sinful by how we use it,** else wise Christ could not have "condemned **sin** in the flesh" (8:3) without obliterating flesh entirely-- which He did not. "19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1Corinthians 6:19-20). Brother Paul goes on to **disabuse us of any misconception we have that flesh, by itself, is sinful,** by further informing us that:

(1) it is only how we mind or treat the flesh, that makes it sinful, i.e., "6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be Spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:6-7), and

(2) we are no longer minding the flesh, if we are walking after the Spirit, i.e., "8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (8:8-9).

If we desire to honor God for His Love, Truth, Mercy, and Grace, then **we ought to give the Son of God the "glory and honour and power"** (Revelation 4:11) **for walking in human flesh without sinning, without having to resort to miraculous or supernatural advantages normally unavailable to mortal man.** "Though He were a Son, yet **learned He obedience** by the things which He **suffered**" (Hebrews 5:8). Instead of calling for the assistance of angels to stand in for Him when obedience was difficult and sinning was easy, i.e., "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53), **Jesus chose to be humanly perfected and matured by His human sufferings.** "For it became Him [the Father], for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to **make** the Captain of Their Salvation [Jesus] **perfect through sufferings**" (Hebrews 2:10).

The sinless obedience of Christ while in human flesh magnifies the wise choice of God to create man and to wisely and certainly expect that man must perfectly obey Him, "as unto a Faithful Creator" (1Peter 4:19). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His Judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). If the Son of God was the only man to ever obey the Father, then God would still be praised for the wisdom and justice of His decision to require loving and sinless obedience from man. "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is



written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy Sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged" (3:4). But, the truth is that any time that any man ever does obey the Father, it is because the New Covenant's gift of the Spirit of Christ is working in us to "will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). And, that working in us comes **only** when we trust Him. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23).

## Christ's Human Nature Exemplifies How We Can and Ought to Live

Since Jesus is truly the Almighty God, being "declared to be the Son of God with power" (Romans 1:4), and since Christ is also truly man, being "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15), then the human nature of Jesus Christ joyfully announces to all mankind that we can and ought to live without sinning. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1John 2:6). Even as the "Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made [us] free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2), He has set us free as "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). No longer are we to cower as sinners, sinning while awaiting the execution of the penalty for our deeds. "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:15). The Christmas gifts that the LORD Jesus has given us include not only His atonement for our sins, but His deliverance of us from any necessity to 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).

It was vital that the Son of God manifested Himself to us as Emmanuel (Matthew 1:23), because it demonstrated through Jesus' perfect human example that God is justified in expecting and receiving perfect obedience, i.e., walking without sinning, from His Saints. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). It is a depreciation of the true value of the humanity of the LORD Jesus Christ, to say that Christ was only able to walk perfectly in this world without sinning, because His Divine Nature somehow metaphysically extinguished the sin in His human nature. "1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins: 2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity" (Hebrews 5:1-2).

Jesus' perfect human example evidences that **the only sin in the human nature comes when we actually commit sin**, not by merely being human. "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:3). But, after we have confessed "our sins, He is Faithful and Just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness" (1John 1:9), then we are without sin in our human nature, and can partake again in the Divine Nature. "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). The great tragedy for mankind and for the Professed Church, is that the humanity of Jesus Christ is either **only** a good example or **only** a preview of how life will be lived "when we all get to Heaven". But, how much more has His Divine Power "given unto us all things that pertain unto Life and Godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (1:3)?

If the Pre-Tribulational Rapture and departure of the Saints is so close at hand, why need we any further discussion of how the Professed Church could have or should have lived? Because the prospect of anyone departing this planet for Heaven is still contingent upon whether we are walking according to the "righteousness which is of faith" (Romans 10:6). If we do not learn and live what Abraham understood-- "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3)-- then we will not experience the blessings of Abraham. "18 Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: 20 He staggered not at the Promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what He had Promised, He was able also to perform. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:18-22). Likewise, our worthiness to be Pre-Tribulationally Raptured is based upon the "righteousness of faith" (Romans 4:13). "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).

## Conclusion

The doctrine of the humanity of Christ is so important that the true confession of it, is a test of belonging to God. "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is **come in the flesh** is of God" (1John 4:2). In fact, the human nature of Christ will be denied by the Antichrist. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess **not** that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (2John 7). "The Antichrist denies not only that

Jesus is solely the Christ-- and continues to be so-- but, Antichrist also denies that Jesus the Christ dwells in a resurrected, fleshly body-- and continues to do so-- while he, the Antichrist, obviously claims to be dwelling in human flesh" (excerpted from our article, "[Antichrist Shall Come](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Prophecy/Antichrist.Shall.Come.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Prophecy/Antichrist.Shall.Come.html> --). "And every spirit that confesseth **not** that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (1John 4:3).

Because of the celebration of Christmas, we have been benefited by a thorough familiarization with the idea of the birth of the Baby Jesus in a Bethlehem manger. "1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with Child. 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. 7 And she brought forth her Firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. 8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And, lo, the angel of the LORD came upon them, and the glory of the LORD shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the LORD. 12 And this shall be a Sign unto you; Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:1-14).

But, the true benefit of the Christmas Story is **the manifestation of the Son of God in human flesh to "redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works"** (Titus 2:14). We need to be reminded that the Little Baby in a Bethlehem manger was named Jesus, by His Father, because "He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). So great is His Salvation, that He not only would redeem us from the "wrath to come" (1Thessalonians 1:10), but the Spirit of Christ, Who is the True Spirit of Christmas, would secure for Himself *a wonderful change of heart in the children of men that would cause loving obedience in His people*. "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). And, the willingness of His people seems to be the very issue that connects the reason for the advent of Jesus at the First Christmas with His soon return. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy Power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: Thou hast the dew of Thy youth" (Psalm 110:3).

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## The Majesty of the Atonement of Jesus Christ

Or, Christ's Humanity Provided an Atoning Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind

"And not only so, but we also joy in God through our LORD Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement"

(Romans 5:11).

by Tom Stewart

12-31-99

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### Preface

At this moment, only a short time before the "glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13), it is a retrospective of awe and wonder that we would consider again the central, fundamental, and timeless theme of the atoning self-sacrifice of the Creator for the well-being of rebellious and sinful man. "And without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1Timothy 3:16). Nothing can compare to "His Unspeakable Gift" (2Corinthians 9:15), that the Son of God "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). May His Name be forever blessed "for His Great Love wherewith He loved us" (Ephesians 2:4) by His voluntary sacrifice, that we "might have Life through His Name" (John 20:31)!

### What Does the Term Atonement Mean?

Charles G. Finney best summarized the meaning of the term atonement.

"The English word atonement is synonymous with the Hebrew word cofer. This is a noun from the verb caufar, to cover. ["Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt **pitch** <Hebrew, kaphar or caufar, meaning 'to cover'> it within and without with pitch" (Genesis 6:14).] The cofer or *cover*, was the name of the lid or cover of the ark of the covenant, and constituted what was called the mercy-seat. ["And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the **mercy seat** <Hebrew, kapporeth, meaning 'mercy seat or cover of the ark of the covenant'> that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee" (Exodus 30:6).] The Greek word rendered *atonement* is katallage. ["And not only so, but we also joy in God through our LORD Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement <Greek, katallage, meaning 'atonement or reconciliation'>" (Romans 5:11).] This means reconciliation to favour, or more strictly, the means or conditions of *reconciliation* to favour; from katallasso, to 'change, or exchange.' ["To wit, that God was in Christ, **reconciling** <Greek, katallasso, meaning 'to change or exchange, especially of money'> the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the Word of **Reconciliation** <Greek, katallage>" (2Corinthians 5:19).] The term properly means *substitution*. An examination of these original words, in the connection in which they stand, will show that **the atonement is the governmental substitution [or, exchanging] of the sufferings of Christ for the punishment of sinners**. ["For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1Peter 3:18).] It is a covering of their sins by his sufferings" (from Finney's "[Lectures on Systematic Theology](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html)"-- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html> --, [Lecture 34 on "Atonement"](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE%2034)-- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE 34](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE%2034) --).

"But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9).

## What Is the Purpose of Christ's Suffering in the Atonement?

The One-Time-Only Sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of mankind required the suffering of our LORD, while in human flesh. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). More than mental anguish, *Christ suffered in the flesh that all men might be saved*. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1Peter 3:18). But, why did God deem it wise, i.e., the most fit means to the end of man's salvation, to suffer and die while in human flesh to accomplish the salvation and reclamation of man from sin? Could He not have accomplished it another way? Since the "Only Wise God Our Saviour" (Jude 25), chose that path, then it must be the most wise way. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). But, more importantly, *the Almighty's choice of manifesting Himself in human flesh through His Only Begotten Son, and dying for our sins, has the most powerful persuasive effect of subduing our tendency to sin*. "He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:19). *Confirming all holy beings in their holiness so that there could never be another outbreak of sin, such as when Lucifer rebelled in Heaven, is a prime purpose of the Atonement of the LORD Jesus Christ*. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:21).

## Why Is an Atonement Necessary?

Man has been so constituted by God with a moral nature that recognizes the reality of God's existence and the necessity of gratefully acknowledging and glorifying Him. "20 For the invisible things of Him from the Creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His Eternal Power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:20-21). Gratitude to God would naturally manifest itself in love to God and to man, i.e., "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27), but this love of God and man did not happen. "14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another" (Romans 2:14-15).

Throughout history, man has known that he has offended God, and that he needs some kind of expiation, reconciliation, or atonement for his sins or offenses against God. "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you" (Acts 17:23). The Old Testament is complete with a dispensation of offerings and sacrifices to Jehovah. "These are the feasts of the LORD,

which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his [its] day" (Leviticus 23:37). Even the New Testament understands the need for atonement to be made for the forgiveness of sin. "And almost all things are by the Law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

If man is so certain that he must be forgiven for his sins, then it is even more certain that God knew of this necessity long beforehand. "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (Matthew 6:8). But, why must such extreme measures be taken to manifest the Son of God in human flesh and cause Him to suffer so? The atonement was necessary because sin violated the Law of the Kingdom of God and threatened to bring it down for all the angelic and holy beings, as well as to secure the salvation, sanctification, happiness, and future of mortal man. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the Law: for sin is the transgression of the Law" (1John 3:4). When children knowingly and willfully break family rules, human parents know that they must uphold the integrity of the rules, as much as they would desire to seek the reconciliation of their offending children; thus, in the counsel of God, it was deemed wise for the Son, the Lamb, to be "slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Accordingly, the atonement by the LORD Jesus Christ provided God, the Head of the Moral Government of the Universe, with the justification for His pardoning of our sins, while still upholding the worth of His most holy Law, which benefits all holy beings-- God Himself, man, and angels. "24 Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: **that He might be just**, and the justifier of Him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

## Miscellaneous Comments

If the Almighty desired only the letter of the Law to be executed, then the Retributive Justice called down upon sinning angels would have sufficed to stop the spread of rebellion in the universe. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). Retributive Justice is the concept of an exact payment for sin, that the sinner must and will be punished without probation or mercy, as demonstrated in God's swift judgment of the rebellious angels. "2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; 3 How shall we escape, if we neglect So Great Salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the LORD, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him" (Hebrews 2:2-3). But, in the wisdom and love of God, if the spirit of the Law would be enacted, then His Public Justice could enable the sinner to be reclaimed, while still upholding the integrity of the Moral Law. "29 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the Commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one LORD: 30 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first Commandment... 33 And to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:29-30, 33).

Public Justice is the administration of the Law that secures the highest good and well-being of the universe, while upholding the Law; hence, it secures the welfare of the general public. The concept of the spirit of the Law contrasted to the letter of the Law was illustrated by the LORD Jesus, while in human flesh. "1 At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. 3 But He said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; 4 How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? 5 Or have ye not read in the Law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? 6 But I say unto you, That in this place is One greater than the temple. 7 But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matthew 12:1-8). Therefore, exception may be made to the execution of the letter of the Law, but never to the spirit of the Law.

The spirit of the Law is the same as the Public Justice that Charles G. Finney placed in contrast to Retributive Justice, i.e., "the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). Notice how Finney points out that Retributive Justice makes no exception to the execution of the penalty for the infraction of the rules, as when the angels sinned, there was quick and immediate punishment without opportunity for salvation. "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2Peter 2:4).

"There is an important distinction between retributive and public justice. Retributive justice consists in treating every subject of government according to his character. It respects the intrinsic merit or demerit of each individual, and deals with him accordingly. Public justice, in its exercise, consists in the promotion and protection of the public

interests, by such legislation and such an administration of law, as is demanded by the highest good of the public. It implies the execution of the penalties of law where the precept is violated, unless something else is done that will as effectually secure the public interests. When this is done, public justice demands, that the execution of the penalty shall be dispensed with by extending pardon to the criminal. Retributive justice makes no exceptions, but punishes without mercy in every instance of crime. Public justice makes exceptions, as often as this is permitted or required by the public good. Public justice is identical with the spirit of the moral law, and in its exercise, regards only the spirit of the law. Retributive justice cleaves to the letter, and makes no exceptions to the rule, 'the soul that sinneth, it shall die'" (from Finney's "[Lectures on Systematic Theology](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html)"-- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html> --, [Lecture 34 on "Atonement"](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE%2034)-- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE 34](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE%2034) --).

The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ was for all men. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). The willingness of the LORD Jesus to humble Himself to become a man, made possible His appeasement for our sins; yea, for the sins of the whole world. "And He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1John 2:2).

"14. The spirit of the moral law can no more be dispensed with by the lawgiver than it can be repealed. The spirit of the law requires that, when the precept is violated, the penalty shall be executed, or that something shall be done that will as effectually and impressively negative the inference or assumption, that sin can escape with impunity under the government of God, beyond the limits of the race for whom the atonement was especially made, as the execution of the law would do. The following things must be true under a perfect government, as has been said above.

"(1.) That sin cannot be forgiven merely upon condition of repentance; for this condition is within the power of the subject, so that he might then be sure of impunity.

"(2.) Nor can it be forgiven upon a condition that shall be repeated, for this would encourage the hope of impunity.

"(3.) Nor can it be forgiven upon a condition that will extend to all worlds, and throughout all eternity, for this would be equivalent to forgiving sin merely upon condition of repentance, without any reference to the authority of law or to public justice.

"(4.) Hence it is evident that it must originate in sovereign clemency, subject to the previous conditions." (from Finney's "[Lectures on Systematic Theology](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html)"-- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html> --, [Lecture 34 on "Atonement"](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE%2034)-- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE 34](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE%2034) --).

A grand mistake of modern theology is to confound Retributive and Public Justice.

"12. If mercy or pardon is to be extended to any who have violated law, it ought to be done in a manner and upon some conditions that will settle the question, and establish the truth, that the execution of penalties is not to be dispensed with merely upon condition of the repentance of the offender. In other words, if pardon is to be extended, it should be known to be upon a condition not within the power of the offender. Else he may know, that he can violate the law, and yet be sure to escape with impunity, by fulfilling the conditions of forgiveness, which are, upon the supposition, all within his own power.

"13. So, if mercy is to be exercised, it should be upon a condition that is not to be repeated. The thing required by public justice is, that nothing shall be done to undermine or disturb the influence of law. Hence it cannot consent to have the execution of penalties dispensed with, upon any condition that shall encourage the hope of impunity [exemption from punishment]. Therefore, public justice cannot consent to the pardon of sin but upon condition of an atonement, and also upon the assumption that atonement is not to be repeated, nor to extend its benefits beyond the limits of the race for whom it was made, and that only for a limited time. If an atonement were to extend its benefits to all worlds and to all eternity, it would nullify its own influence, and encourage the universal hope of impunity, in case the precepts of the law were violated. This would be indefinitely worse than no atonement; and public justice might as well consent to have mercy exercised, without any regard to securing the authority and influence of law" (from Finney's "[Lectures on Systematic Theology](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html)"-- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html> --, [Lecture](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE%2034)

[34 on "Atonement"-- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE 34 --](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.4.html#LECTURE 34 --)).

## Conclusion

The most majestic act of God towards us was the Atonement of Jesus Christ on the Cross for all mankind. So marvelous was this act of atonement, that the angels were quite eager to see how the LORD would handle it. "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" (1Peter 1:12). Eternity cannot exhaust our study of the love of God that was manifested in His atonement for us. "14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, 15 Of whom the whole family in Heaven and Earth is named, 16 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; 17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 May be able to comprehend with all Saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19 And to know the Love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20 Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us, 21 Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:14-21).

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# An Urgent Call to Christian Perfection

## An Exposition of the Doctrine of Christian Perfection

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light"

(Matthew 11:28-30).

by Tom Stewart

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B. 1 John 1:8

C. Philippians 3:12

D. 1 Timothy 1:15

VII. Christ: The Example of Christian Perfection

A. That God became man is astounding!

1. Prophecy
2. Fulfillment
3. In the likeness of sinful flesh
4. Made under the law
  - a. The law is holy.
  - b. Justification is by faith.
  - c. The law is still necessary.
  - d. The law is not ceremonial, but moral.
  - e. The purpose of the law is to define sin.
  - f. Christ upholds the law perfectly.
  - g. The law completely points to Christ.
  - h. Christ expects perfect obedience to His law.

B. That Christ became our servant is humbling!

C. That Christ suffered for us is sanctifying!

Conclusion

Christ's Roll Call of Christian Perfection

## Preface

The things which we both have seen and known from the beginning about the LORD Jesus Christ are the things which I must share with you. Even as we "have tasted that the LORD is gracious" (1Peter 2:3) and "our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1John 1:1), even so these things that I am writing, I write because I desire to have fellowship with you: "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1John 1:3).

Why am I writing to you about the doctrine of Christian perfection?

First, because I desire to be like the Master. I do not wish to be superior to my Master, but I want to be like Him. "The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master" (Luke 6:40).

Second, because Christ prayed for our unity. "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in One" (John 17:23).

Third, because if you are reading this, you have, most likely, demonstrated faith in Christ. I write to you, not as though you have not demonstrated saving faith, but "we speak wisdom among them that are perfect" (1Corinthians 2:6).

Fourth, because I desire to promote the unity of our faith unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Likewise, with whatever degree of gift that I can minister, I am writing this "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

Fifth, because I desire to present you perfect in Christ Jesus. Unapologetically, I must preach to you Christ, The Hope of



Glory, "warning every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28).

Sixth, because I desire that you may know the Word of God more perfectly, that you may do all the will of God. I encourage you to search the Scriptures to see whether the things I write to you are so (Acts 17:11), because "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God... That the man of God may be perfect" (2Timothy 3:16,17). Not only may he be perfect, but he will be perfect. The place of his perfection is not simply in Heaven, but on earth where Christ prayed for it: "Thy will be done **in earth**, as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

And finally, I write this because Christ insists upon our perfection here and now. After all, the only reason why we ought to insist upon any doctrine is because our LORD and Teacher insists upon it. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

I am well aware that our beloved brother Paul plainly warns us as he did Timothy: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our LORD Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself" (1Timothy 6:3-5). I, too, desire to consent to wholesome words and to the doctrine which is according to godliness.

For this reason, I am writing to you to set forth the doctrine of Christian perfection (or, entire sanctification). Simply put, Christian perfection is to appropriate Christ by faith in all of His offices, capacities, and relations to meet our every need in life... "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:20, Who "shall supply all [our] need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19), Who is our "Jehovah Jireh" (Genesis 22:14) (literally, the LORD will provide).

## **I. Unrealistic Idea of Perfection? or, Are We Compassed About With So Great a Cloud of Witnesses?**

### **A. Andrew Murray: *Be Perfect: A Devotional Study of Christ's Command* (1893)**

In 1893, Andrew Murray wrote a devotional study of Christ's command for Christian perfection. Appropriately, he entitled it *Be Perfect*. Listen to the heart of this man of God (p.8):

"Jesus said, 'If any will do [His will]... he shall know' [John 7:17]. The same principle holds good in all human attainment. It is only he who has accepted in adoring submission and obedience the command 'Be perfect' [Matthew 5:48] who can hope to know what the perfection is that God asks and gives. Until the Church is prostrate before God, seeking this blessing as her highest good, it will be no wonder if the very Word, instead of being an attraction and a joy, is a cause of apprehension and anxiety, of division and offense."

### **B. John Wesley: *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1767)**

You can see that nothing we discuss about Christian perfection is "done in a corner" (Acts 26:26) when we can reach back into church history and find so eminent a testimony as that of John Wesley. Truly we are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1) who affirm the doctrine of Christian perfection. Read Wesley's *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (p.106):

"There is such a thing as perfection; for it is again and again mentioned in Scripture... It is not absolute. Absolute perfection belongs not to man, nor to angels, but to God alone... It does not make a man infallible; none is infallible while he remains in the body... Is it sinless? It is not worth while to contend for a term. It is 'salvation from sin'... It is 'perfect love' (1John 4:18). This is the essence of it: its properties, or inseparable fruits, are, rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in everything giving thanks (1Thessalonians 5:16, etc.)... It is improvable. It is far from lying in an indivisible point, from being incapable of increase... It is amissible, capable of being lost."

### **C. Charles G. Finney: *Finney's Systematic Theology* (1846)**

Another man of God, Charles G. Finney, recorded in his book (1846), *Finney's Systematic Theology* (pp.355-356):

"It has been common for Christians to suppose, that a state of entire consecration is attainable; but while they believe in the sinfulness of their natures, they would not of course call even entire sanctification, entire sanctification... Call it what you please, Christian perfection, heavenly mindedness, the full assurance of faith or hope, or a state of entire consecration; by all these I understand the same thing. And it is certain, that by whatever name it is called, the thing must be aimed at to be attained. The practicability of its attainment must be admitted, or it cannot be aimed at. And now I humbly inquire, whether to preach any thing short of this is not to give countenance to sin?"

As I read Brother Finney's statement above, I noticed a passage directly preceding it (p.355) where he quotes *Barnes' Notes* on 2Corinthians 8:1. Brother Finney begins:

"It has long been maintained by orthodox divines, that a person is not a Christian who does not aim at living without sin- that unless he aims at perfection, he manifestly consents to live in sin; and is therefore impenitent. It has been said, and I think truly, that if a man does not, in the fixed purpose of his heart, aim at total abstinence from sin, and at being wholly conformed to the will of God, he is not yet regenerated, and does not so much as mean to cease from abusing God. *Barnes' Notes* upon 2Corinthians viii.1, we have the following: 'The unceasing and steady aim of every Christian should be perfection- perfection in all things- in the love of God, of Christ, of man; perfection of heart, and feeling, and emotion; perfection in his words, and plans, and dealings with men; perfection in his prayer, and in his submission to the will of God. No man can be a Christian who does not sincerely desire to be perfect as God is, and who does not make it his daily and constant aim to be as perfect as God, may set it down as demonstrably certain that he has **no true religion**.'"

Thus far we have only the testimony of men- "so great a cloud of witnesses"- concerning the doctrine of Christian perfection. They are... "being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). We, however, as those who are "of full age" (literally, perfect) (Hebrews 5:14) require the testimony of the "strong meat" of the Word of God, because only then can we by "reason of use have [our] senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). Beware what you believe! Take care to build your doctrine ONLY upon "What saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3).

## II. "Be Perfect": What Saith the Scripture?

### A. It is commanded.

The LORD Jesus Christ commanded, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Because the Father and the Son are one... "he that hath seen Me [Christ] hath seen the Father" (John 14:9)... Christ is our model for Christian perfection. He is both our motivation, as well as example, that we "should follow His steps" (1Peter 2:21). The goal: "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man**, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

### B. We are able to obey the command.

Just the fact that Christ commands us to be perfect is reason enough for us to believe that we can, and ought, to be perfect. Why?

First, the just nature of our LORD **secures** for us the attainability of our perfection on the ground that it is a fair, just, and equitable command. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

Second, the LORD completely understands the capabilities and limitations of each of us. "For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).

Third, our LORD Jesus Christ is completely sympathetic to our circumstances, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

Finally, our claim to love God necessitates our obedience to His command to be perfect because His commands are never "grievous" (or, burdensome). Grievous commands are impossible and unbearable. Not so with His command that we should be perfect. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are **not** grievous" (1John 5:3).

### **C. Christians are perfect.**

Perfect describes not only our heavenly Father, but also His earthly children. "Because as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17). Christians are Scripturally represented as presently perfect, not awaiting future heavenly fulfillment. "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Christians are Scripturally represented as actually perfect, not just in theory. "Let us therefore, as be perfect, be thus minded: if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (Philippians 3:15).

### **D. Perfect means sanctified.**

Christians are those who are perfect. Those who are perfect are sanctified... "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Christian sanctification is a fact:

(1) "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that **are sanctified** in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1Corinthians 1:2) and

(2) "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?... fornicators... idolaters... adulterers... effeminate... abusers of themselves with mankind... thieves... covetous... drunkards... revilers... extortioners... And such **were** some of you: but ye are washed, but **ye are sanctified**" (1Corinthians 6:9-11).

### **E. Sanctification is fact.**

Christian sanctification is a fact. How?

First, via the Word. "Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth" (John 17:17). "That He [Christ] might sanctify and cleanse it [the Church] with the washing of water by the Word" (Ephesians 5:26).

Second, via faith. "That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith" (Acts 26:18).

Third, via the Father. "To them that are sanctified by God the Father" (Jude 1).

Fourth, via Christ. "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12).

Finally, via the Holy Ghost. "That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:16).

### **F. Sanctification is entire.**

Not only did the LORD Jesus Christ command us to be perfect, but the Apostle Paul prayed for the complete sanctification of the Thessalonians. Whether you call it entire sanctification or Christian perfection, it describes the same thing. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23). Notice the following:

(1) God sanctifies completely, not simply enough to get us into Heaven, and

(2) Sanctification must take place NOW for it to be preserved until a future event, i.e., "the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ".

### **G. Perfect means perfect heart.**

What is the nature of Christian perfection? Perfection implies a perfect heart. "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him" (2Chronicles 16:9). A perfect heart demonstrates a wholehearted seeking of God. "With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy commandments" (Psalm 119:10). Anyone who wholeheartedly seeks after God does no iniquity. "Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in His ways" (Psalm 119:2-3). Therefore, sin in the saints must be contrary to abiding in Christ. "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (1John 3:6).

## **H. Perfect means sinless.**

In the book of Job, the question is posed, "What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of woman, that he should be righteous" (Job 15:14). King David faced the same question after he had committed the sin of adultery with Bathsheba. "Have mercy upon me, O God... Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:1,2,7). David implored God for mercy. He asked God to cleanse him from sin. He concluded that if God would purge and wash him, he would "be clean... whiter than snow". No telltale residue of sin remains when the LORD, the Creator of Clean Hearts (Psalm 51:10) has purged and washed a sinner.

## **III. Back to the Basics: The Principles of the Doctrine of Christ**

### **A. "Laying again the foundation"**

Whenever problems occur in Christian endeavor, we would do well to check the foundational "principles of the doctrine of Christ" (Hebrews 6:1). The confidence of Paul writing to the Hebrews was his certainty that they would "go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God" (Hebrew 6:1).

### **B. Existence of God**

The existence of God is the foundational assumption of true religion. Scripture assumes the existence of God at the outset. "In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1:10). Everything Scripture reveals to us about who God is and what He does, constitutes the foundation of why we are obliged to obey God. Man stands before God without excuses because God has already made Himself known to man. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:20). No man can come to God if he does not believe in the existence of God. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

### **C. Faith in God**

Faith in God is a voluntary act of the human will turning toward God. Again, "he that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Hebrews 11:6). **Faith is the action of the human heart reaching up to God, while grace is God reaching down to man. When they embrace, a man is saved. "For by grace are ye saved through faith"** (Ephesians 2:8). You must believe God for yourself, because no one else can do it for you. Even God will not do it for you. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30-31). He who believes is saved.

### **D. Repentance of sin**

Repentance of sin is a voluntary act of the human will turning from sin. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Either a man will turn away from his sin or he will perish from it. The LORD Jesus warns all unregenerate mankind of impending doom if they do not choose to turn away from their sin. "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). To repent is to turn your back on sin and turn toward God. To sin is to turn your back on God and embrace sin. **No man can be both sinful and holy.** For this reason Christ makes clear the only alternatives to unregenerate man: repent or

perish!

## E. Sin

Sin, like faith, is a voluntary act of the human will. Sin is the human will entrenched against God.

### 1. Scriptural definition of sin

#### a. Transgression of the law

"Sin is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4). To transgress the law is to break the law. Scripture does not represent sin as an honest accident, but as a willful, criminal breaking of God's law. Notice that sin is never represented by God to be anything but a willful refusal to do what one knows he ought to do.

#### b. All unrighteousness

"All unrighteousness is sin" (1John 5:17). Again, man must first choose unrighteousness before it would be proper to label him a sinner. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (1John 3:7). If you commit sin, you are a sinner. If you commit murder, you are a murderer. Commit one sin, you are a sinner. "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34). "He that committeth sin is of the devil" (1John 3:8).

#### c. Whatsoever is not of faith

"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). God gives us simple choices. Choose faith or sin. If you choose faith, you reject sin. If you choose sin, you reject faith. You must be a saint or a sinner, **but not both**. To say a Christian **was** a sinner who is now a saint is correct. A Christian was a sinner who is now saved is also correct. "He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). Either saved or a sinner, but never both.

#### d. Knoweth to do good, and doeth it not

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Sin means we must first know what good we are to do for us to choose not to do it. When we know what the good is that must be done, then, and only then, can we choose it or refuse it. **You cannot sin without first a knowledge of what you should or should not do**, i.e. Thou shalt, thou shalt not. This knowledge the Scripture calls the Law. Voluntarily transgress that Law and you become a sinner.

### 2. In Adam's fall, we sinned all?

If a man is properly called a sinner only because of his transgression of God's Law, then what must we make of the old, but popular sentiment: In Adam's fall, we sinned all? This has been a common position in the past, as well as the present, but we have been warned to "be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men" (Ephesians 4:14). Instead of accepting the position that we have been born sinners with a sinful nature, we should "prove all things" and only "hold fast that which is good" (1Thessalonians 5:21). Before making the accusation of "heretic" toward those who reject the belief that all men are sinners by birth and not simply by choice, before defending the doctrine of sin nature as "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), would you not do well to examine the Scripture? "What saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3).

### 3. Sin is criminal.

If it can be proved that all sin is only a result of personal choice to transgress God's law and not also the result of a sinful nature, then all sin must be a criminal act in the eyes of God. If it can be demonstrated from the Scripture that sin is the result of a sinful nature, then sin would simply be an unavoidable calamity. Free choice versus a constitutionally sinful nature.

Criminal act versus an unavoidable calamity. "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). Which position most accurately justifies God? Sin must be only a personal choice to transgress God's law or why would God say, "Sin is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4)?

#### **4. Objections answered**

Let us examine a few Scriptural passages that some claim support the concept that the human nature is sinful in itself.

##### **a. Genesis 5:3**

"Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness and after his image; and called his name Seth." You must assume what you are trying to prove to use this text to support the sin nature position. You must assume that Adam had a sin nature, to prove that he passed it on to Seth. Illogical. Instead, the text asserts that man's moral nature, i.e., his ability to make choices of right versus wrong, just as the Creator makes, was passed from Adam to Seth concurrently with a physical birth.

##### **b. Job 14:4**

"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Job remarks about the plight of man, that the run down physical condition of man (physical depravity) is passed on to the next generation of man by physical birth. Physical depravity is **not** sin. Physical depravity is the resulting run down physical condition due to the actual commission of the first sin.

##### **(1) Death to the sinner**

Spiritual death comes to all who sin. Adam was warned: "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Scripture makes plain about sin... commit it and die. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Moral depravity is sin. Moral depravity is sinning.

##### **(2) The flesh is the opportunity.**

The flesh is the occasion for sin to take place. The flesh itself is not sinful, but when we attempt to satisfy a proper desire of the flesh (i.e., procreation), when specifically told not to (i.e., "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14), that is sin... "for sin is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4).

##### **(3) Sin had physical consequences.**

Man's first sin ad physical consequences:

- (a) "enmity" between Satan and man, especially concerning his flesh (Genesis 3:15),
- (b) "sorrow" in the flesh for the woman in childbearing (Genesis 3:16),
- (c) because of a "cursed" ground (environment) man would toil with "sweat" to "eat" and finally die... "unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:17-19).

##### **(4) Physical depravity is the physical consequence of sin.**

Adam's sin had physical consequences. Physical death must now be the rule for all man. The flesh, once an occasion for good... "And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight [the flesh], and good for food" (Genesis 2:9)... now becomes the occasion for much evil.

Man's environment, as well as body, have been beat as a result of sin. This is physical depravity, which is **not** sin. However, when man obeys the normal, proper desire of the flesh, when commanded by the LORD to contain it, then man commits sin.

This is moral depravity- the act of sinning. Physical depravity precedes moral depravity, but no man has the right to say that he committed adultery because his body forced him! So it would be proper for Job to assert in Job 14:4 that a **physically** depraved human will only beget another physically depraved human.

### c. "No man that sinneth not"

"There is no man that sinneth not" (1Kings 8:46); "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecclesiastes 7:20); "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10): all teach the universality of sin among the unregenerate, but do not prove that man has a sin nature, which he is born with. Sin is universal to all unregenerate man; however, of regenerate man God says; "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). Notice, again, that sin is represented in these passages as **an act**, not a constitutionally sinful nature. Of unregenerate man, it is proper to say that none are righteous (Romans 3:10).

### d. Psalm 51:5

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." David uses the strong language of repentance. Repentance is to take sides with God against yourself. So *thoroughly* did David condemn himself that he claimed that he even was conceived in sin in his mother's womb! His repentance and this language are proper; however, we should not forget the faithful Psalmist's claim: "O LORD God: Thou art my trust from my youth. By Thee have I been holden up from the womb: Thou art He that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise shall be continually of Thee" (Psalm 71:5-6). No wonder the Apostle Paul could speak of his **past** life of sin and claim: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1Timothy 1:15)! False piety? Not hardly! This is the same Paul who also wrote to Timothy: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2Timothy 4:7). Remember that the context of Psalm 51 is repentance. King David is taking sides with the LORD against himself. Expect the language to correspond to this act of repentance!

### e. Psalm 58:3

"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies". What a marked contrast to the faithful Psalmist who the LORD had "holden up from the womb" (Psalm 71:6)! Certainly the wicked do not have the power of speech at birth. This passage affirms that the LORD, the Alpha and Omega, **views the wicked as utterly against Himself- from their birth to their certain death and judgment**. Because the righteous cannot be labeled as being "estranged from the womb", it would be improper to say that this passage proves that all men are born sinners. Instead, this Psalm paints a bleak but accurate picture of the wicked man's birth and judgment.

### f. Romans 5:12

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." It is common amongst evangelical theologians to say: Romans 5:12 means that all sinned by having a sinful nature. These theologians have taught that the possession of a human nature makes one a sinner without the need of committing one sin.

*How to Commit Sin Without Even Trying... Be Born a Human Being* by The Doctrine of Sin Nature. This facetious title only serves to dramatize a real position. Let's examine Romans 5:12.

Sin entered into the world by one man. That is the Genesis record of the first transgression in the garden of Eden... "and death by sin". The first man sinned and spiritually died (not to mention physically). "And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Death passes upon all men because all men have sinned. The "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). If you commit sin, you die. Only those who commit sin die. It just so happens that "all [men] have sinned". Because "all [men] have sinned"... "death [has] passed upon all men". Sin is an action, not a nature.

If we were to conclude that all men are sinners because Adam sinned, we would be just as logical in saying that all men are righteous because of Christ's free gift. Certainly we cannot maintain the universal salvation of mankind, but neither can we maintain that a man is a sinner by birth. Read the rest of the Romans 5:12-19 context. The comparison is between Christ and

Adam "who is the figure of Him that was to come" (Roman 5:15-19):

<b>Adam</b>		<b>Christ</b>
v.15 <b>offense</b> results in <b>many dead</b>	cp.with	v.15 <b>free gift</b> results in <b>abounded to many</b>
v.16 <b>judgment by one</b> results in <b>condemnation</b>	cp.with	v.16 <b>free gift is of many</b> results in <b>justification</b>
v.17 <b>by one man's offense</b> results in <b>death reigned by one</b>	cp.with	v.17 <b>by the gift of One, Jesus Christ,</b> results in <b>abundance of grace/ gift of righteousness</b>
v.18 <b>offense of one</b> results in <b>judgment upon all men to condemnation</b>	cp.with	v.18 <b>righteousness of One</b> results in <b>free gift upon all men to justification</b>
v.19 <b>one man's disobedience</b> results in <b>many were made sinners</b>	cp.with	v.19 <b>obedience of One</b> results in <b>many be made righteous</b>

Read Romans 5:18: "Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." Remember, the context is comparing Christ to Adam. Offense by Adam, righteousness by Christ. Judgment upon all men by Adam, free gift upon all men by Christ. Condemnation by Adam, justification by Christ. Look at the chart and think.

If it is proper to say:

- (a) Adam's offense brings condemnation and judgment upon all men, and
- (b) Christ's righteousness brings justification and the free gift upon all men;

then it would also be proper to say:

- (a) If Christ's righteousness is only appropriated by a personal act of faith, i.e., "the righteousness of God which is by faith" (Romans 3:22), then
- (b) Adam's offense (i.e., sin) should only be appropriated by a personal act of transgression ["sin is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4)].

Sin is not something we do because we have a sin nature and were born sinners, but because of a personal choice... "he that **doeth** righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (1John 3:7). Sin is a criminal act, not a calamity of our nature.

### **g. Ephesians 2:3**

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." When we walked after the flesh and fulfilled the desires of the flesh- in direct opposition to the commandments of God's law- we "**were** by nature the children of wrath". To commit sin is to be morally depraved. And to be morally depraved is to be "by nature the children of wrath". Notice, Paul is inspired to say we **were**- not are- the children of wrath, when we walked after the flesh. When we stop walking after the flesh, we no longer are "by nature the children of wrath". Even still, Paul associates sin with personal choices and not with a constitutionally sinful nature. No man can rightly think, after reading Scripture: My sin nature made me do it, or I commit sin



because I was born a sinner.

Think about it. What Scripturally justifies God the most? "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). The doctrine of sin nature: that sin is the result of a necessary choice due to a nature over which we had no control? The doctrine of sin nature makes sin a mere calamity. Now what about the opposing position that makes sin **only** a deliberate choice of unbelief to reject the love of God "that we keep His commandments" (1John 5:3)? Sin now becomes a crime and not just a mere calamity. "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Romans 7:13).

## IV. Complete: Our Salvation from Sin

### A. How clean is clean?

The question can be legitimately asked: "To what extent does God cleanse us from sin?" Again, "What saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3).

#### 1. 1 John 1:7

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." How much sin? All sin. What kind of sin? All sin. To be cleansed from "all sin" is to be perfectly clean. Who cleanses? Christ cleanses. How does Christ cleanse? With His blood.

#### 2. 1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." To whom is the Apostle John writing? "My little children" (2:1). What will the LORD do when His little children confess their transgressions? Forgive and cleanse. How completely will He cleanse? He will cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness. Can we claim a child of God is honestly confessing his sin, if he is still knowingly harboring other unconfessed sin? Never! Only a hypocrite will attempt to persuade someone that he is truly repentant when holding on to known sin. Even so, when one truly confesses his sins, the result is: our faithful and just God will cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

#### 3. Titus 2:13-14

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ gave Himself for us for a purpose: "that He might redeem us from **all** iniquity". What glorifies Our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ more: to reform us from a few bad habits or to "redeem us from all iniquity"? Why do professed Christians insist that they are not redeemed from all iniquity? Or at least, why do professed Christians complain among themselves about "sin areas" that have not been taken care of? As Brother Finney stated: "When we sin, it is because of our ignorance of Christ."

#### 4. 1 John 3:5

"And ye know He was **manifested to take away our sins**; and in Him is no sin." Who was manifested to take away our sins? Christ, the Lamb of God (John 1:29). His purpose was, and is, "to take away our sins". All our sins. Are we to expect our sins (plural) to be completely removed when we get to Heaven- if we should ever get there? Surely, because "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth" (Revelation 21:27). Can we expect our sins (plural) to be completely removed before death? Certainly! Scripture affirms: "as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17). How is He? "in Him is no sin" (1John 3:5). If in Him is no sin, then so are we to be "in this world"!

## 5. John 1:29

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Obviously, no one in the world will have any sin taken away if personal faith in Christ is not exercised. The Lamb of God is effectual to whosoever will.

## 6. Psalm 51:9

"Blot out all mine iniquities." David asked God to blot out all his iniquities. Would the LORD grant such a request to an Old Testament saint, much less to a New Testament saint? Listen to the Scripture. "The desire of the righteous shall be granted" (Proverbs 10:24). David requested God to blot out all his iniquities with the full assurance that it would be granted. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). How much more a New Testament saint should assure himself from the Scripture that the LORD will treat him so!

## 7. Matthew 1:21

"Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." The name Jesus is inseparable from the idea of Saviour. Saviour of who? His people. Save His people from what? Their sins. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2). Jesus came, not merely to save us from the consequences of our sin, but also to save us from sinning.

## 8. Romans 6:18

"Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Christ has made His children free from sin and its consequences... death (spiritual). Freedom from sin means we are now "the servants of righteousness". To not walk righteously means to walk again as a slave of sin. It is plain that Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (1Peter 2:24). Christ not only saved us, but continues to sanctify us.

### B. What must we do to be free from sin?

Since our salvation from sin is complete, how does God expect man to cooperate with Him in this salvation?

#### 1. 1 Corinthians 15:34

"Awake to righteousness, and sin not." The LORD never demands man to do anything halfway, if it were possible. "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). There is no duality to man's moral choice. The choice is either sinful or holy, but never both. There is, in the truest sense, a unity of moral action. [Please read "[Unity of Moral Action](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html> -- by Charles G. Finney]

If we awake to righteousness, we will not be sinning. If we sleep to righteousness, we will be sinning. Notice that 1Corinthians 15:34 does **not** allow the following duality of moral choice:

- (1) Awake to righteousness and sin, or
- (2) Awake to unrighteousness and sin not. Both combinations are absurd!

#### 2. Hebrews 12:1

"Let us **lay aside** every weight, and the **sin** which doth so easily beset us." How are we to "run with patience the race that is

set before us" (12:1)? This is the "race" of faith. We cannot run with the weight of sin. To weigh ourselves down with sin is to stop the running of the race of faith. Either we "lay aside... sin" and "run... the race", or we weigh ourselves down with sin and cease to run the race. Do one or the other, but never both. There is, and must be, a unity of moral action.

### 3. Hebrews 12:14

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which **no man** shall see the LORD." Holiness is a voluntary choice. Sin is a voluntary choice. Choose sin, and you must cease to be holy. Choose holiness, and you must cease to be a sinner. Obviously, a man cannot be sinful against his will any more than he can be holy against his will.

### 4. Ephesians 1:4

"According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Christ hath chosen us before the foundation of the world to "be holy and without blame". Christ hath chosen us so that we would choose to "be holy and without blame". "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). His predestination and choosing of us in Him, before the foundation of the world, is based upon His foreknowledge that we would choose to "be holy and without blame". Only God has foreknowledge. Christ's choice of us is praise to His sovereignty, while yielding us the benefit of taking away our sin.

### 5. 1 Peter 1:16

"Be ye holy; for I am holy." Why are we obliged to be holy? Because God is holy. The foundation of moral obligation is... as He is, so ought we to be. "Because as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17). "Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1Peter 2:21).

## C. Compare those who commit sin to those who commit righteousness.

What should we understand about those who do, and do not, sin?

### 1. 1 John 3:6

"Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him." Whoever walks, remains, and continues in Christ is not committing sin. Whoever is sinning has not seen or known Christ. How can these things be? To answer that, we must study the purpose for the writing of 1John.

1John was written "that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1John 5:13). What is the basis upon which we can know that we know Christ? "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His Commandments" (1John 2:3). If we walk in obedience, the Holy Spirit testifies that "we know Him". On the other hand, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is **a liar**, and the Truth is not in him" (1John 2:4). If we claim to know Christ, while walking in disobedience, the Holy Spirit testifies that we are a liar and the Truth is not in us. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murders, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and **all liars**, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

Assurance of salvation is only given to those who walk in obedience. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27). "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1Peter 4:17-18).

## 2. 1 John 5:18

"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." Whoever is born of God is not sinning. No man who is sinning can claim to be born of God. The Holy Spirit does not testify contrary to the Word. The "Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father... beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:15-16), if we "are led by the Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14). A backslidden Christian will deprive himself of the testimony of the Spirit of God that he is "born of God". All that a backslidden Christian will have left to testify of his salvation will be his comfortless memories and memorabilia of salvation, that both lost and saved show about. All that the Word of God and the Spirit of Christ will testify to the backslider, is a sense of God's anger and righteous judgment... "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" (Hebrews 10:27)... "except ye repent" (Luke 13:3).

## 3. 1 John 3:9

"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." Strong language. One properly cannot do what he will not do. Take the example of God and His unwillingness to lie. "God is not a man, that He should lie" (Numbers 23:19). God wills not to lie. Paul writes to Titus... "God, that cannot lie" (Titus 1:2). God cannot lie because He will not lie. In the same way, whoever is born of God cannot sin because he is **unwilling** to commit sin "for His Seed remaineth in him".

## 4. 1 John 3:7-8

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil." True righteousness is committed by those who are righteous. Commit one act of true righteousness, and you are righteous. Commit one act of true sin, and you are of the devil. Is this a hard thing to hear? Our pattern for righteousness is Christ, for "he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous" (3:7).

## 5. 1 John 3:10

"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." Just as he that doeth righteousness is righteous, he that doeth not righteousness is not of God. This follows to reason with the Spirit's testimony of His Word, especially John's epistle.

## V. Christ: Our Saviour from Sin

### A. Who is Christ?

#### 1. Jesus (literally, Saviour)

"Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Christ's name, Jesus, reminds us how great a God we have. He came to save us from our sins... from sin's penalty, from sin's consequences, **and from sinning itself**.

When we appropriate Christ by faith in all His offices, relations, and capacities to meet every need in our lives, then we truly are "perfect, even as [our]Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). To appropriate Jesus, our Saviour, by faith, meets our need of salvation from sin's consequences, as well as from sinning itself. Jesus came, not simply "for the remission of sins that are past" (Romans 3:25) and to deliver us "from the wrath to come"(Luke 3:7), but that we would "be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our LORD" (Romans 6:11). Jesus gives us a present tense salvation.

Salvation from sin is not only Jesus revealing Himself as "the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe" (1Timothy 4:10), but also as our present Saviour. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2). To not live longer in sin means to not be

sinning. "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid" (Romans 6:15). In response, we shall not sin because we are "His servants... of obedience unto righteousness" (Romans 6:16).

## 2. The Lamb of God

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). What does the Lamb of God do? He takes away the sin of the world. In what sense? Only of those of the world who believe. "Believe on the LORD Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Just as the sacrificial lamb of the Old Testament was necessary to take away sin, so the Lamb of God's once-for-all-sacrifice takes away all sin in the New Testament.

## 3. His Blessed Son Jesus

"God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:26). Why did God send and raise up His Blessed Son Jesus? To bless us. How? In turning away every one of us from our iniquities. To be without sin is a blessing. You can see that if man is not shackled with the extra baggage of original sin, a sinful nature, and constitutional sin, then a man who has turned away from his sin- courtesy of the Father's Blessed Son Jesus- is **truly** blessed! That man is perfect in Christ. No metaphysical or theological sleight of hand is needed to say that the Father's Blessed Son Jesus has blessed us in making us as perfect as He is perfect. Hallelujah!

## 4. The Head of the Church and the Saviour of the Body

"Even as Christ is the head of the Church: and He is the Saviour of the Body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:23-27). What a mouthful! We are the Church... "which is His Body" (Ephesians 1:23). Christ is the Head of the Church... the Head of our Body. "He is the Saviour of the Body" (5:23).

An example of sanctification is the use of the headship of Christ to the Church, to demonstrate how the wife ought to be subject to the husband. In the same way, "as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it" (5:25), husbands ought to love their wives and give themselves for them. This is practical sanctification or Christian perfection.

The object of Christ in giving Himself to the Church is "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word" (5:26). A pure Church. A clean Church. "A glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (5:27). Divorce the Church from the Word, and you rob the saints of their means to walk as perfect Christians. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word... Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119:9,11). Cleansing from sin and preventing sin, come from the Christian's voluntary compliance and conformity to the Word of God. "Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth" (John 17:17). Christian perfection means that we are cleansed and set apart to Christ for His service by the instrumentality of the Word of God. The result is a body of Christians who are "holy and without blemish" (5:27) not merely in theological theory, but in actual practice.

Christ, the Saviour of the Body, prayed for our Christian perfection in His exemplary prayer... "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10). In spite of all the limitations of our flesh, the Saviour of the Body prays for our present compliance "in earth, as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10) that we "should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). If this does not teach you Christian perfection, what else must the Head of the Church and the Saviour of the Body do?

## 5. Our Redeemer from All Our Iniquity

"Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave

Himself for us, that He might redeem us from **all** iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:13-14). Who is the Blessed Hope? Christ is the Blessed Hope of the Christian. "Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time" (Hebrews 9:28). Christ inspires hope in His people. Why has our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ given Himself for us? "That He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (2:14). The Word of God says it. We ought to believe it. How much iniquity? "**All** iniquity." If Christ is not Our Redeemer from **All** Our Iniquity, then how can He "purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (2:14)? When professed Christians do not walk in purity, then Christ is not their Redeemer from all their iniquity.

## 6. Mercy Seat for Our Sins

"He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the world" (1John 2:2). We are the children of God because "as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). The Apostle John addressed the first epistle of John to "my little children" (1John 2:1). John told his "little children" that Jesus Christ is the "propitiation", or mercy seat, for our sins. In the Old Testament, the mercy seat was the covering of the ark where the LORD accomplished atonement for His people. When Christ is represented as the Mercy Seat for Our Sins, it is difficult for the Christian to not be overwhelmed with a sense of gratitude to Christ for cleansing **all** our sins and making us one with Himself.

## 7. In Him Should All Fulness Dwell

"For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in Heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled. In the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in His sight: **if** ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under Heaven" (Colossians 1:19-23). The evidence can be continually accumulated to prove that Christ was manifested to take away our sins, in the plural-- not the singular, in the present-- not simply the past, in the actual-- not simply the theoretical. Who else but Christ can be called In Him Should All Fulness Dwell? This One reconciles, or brings "at-one-ment", to His people who "were sometime alienated and enemies" of His. And what is His purpose? Again, "to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in His sight" (1:22). Does this sound like a partial redemption from sin, or a future event that takes place when we finally get to Heaven? Not hardly. His salvation is complete, and His redemption is **now**. Notice the "if" provision attached to the end of this passage... "**If** ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel" (1:23). Our continuing in the faith is the basis of His presentation of us "holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in His sight" (1:22). To not continue is to not be presented "holy and unblameable and unreprieveable". "You... hath He reconciled... to present you holy and unblameable... if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled" (1:21-23). To not be presented is to not be reconciled. You cannot say you had what you thought you had if you do not continue. This method of evidence is acceptable to Him in Whom All Fulness Should Dwell. It makes sense to me, too.

## 8. The Hope of Glory

"Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:27-28). The Hope of Glory is a worthy name for Christ. The Hope of Glory is in you, if you know Him. Think of it: We are "perfect in Christ Jesus" Who is "in you, the Hope of Glory". With all of that working for us, should not Christians be embarrassed to continually be talking about sin areas and sin problems that they are still working on? As if sin, especially their sin, was so complex a problem that it could not be immediately dealt with! What is the solution for sin? "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Repent. That is to take sides with God against yourself, just like David (Psalm 51). How do you prevent sin from returning? "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119:11). The Word of God hidden in our hearts, ready to be claimed and obeyed-- not just memorized in our minds-- is the Hope of Glory's sin prevention program.

You've got to love the heart of the Apostle Paul, too. Preaching, warning, and teaching "every man in all wisdom" (1:28). Cooperating with the Holy Spirit, Paul strove to secure the sanctification of his readers and listeners. He preached and taught, but he also had to warn. Recall that Paul was warning Christians. "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled" (Colossians 1:21). Christians are reconciled.

Is it proper to warn Christians? Obviously, yes! Warn them of what?

### **a. Necessity of the Christian to continue**

Warn them to continue.

(1) If ye continue... Then you are a true disciple. "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Live in God's Word because it is your life. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Measure your spirituality, or lack of it, by your relationship to the Word of God. "And His name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13). Freedom is not measured by what human government allows its people, but by how much Truth has found its place in your heart... "ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

(2) If ye continue... Then you are truly reconciled. "You... hath He reconciled... to present you holy and unblameable... If ye continue in the faith" (Colossians 1:21-23). To be reconciled to God is to be made at one with God. Christ's reconciliation is conditional. Though it is offered to whosoever will and "the world" (John 3:16), reconciliation only effects the one who puts his trust in Christ. "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). Reconciliation is conditioned upon faith. "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled" (Colossians 1:23).

Faith, by its very nature, requires the believer to continually exercise that faith to receive the promised blessings of that faith. "The other disciples therefore said unto [Thomas] , We have seen the LORD. But [Thomas] said unto them, Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe [present tense unbelief]. And after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing [present tense faith]. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My LORD and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed [past tense faith]: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed [potentially, future tense faith]" (John 20:25-29).

### **b. Scope of what it means to continue**

"Continue" is a more important word in the Christian vocabulary, than many have been taught. Notice the scope of what a Christian is enjoined to "continue in"... the love of God, the grace of God, the faith, His goodness, prayer, the doctrine, the things which you have learned, brotherly love, and that which you have heard from the beginning.

"Continue in":

#### **(1) Continue in the love of God.**

"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love" (John 15:9).

#### **(2) Continue in the grace of God.**

"Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43). Grace is given by God and is necessary for salvation... "For by grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). Again, though grace is given by God, we must be persuaded to continue in it... "Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God" (Acts 13:43).

### **(3) Continue in the faith.**

Paul and Barnabas "returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:21-22). Again, faith to be true faith must be a continuing faith. Faith does not rest simply on what it has believed or even upon what it will believe. Faith must **continually** work... "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:17).

### **(4) Continue in the goodness of God.**

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou shalt be cut off" (Romans 11:22). God's goodness, like His grace, only gives us benefit "if thou continue in His goodness". God's goodness is conditional, even upon those who have already received His goodness. If you do not **continue** in the grace of God, then "thou shalt be cut off", just like unbelieving Israel... for "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Romans 11:25).

### **(5) Continue in prayer.**

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds" (Colossians 4:2-3). "Pray without ceasing" (1Thessalonians 5:17). "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). Paul was a bold apostle, fearlessly opening his mouth where no man had gone before, but he still asked the help of fellow Christians that he would have the opportunity to utter "the mystery of Christ" (Colossians 4:3). Why is it a mystery? Because we have yet to discover all the Truth as it "is in Jesus" (Ephesian 4:21).

### **(6) Continue in the doctrine.**

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1Timothy 4:16). What is the result of paying attention to yourself and the doctrine (teachings of the Word of God)? "Thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (4:16). Paul practiced what he preached. "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:18-19). Again, salvation is past, present, and future:

- (1) past: "Thy faith hath saved thee" (Luke 7:50),
- (2) present: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12), and
- (3) future: "This shall turn to my salvation" (Philippians 1:19).

### **(7) Continue in brotherly love.**

"Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1). To continue in brotherly love assures our hearts that we are the children of God. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1John 3:14).

## **9. The Very God of Peace**

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23). Who is The Very God of Peace? The One who Paul asked to sanctify wholly the Church. Already He has pronounced about this Laodicean Church and final phase of Church history: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold or hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spur thee out of My mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy



of Me gold tried in fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation 3:15-18). "Lukewarm" means that the pot on the stove was hot at one time (just as Christians were once hot with love to their LORD) but has now cooled off. Cold is pagan and lost. Hot is true Christianity. Because of Laodicean Christianity's lukewarmness, Christ is so sick to His stomach that He threatens to vomit these out of His mouth. Professed Christians who are backslidden from their "First Love" (Revelation 2:40, sense no need of Christ. Speak to them of The Very God of Peace, and they will wonder at you as to who, what, and why you speak thus. They will say, "Oh, I **already** know that. Don't speak to me about that." If you do not realize your need of Christ, you cannot be wholly sanctified. Without that sanctification you can only be described as: "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). The Very God of Peace speaks to you: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19). That is the warning and the invitation. The LORD Jesus Christ, the LORD in the midst of the seven candlesticks (Revelation 1:13), makes His personal appeal to His wayward Church to accept Him and His cleansing and His complete sanctifying: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:20).

## **10. Our Sanctification**

"Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Corinthians 1:30). Christ, Our Sanctification, has already given to us the commanding motivation for Christian perfection. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Certainly the LORD has commanded and we ought to obey, but why should we obey? Simply, because "God is". Because God is, we ought... God is holy (1Peter 1:16), so we ought to be holy. "The Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48), so ought we to be perfect. He who is infinite gives His all, while we who are finite give our all. This is perfection. Discover who and what God is and you will know the foundational reason why you are obliged to be like Him. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17).

### **B. Christian perfection is to appropriate Christ by faith in all of His offices, capacities, and relations to meet our every need in life.**

Not only does Christ motivate us to Christian perfection, but He gives us the assistance needed to secure our sanctification. Call it entire sanctification or Christian perfection. Both describe the same thing. Listen to the yearning of Christ, Our Sanctification: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). What better way to sound the call for Christian perfection... "Learn of Me"?

All that any Christian needs to know about Christian perfection is based upon our knowledge of Christ. For this reason "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 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 1:3-4).

Is it any wonder that the Apostle Peter enjoins us at the end of his epistle... "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Peter 3:18)? Christian perfection demands growth. True growth goes beyond the mere intellectual assent to what the Scripture states about Christ, but rests upon how we have personally appropriated Christ, by faith, to be all and do all that He says.

## **VI. Christian Perfection: "Almost Thou Persuadest Me"?**

### **A. Romans 7, especially verses 14 through 25**

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24). Opponents of this doctrine of Christian perfection, or entire sanctification, in this life, claim that this seventh chapter of Romans is a sad but accurate portrayal of what a Christian cannot avoid as part of the Christian experience. These, who would label Christian perfection as a false

doctrine, claim that Romans chapter seven is proof that Christian perfection is a fantasy and that entire sanctification in this life is something they wish were true, but, alas, only in Heaven will it be true. O wretched creatures they are! Who shall deliver them from their body of death? But, "what saith the Scripture?" (Romans 4:3).

Most will probably admit that Romans 7 describes walking in the flesh, which is the legal experience, while Romans 8 depicts walking in the Spirit, which is the gospel experience. The theme of Romans 7 is the legal experience-- either of a backslider or of a convicted person who never has been converted. A brief outline of Romans 7:

- (1) the dominion of the law (vv.1-3),
- (2) deliverance from the law (vv.4-6),
- (3) the distress of sin (vv.7-13),
- (4) the Slough of Despond (vv.14-24), and
- (5) the dawn of deliverance.

### **1. The dominion of the law (vv.1-3)**

"The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth" (7:1). The law dominates a man as long as he has breath. Paul shows how a man is married to the law 'til death do us part. To illustrate, a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If she marries another while her husband is alive, she is an adulteress. But if her husband is dead, "she is free".

### **2. Deliverance from the law (vv.4-6)**

"But now we are delivered from the law" (7:6). How are we delivered? "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (7:4). Death to the law comes by the body of Christ. Paul makes it no mystery about the relation of the Christian to the law:

- (1) "ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ" (7:4) and
- (2) "now we are delivered from the law" (7:6).

### **3. The distress of sin (vv.7-13)**

"But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (7:13). The law is described:

- (1) The law is not sin. "Is the law sin? God forbid" (7:7),
- (2) No sin is possible without the knowledge of the law. "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law" (7:7), and
- (3) The law is holy, just, and good. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (7:12).

Sin is also described:

- (1) Knowledge of sin comes by the law. "Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law" (7:7),
- (2) Sin takes advantage of the law to produce death. "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me" (7:11), and

(3) Sin is exceeding sinful because it uses the law, which is good, to produce death. "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (7:13).

#### 4. The Slough of Despond (vv.14-24)

"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24). Those who are in the dependency of sin are "carnal [literally, fleshly], sold under sin" (7:14). I do not expect anyone to defend this as victorious Christianity. Look at this wretched creature caught in the Slough of Despond:

(1) He is a slave of sin. "I am carnal, sold under sin" (7:14). "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (7:23).

(2) He is frustrated. "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good" (7:15-16). "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (7:19-20).

(3) He has lost control. "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (7:17). "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (7:20).

(4) He loathes himself. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (7:18).

(5) He is in despair. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (7:24).

#### 5. The dawn of deliverance (v.25)

"I thank God through Jesus Christ our LORD. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (7:25). What does the wretched man of verse 24 now exclaim? "I thank God through Jesus Christ our LORD." What has caused this change of heart, change of mind? Listen to him reason.

*Now, I think I understand... Either I will serve the law of God with my mind (i.e., what I know is right, via the law), or I will serve the law of sin with my flesh. But not both! The law of God tells me what is right, while the law of sin wants to control me through my flesh. But, wait... I remember... "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2). "For he that is dead is freed from sin" (Romans 6:7). "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our LORD" (Romans 6:11). What a breath of fresh air to the soul!*

#### 6. Victory! (Romans 8)

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). No condemnation to them who walk after the Spirit! This is the gospel experience. Until the LORD Jesus Christ is revealed to the heart by faith, our sanctification will not be secured. Christian perfection, or entire sanctification, will continue to be only such stuff as dreams are made of. But... "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:2-4). Reveal **Him Who Came in the Likeness of Sinful Flesh** to the heart, by faith, and you will secure the sanctification of the believer... who walks "after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

## B. 1 John 1:8

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us." This verse has often been appropriated by opponents of the doctrine of Christian perfection to prove that no man can say he has no sin. Taken out of context, that is just what it seems to say. But "what saith the Scripture?"

**Does this teach** us that we have a sinful nature and that only the deceived will say that they are entirely sanctified? If that is the teaching of 1:8, then **why** does 1:7 say that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin", and why does 1:9 say that "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"? We now have the dilemma of reconciling verses 7 and 9 with verse 8. Remember, one part of Scripture will never contradict another part of Scripture. "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35).

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1:5) is a basic revelation of the nature of God. He is the One "Who covereth [Himself] with light as with a garment" (Psalm 104:2). Of this same One the Psalmist declares: "in Thy light shall we see light" (Psalm 36:9). Why teach "little children" (2:1) that God is light? Because this reveals to the children of God, the exclusive nature of God. As light opposes darkness, so must sin oppose holiness. **Darkness cannot be found in light, and light cannot be found in darkness. In the same way, sin cannot be found in the children of God.**

Consider the following as an explanation of verses 5 through 10. The prior revelation is "that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1:5). The present problem is with one of us when we "walk in darkness" (1:6). What follows in verses 6 through 10 is a progressive argument as the backslider proclaims his innocence. The claim of the backslider is followed by a conclusion of authority as to the real nature of the backslider. Each claim and conclusion is met with a counter argument designed to disarm the backslider and secure his repentance.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth" (1:6). The claim is, *I have fellowship with God*. The present problem is that "we" are walking in darkness while claiming to be in fellowship with God. This is an obvious lie. God authoritatively concludes that "we lie, and do not the Truth".

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1:7). If each child of God is walking in the light that dwells with God (Daniel 2:22), then a condition of fellowship exists with all concerned. If the child of God has returned to obedience, he has repented of his sin. Now it is proper to say that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin". This is a return to normal Christianity, which is Christian perfection.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us" (1:8). Continuing to assert **our** innocence in spite of **our** ongoing walk in darkness, **our** claim is: *I have no sin*. Just like a backslider... after being accused of being a liar, we dig in our heels and defiantly claim to have no sin. God concludes: "we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us." When we engage in sin, we deceive ourselves. Obviously, this verse does **not** teach us that Christian perfection is self deception.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1:9). God faithfully counters the backslider's continuing obstinance with His continued demand of unconditional surrender. It is just for God to forgive us our sins, but only if we repent. When a backslider repents, he becomes just as pure as the lost sinner who repents. God cleanses from all unrighteousness. All means any and every sin that would prevent the child of God from being as perfect as the "Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). God gives 100% of His infinite, while we give 100% of our finite. This is Christian perfection.

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us" (1:10). Still impenitent, we dislike being called deceived, and adamantly maintains our innocence. Emphatically, we say: *I have not sinned!* The LORD persistently reminds us that we are calling Him a liar, "and His Word is not in us". Warning to all of you who profess Christ to be your

Saviour, while living in known sin:

(1) you "do not the Truth" (1:6),

(2) "the Truth is not in " you (1:8), and

(3) "His Word is not in " you (1:10)! If that gives you no comfort, then you are getting the message! Repent, and quit claiming your innocence. Agree with God about your sin, and receive 100% cleansing. Return to Christian perfection.

### **C. Philippians 3:12**

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." This is another passage that may be appropriated by casual readers of the Bible and mistaken to mean that the Apostle Paul claimed to not know Christian perfection. Again, upon closer examination of the passage, verses 7 through 16, it can be seen that Paul plainly claimed to be perfect! Notice verse 15. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." Look at verse 16, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Our Christianity demands that we reconcile verse 12 with verses 15 and 16; otherwise, we can cite verses to prove anything, while ignoring the context.

Paul uses the language of Olympic-like games as a means to illustrate two kinds of perfection, one which he claims to have obtained (verses 15 and 16), and the other which he claims to have not obtained (verse 12). We see the Olympic games in his use of words:

(1) "what things were gain to me" (3:7),

(2) "I counted loss for Christ" (3:7),

(3) "That I may win Christ" (3:8),

(4) "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (3:11),

(5) "reaching forth unto those things which are before" (3:13),

(6) "I press toward the mark" (3:14), and

(7) "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14).

In what sense had Paul not attained perfection? Paul had not attained unto the resurrection of the dead (3:11). "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (3:11,2). Paul admits to a kind of Christian perfection that he had not achieved. Christian perfection is not static, that is, it does not stand still. It must "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Peter 3:18). Growth implies that we are not dead. Until we are dead, we will not have attained unto the resurrection of the dead, nor will we have achieved the final level of growth as well as the final stage of Christian perfection.

In what sense had Paul attained perfection? Paul considered himself to be perfect in that he conducted himself according to rule. "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2Timothy 2:5). To strive lawfully is to play by the rules. "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule" (3:16). Paul understood that his race is not over until he receives his crown of righteousness. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the

time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the Righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but **unto all them also that love His appearing**" (2Timothy 3:6-8).

In the meantime, Paul understood that our perfection resides in that we, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, [we] press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:13-14). Again, though Christian perfection is to be as wholeheartedly complete as one can be at any moment in time, we must grow. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (3:15). "Otherwise minded" does **not** mean sin. It implies new offices, relations, and capacities of Christ, **yet to be discovered**, that need to be appropriated by faith to meet our every need in life. This is Christian perfection.

### D. 1 Timothy 1:15

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Paul counted himself as the chief of sinners. Was that false humility? No. Paul, like David, admitted his sin. David said, "I acknowledge my transgressions" (Psalm 51:3). Paul claimed he "was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious" (1:13). Paul, like David, was penitent, and as such, he could not see anyone as being a worse sinner than himself. David declared, "My sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). Paul said, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1:15).

Was the Apostle Paul only employing poetic license to wax eloquent about his sin? No. To describe this only as strong poetry is to display a want of knowledge of the inner workings of repentance. Repentance means you must see yourself the way God saw you when you were sinning. "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). Repentance does not seek to cast blame upon anyone else, except where it belongs-- squarely upon yourself! Who then should be at the top of the list of sinners, as far as the penitent are concerned? Certainly a mirror will give an accurate picture! If we put anyone else at the top of our list, then we begin to hypocritically share blame and to minimize just how bad we really are. Paul demonstrated true repentance. Paul demonstrated Christian perfection.

## VII. Christ: The Example of Christian Perfection

Christ not only commanded Christian perfection-- "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)-- but He, better than anyone else, exemplified that a man in human flesh, on this earth, **can** walk perfectly without sin-- "but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Is it really necessary to prove that any man, living or dead, has attained Christian perfection, when we have Christ's example?

To understand properly the humanity of Christ is to appreciate that Christ's perfect life in the flesh was **not due to His divinity**, but "**learned He obedience by the things which He suffered**; and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Hebrews 5:8-9). **Study the humanity of Christ, and you must see how appropriate Christ is as the example of Christian perfection!** "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1Peter 2:21-22).

### A. That God became man is astounding!

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1Timothy 3:16). The plot is so astounding that you can picture the angels in Heaven sitting at the edge of their seats, craning their necks to see what the Son of Man would do next... "which things the angels desire to look into" (1Peter 1:12).

## 1. Prophecy

The LORD pronounced the prophecy of a coming Messiah by the prophet Isaiah. "Therefore the LORD Himself shall give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel [literally, God with us]" (Isaiah 7:14). The LORD planned to send His Son, Who when He is come, is "God with us". "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). This Child is "The Mighty God"!

## 2. Fulfillment

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:1,14). No longer does Scripture prophesy that God becomes flesh. He has already come. Christ has come with His name, "The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13), and still those who profess Christ in this late stage of Church history complain, "*I just can't understand the Bible*"! If Christ is the Word of God and you do not know the Word of God, then you do not know Christ!

## 3. In the likeness of sinful flesh

"God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3). God forbid that anyone should ever accuse Christ of sin, but how did Christ take on human flesh without sinning? This is a difficulty for the doctrine of sin nature. Some who hold this faulty doctrine claim that Christ extinguished the sin in His flesh the moment He came into it. If this were true, Christ's perfect life, while on this planet, could not be credited to grace or faith. If this faulty doctrine were true, why should anyone be impressed that He did not commit sin? Perhaps... Christ came into the world "in the likeness of sinful flesh" to demonstrate the power and victory that the weakest saint could enjoy through appropriating Christ by faith. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1John 5:4). But, what about this phrase, "sinful flesh"? If sin is an act of the will, a transgressing of the law (1John 3:4), then something is only holy or sinful in relation to how one chooses. For one's flesh to be sinful, one's choice must first have been sinful. "Sinful" is appropriate to describe man's flesh... "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). If this is not correct, then how could Brother Paul beseech us to "present [our] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service" (Romans 12:1)? No longer "sinful flesh", but now holy flesh!

## 4. Made under the law

"But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4). God's time is always appropriate. Should any heresy arise to claim that Jesus Christ did not come in human flesh and that He was not as truly man as you or I, this phrase should stop that lie-- "made of a woman". But, if we "are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14), what does this mean, "made under the law"? A few points should be made about the law of God.

### a. The law is holy.

"The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). "The law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (1Timothy 1:8).

### b. Justification is by faith.

"No man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (Galatians 3:11). No saint has ever been justified by the law. The just have **always- and- only** been justified by faith. "The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17. Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38 are all the same quotation of Habakkuk 2:4).

### c. The law is still necessary.

The law is just as important now as it has ever been. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we

establish the law" (Romans 3:31). Christ presently promotes the law. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17).

#### **d. The law is not ceremonial, but moral.**

What is the law of which we speak? The law is **not** the ceremonial law of the old covenant. "For the [ceremonial] law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect... For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins... For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:1,4,14). Christ is the once for all sacrifice for those who walk sanctified.

"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. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40). God's moral law is unchanging. The Decalogue (the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20), as well as "all the law and the prophets", have been boiled down to one simple requirement... **PERFECT LOVE**. This is moral law, necessitating moral choice. This is not simply advice. This is law. Refuse obedience and... "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20). "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "And death and hell [will be] cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Revelation 20:14).

James describes the law as the 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 the law of liberty ["So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12)]. Brother John would probably call the law the *law of love* because he wrote: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1John 5:3).

#### **e. The purpose of the law is to define sin.**

What is the purpose of the law? The law was given to define what is a transgression of the law. It tells us what is sin. How else can we know how to avoid sin unless the law shows us intelligently what we are avoiding? Remember, "sin is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4). The law "was added because of transgression" (Galatians 3:19) for "where no law is, there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15). Without law, there can be no sin, "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

Some may say that the best way to eliminate sin is to eliminate the law. God forbid! But, isn't that what we promote when we insist that those who require obedience to God's law are *legalists*? "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7).

Because the purpose of the law is not to justify anyone-- never has and never will-- for "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God" (Galatians 3:11)-- it must merely state that the one who practices the law must live by the law. "And the law is not of faith: but, the man that doeth them shall live in them" (Galatians 3:12). In this regard, the law is very cause- and- effect, matter- of- fact mechanical. How like the preaching of dead churches! **Enough knowledge to condemn the hearers, but not enough to secure their loving obedience in an entirely sanctified walk!**

For the law to be law, it must be more than advice. The law must have a penalty to be law. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) tells us that those who sin have earned, and do deserve, the payment of death. Sin's penalty is death. Knowing that a righteous man is "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1), we understand "that the law is not made for a righteous man [to reward or justify him], but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane [to penalize or punish them]..." (1Timothy 1:9, as well as v.10).

#### **f. Christ upholds the law perfectly.**

What is the relation of Christ to the law? Because of Christ's unity with the Father-- "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and



the Father in Me" (John 14:11)-- it is plain to see that Christ gave the Ten Commandments to Moses. Christ supports the law. Again: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:17-20). Christ advocates the law. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart" (Psalm 19:7-8).

The LORD Jesus Christ said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psalm 40:7-8). He delighted in obeying the law! Christ testified on His own behalf: "I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10). Christ obeyed the law perfectly. "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Obedience to God's law was so important to Christ, He willingly laid down His life on the cross!

### **g. The law completely points to Christ.**

What is the relation of the law to Christ? God is clear about the condition of all unregenerate man... "the Scripture [i.e., the Law] hath concluded all under sin" (Galatians 3:22) because "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23; 5:12). Because all have sinned, all are under sin. Remember, sin, which "is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4), is a voluntary act of the human will entrenching itself against God. Unrighteous actions beget a pathetic condition... "all under sin" (Galatians 3:22). What is the effect of the law that concludes "all under sin" (3:22)? The result is "that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (3:22-23). Because all men are under sin, all men need to put their faith in Christ. Man under sin has been graciously offered a wonderful alternative to his certain judgment of death. What is that alternative? Life! "That the promise by faith of [in] Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (3:22).

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (3:24). The law points us to Christ, and why shouldn't it? After all, Christ did give the law to Moses! "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4). The end result of the law for the unrighteous "is death" (Romans 6:23), while "Christ is the end [result] of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (10:4). It makes sense, now that we read Christ's statement: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17). Christ is the fulfillment of the law. He has providentially placed Himself where all men can trust Him, where all men can see that their only alternative to death by the law, is faith in Christ.

### **h. Christ expects perfect obedience to His law.**

Are we really expected to obey God's law? Can you honestly ask that question when you think about it? Obviously, Christ expects obedience, or else His commands become merely the advice of a meddling parent to a wayward child. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself" (Luke 10:27). This is more than advice. This is God's moral law. This is the law of love. Our beloved brother, Paul, agrees with the LORD Jesus: "Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10). This is what Paul further described as "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6).

Love, for the Christian, is more than emotion or physical arousal. "For **this** is the love of God, that **we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous**" (1John 5:3). Love is obeying God. "**If ye love Me, keep My commandments**" (John 14:15). "**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, disobedience is classed with a lying profession of Christ, that has no other hope than the lake of fire. "**He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him**" (1John 2:4). "And **all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death**" (Revelation

21:8)... "Except ye repent" (Luke 13:3).

Law is the concept of *oughtness*. Why ought men to do what they know they should do? Certainly because God has commanded them to obey. But why *ought* men to do what they know they should do? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Because God is perfect, we should be perfect. "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1Peter 1:16). Because God is holy, we should be holy. Why, then, should we be what we ought to be? **Because God is.** "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for He that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Hebrews 11:6). "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because **as He is, so are we in this world**" (1John 4:17). Find out Who and what Christ is in all of His offices, relations, and capacities; then appropriate them by faith... This sounds familiar!

Now, let us conclude a prior question... what does this mean, "made under the law" (Galatians 4:4)? How can it be said that Christ was "made under the law" (4:4)? Because Christ actually became a man. He can completely sympathize with man and understand what it is like to be required to obey the law of God. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered: **and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him**" (Hebrews 5:8-9).

### **B. That Christ became our servant is humbling!**

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion [literally, habit] as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8). We are enjoined to have the mind of Christ. If Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God, it was only because He is God. If you have created the universe and you do providentially superintend it, you must have a large reputation! What happened to Christ-- He did to Himself. He "made Himself of no reputation". He went from somebody, to nobody. He "took upon Him the form of a servant". God's choice is wisdom. He will pick a servant's form, if it will best accomplish His purpose. He humbled Himself as only a man needs to humble himself. He became obedient in the same way we must obey to please those who rule over us. He actually died a physical death. **He was just like one of us!**

"The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him" (John 13:16). This was true with the Father and the Son, and it is also true of ourselves and Christ. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Why would Christ do this? Because He was the most preeminent man. He was the most humble servant. "And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be the servant of all" (Mark 10:44). Christ sets the pattern for the rest of us.

### **C. That Christ suffered for us is sanctifying!**

If Christ was not truly man, of what value are His sufferings? If His flesh was not our flesh, then His pain was not our pain. If His suffering was not our suffering, then how could we read Isaiah 53, about Our Suffering Saviour and feel pity, grief, admiration, and love for Christ? But, Our Suffering Saviour was truly man! "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For He [Christ] shall grow up before Him [the Father] as a tender plant [Christ's human growth], and as a root out of a dry ground [unregenerate, sinful humanity]: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him [might miss Him easily on a crowded street]. He is despised and rejected of men [unpopular]; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief [grieving about rebellious man]: and we hid as it were our faces from Him [humanly speaking, not the face sought after]; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows [Christ "healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17). This is a promise of physical healing, if we can receive it.]: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God [Christ's humanity allowed His own hand to be turned on Himself!], and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him [Christ offers atonement for sins to whosoever will.]: and with His stripes we are healed [literally, made whole-- because our sinning has damaged us in every which way, except in our ability to repent.]. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way [Yes, pathetic like a sheep, but selfish, stupid, and wicked as a brute beast!]; and the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:1-6).

"But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation **perfect through sufferings**. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of One: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee. And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given Me. Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:9-16).

## Conclusion

I believe that when the Apostle John wrote to his "little children", he desired that they understand more perfectly those things that they had already heard. The doctrine of Christian perfection was no stranger to John, because he taught it. "But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him" (1John 2:5).

Let me share with you the yearnings of a great and good man, who like the Apostle Paul, travailed in birth until Christ was formed in his hearers (Galatians 4:19). Charles G. Finney (1792-1875) was an American lawyer who was converted to Christ at the age of 29. He preached in revivals throughout his life and spent many years as a teacher at Oberlin College. His early evangelistic messages can still be read from his book *Revival Lectures*. An account of his life is recorded in *Charles G. Finney: An Autobiography*; however, it lacks the last element, i.e., *Finney's Systematic Theology*, of how this man has been used of God to touch other generations with benefits without their "knowing the source whence they have sprung" (*Charles G. Finney: An Autobiography*, p.477).

The following have been excerpted from *Finney's Systematic Theology* (originally published in 1846).

That this state [entire sanctification or Christian perfection] may be attained in this life, I argue from the fact, that provision is made against all the occasions of sin. Men sin only when they are tempted, either by the world, the flesh, or the devil. And it is expressly asserted, that, in every temptation, provision is made for our escape. Certainly, if it is possible for us to escape without sin, under every temptation, then a state of entire and permanent sanctification is attainable.

"Full provision is made for overcoming the three great enemies of our souls, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

(1.) The world-- 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith' [1John 5:4]. 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ' [1John 5:5].

(2.) The flesh-- 'If ye walk in the Spirit, ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh' [Galatians 5:16].

(3.) Satan-- 'The shield of faith shall quench all the fiery darts of the wicked' [Ephesians 6:16]. And, 'God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly' [Romans 16:20]." [p. 352]

"A denial of this doctrine has the natural tendency to beget the very apathy witnessed in the Church. Professors of religion [i.e., professing Christians] go on in sin, without much conviction of its wickedness. Sin unblushingly stalks abroad even in the church of God, and does not fill Christians with horror, because they expect its existence as a thing of course. Tell a young convert that he must expect to backslide, and he will do so of course, and with comparatively little remorse, because he looks upon it as a kind of necessity. And being led to expect it, you find him, in a few months after his conversion, away from God, and not at all horrified with his state. Just so, inculcate the idea among Christians, that they are not expected to abandon all sin, and they will of course go on in sin with comparative indifference. Reprove them for their sin, and they will say, '*O, we are imperfect creatures; we do not pretend to be perfect, nor do we expect we ever shall be in this world.*' Many such answers

as these will show you the God- dishonoring, soul- ruining tendency of a denial of this doctrine.

"A denial of this doctrine prepares the minds of ministers to temporize, and wink at great iniquity in their churches. Feeling as they certainly must, if they disbelieve this doctrine, that a great amount of sin in all believers is to be expected as a thing of course their whole preaching, and spirit, and demeanor, will be such as to beget a great degree of apathy among Christians, in regard to their abominable sins." [p.354]

"Total abstinence from sin must be every man's motto, or sin will certainly sweep him away as with a flood." [p.358]

"The great and fundamental sin, which is at the foundation of all other sin, is unbelief. The first thing is, to give up that-- to believe the Word of God. There is no breaking off from one sin without this. 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin' [Romans 14:23]. 'Without faith it is impossible to please God' [Hebrews 11:6]. Thus we see, that the backslider and convicted sinner, when agonizing to overcome sin, will almost always betake themselves to works of law to obtain faith. They will fast, and pray, and read, and struggle, and outwardly reform, and thus endeavor to obtain grace. Now all this is vain and wrong. Do you ask, *'Shall we not fast, and pray, and read, and struggle? Shall we do nothing but sit down in antinomian security and inaction?'* I answer, you must do all that God commands you to do; but begin where He tells you to begin, and do it in the manner in which He commands you to do it; that is, in the exercise of that faith that works by love [Galatians 5:6]. Purify your hearts by faith [James 4:8]. Believe on the Son of God [1John 3:23]. And say not in your heart, 'Who shall ascend into heaven, that is to bring Christ down from above; or who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that is, the Word of faith which we preach' [Romans 10:6-8]. Now these facts show, that even under the Gospel, almost all professors of religion [professing Christians], while they reject the Jewish notion of justification by works of law, have after all adopted a ruinous substitute for it, and suppose, that in some way they are to obtain grace by their works." [p.373]

"It is Christ, in the exercise of His different offices, and appropriated in His different relations to the wants of the soul, by faith, Who secures our sanctification. This He does by Divine discoveries to the soul of His Divine perfections and fulness. The condition of these discoveries is faith and obedience. He says, John xiv. 21-23: '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. Judas saith unto Him, (not Iscariot,) LORD, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My Words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.'" [p.376]

"I have often feared, that many professed Christians knew Christ only after the flesh; that is, they have no other knowledge of Christ than what they obtain by reading and hearing about Him, without any special revelation of Him to the inward being by the Holy Spirit. I do not wonder, that such professors [professing Christians] and ministers should be totally in the dark, upon the subject of entire sanctification [or, Christian perfection] in this life. They regard sanctification as brought about by the formation of holy habits, instead of from the revelation of Christ to the soul in all His fulness and relations, and the soul's renunciation of self and appropriation of Christ in these relations." [pp.380-381]

"When we sin, it is because of our ignorance of Christ. That is, whenever temptation overcomes us, it is because we do not know and avail ourselves of the relation of Christ that would meet our necessities." [p.382]

"It has been to my mind a painful and serious question, what I ought to think of the spiritual state of those who know so little of the blessed Jesus. That none of them have been converted, I dare not say. And yet, that they have been converted, I am afraid to say. I would not for the world 'quench the smoking flax, or break the bruised reed', [Matthew 12:20] or say anything to stumble, or weaken the feeblest lamb of Christ; and yet my heart is sore pained, my soul is sick; my bowels of compassion yearn over the church of the blessed God. O, the dear church of Christ! What does she in her present state know of the Gospel- rest, of that 'great and perfect peace' [Isaiah 26:3] which they have whose minds are stayed on God?" [p.413]

## **Christ's Roll Call of Christian Perfection**

**Paul**

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

Because Christ is the Son of God Who Loved Me and Gave Himself for Me... I will live the life of Christ by faith.

**Peter**

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth... that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness" (1Peter 2:21-22,24).

Because Christ is Our Suffering Example... I will follow Him as dead to sin and alive to righteousness.

**John**

"Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the say of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world" (1John 4:17).

Because Christ is Perfect Love... I will exercise perfect love until He rewards me at the day of judgment.

**David**

"LORD, who shall abide in Thy Tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy Holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the Truth in his heart... He that doeth these things shall never be moved" (Psalm 15:1-2,5).

Because Christ is LORD of the Tabernacle... I will continue steadfast in faith in Him.

**Jude**

"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, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 1:24-25).

Because Christ is the Only Wise God Our Saviour... I will not fall but will continue faultless into His presence.

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**Exceeding Great and Precious Promises**

Or, How God Has Ingeniously Designed His Promises to Sanctify His People

"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).

by Tom Stewart

3-7-98

**Preface**

Who but God could have been so clever as to design His Promises to have the sanctifying effect of transforming the Believer into the image of the Only Begotten Son of God? Every Believer has been predestinated to be like the Son. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). Sanctification is the process of becoming more and more like Jesus. "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2Peter 3:18). Our day-to-day needs have been ordained by God to cause us the necessity of discovering some new aspect of the character of the LORD Jesus that we may lay hold of by means of the Exceeding Great and Precious Promises. "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

## Only Faith Can Receive the Promises

Faith is the only thing that man can do to please God. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). Rees Howells, a Welsh coal miner who exemplified intercessory prayer, understood that need to please God and recorded: "Faith Is Substance". "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). God requires man to live by faith. "The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him" (Hebrews 10:38).

All men have a moral likeness to their Creator. That likeness means the ability to make a moral decision of choosing or rejecting good or evil. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (Genesis 1:27). No, that does not make one a child of God without repentance and faith. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). But, even with this God-given capacity of every man to choose or reject God, man never does what he should without the gracious intervention of God. "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth" (2Timothy 2:25).

Our claiming of the Promises only occurs with the continual help of God. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). In this fashion, God rightly demands us to exercise faith in our own salvation and sanctification, while giving us His help freely, as a Father to a child, to ensure our likeness to the Only Begotten Son. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Romans 4:16). Through Jesus "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Romans 5:2).

## The Veracity of God

A promise assumes the veracity and ability of the one who makes the promise to keep it. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He sware by Himself" (Hebrews 6:13). What is Scripture but the account of a Faithful God dealing with man? "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His Counsel, confirmed it by an Oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Hebrews 6:16-18).

What "two immutable things" are meant by Hebrews 6:18? God's "Counsel" and "Oath" (6:17) are the "two immutable things" intended. God's Counsel is the "Thus saith the LORD" (Isaiah 7:7) of the prophets. God's Counsel is the right advice. "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the Counsel of the LORD, that shall stand" (Proverbs 19:21). God's Counsel is the leading that comes from the Spirit of Counsel and Might (Isaiah 11:2). God's purpose is to work "all things after the Counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11).

God's "Oath" (Hebrews 6:17) is His confirmation that His counsel will come to pass. "By Myself have I sworn, saith the LORD" (Genesis 22:16). Man's oath is questionable, but God's Oath is certain. "God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that **cannot** lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2). God cannot lie because He has **chosen** not to lie. "The Strength of Israel **will not** lie nor repent" (1Samuel 15:29). God is what He is because He has chosen to be so, not because someone else caused Him to be that way. "I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me" (Isaiah 43:10). Thus, He is what He has chosen to be, and deserves the greatest honor and credit for being the Faithful God. "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth Covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His Commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9).

## The Cooperation of Man

God's Promises are checks drawn on the Bank of Heaven, backed by the unlimited resources of God. "Prove Me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). The Father has made the deposit. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son" (John 3:16). His authorizing signature is His Word. "For all the Promises of God in Him are

yea, and in Him Amen" (2Corinthians 1:20). The amount of the check is the Kingly sum of "According to Your Faith" (Matthew 9:29).

Your name has been carefully included on the line, "Pay to the Order of". To ensure no difficulty in your cashing of the check, our Loving Heavenly Father has written your name as "Whosoever Will"-- "whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely" (Revelation 22:17). All that remains is your cooperation, in endorsing your signature on the back of the check, to tell the Bank that you have accepted the check. This can only be done by faith. "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

What hinders us from claiming the Promises of God? The absence of faith. Sometimes we refuse to believe what God has said-- for whatever selfish reason. That is sin. "Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen" (Mark 16:14). Other times, we simply lack the faith to honestly believe because we do not understand the Promise. "If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will He clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:28-32).

After we have claimed the Promises, we may falter because we become impatient. That too, is sin. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4). Gaining from God the very thing we desired and for which we prayed the Promises, has the added benefit of God perfecting us to be more like the LORD Jesus.

Although faith is the condition of all of God's Promises, our reception of His Promises is usually based upon some specifically stated condition. For instance, we have been promised prosperity and success, but on the condition that we abide in the Word of God. "This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1:8). We have been promised a secure and happy family, but on the condition of fearing (i.e., reverently trusting) God. "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD" (Psalm 128:3-4). We have been promised escape from the Tribulation Week (as understood from Daniel 9 and Matthew 24), but on the condition of our continual watching and praying that we would be accounted worthy to escape. "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). The examples are endless.

## **God Has Always Kept His Promises**

Even when the consequences are negative, God has always kept His Word. With all the love that He lavished upon our original parents in their Edenic Paradise, it must have truly pained Him to cause death to fall upon Adam and Eve after they ate the Forbidden Fruit. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16-17).

Noah "being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house" (Hebrews 11:7). Jehovah said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth" (Genesis 6:7) because He "looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt" (Genesis 6:12). He promised Noah the delay of 120 years before the Flood would come, which was enough time to build the Ark. "And the LORD said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Genesis 6:3). Noah fulfilled the conditions of God's promised deliverance from the coming Flood, by building the Ark.

The Promised Land is Israel. It received that name from the fact that the LORD promised Abraham "all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:8). Though Abraham was promised to possess all the land on which he dwelled, he was still only "a stranger and a sojourner" (Genesis 23:41) as far as the practical ownership of the land was concerned. "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise" (Hebrews 11:8-9).

What motivated Abraham to continue living as a stranger in the land that God had promised him as a possession? "He looked for a City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). Abraham looked for an eternal dwelling with his God. "But now they desire a better country, that is, an Heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a City" (Hebrews 11:16). Abraham was looking for what the Apostle John called the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2). In other words, Abraham was patient about receiving the Promised Land from God because He was motivated by the higher desire to dwell with God forever.

Rahab is another excellent example of how God has kept His Promises. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace" (Hebrews 11:31). She perished not with the inhabitants of Jericho because she believed the promise God had given her through Joshua's two spies. "And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the LORD hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee" (Joshua 2:14). Rahab had a further condition to fulfill in addition to her silence about the whereabouts of the two spies. She was to bind a line of scarlet thread in the window of her room on the walls of Jericho, where she and her father, mother, brothers, and her father's household would be protected from Jericho's sure destruction. "Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window" (Joshua 2:18-21).

Because Rahab fulfilled the conditions for her promised preservation, she not only received her life in the bargain, but was one of the direct ancestors of King David and the LORD Jesus Christ. "And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse" (Matthew 1:5). Truly our God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the Power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20). Thank God for the faith of Rahab!

## God is Keeping His Promises

Our certainty about trusting the Promises of God is founded upon the character of God Himself. "For I am the LORD, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). Also, consider the fact that we can only stand on the Promises in the present tense. It is appropriate to say that we have stood on the Promises in the past and will stand upon them in the future, but only today can we say that we are Standing on the Promises of God. "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe [present tense] that ye receive them, and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

If we cannot have a present victory in our dependance on the Promises of God, the past and the future lose significance. May we be as presently optimistic as Brother Paul when he announced to his fellow lost-at-sea shipmates their certain deliverance. "Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts 27:25).

If God is presently sustaining us, then we have confidence in God. "But Christ as a Son over His own house; Whose house are we, **if** we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope **firm unto the end**" (Hebrews 3:6). Walking by faith, claiming the Promises, and believing God, all describe confidence in God. "For we are made partakers of Christ, **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence **stedfast unto the end**" (3:14). Pray that God will give us a strong grip on Himself. "Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which Thou hast wrought for us" (Psalm 68:28). What a wonderful prayer that God will most willingly grant! "O God, strengthen my hands" (Nehemiah 6:9).

Can we lose our reward? Most certainly. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2John 8). Our confidence in God and in His Promises has great reward. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward" (Hebrews 10:35). When we backslide from the LORD, we lose ground from where we were previously standing. "For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer" (Hosea 4:16). We need Promises from God to ensure our continual cleaving to His Promises! "I have stuck unto Thy Testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame" (Psalm 119:31). "He will keep the feet of His saints" (1Samuel 2:9). "Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust" (Psalm 16:1).

Confidence in God and His Promises is essential for those who wait for the soon coming of the LORD. "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1John 2:28). How can we await an appointed time of departure from this earthly abode without confidence in God? "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isaiah 25:9).



The certainty that we will leave in a Pre-Tribulational Rapture before the Tribulation Week begins is founded upon the LORD Jesus' promise and admonition to watch and pray that we would be accounted worthy to escape ALL things that shall come to pass. "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). The promise of our LORD coming to take us before the Tribulation Week begins is further founded upon our confidence that He is able to subdue us to Himself. How could we be ready otherwise? "For our conversation is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the LORD Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Philippians 3:20-21). What an ecstatic relieving of a great burden will our departure be! "But as it is written, 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).

A present tense confidence in God and His Promises is **necessary** for our prayers to be answered. "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us: And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1John 5:14-15). The mighty men of faith and prayer of the past such as George Muller and Hudson Taylor have taught the Church to expect great things from God-- and to attempt great things for God. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalm 81:10). They will be waiting in Heaven with the Saviour to welcome us as soldiers of the Promises, who have come home. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2Timothy 4:7).

## God Will Surely Keep His Prophecies

What else is a prophecy than God's promise of what He said will happen in the future? "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My Counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure" (Isaiah 46:10). The Immutability of God assures us that He will most assuredly perform all of His promised prophecies. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8).

God's Promises are to prevent us from taking anxious thought about the future. "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34). But why should we be so unconcerned about the evil that could befall us tomorrow? Because our God is demonstrating His sustaining power through His Promises toward us today. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

How could we be in a state of Spiritual readiness as Wise Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13), if we are in an anxious state of fear, doubt, and perplexity concerning our immediate circumstances? "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1John 4:18). By intelligent and thoughtful use of the Promises, cast all of your cares upon the LORD. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you" (1Peter 5:7). Your faith in God honors Him, and He will likewise honor you with the fulfillment of His Promises in answer to your prayers. "Them that honour Me [the LORD God of Israel] I will honour" (1Samuel 2:30).

What has the LORD promised about the future? He has promised eternal happiness for His people. "Blessed are they that do His Commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the City" (Revelation 22:14). The wicked are promised eternal suffering. "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30).

Those who are walking in righteousness are promised to be delivered from the upcoming Tribulation Week, while the backslidden and the wicked will not escape it. "The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead" (Proverbs 11:8). The Foolish Virgins (i.e., the backslidden) who enter into the Tribulation Week are promised to be refined by their experience. "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience" (Romans 5:3).

Israel is promised to return to Jehovah at the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ. "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Isaiah 66:8). The Apostle Paul's heart desire for Israel will finally be realized. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). All Israel is promised to be finally saved. "And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (Romans 11:26).

## Conclusion

A promise need not start with an "If" to be a promise. Your faith is the understood condition of all of the Promises of God. "And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:21). Further, anything from God's Word that you can reverently fashion into a promise from God without diminishing the rest of Scripture-- for "the Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35)-- is yours. "Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours" (1Corinthians 3:21). Ours is the God who has promised us Heaven. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). He only awaits the prayerful cry of His children to meet their every need. "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).

Since God has designed man from the "dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7) and not as the Angels, we have our own unique problems and necessities. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:7). Adam and Eve's sin has tainted all except the moral agency of man, which is the "image of God" (Genesis 1:27). That moral agency-- the capacity to choose between right and wrong-- is practically all that separates man from the animals, for they also were formed from the dust of the ground. "And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field" (Genesis 2:19). However, that moral agency is the avenue by which we have the glorious opportunity of being elevated to the Throne of God by His Exceeding Great and Precious Promises. "Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and His Maker, Ask Me of things to come concerning My sons, and concerning the work of My hands command ye Me" (Isaiah 45:11).

Confidence in the Promises of God is another way of saying confidence in God. After all, God is as good as His Word because He is His Word. "His name is called The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13). Our confidence in God binds us to Him by faith. "The just shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11). Our Creator, who has become our Saviour, is also our Sanctifier. "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1Corinthians 1:30). Truly, the LORD Jesus Christ is unto us "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2Peter 1:3). Our access to all of His divine attributes is through the "Exceeding Great and Precious Promises" (1:4). The result of the Promises is as complete of a union of God's people with Himself as Divinely possible. "And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be All in all" (1Corinthians 15:28).

For additional reading on this topic,  
please see our article,

Charles G. Finney's "[Systematic Theology](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html)"  
<http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.html>  
is available to develop the subject at length.

For more material related to this topic please see  
[WS&S TOPICAL LINKS: On Salvation](http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Jehovah/Topical.Links.Salvation.html)  
<http://whatsaiththescripture.com/Jehovah/Topical.Links.Salvation.html>

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## **The Significance of Charles G. Finney's Disinterested Benevolence** Or, God Loves All, But Only the Lovingly Obedient Go to Heaven

"Love is the fulfilling of the Law"

(Romans 13:10).  
by Tom Stewart  
5-31-2000

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## Preface

The 19th century American evangelist, [Charles G. Finney](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html> --, is well known for his "[Revival Lectures](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Revival.Lectures.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Revival.Lectures.html> -- and "Memoirs" (also called, his

"[Autobiography](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Finneys.Autobiography.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Finneys.Autobiography.html> --); but, his contribution to Christian theology can best be seen in his careful analysis of Christian love, as expressed by his distinction between "disinterested benevolence" and the "love of complacency". "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1Corinthians 13:1). In his sermons published in "[The Oberlin Evangelist](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Finney.Oberlin.Evangelist.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Finney.Oberlin.Evangelist.html> --, Finney attempted to continue to edify those who had been won in the revivals of the previous years (prior to 1839). A lecture on "[The Law of God](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html)" -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin\\_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html) -- by Brother Finney demonstrated that the Moral Law, which the LORD Jesus Christ outlined to the Pharisees, "comprises the whole of true religion". "36 Master, which is the Great Commandment in the Law? 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 22:36-40).

Confusion over the meaning of the word "love" has caused the Body of Christ unnecessary pain and stumbling. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). In the early 1800's, Finney labored to lay a foundation for young Christians to "keep [themselves] in the love of God" (Jude 21). Because Christianity must necessarily stress the "love of God", a lack of precision in defining that love, may translate into stumbling the Christian into gross sin, i.e., "*God loves me even when I am sinning.*" But, "4 He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him" (1John 2:4-5). The following is a brief discussion of two terms used by Charles G. Finney, "disinterested benevolence" and the "love of complacency", and attempts to demonstrate that a proper understanding of the two, may be used by the Holy Spirit to keep the Body of Christ pure. "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15).

## Disinterested Benevolence

The word "disinterested" carries with it two different connotations. The more current implication of the word "disinterested" is a **negative** one-- meaning *not interested or indifferent*. On the other hand, Charles Finney used the word "disinterested" in a **positive**, 19th century way-- meaning *free of bias or self-interest*. "[Love] seeketh not her own" (1Corinthians 13:5). A charitable, kind, or generous act is generally defined by a modern dictionary as "benevolence"; and, Finney would stress that "benevolence" involves **good willing** *because it is a moral action of the human will*. Coupling "disinterested" with "benevolence", we get the uniquely 19th century expression-- commonly used by Finney and others of his day-- "disinterested benevolence". "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life" (John 3:16). The love of John 3:16 is the quintessence of "disinterested benevolence".

"The very idea of disinterested benevolence, and there is no other true benevolence, implies the abandonment of the spirit of self-seeking, or of selfishness. It is impossible to become benevolent, without ceasing to be selfish" (from "[Attributes of Love](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.3.html#LECTURE%2022)" [[Lecture 22](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.3.html#LECTURE%2022)] of Finney's "[Systematic Theology](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.3.html#LECTURE%2022)" -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.3.html#LECTURE 22](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.3.html#LECTURE%2022) --).

"By **disinterested benevolence** I do not mean, that a person who is **disinterested** feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and **disinterestedly benevolent**. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification" (from [Lecture 1](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Lectures.Profes.Christia.1.html#LECTURE%201) of Charles G. Finney's "[Lectures to Professing Christians](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Lectures.Profes.Christia.1.html#LECTURE%201)" -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Lectures.Profes.Christia.1.html#LECTURE 1](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Lectures.Profes.Christia.1.html#LECTURE%201) --).

"Another peculiarity of this love, which must, by no means, be overlooked, is, that it must be **disinterested**; i.e. that we should not love him [God] for selfish reasons. But that we should love him for what he is--with **benevolence**, because his well-being is an infinite good--with complacency; because his character is infinitely excellent--with the heart; because all virtue belongs to the heart. It is plain, that nothing short of **disinterested love** is virtue. The Savior recognizes and settles this truth, in Luke 6:32-34: 'For if ye love them who love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.' These words

epitomize the whole doctrine of the Bible on this subject, and lay down the broad principle, that to love God, or anyone else, for selfish reasons, is not virtue... By **disinterested** I do not mean that the mind must necessarily feel that it has no personal interest in the thing. But that the degree of self-interest that is felt should not be disproportioned to the interest which the mind takes in the matter, on account of its own intrinsic importance. In other words, if the mind's interest in it is selfish, the action or exercise, whatever it may be, is sinful. If it be not selfish, it is holy, although there may be a suitable regard to our own interest, at the moment of decision" (from Finney's lecture, "[The Law of God, No. 1](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html)" -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin\\_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html) --).

Then, **disinterested benevolence** may best be described as the *unselfish seeking of the highest good or well-being of God and others for its own sake, because the selfless promoting of both God and man's well-being is in itself the highest good possible*-- which is again, **disinterested benevolence**. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (1Corinthians 10:24). The loftiness of **disinterested benevolence** is epitomized by the self-sacrifice of the LORD Jesus Christ for the world of humanity. "But we see Jesus, Who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). Likewise, every Christian's attempt to lay himself out for the salvation of his neighbour, is also a depiction of **disinterested benevolence**. "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1Corinthians 10:33). Whether the Saints are seeking the salvation or sanctification of their fellow man, it is treating every man as his neighbour, i.e., with **disinterested benevolence**. "1 We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. 2 Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification" (Romans 15:1-2).

It becomes more plain to the modern reader of the Gospels that Jesus Christ's response to the Pharisees concerning the "Great Commandment in the Law" (Matthew 22:36) was a reiteration of the Moral Law, that has been plain to all of mankind since Adam, and not simply demanded of the Old Testament Jew. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). And, that Moral Law expresses the necessity of love that Charles G. Finney labored to make plain to his 19th century audience with the term, "disinterested benevolence". "3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:3-5).

Not only is the love expressed by the term, **disinterested benevolence**, universally owed to God and man, but it *is owed without regard to the goodness or badness of their moral character*, i.e., "God so loved the world" (John 3:16), *not* merely the Elect. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1Timothy 1:15). "And so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12). Though it is certain that unless individual sinners repent of their sins, they "shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3), still, God loved the world enough to spare "not His own Son" (Romans 8:32) from the suffering of the Cross. Equally assured, is that no man will see God in Heaven without the clothing of holiness that God gives when men exercise truly **disinterested benevolence**-- but again, "when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD" (Hebrews 12:14). Nevertheless, God has given to man the supreme display of **disinterested benevolence** when He gave His Only Begotten Son to atone for the sins of the world, sacrificing His Son for *ALL*, without regard to the obvious lack of goodness of man's moral character. "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

## Love of Complacency

One more word that may disorient modern readers of Charles G. Finney, is "complacency", because **complacency** is currently defined as *contentment or self-satisfaction*. But, a 19th century Finney would recoil at the thought of a Professed Christian seeking merely to satisfy himself, and would use the term "complacency" to mean the *approbation or approval* of "moral worth or excellence" (from "[Attributes of Love](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.3.html#LECTURE%2018)" [Lecture 18] of Finney's "[Systematic Theology](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.3.html#LECTURE%2018)" -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.3.html#LECTURE 18](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.3.html#LECTURE%2018) --). "9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation... 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Revelation 5:9, 12).

"Another modification of this love, is that of complacency or esteem. God's character is infinitely good. We are therefore bound, not merely to love him, with the love of benevolence; but to exercise the highest degree of complacency in his character. To say that God is good and lovely is merely to say that he deserves to be loved. If he deserves to be loved, on account of his goodness and love, then he deserves to be loved in

proportion to his goodness and loveliness. Our obligation, therefore, is infinitely great to exercise towards him the highest degree of the **love of complacency**, of which we are capable" (from Finney's lecture, "[The Law of God, No. 1](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html)" -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin\\_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html) -- in "The Oberlin Evangelist" [February 27, 1839]).

"Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their **complacent love** to the saints" (from "[Foundation of Moral Obligation](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.1.html#LECTURE%207)" [Lecture 7] of Finney's "[Systematic Theology](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.1.html#LECTURE%207)" -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.1.html#LECTURE 7](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.1.html#LECTURE%207) --).

Also, **complacency** is the "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy" (from [Lecture 12 of Charles G. Finney's "Lectures to Professing Christians"](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Lectures.Profes.Christia.4.html#LECTUREXII) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Lectures.Profes.Christia.4.html#LECTUREXII> --). Our Saviour categorically gave us the definitive statement on the meaning of the **love of complacency** in the private instructions He made to His disciples on the night of His betrayal. "If ye love Me, keep My Commandments" (John 14:15). Though all men are favored with disinterested benevolence from the Almighty, only the lovingly obedient are blessed by God's special **love of complacency**. "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" (14:21).

Again, Finney drives home the distinction between disinterested benevolence and the **love of complacency**:

"Complacency towards those that are virtuous is another modification of holy love. I say towards those that are virtuous, because while we exercise benevolence towards all, irrespective of their character, we have a right to exercise complacency towards those only who are holy. To exercise complacency towards the wicked is to be as wicked as they are. But to exercise entire complacency to those that are holy, is to be ourselves holy" (from Finney's lecture, "[The Law of God, No. 1](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html)" in "[The Oberlin Evangelist](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html)" [February 27, 1839] -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin\\_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Law.of.God.1.html) --).

"Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long" (Proverbs 23:17). The Psalmist confessed that he wrongly showed approval or **complacency** for the ungodly, being "envious at the foolish, when [he] saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Psalm 73:3). Though the Psalmist initially wrongly reasoned, he eventually realized his error, when he exclaimed, "Surely Thou didst set [the wicked] in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors" (73:18-19).

Unlike the disinterested benevolence that God demonstrated to a world of lost sinners through the "once for all" (Hebrews 10:10) atonement of Jesus Christ on the Cross, the **love of complacency** is exercised by God to only the one "that hath [His] Commandments, and keepeth them", for only that lovingly obedient one is the one "that loveth [Christ]: and he that loveth [Christ] shall be loved of [Christ's] Father, and [Christ] will love him, and will manifest [Himself] to him" (John 14:21). Not only does God distinguish between these two kinds of love, i.e., disinterested benevolence and the **love of complacency**, but it is a potentially fatal mistake for the Professed Christian to assume that the vastness of the **complacent** love of God is given to those who claim to know Him, while they refuse to walk holy. "1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? 2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2).

In fact, the very holiness of life that characterizes the True Saints, is the evidence that we are exercising the **love of complacency** to the Thrice Holy God. "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God" (Leviticus 20:7). When Jesus said, "If ye love Me, keep My Commandments" (John 14:15), how can we rightfully claim to be exercising the **love of complacency** toward Him, without obeying the command to walk in holiness? "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). The Apostle Paul understood the difficulties of living holy while still in the flesh; and yet, he affirmed by Inspiration that we are able to yield ourselves unto holiness. "19 I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness... 22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end Everlasting Life" (Romans 6:19, 22).

It is to the glory and credit of God that He has taken man as a moral agent-- who can, but won't obey-- and blessed him with the gift of the Holy Spirit of the New Testament "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). "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). So then, the **love of complacency** is exercised by God toward those who walk in loving, holy obedience, as Jesus revealed shortly before His betrayal, i.e., John 14:21. But, since a loving, holy walk is plainly possible through every Saint's possession of the

Indwelling Holy Spirit, then we ought not to object that the **love of complacency** toward God, which is holiness, is required for all who would enter Heaven. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD" (Hebrews 12:14). [See Charles G. Finney's "[Salvation Always Conditional](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1840/OE1840.Salvation.Condition.html)" (Lecture 24) from "[The Oberlin Evangelist](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1840/OE1840.Salvation.Condition.html)" of December 16, 1840 -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin\\_1840/OE1840.Salvation.Condition.html](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1840/OE1840.Salvation.Condition.html) --, where he states that "believers are not unconditionally and permanently justified by any one act of faith, is plainly asserted, in Ezek. 18:21-29, and 33:12-16."]

## Conclusion

It is the grand truth in the study of God, that "God is love" (1John 4:8). And, anyone who professes to know God, while walking disobediently, exhibits neither **disinterested benevolence** nor the **love of complacency** toward God or man. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous" (5:3). The essential or fundamental difference between **disinterested benevolence** and the **love of complacency**, is that **disinterested benevolence** is owed to all without regard to character, i.e., "For God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life" (John 3:16), while the **love of complacency** is due only those who are holy or lovingly obedient, i.e., "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" (14:21).

The danger of confusing these terms that Charles G. Finney labored his life to teach the Philadelphian Church of the 1800's, is that:

(1) The Ungodly will claim that, if the God who is love died for the world, then all men will be universally saved, e.g., Universalism. But, that would be to neglect the paramount truth that only those who "believe on the LORD Jesus Christ" shall "be saved" (Acts 16:31), because that only is the "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6).

(2) The Backslidden will maintain that obedience to the Moral Law is not only unnecessary for salvation, and that, outright disobedience to the same Moral Law does not separate us from the love of God. "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). It would be the same as if they advocated that it is unnecessary to love God with all your heart-- as demanded by the Moral Law (Matthew 22:36-40)-- in order to be saved, i.e., "But if any man love God, the same is known of Him" (1Corinthians 8:3). Further, they would be purposely obscuring the fact that "whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (1John 3:6), and that "if we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth" (1:6). And,

(3) The Honest But Ignorant Saints will become so confused by an improper understanding of the love of God, that they will often find themselves falling back into sin, making little headway in their Christian walk, while finding their pace to be much like the Laodicean Church around them. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the Oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12).

Finally, the great opportunity of properly understanding the love of God, which Charles Grandison Finney faithfully expounded to the Church with the terms "disinterested benevolence" and the "love of complacency", is that individual Christians may enter into the covenant blessings of the New Testament by knowledgeably embracing the Spirit of God, Who will work "in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the Promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14). Instead of waiting for the Hereafter to see the Promises of God fulfilled, we can and ought to embrace them now. "As for Me, this is My Covenant with them, saith the LORD; My Spirit that is upon thee, and My Words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever" (Isaiah 59:21). We ought to resist the impulse of misdirected teachings that make the giving of the Holy Spirit only a past event to an Institutional Church, but that the very purpose of the gift of the Holy Spirit, is that the God of love will "abide with [us] for ever" (John 14:16). More important than the happiness that we immediately receive from the Spirit's presence, or even the anticipation of future Rapture and Heavenly joyfulness, we will have the present fulfillment of the Entire Sanctification or Complete Obedience promised through Jeremiah. "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" (Jeremiah 31:33). And, we, the Church of Jesus Christ, will presently justify the God Who created us "in His own image" (Genesis 1:27) as moral agents, and the Saviour Who redeemed us "by His own blood" (Hebrews 9:12), that we should actually and presently "live unto righteousness" (1Peter 2:24). "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye

shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2:15).

May the "very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our LORD Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:23).

Maranatha!

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## The Beauty of Holiness

Or, Beautiful Holiness: The Fruit of Loving Obedience

"O worship the LORD in the Beauty of Holiness"

(Psalm 96:9)

by Katie Stewart

7-14-2000

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### Preface

When obedience comes hard, as "heavy burdens and grievous to be borne" (Matthew 23:4), we either don't stop to think of Holiness at all, or else only in a sarcastic reference to the strictness of the Law. This is not love. This is not obedience. This is not Holiness. Love obeys, and does so readily and joyfully. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are *not grievous*" (1John 5:3). Holiness is beautiful because it is the fruit of your love to Him. Our love union with the LORD is beautiful because it yields our obedience to Him, which yields to Him great joy. "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). What can you offer God Who has everything? You can choose Him. Be called by His Name. Agree with Him. Please Him. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my LORD" (Philippians 3:8). Give Him the love and worship of an obedient heart to His every Word. "Thy Words were found, and I did eat Them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy Name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jeremiah 15:16).

### Obedience Yields Holiness

Holiness means "to be set apart or consecrated, sanctified". Holiness is the state in which a true Christian lives his life. Holiness is the state of moral being in which absolutely no sin can exist, and in which love is absolutely foundational. Obedience, committed by the motive of Divine Love, yields Holiness. "God is love" (1John 4:8). God is Holy. "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His Holy Hill; for the LORD our God is Holy" (Psalm 99:9). "Holy is His Name" (Luke 1:49). God is the Standard for Holiness. "There is none Holy as the LORD: for there is none beside Thee" (1Samuel 2:2). God "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). God has never sinned, does not sin, and will never sin.

- (1Peter 2:22) "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."
- (1John 3:5) "In Him is no sin."

God expects His people to be like Him.

- (1John 3:5) "He was manifested to **take away** our sins."
- (1Peter 1:15-16) "But as He which hath called you is Holy, so be ye Holy in ALL manner of conversation. Because it is written, Be ye Holy; for I am Holy."
- (2Timothy 2:19) "Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ depart from iniquity."

We are to use the free will that God has given us to recognize His worth. We are to want to be like Him. We are to want what

He wants. We are to *want Him*. "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire beside Thee" (Psalm 73:25). Esteem Him by valuing His opinions, His desires, and His requirements with loving obedience. "I have esteemed the Words of His mouth **more** than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). "How sweet are Thy Words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103). Only then will you know the true Beauty of that sweet Holiness that **binds you and the Godhead together** in blessed love. "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My Words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our **abode** with him" (John 14:23).

Love works obedience in us and is the motive of our obedience. You cannot love God in disobedience. You can claim to, but it's a lie. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and **walk** in darkness, we lie, and do not the Truth: but if we **walk** in the Light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1John 1:6-7). Love always produces obedience. You cannot have love without obedience. It's just NOT possible! (Please read the articles listed in "[Topical Links On Sound Doctrine](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Topical.Links.On.Doctrine.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Topical.Links.On.Doctrine.html> -- for more help with this concept.)

- (2John 1:6) "And this is love, that we **walk** after His Commandments. This is the Commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should **walk** in it."
- (John 15:10) "If ye **keep** My Commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have **kept** My Father's Commandments, and abide in His love."
- (1John 2:3-5) "3 And **hereby** we do know that we know Him, if we **keep** His Commandments. 4 He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth NOT His Commandments, is a liar, and the Truth is NOT in him. 5 But whoso **keepeth** His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: **hereby** know we that we are in Him."
- (1John 3:22,24) "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we **keep** His Commandments, and **do** those things that are pleasing in His sight... And he that **keepeth** His Commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And **hereby** we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us." And the Holy Spirit is given ONLY to those who won't grieve Him away. "The Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that **obey** Him" (Acts 5:32).
- (1John 4:7-8; 5:2) "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love... 5:2 **By this** we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and **keep** His Commandments."
- (1John 3:18) "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in **deed** and in **Truth**."

"Come now, and let us reason together" (Isaiah 1:18). Holy living is built on love.

1. Obedience is the validation of love and cannot exist without it. "And though I... have not charity, I am nothing" (1Corinthians 13:2).
2. Holiness is the state in which obedience dwells. "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the Truth" (1Peter 1:22).
3. Holiness is beautiful because it is the fruit of love. "The fruit of the Spirit is love" (Galatians 5:22).
4. Love is what God is. "God is love" (1John 4:8).
5. Therefore love is beautiful because God is beautiful. "Yea, He is Altogether Lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend" (Song 5:16).

When you live "in the Beauty of Holiness" to and for the LORD, the fruit of your life will be a magnification of Him, for truly He is "Altogether Lovely". (Please visit the website, "[Altogether Lovely](http://wallpaper.pair.com/)" -- <http://wallpaper.pair.com/> -- for desktop wallpapers that tries to magnify His beauty and His Word.)

## Holiness Beautifies the LORD and His People



Beauty: "splendor, majesty, Godly in appearance" --from "Strong's Concordance"

From Baal to Buddha, the gods of this world have been tools of the Devil to lead men into "the blackness of darkness for ever" (Jude 1:13). It is only the Almighty God, Creator and "Possessor of Heaven and Earth" (Genesis 14:19), that leads men into an Everlasting Covenant of splendor and majesty. "LORD God of Israel, there is no God like Thee, in Heaven above, or on Earth beneath, Who keepest covenant and mercy with Thy servants that walk before Thee with ALL their heart" (1Kings 8:23). These Three In One: Jehovah Father and Jesus Christ, magnified by Their Holy Spirit, are Singularly worthy of Glory and Honour. "Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like Thee, **Glorious in Holiness**, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Exodus 15:11).

The Holiness that unites us with the LORD is a Transforming Power that comes from only Him.

- (Romans 11:36) "For **of** Him, and **through** Him, and **to** Him, are ALL things: to Whom be Glory for ever. Amen."
- (Psalm 110:3) "Thy people shall be **willing** in the day of Thy Power, in the Beauties of Holiness from the womb of the morning."

Our "willing" is by His Transforming Power, making us "a living sacrifice, Holy, acceptable unto God" (Romans 12:1), but it is our "reasonable service" (12:1) to "present [our] bodies" (12:1), "and be not conformed to this world: but be ye **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (12:2).

To be transformed by His Power to be Holy (or, Obedient) is true Beauty. Holiness reflects the splendor, majesty and appearance that radiates from the Glory of God. "His Glory is above the Earth and Heaven" (Psalm 148:13). "For who in the Heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?" (Psalm 89:6). "Unto you therefore which believe He is Precious" (1Peter 2:7). Yet He shares Himself with us and we partake of His Godly appearance and "Beauty of Holiness".

- (Psalm 27:4) "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the House of the LORD all the days of my life, **to behold the Beauty of the LORD.**"
- (Isaiah 28:5) "In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a Crown of Glory, and for a Diadem of Beauty, **unto the residue of His people.**"

There is coming soon, a time when we shall "make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, **HOLINESS TO THE LORD**" (Exodus 28:36). The Millennium, a thousand years where King Jesus will reign over ALL the Earth, will be a time when men "give unto the LORD the Glory **due** unto His Name: [and men will] bring an offering, and come before Him: [and] worship the LORD **in** the Beauty of Holiness" (1Chronicles 16:29). The kings and priests of the Earth will be of the LORD's Own choosing, and we shall rule with Him.

- (Revelation 1:6) "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen."
- (Revelation 5:10) "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the Earth."
- (Revelation 20:6) "Blessed and Holy is he that hath part in the First Resurrection: on such the Second Death hath NO power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

And "in that day shall there be [in every place, even] upon the bells of the horses, **HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD**" (Zechariah 14:20). The hosts of Heaven will shout, "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the Earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it" (Isaiah 34:1), "**HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD**". And Obedience will be given joyfully from the heart. The Earth will shine with Glory in His Righteousness. In the fulness of the thousand-year-moment, they will "sing unto the LORD a **New** Song, and His praise from the end of the Earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof" (Isaiah 42:10). **And ALL the Earth will finally see the rightness of obeying a Righteous God.** "Tremble, thou Earth, at the presence of the LORD" (Psalm 114:7). The reality of it will be breathtakingly beautiful. "Let ALL the Earth fear the LORD: let ALL the inhabitants of the world stand in **awe** of Him" (Psalm 33:8). For just such a time as this, a time in which "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven"

(Matthew 6:10), our earnest prayer should be, "Come, LORD Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). "O, please, please, come!"

The world's beauty "is only skin deep". This life "is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). But this life affords us a grand opportunity to be blessed in Heaven while still here on Earth; for "blessed be the God and Father of our LORD Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with ALL spiritual blessings in Heavenly Places in Christ... and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in Heavenly Places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6). Our spirits are blessed by His Spirit when we obey "all things whatsoever [He has] commanded" (Matthew 28:20).

"All Turned to Holiness"

by [C. H. Spurgeon](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.Haddon.Spurgeon.html) (1834-1892) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.Haddon.Spurgeon.html> --

"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness Unto The LORD" (Zechariah 14:20).

Happy day when all things shall be consecrated, and the horses' bells shall ring out holiness to the LORD! That day has come to me. Do I not make all things holy to God? These garments, when I put them on or take them off, shall they not remind me of the righteousness of Christ Jesus my LORD? Shall not my work be done as unto the LORD? Oh, that today my clothes may be vestments, my meals sacraments, my house a temple, my table an altar, my speech incense, and myself a priest! LORD, fulfill Thy promise, and let nothing be to me common or unclean.

Let me in faith expect this. Believing it to be so, I shall be helped to make it so. As I myself am the property of Jesus, my LORD may take an inventory of all I have, for it is altogether His own; and I resolve to prove it to be so by the use to which I put it this day. From morning till evening I would order all things by a happy and holy rule. My bells shall ring -- why should they not? Even my horses shall have bells -- who has such a right to music as the saints have? But all my bells, my music, my mirth, shall be turned to holiness and shall ring out the name of 'the happy God.'" -- excerpt from "[Faith's Checkbook](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Spurgeon/Faith.Checkbook/Faiths.Checkbook.Preface.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Spurgeon/Faith.Checkbook/Faiths.Checkbook.Preface.html> -- by C. H. Spurgeon. SEE [TODAY'S ENTRY](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Home_Page/Faiths_Checkbook_Daily.html) -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Home\\_Page/Faiths\\_Checkbook\\_Daily.html](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Home_Page/Faiths_Checkbook_Daily.html) --.

Holiness beautifies the LORD. Obedience magnifies His Righteousness. The LORD's people, powerfully transformed by the Spirit of His Word, are a beautiful reflection of His Holiness.

## The Fruit of Holiness on a Loving Mind

Obedience demonstrates love, i.e., "If ye love Me, keep My Commandments" (John 14:15), and is wrought through love, i.e., "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6). Obedience, or Holy living, is the beautiful fruit which is lovingly given to the One Who is Love. "God is Love" (1John 4:8). Whenever there is True Love for the LORD, that Divinely-authored, Life-giving, spark of Heaven-sent Love will ALWAYS be demonstrated with cheerful obedience to every, single desire or command that the LORD esteems to be for the highest good of His Kingdom, and of His children. Mr. Charles Finney spoke of the "blessedness" that love, or "benevolence," has on an obedient mind:

"Blessedness of Benevolence"

by [C. G. Finney](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html) (1792-1875) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html> --

"What constitutes true Christian *happiness*."

- 1. It consists in the exercise of benevolence itself. The human mind is so constructed by its Author, that the exercise of benevolence in itself, is exceedingly sweet and grateful to the mind. It has an excellent relish and sweetness that enters into the very substance of the exercise. There is a conscious happiness diffused through the mind, that seems to be woven into the very texture of benevolence itself. This is to the benevolent mind like the perennial fountain, pouring forth continually the sweet and refreshing waters of life.
- 2. Another element of Christian happiness is, that which consists in the gratification of the benevolent disposition. I have already said, there is a sweet satisfaction in the exercise itself. But still, the exercise is one thing, and its gratification another. The gratification is another ingredient that greatly augments the sum of happiness. **To will to do good, is sweet, but to really succeed in doing the good that we desire, is sweeter still.** [Bold emphasis by WSTS.]
- 3. Another element of the Christian's happiness is the self-complacency that follows and accompanies the exercise or gratification of benevolence. This is indispensable to complete happiness. Men may experience a kind and degree of happiness, in indulging in those things in which all the powers of the mind do not harmonize; but if they are indulging

in things to which their consciences are opposed, the inward mutiny and conflict thus produced, mingles in their cup of gratification the gall of bitterness. But benevolence always has the approbation of conscience. And the mind, from its very structure, necessarily feels a self-complacent satisfaction in the exercise of benevolent affections.

- 4. Another element of this happiness is the life and harmonious action of all the powers of the soul in its exercise. The mind is so constructed, that it will not, cannot harmonize in any other course of action. It was made to be benevolent. Benevolence is its proper element, and it can no more properly enjoy life in the exercise of selfish affections, than a fish can live out of water. But there is an excellent harmony, like an exquisitely tuned instrument, in the movements of all the powers of the mind in the exercise and gratification of benevolence. Like an exquisite machine, that is made of such materials, kept so clean, and so oiled as to cut off all friction as far as possible, it moves so still, so sweet, so safe, there is a loveliness in the harmony of its movements. So the soul in the exercise of benevolence is made to harmonize. Every power of the mind consents. There is no jarring, no grating, no friction, no inward mutiny or repellantcy to grate like discord; but all is loveliness; quietness, and assurance for ever." --from "[Blessedness of Benevolence](#)" -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin\\_1840/OE1840.Blessedness.html](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1840/OE1840.Blessedness.html) -- by C. G. Finney, published in "[The Oberlin Evangelist](#)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Finney.Oberlin.Evangelist.html> --, 1840.

Also, as a helpful aid in understanding Mr. Finney's, sometimes archaic, form of speech:

1. Complacency, or Esteem: "Complacency, as a state of will or heart, is only benevolence modified by the consideration or relation of right character in the object of it. God, prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, in all ages, are as virtuous in their self-denying and untiring labours to save the wicked, as they are in their complacent love to the saints." *Systematic Theology (LECTURE VII)*. Also, "approbation of the character of its object. Complacency is due only to the good and holy." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE XII)*.
2. Disinterested Benevolence: "By disinterested benevolence I do not mean, that a person who is disinterested feels no interest in his object of pursuit, but that he seeks the happiness of others for its own sake, and not for the sake of its reaction on himself, in promoting his own happiness. He chooses to do good because he rejoices in the happiness of others, and desires their happiness for its own sake. God is purely and disinterestedly benevolent. He does not make His creatures happy for the sake of thereby promoting His own happiness, but because He loves their happiness and chooses it for its own sake. Not that He does not feel happy in promoting the happiness of His creatures, but that He does not do it for the sake of His own gratification." *Lectures to Professing Christians (LECTURE I)*. --from a [GLOSSARY](#) -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin\\_1839/OE1839.Eternal.Life.html#GLOSSARY](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1839/OE1839.Eternal.Life.html#GLOSSARY) -- of easily misunderstood terms as defined by Mr. Finney himself. Compiled by Katie Stewart.

You CANNOT have Joy of confidence and assurance without Obedience. You CANNOT have Obedience without God's Perfect Love. And you CANNOT have the Fruits of the Spirit, which includes Love, without the Spirit, "Whom God hath given to them that Obey Him" (Acts 5:32). Circular, yes. But, it starts with the Greatest. And "the greatest of these is Charity [i.e., Love]" (1Corinthians 13:13). Love is the greatest because Love is what God is. "And we have **known and believed the Love** that God hath to us. *God is Love*; and he that **dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God**, and God in him" (1John 4:16).

- (1John 4:17) "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as He is, **so are we in this world.**"
- (1John 4:18) "There is NO fear in love; but perfect love casteth OUT fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is NOT made perfect in love."

And again, going circular, "but whoso **keepeth** His Word, in him verily is the Love of God perfected: **hereby know** we that we are in Him" (1John 2:5). So, you see that, the "Beauty" that there is in "Holiness" lies in the fact, that,

1. **Love, as our Living Motive, works obedience in us,**
2. **which then allows the Holy Spirit to testify to us**
3. **of the confidence and assurance that we know we are truly His,**
4. **which then completely fills our joy!**

- (Philippians 2:2) "Fulfil ye my JOY, that ye be **likeminded**, having the same LOVE, being of one accord, of one mind."
- (Psalm 5:11) "But let all those that put their trust in Thee REJOICE: let them ever shout for JOY, because Thou

defendest them: let them also that LOVE Thy Name be JOYFUL in Thee."

- (Galatians 5:22-25) "22 But the fruit of the Spirit is LOVE, JOY, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24 And they that are Christ's **have crucified** the flesh with the affections and lusts. 25 If we **live** in the Spirit, let us also **walk** in the Spirit."
- (1Peter 1:8) "Whom having not seen, ye LOVE; in Whom, though now ye see Him not, yet **believing**, ye REJOICE with JOY unspeakable and full of [Beautiful] Glory."

Commit just ONE sin, "for whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in ONE point, he is guilty of ALL" (James 2:10),-- and ALL of that Beautiful Holiness is ruined forever-- "except ye repent" (Luke 13:3).

- (2Peter 1:10) "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for **if ye do these things**, ye shall never fall."
- (Jude 1:24) "Unto Him that is ABLE TO KEEP YOU FROM FALLING, and to present you faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding Joy."

God's Laws, when received with a loving, trusting heart, are NEVER EVER hard to hear, nor hard to obey. God NOT a hard taskmaster to His children.

- (Psalm 96:9) "O worship the LORD in the Beauty of Holiness: fear before Him, all the Earth."
- (Psalm 37:24) "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with His hand."
- (Psalm 1:6) "For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

Walking in the Light with The Word of God Himself, we ENJOY all that the LORD was, is, and shall be-- for us and to us-- "that your JOY may be full" (1John 1:4). With a Holy heart, our confidence and assurance in God's ability to "keep that which [we] have committed unto Him against that day" (2Timothy 1:12) soars to Heaven's heights, with an Eternity of width and scope. "38 For [we are] persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the LOVE of God, which is in Christ Jesus our LORD. 9:1 [We] say the Truth in Christ, [we] lie not, **[our] conscience also bearing [us] witness in the Holy Ghost**" (Romans 8:38-9:1). In this most Holy and Beautiful state, we most assuredly agree with our brother in the LORD, Mr. Spurgeon, when he worships the LORD with the following:

"Never Separated from God"

by [C. H. Spurgeon](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.Haddon.Spurgeon.html) (1834-1892) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.Haddon.Spurgeon.html> --

"And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believeth thou this?" (John 11:26).

Yes, LORD, we believe it; we shall never die. Our soul may be separated from our body, and this is death of a kind; but our soul shall never be separated from God, which is the true death -- the death which was threatened to sin -- the death penalty which is the worst that can happen. We believe this most assuredly, for who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our LORD? We are members of the Body of Christ; will Christ lose parts of His Body? We are married to Jesus; will He be bereaved and widowed? It is not possible. There is a life within us which is not capable of being divided from God: yea, and the Holy Spirit dwells within us, and how then can we die? Jesus, Himself, is our life, and therefore there is no dying for us, for He cannot die again. In Him we died unto sin once, and the capital sentence cannot a second time be executed. Now we live, and live forever. The reward of righteousness is life everlasting, and we have nothingless than the righteousness of God, and therefore can claim the very highest reward.

Living and believing, we believe that we shall live and enjoy. Wherefore we press forward with full assurance that our life is secure in our living Head." -- excerpt from "[Faith's Checkbook](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Spurgeon/Faith.Checkbook/Faiths.Checkbook.Preface.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Spurgeon/Faith.Checkbook/Faiths.Checkbook.Preface.html> -- by C. H. Spurgeon. SEE [TODAY'S ENTRY](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Home_Page/Faiths_Checkbook_Daily.html) -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Home\\_Page/Faiths\\_Checkbook\\_Daily.html](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Home_Page/Faiths_Checkbook_Daily.html) --.

"Of Whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is OVER all, God blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 9:5).

## Holiness Versus Sinfulness: One or the Other, But Not Both

The Christian does "not" and "cannot" sin, **as long as he trusts God to work His Will in him**. "For it is **God which worketh** in you both **to will and to do** of **His** good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The description of a Christian, is one who is "like Christ." He does not sin. "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). He "keepeth himself" from sin because he **depends** on God's keeping him from committing sin, i.e., "His Seed remaineth in him: and he CANNOT sin." It is truly impossible to sin while wilfully trusting God not to. You cannot be holy and sinful at the exact same time.

- "6 Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth NOT: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. 7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that **doeth** righteousness is righteous, even as He is Righteous. 8 He that **committeth** sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 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 3:6-9).

When the Christian **wilfully rejects** doing right, he then removes himself from God's keeping-- and sins. And while stubbornly **residing** in this sinful state, God says that the sinning Christian, or, in fact, "whosoever," CANNOT know assuredly in his heart that he EVER was really a Christian, or that he EVER really did know God. "**Whosoever** sinneth hath NOT seen Him, neither known Him." There is no Beauty, GLORY, nor honour in a God-insulting moment of sin. That moment is ruined forever. God wants the backslider to feel the condemnation of hell-- NOT the assurance of Heaven. (Please see our article, "[He Will Subdue Our Iniquities](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/He.Will.Subdue.Our.Iniquity.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/He.Will.Subdue.Our.Iniquity.html> --, Or, How God Makes Normal Christians to Walk Without Sinning- Or, How Anyone Can Be Ready to Meet God at Any Time.) It is for our highest good that the LORD withdraws assurance from any "whosoever sinneth". How else can He prepare us for the Place He has prepared for us-- a Place where "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth" (Revelation 21:27).

- (1John 3:20-21) "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things [He knows our heart better than we do, so if we know in our hearts that we have sinned, be sure of this-- He knows, too.]. Beloved, **IF OUR HEART CONDEMN US NOT, THEN HAVE WE CONFIDENCE TOWARD GOD.**" (Please see our article, "[That Ye May Know That Ye Have Eternal Life](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/That.Ye.May.Know.That.Ye.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/That.Ye.May.Know.That.Ye.html> --, Or, The Biblical Doctrine of the Assurance of Salvation- Or, Only Those Who Abide in Christ May Know That They Have Eternal Life.)
- (Hebrews 10:26-27) "For if we sin wilfully **after** that we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth **no more sacrifice** for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."

If the backslider would "walk in the Spirit" then he would "NOT fulfil the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). But the backslider does NOT listen to the Spirit, therefore he has NO right to call himself a son of God, *no matter what he has claimed in the past*. "**For as many as are LED by the Spirit of God, they ARE the sons of God**" (Romans 8:14). The backslider could easily prove his claim to Christ by acting like a real Christian does-- and REPENT. For "if we live in the Spirit, let us also **walk** in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). A real Christian IS "LED by the Spirit of God", and they DO HAVE **the testimony of the Spirit and the assurance** that accompanies a peaceful heart. "Because ye ARE sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). A real Christian enjoys God's assurance because John says, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; **but in deed and in Truth**. And HEREBY WE KNOW that we are of the Truth, and shall **assure** our hearts before Him" (1John 3:18-19). A backslider, while stubbornly entrenched in his pride and sin, will always deceive himself, and vainly attempt to console himself, that "the Spirit Itself beareth witness with [his] spirit" that he is one of the "children of God" (Romans 8:16). But the Holy Spirit of God is the "Spirit of **Truth**" (John 15:26) and does not lie. He comforts as "The Comforter" (John 15:26) ONLY those to whom He has been given, and He is ONLY "given to them that **obey** Him" (Acts 5:32). When we sin, and "our heart condemn us" (1John 3:20), assurance is denied-- until we obey and repent. After coming out of a backslidden condition, we look at our sinful period as an all-consuming waste. King David illustrates this "clearing" of himself with Divine Inspiration.

- (Psalm 51:1-5) "1 A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For **I acknowledge**

my transgressions: and my sin is **ever** before me. 4 Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest. 5 Behold, **I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.**" (Please see our article, "[An Urgent Call to Christian Perfection](#)" --

<http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Exposition.Perfection.html> --, Or, An Exposition of the Doctrine of Christian Perfection.)

- (2Corinthians 7:11) "For behold this selfsame thing, that ye **sorrowed after a Godly sort**, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what **clearing** of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."
- (Psalm 147:11) "The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that **hope in His mercy.**"

"The Spirit Not Striving Always"

by [C. G. Finney](#) (1792-1875) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html> --

"Ye professors of religion who have lived a worldly life so long, are you not ashamed of your hope? Have you not good reason to be ashamed of a hope that has no more power than yours has had? Are there not many in this house who in the honesty of their hearts must say, 'Either there is no power in the gospel, or I don't know anything about it?' For the gospel affirms as a universal fact of all those who are not under the law but under grace, 'sin shall not have dominion over you.' Now will you go before God and say, 'Lord, thou hast said, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you;' but, Lord, that is all false, for I believe the gospel and am under grace, but sin still has dominion over me!' No doubt in this case there is a mistake somewhere; and it becomes you to ask solemnly, Shall I charge this mistake and falsehood upon God, or shall I admit that it must be in myself alone? The apostle Paul has said, 'The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.' Is it so to you?"

He has also said, 'Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Do you know this by your own experience? He adds also that we 'rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.'

Is all this in accordance with your experience, professed Christian? Is it true that your hope makes not ashamed? Does it produce such glorious fruits unto holiness as are here described? If you were to try your experience by the word of the living God, and open your heart to be searched by the Spirit, would not you be convinced that you do not embrace the gospel in reality?... It is the Spirit's work to make self-deceived men feel that they are now having their last call from the Spirit. When this impression is made, let it by all means be heeded. It is God's own voice to the soul. Out of a great multitude of cases under my observation, in which God has distinctly made sinners feel that the present was their last call, I do not recollect one in which it did not prove to be so. This is of a truth a solemn moment to the sinner, and ought to make the warning voice of God ring in his ear like the forewarning knell of the second death." --from C. G. Finney's "The Spirit Not Striving Always," Lecture 2 of the [1848 Download](#) (for "HELP" with the Download, see "[The Oberlin Evangelist](#)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Finney.Oberlin.Evangelist.html> --, bottom of page.)

Real Christians ALWAYS repent. "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22). "Praise the Beauty of Holiness... Praise the LORD; for His mercy endureth for ever" (2Chronicles 20:21). God DOES work it in us. "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). Real Christians taste of, and display as "ambassadors for Christ" (2Corinthians 5:20), all the Beauty and GLORY of God's Holiness. When Christians are "partakers of the Divine Nature" (2Peter 1:4), they are "ensamples to the flock" (1Peter 5:3), displaying: 1. His mercy, 2. His compassion, 3. His praise, 4. His perfection, 5. His perseverance, and 6. His righteousness. Christians are living epistles "known and read of all men" (2Corinthians 3:2). They portray the LORD in His "Beauty of Holiness".

If you are presently a backslider, one "that knoweth to do good, and doeth it NOT, to him it is SIN" [James 4:17]), and you have NOT allowed God to work repentance in you, how can you possibly know you've EVER let God even start a "good work" of grace in you? You CAN'T know. "But whoso *keepeth His Word*, in him verily is the love of God perfected: **hereby know** we that we are in Him" (1John 2:5). With NO testimony of the Spirit, you have NO assurance. Our walk with Him is always in the *present tense*. He has Foreknowledge and Omniscience-- we do not.

Beware! You'd better start worrying if you are presently in sin, and "*without chastisement*, whereof all are partakers, [for] then are ye bastards, and NOT sons" (Hebrews 12:8).

- (Hebrews 12:7) "**If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons**; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"
- (1Thessalonians 2:11) "Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children."

If this world seems "cool" to you, and money flows, and friends come easy, then beware, because you are enjoying "the pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25) and not "the Beauty of Holiness".

- (Romans 8:7) "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be."
- (James 4:4) "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."
- (John 15:19) "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."
- (1John 2:15) "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is NOT in him."
- (Mark 10:25-27) "25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. 26 And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? 27 And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."

Just because the Longsuffering and Patient LORD gives us "space to repent" (Revelation 2:21) doesn't mean that you can depend on that "space" to be there just "whenever you get around to it". There is coming to EVERY sinner (or, any person who is presently committing sin) a "Day of Wrath and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God" (Romans 2:5).

- (Romans 2:3-6) "3 And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, **and doest the same**, that thou shalt escape the Judgment of God? 4 Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; NOT knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5 But after thy **hardness and impenitent heart** treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the Day of Wrath and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God; 6 Who will render to EVERY man according to his deeds:"
- (Jeremiah 8:5) "Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a **perpetual** backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they **refuse** to return."

Sin causes a hardening effect that deceptively worsens as the backslideness lingers."Exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

- (Hebrews 4:7) "Again, He limiteth a certain day... **To day** if ye will hear His Voice, harden not your hearts."
- (2Corinthians 6:2) "Behold, **NOW is the accepted time**; behold, now is the day of Salvation."

We must not take God for granted. "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, **if thou continue** in His goodness: **otherwise thou also shalt be cut off**" (Romans 11:22).

- (1Corinthians 15:2) "By which also ye are saved, **if** ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."
- (Hebrews 3:6) "But Christ as a Son over His Own House; Whose House are we, **if** we hold fast the confidence and the

rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

- (Hebrews 3:14) "For we are made partakers of Christ, **if** we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end." (Please see, "[Salvation Always Conditional](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin_1840/OE1840.Salvation.Condition.html)" -- http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Oberlin\_1840/OE1840.Salvation.Condition.html --, by C. G. Finney.)

If professing Christians die in an unrepentant condition, they prove only one thing. They never were what they professed to be. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would **no doubt** have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be **made manifest** that they were not all of us" (1John 2:19). There is no GLORY, no honour, no splendor, no majesty, and there is no Beauty in sin. When you walk in sin, as opposed to Holiness, you are filthy and naked.

- (Revelation 3:17-19) "17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art **wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked**: 18 I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that **the shame of thy nakedness** do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."
- (Revelation 16:15) "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he **walk naked**, and they see his **shame**."

Sin breeds fear and leaves you "naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13).

- (Genesis 3:7, 10) "They [Adam and Eve] knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons... And he said, I heard Thy Voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

## The Beauty of Holiness and the Ruin of Sinfulness

Beauty: "8597h: tipharah -- beauty, **glory**" --from "Strong's Concordance"

Godly parents rejoice when their children obey them. "A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother" (Proverbs 10:1). A child's obedience brings GLORY and honour to the parents, as the parents do to the LORD. "The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him" (Proverbs 23:24). Obedience shows that the child respects the parents, and that the child, in appearance, is like the parents. "Yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things" (Proverbs 23:16). Everyone delights in a delightful child. "And the child grew, and the LORD blessed him" (Judges 13:24). Pleasant feelings abound. The home is filled with unity and harmony. The scene is one of Beauty. "1 Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in His Ways. 2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. 3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. 4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD" (Psalm 128:1-4). The scene is one of Heaven. Heaven is a Home for the Godly, that is, for ones who are like God. They, like God, do not sin.

- (1John 2:29) "If ye know that He is Righteous, ye know that every one that **doeth** Righteousness is born of Him."

Sin is morally reprehensible because it is a willful act committed against God.

- (1John 3:8) "He that **committeth** sin is of the Devil; for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the Devil."

The willful acts committed in loving obedience to, and for God, yield the gloriously beautiful fruit of Holiness.

- (1John 3:3) "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."



The wealth of this world is temporary, "for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away" (Proverbs 23:5). Scripture often teaches in an oxymoronic fashion. For example, take the contradictory descriptions of a monetarily rich, yet wicked man. "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing" (Proverbs 13:7). A wicked man works this world's system to "treasure" for himself all that his heart desires. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:21). Being poor "toward God" is to have "nothing". The LORD is the ONLY True Wealth. That's why "there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath Great Riches" (Proverbs 13:7). In this world, "we have this Treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us" (2Corinthians 4:7). But the Treasure is Eternal, "that in the ages to come He [God the Father] might show the **exceeding riches** of His grace in His kindness toward us **through Christ Jesus**" (Ephesians 2:7).

- (James 5:1-3, 5) "1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. 3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days... 5 Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a Day of Slaughter."
- (Luke 12:33-34) "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a Treasure in the Heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For **where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**"

Sin strips naked, but Holiness covers and "worketh for us a far more exceeding and Eternal weight of GLORY" (2Corinthians 4:17).

- (Is. 52:1) "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the Holy City: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."
- (Is. 48:2) "For they call themselves of the Holy City, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The LORD of Hosts is His Name."
- (Rev. 21:2, 22-27) "2 And I John saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, prepared as a Bride adorned for her Husband... 22 And I saw no temple therein: for the LORD God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple of it. 23 And the City had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the GLORY of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof. 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the Light of it: and the kings of the Earth do bring their GLORY and honour into it. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the GLORY and honour of the nations into it. 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

A Holy heart is sinless-- pure and clean. A Holy soul is at home in Heaven, "and there shall in no wise enter into [Heaven] any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Revelation 21:27). The "Beauty of Holiness" is that it leads us all the way Home to God. "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it" (Isaiah 35:8). The ruin of sinfulness stops us dead, and diverts us out of "The Way of Holiness". But, praise the Son of God, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might **redeem** us from ALL iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, **zealous of good works**" (Titus 2:14). Praise Him for His mercy, for "he that covereth his sins shall NOT prosper: but whoso **confesseth and forsaketh** them shall have MERCY" (Proverbs 28:13).

- (1John 1:9) "If we confess our sins, **He is Faithful and Just to forgive us our sins**, and to cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness."
- (Psalm 32:5) "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and Thou **forgavest** the iniquity of my sin."

## Life's Heavy Burdens Are Too Grievous to Bear

Life always lays backbreaking problems on man. "Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens... And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field:

all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigour" (Exodus 1:11, 14). Man's labour is meant to be God's method of refining. "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?... this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith" (Ecclesiastes 1:3,13).

Considering man was created out of mere dust, it would seem that the arduous task of living life would just be too much grief. [See our article, "[What the Bible Says About Suicide](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/What.Bible.Says.Suicide.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/What.Bible.Says.Suicide.html> --]

- (Genesis 2:7) "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."
- (Genesis 3:19) "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

But the LORD's plan was to create man to have an "inbuilt" **need** of Him. God never intended that man should "bear the brunt" by himself. **He wants us to trust Him.** "For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14).

- (Exodus 3:7; 6:7) "And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows... And I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I Am the LORD your God, which bringeth you **out from under the burdens.**"
- (Psalm 10:14) "Thou hast seen it: for Thou beholdest mischief and spite, **to requite it** with Thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto Thee; Thou art **The Helper** of the fatherless."
- (Psalm 90:14) "O satisfy us **early** with Thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days."
- (Psalm 22:11) "**Be not far** from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help."
- (Psalm 68:5) "A **Father** of the fatherless, and a **Judge** of the widows, is God in His Holy Habitation."
- (Nahum 1:7) "The LORD is good, a **Strong Hold** in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him."
- (John 10:14) "I am the **Good Shepherd**, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine."
- (Matthew 6:24-34) "24 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. 25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? 27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? 28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: 29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? 31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 But **seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His RIGHTEOUSNESS; and all these things shall be added unto you.** 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

In the flesh, life is burdensome-- crushingly so, in fact. But Relief does come to the rescue for those ONLY who have learned to "cast" ALL their problems on the Sustainer! "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and **He shall sustain thee:** He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalm 55:22).

"Burdens Cast on Him"

by [C. H. Spurgeon](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.Haddon.Spurgeon.html) (1834-1892) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.Haddon.Spurgeon.html> --

"Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee; He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved"

(Psalm 55:22).

It is a heavy burden; roll it on Omnipotence. It is thy burden now, and it crushes thee; but when the LORD takes it, He will make nothing of it. If thou art called still to bear, 'he will sustain thee.' It will be on Him and not on thee. Thou wilt be so upheld under it that the burden will be a blessing. Bring the LORD into the matter, and thou wilt stand upright under that which in itself would bow thee down.

Our worst fear is lest our trial should drive us from the path of duty; but this the LORD will never suffer. If we are righteous before Him, He will not endure that our affliction should move us from our standing. In Jesus He accepts us as righteous, and in Jesus He will keep us so.

What about the present moment? Art thou going forth to this day's trial alone? Are thy poor shoulders again to be galled with the oppressive load? Be not so foolish. Tell the LORD all about thy grief and leave it with Him. Don't cast your burden down and then take it up again; but roll it on the LORD and leave it there. Then shalt thou walk at large, a joyful and unburdened believer, singing the praises of thy great Burden-bearer." -- excerpt from "[Faith's Checkbook](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Spurgeon/Faith.Checkbook/Faiths.Checkbook.Preface.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Spurgeon/Faith.Checkbook/Faiths.Checkbook.Preface.html> -- by C. H. Spurgeon. SEE [TODAY'S ENTRY](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Home_Page/Faiths_Checkbook_Daily.html) -- [http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Home\\_Page/Faiths\\_Checkbook\\_Daily.html](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Home_Page/Faiths_Checkbook_Daily.html) --.

God loves you. "Who is this King of Glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle" (Psalm 24:8). He is the Strong One Who really cares about you. "Casting **all** your care upon Him; for **He careth for you**" (1Peter 5:7). Give ALL of the worry, care, and responsibility to Him. Let it be **His** problem!

- (Psalm 31:7) "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy: for **Thou hast considered** my trouble; **Thou hast known** my soul in adversities."
- (Psalm 37:5) "**Commit** thy way UNTO THE LORD; **trust** also in Him; and **He shall bring it to pass.**"
- (Proverbs 16:3) "**Commit** thy works UNTO THE LORD, and thy thoughts shall be **established.**"

Trusting God is the act of a loving obedience to Him and confidence in Him. Obedience works a beautiful Holiness that shines with contentment and peace.

- (Isaiah 58:6,9) "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to **loose** the bands of wickedness, to **undo** the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed **go free**, and that ye **break every yoke**?... Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity."

Men lust for power over other men. No one is too low in the succession. Preying upon each other, they reveal the ugliness of greed and hate. The lowest man finds someone that he can "lord over". Men bind impossible burdens. They are truly "grievous to be borne."

- (Matthew 23:4) "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."
- (Luke 11:46, 52) "And he said, **Woe** unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers... **Woe** unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."
- (Matthew 23:13, 15, 23-24) "13 But **woe** unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in... 15 **Woe** unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves... 23 **Woe** unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. 24 Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."

But the LORD's people are not so. They imitate their God, and the fruit of it is beautiful. "O worship the LORD in the Beauty

of Holiness: fear before Him, all the Earth" (Psalm 96:9).

- (Galatians 6:2) "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ."
- (Romans 15:1) "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves."
- (2Timothy 2:19) "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, **The LORD knoweth them that are His**. And, Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ **depart from iniquity**."

## Conclusion

"O worship **the LORD** in the Beauty of Holiness: fear before Him, all the Earth" (Psalm 96:9). What Beauty is found in Holiness? The LORD. "Let the Beauty of the LORD our God be upon us" (Psalm 90:17). And what Beauty "upon us" does He work? "Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it" (90:17). The beautiful "work" of Holy living God will "establish... upon us".

And Love? Well, Love is the "greatest" (1Corinthians 13:13) of all spiritual assets, and without Love, we are nothing" (13:2). Love is the motive for Holy living. On Love, the whole Moral Law of God is **suspended**. "37 Jesus said... 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).

"To hang so as to allow free movement... To fasten or be fastened at one point with no support from below, depend from" --from "American Heritage Dictionary"

Of what value is law, if it is not esteemed and obeyed? God obeys His Law, and He expects the same of us.

- (John 15:10) "If ye keep My Commandments, ye shall abide in My Love; **even as I have kept My Father's Commandments**, and abide in His Love."
- (Psalm 89:35) "Once have I sworn by My Holiness that **I will not lie** unto David."
- (Psalm 60:6) "God hath spoken **in His Holiness**."
- (2John 1:6) "And this is Love, that we **walk** after His Commandments."

God's Moral Law depends on, and is supported only by Love. Mr. [Finney](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html) (1792-1875) -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Fellowship/Charles.G.Finney.html> -- stresses the importance of Love in our obedience and moral obligation to the Moral Law.

"Moral law invariably holds one language. It never changes the spirit of its requirement. 'Thou shalt love,' or be perfectly benevolent, is its uniform and its only demand. This demand it never varies, and never can vary. It is as immutable as God is, and for the same reason. To talk of letting down, or altering moral law, is to talk absurdly. The thing is naturally impossible. No being has the right or the power to do so... The totality of its requisitions are, both in its letter and its spirit, 'Thou shalt love, &c., with all thy heart, thy soul, thy might, thy strength.' That is, whatever there is of us, at any moment, is to be wholly consecrated to God, and the good of being, and nothing more nor less." -- excerpt from "[SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.I.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.I.html> -- by Charles G. Finney, Lecture II.

"Obligation is a bond, or that which binds. Moral obligation is oughtness. It is a responsibility imposed on the moral agent by his own reason, and by the authority of God." -- excerpt from "[SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.I.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Systematic.Theology.I.html> -- by Charles G. Finney, Lecture III.

As simply as any man needs to hear it, "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man **love Me**, he will **keep** My Words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). Holiness is the state we're in when we love God with our joyful obedience. "For this is the **LOVE** of God, that we **KEEP** His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous" (1John 5:3). Holiness is beautiful because it is the fruit of Love.

"O worship the LORD in the Beauty of Holiness"  
(Psalm 96:9).

## A Little Leaven

by Tom Stewart  
9-5-2000

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Church history has seen innumerable controversies concerning all of its major doctrines, from the Divinity of Christ to the Second Coming of the Messiah; but, *the neglect of the Church to return to its First Love is our most serious failure*. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy First Love" (Revelation 2:4). Falling away from a loving obedience of the LORD Jesus Christ is evidence that we are close to the appearing of the Antichrist. "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition" (2Thessalonians 2:3). Rejecting our necessity to love our neighbour as ourself, has caused so much confusion that the Church resorts to the world's psychology rather than the Word of God for answers to the problems of human relationships. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1John 4:20). Our doctrine will soon betray our deficiency of a "faith which worketh by love" (Galatians 5:6), if when the Saviour returns, our claim to orthodoxy outweighs our proof of loving obedience. "If ye keep My Commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's Commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

**Doctrine is important**, because it is the encapsulation of our understanding of the things "which are most surely believed among us" (Luke 1:1). *It is necessary to defend the doctrines that ought to be believed*. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the Common Salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints" (Jude 3). Each generation is commissioned, not only to "teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19), but to pass "Sound Doctrine" (Titus 2:1) on to the succeeding generations, in its purest form. "6 And these Words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them

when thou sittest in thine house,  
and when thou walkest by the way,  
and when thou liest down,  
and when thou risest up"  
(Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

The only true method of maintaining pure doctrine, is to live it before our children; and ensure that they likewise live what they profess to have received. "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2Timothy 2:2).

In geometry, two lines on the same plane that do not intersect are said to be parallel. When attempting to draw two parallel lines with a straightedge, the slightest amount of error will eventually see the two lines intersect, if extended far enough. The same is true of doctrine that is not backed by a "living-loving" faith, i.e., *hypocritical practice will collide with dead doctrine*. "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1Corinthians 11:1). In truth, we must guard ourselves from receiving or introducing the **slightest amount** of error in the doctrine that we believe. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). **Only the Spirit of Truth can preserve us from the leaven of error**. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (Galatians 5:9). We, then, should rest confident that the Holy Spirit can address us from His Word, teaching us "Sound Doctrine" (Titus 2:1), if we are willing. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself" (John 7:17). A willing heart is the only pupil that the Holy Spirit can teach. "But the Anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same Anointing teacheth you of all things, and is Truth, and is no lie, and even as It hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (1John 2:27).

That Anointing (1John 2:27) is the Blessed Paraklete Himself, Who is the Teacher that the Father and the Son have appointed to instruct us. "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come" (John 16:13). More than an emanating power from the Son or Father, the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Godhead, being of the same Divine Essence. "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you Another [Greek, allos, another of the **same kind**] Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever" (14:16). If we stumble, when dealing with the doctrines of the Divinity and Personality of the

Holy Spirit, we rob ourselves of our Divine Instructor, as well as, our Divine Protection From Error. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (14:26).

Another basic doctrine, such as the Doctrine of the Trinity, when refused and denied, can yield all kinds of negative consequences, i.e., denial of the Divinity and Personality of the Holy Spirit, denial of the Divinity of Christ, etc. "Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to **lie to the Holy Ghost**... thou hast **not lied unto men, but unto God**" (Acts 5:3-4). Historically, the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD made a formal statement of the doctrine of the Trinity; and, today, we understand the Doctrine of the Trinity to mean that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, comprising the Godhead, are of the same Substance or Essence, but are distinctly Three Persons. "The grace of the LORD Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen" (2Corinthians 13:14). We have been graced with the childlike simplicity of the Trinity in the Gospel picture of the baptism of Jesus. "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a Dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, Thou art My Beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22).

A denial of such a doctrine as the Trinity, is sufficient to fuel the way for the Antichrist; and, is consistent with most of the major cults, e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc. "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am" (John 8:58). Comparing the Scriptures with the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, we have found that anti-Christian movements most often will deny the Trinity. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1John 2:22). But, the New Testament plainly teaches the Doctrine of the Trinity. It reveals that the Godhead is One in Essence, but Triune in Personality. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are represented as equally Divine. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). Both the Father and the Son make their abode with the Saints through the Spirit, i.e., "And he that keepeth His Commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us" (1John 3:24). "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My Words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14:23). The New Testament teaches the Unity of God, that the Godhead is One in Its intrinsic properties of Divinity, but It further reveals the Tri-Unity of God as also being distinctly separate in Personality. "For there are Three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are One" (1John 5:7).

Both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons deny the Doctrine of the Trinity. The Jehovah's Witnesses say:

"...Such doctrine is not of God... The obvious conclusion is... that Satan is the originator of the trinity doctrine" (from "Let God Be True" [1952], Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, pp. 100, 101).

The Mormons testify:

"God was once as we are now, an exalted man... We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see... he was once a man like us, yea, that God Himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on earth the same as Jesus Christ did... Here then is eternal life-- to know the only wise and true God, and you have got to learn how to be gods yourselves..." (from Joseph Smith's "Times and Seasons", August 1, 1844).

Further, the Mormons contradict the very concept of the Omnipresence of the Holy Spirit:

"It has been said, therefore, that God is everywhere; this does not mean that the actual person of any one member of the godhead can be physically present in more than one place at one time..." (from James Talmage's "Articles of Faith", p. 42).

In conclusion, "keep thyself pure" (1Timothy 5:22). "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our LORD Jesus Christ unto Eternal Life" (Jude 21). The Doctrine of the Second Coming of the LORD Jesus Christ is designed specifically to keep the Body of Christ **pure** until He comes for us. "Looking for that Blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). A constant abiding in expectation and readiness is our LORD's method of maintaining our purity. "2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is Pure" (1John 3:2-3). Then, a corollary teaching, such as the Doctrine of the Pre-Tribulational Rapture of the Church, is eminently designed to secure the purity of the Saints, as well as their doctrine, until He calls, "Come up hither" (Revelation 4:1). "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).

Maranatha!

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## Victory Over Temptation

"For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"

(Hebrews 4:15).

by Tom Stewart

12-13-2000

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The choices we make when faced with the temptation to not love God's Word or to speak of ourselves, is the difference between holiness and sin. "For we have not an High Priest [Jesus] which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in ALL points tempted like as we are, yet WITHOUT sin" (Hebrews 4:15). That **holy struggle** to overcome the temptation to sin, e.g., the sin of loathing God's Word or of speaking rashly and unlovingly to others, was fought by our Elder Brother, the LORD Jesus. "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of One: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (2:11). Our High Priest told His disciples at the Last Supper, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations" (Luke 22:28).

The significance of the Son of God's incarnation into human flesh was "that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1John 3:8). Christ is not only the One Who Atones for our sins, if we trust Him; but, He set the example and gave us His Spirit to ensure our victory over sinning. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Overcoming the temptation to sin, we see our LORD "leaving us an example, that [we] should follow His steps" (1Peter 2:21). John the Baptist had just baptized the LORD Jesus, and we are shown a perfect picture of the Spirit-filled Son of Man coming out of the water. "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the Heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him" (Matthew 3:16). But, even a Spirit-filled man will be tempted. "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (4:1).

How did our LORD overcome His temptations? Jesus set the example of resisting "stedfast in the faith" (1Peter 5:9) by countering every temptation of Satan with the Word of God. "3 And when the Tempter came to Him, He said, If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But HE ANSWERED AND SAID, IT IS WRITTEN, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. 5 Then the Devil taketh Him up into the Holy City, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, 6 and saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He [the Father] shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. 7 JESUS SAID unto him, IT IS WRITTEN AGAIN, Thou shalt not tempt the LORD thy God. 8 Again, the Devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; 9 and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. 10 THEN SAITH JESUS unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for IT IS WRITTEN, Thou shalt worship the LORD thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:3-10). Just as the Scriptures promise to all those that withstand the Devil in faith, "[Satan] will flee from you" (James 4:7), the "Devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him" (Matthew 4:11).

One of the famous verses of the 119th Psalm, is verse 11. "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (119:11). A mistake made by many Christians is to assume that the mere memorizing of Scripture is sufficient to prevent sin. Although the intellectual gathering and storing of Scripture in our minds is important and laudable, only as we **actively believe** what we have read and memorized, can we "not sin against [God]" (119:11). Whoever could sin WHILE they were trusting God? No one! Charles G. Finney called it the Unity of Moral Action, that is, no one can be sinful and holy AT THE SAME TIME. It is impossible to sin WHILE trusting God. [Please read "[Unity of Moral Action](http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html)" -- <http://WhatSaithTheScripture.com/Voice/Unity.of.Moral.Action.html> -- by Charles G. Finney] Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters [at the same time]: 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).

What is the secret of not sinning? Certainly, by actively seeking God, we will not wander into disobedience. "With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy Commandments" (Psalm 119:10). This is what the Psalmist understood; but, the Saints of the New Covenant have an even greater foundation to keep themselves from sinning. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48). The LORD Jesus Christ not only gave us His example of resisting temptation through active faith in the Word of God, but He gave us the Promised Spirit of the New Covenant to CAUSE us "to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). "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). The Promised Indwelling Holy Spirit is the Means by which the Father secures us in this New Testament dispensation to always walk in obedience without sinning. "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" (Jeremiah 31:33). And, the chief feature of the Holy Spirit's teaching, is that He teaches us about the Son, that we would "follow His steps" (1Peter 2:21). "13 Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. 14 He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you. 15 All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that He [the Spirit] shall take of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13-15).

How can the Spirit's teaching about the LORD Jesus Christ cause us to walk without sinning? For example, TO BE TAUGHT OF THE SPIRIT THAT CHRIST IS OUR SANCTIFICATION, i.e., "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption" (1Corinthians 1:30), CAUSES US TO ACTIVELY TRUST IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST TO SANCTIFY US. "Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a Chief Corner Stone [Jesus], Elect, Precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded" (1Peter 2:6). It is a confounding impossibility that we would end up committing the same sin that we always have committed, WHILE WE ARE TRUSTING THE LORD to keep us from sinning! "33 Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit... 35 A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matthew 12:33,35). It is our responsibility to seek the LORD with all our heart. "With my whole heart have I sought Thee: O let me not wander from Thy Commandments" (Psalm 119:10).

It is the Holy Spirit's responsibility to keep us walking always in His Love. "For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the Law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). Again, the Holy Spirit accomplishes this by revealing Christ to our heart. Our article, "He Will Subdue Our Iniquities" [Micah 7:19] -- the first article in this archive --, shows us how the Spirit reveals Jesus as

"Our Redeemer From All Our Iniquity. 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from ALL iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works' (Titus 2:13-14). Jesus redeems us from all iniquity. Like the Apostle Paul, we seek to be delivered from 'the body of this death' (Romans 7:24), i.e., from being in bondage to sinning. Also, like Paul, we 'thank God through Jesus Christ our LORD' (7:25) for the deliverance from sin and sinning that Our Redeemer From All Our Iniquity can accomplish in us, when we trust Him to do it."

Manwardly, we stress the importance of our exercise of faith; while Godwardly, the Spirit is revealing to us the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). **It requires a personal act of trusting the LORD Jesus to keep us from falling back into our old, easy, sinful habits; BUT, the very fact that we continue to strive to love and obey Him, indicates that He has been Faithful in keeping-- and, restoring us, when necessary.** "Faithful is He that calleth you, Who also will do it" (1Thessalonians 5:24). When the Holy Spirit reveals the LORD Jesus Christ to us that we might trust Him as the "Great Shepherd of the Sheep" (Hebrews 13:20), then we are assured that the Shepherd will give us a way to escape from temptation. "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). As our understanding grows about this process of temptation, sin, faith, Christ, the Spirit, and sanctification, we will **honor** God more and more, as well as **vindicate** His choice of choosing "us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4), as we "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2Peter 3:18).

Maranatha!

Addendum:

### **Christ's Human Sinlessness Proves the Justice of God's Demand for Man's Sinlessness**

by Tom Stewart

["From the Editor's Desktop"](#)

-- <http://whatsaiththescripture.com/W.S.t.S.Fellowship.html#From the Editors Desk> --

It is a forthright point of Biblical theology to state that Jesus is truly God Almighty and that He was truly born as a human



baby nearly 2,000 years ago; but, the uniqueness of His person has caused many in the study of theology **to discount the value of His human sinless life**. "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin" (1John 3:5). "Sure," they may say, "Jesus did not sin while in human flesh, but that's because He is God." But, this misses the point entirely of why the Almighty had to resort to such a daring move as to allow His Eternally Begotten Son to become a defenseless babe in a manger. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth" (1Peter 2:22). You can nearly see in your mind the picture of the Father discussing with the Son that mankind would object to His demand of sinless living as unreasonable and unobtainable because no one could live without sin while in human flesh. But, then the Son said, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:7). The Son of God was willing to undergo all the difficulties, humiliations, and sufferings of the human condition, **if only the attainability of a sinless walk from man could be proved, then the Father's wisdom and justice of requiring it would be justified**. "5 But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. 6 He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1John 2:5-6).

The Son of God volunteered to become a man, because He desired to justify the Father's demand of loving obedience from all the children of men. "For this is the love of God, that we keep His Commandments: and His Commandments are not grievous" (1John 5:3). Since "grievous" Commandments are unbearable and impossible to obey, the Son had to demonstrate that man in human flesh **could** obey everything that the Father commanded of all men. "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" (Matthew 22:37-39). And, if Satan could stumble Jesus into sinning, then Satan would justify himself for his rebellion, *as well as humiliate the Father* for requiring more than He ought from His creation. **"If ye love Me, keep My Commandments"** (John 14:15).

If one must be the Son of God to obey completely the Father, then no one needs to feel himself rebellious for giving only the semblance of partial obedience. But, "whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Jesus came to destroy the arguments of self-justification that allow man to **hide behind physical flesh as his excuse for sinning**. Instead, the Son of God's manifestation in human flesh was to obliterate man's arguments of self-justification for why he sins, which arguments are the "works of the devil". "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1John 3:8). Sin is so rampant in this world, and in the Professed Church, because excuse is found everywhere that our flesh made us to sin. "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12).

Man has transposed sin away from his **willful disobedience** of God and metaphysically made human flesh the residence of sin, as evidenced by the misunderstanding many have of the Apostle Paul's inspired reference to "sinful flesh". "For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3). **Flesh can only be sinful by how we use it**, else wise Christ could not have "condemned sin in the flesh" (8:3) without obliterating flesh entirely-- which He did not. "19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1Corinthians 6:19-20). Brother Paul goes on to **disabuse us of any misconception we have that flesh, by itself, is sinful**, by further informing us that:

(1) it is only how we mind or treat the flesh, that makes it sinful, i.e., "6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be Spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:6-7), and

(2) we are no longer minding the flesh, if we are walking after the Spirit, i.e., "8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (8:8-9).

If we desire to honor God for His Love, Truth, Mercy, and Grace, then **we ought to give the Son of God the "glory and honour and power"** (Revelation 4:11) **for walking in human flesh without sinning, without having to resort to miraculous or supernatural advantages normally unavailable to mortal man**. "Though He were a Son, yet **learned He obedience** by the things which He **suffered**" (Hebrews 5:8). Instead of calling for the assistance of angels to stand in for Him when obedience was difficult and sinning was easy, i.e., "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53), **Jesus chose to be humanly perfected and matured by His human sufferings**. "For it became Him [the Father], for Whom are all things, and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to **make the Captain of Their Salvation [Jesus] perfect through sufferings**" (Hebrews 2:10).

The sinless obedience of Christ while in human flesh magnifies the wise choice of God to create man and to wisely and certainly expect that man must perfectly obey Him, "as unto a Faithful Creator" (1Peter 4:19). "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His Judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). If the Son of God was the only man to ever obey the Father, then God would still be praised for the wisdom and justice of His decision to require loving and sinless obedience from man. "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy Sayings, and mightest overcome when Thou art judged" (3:4). But, the truth is that any time that any man ever does obey the Father, it is because the New Covenant's gift of the Spirit of Christ is working in us to "will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). And, that working in us comes **only** when we trust Him. "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9:23).

**END OF COLLECTION**