

CHRISTIANITY

201

Christianity 201

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Dealing with the sin problem

Actually, before we consider the *cause* of sin in a believer, we really need to address the issue of *does* a believer still sin. There are some who would teach that once a person is regenerated (born again) that they become sinless. In one sense that's true (See Supplemental), but the reality of believers sinning must be rightly understood.

4 Why do believers still sin?

I Jn 1:7-10

But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Considering vs.7 it is obvious that this passage is addressed to the believer. What does the scripture say, then, regarding a believer sinning? Does a born-again, regenerated, saved, believer continue to sin after conversion? _____

It is also true that the believer is **forgiven** for all their sins at the moment of conversion on the sole basis of the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Col 2:13-14

And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us {and} which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Note the emphasis here on "all our transgressions". We tend to think of our sins in terms of time, i.e. past, present, and future. But God sees them apart from time. ALL our sins were forgiven. As a result, the believer goes from "dead" to "alive together with Him".

Now, all this confirms what every believer (I Jn.1:10) already knows. Even after salvation, we still sin! But, why?

2 Cor 5:17

Therefore if any man is in Christ, {he is} a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

What does II Cor.5:17 tell us about the "old things"?

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So if the old things have passed away and new things are come, why do I still struggle with sin? The answer to this question lies in understanding just how we're built. Paul describes us as having two distinct "parts" sometimes referred to as natures. These two "natures" are in mortal combat against one another and he describes it thus,

Rom 7:18-25

For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good {is} not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

(Verse 25, emphasis added) See Gal5:16-17 also

From vs. 25 what part of us (believers) serves "the law of God"?

and what part of us serves the law of sin?

So the believer is, in his mind (also spirit, 8:6), *able* to obey and serve God. (Compare to unbeliever, *unable* to obey, Rom.8:6-9; Eph.2:11-12) However, in his flesh (body) he is the servant of sin. It is therefore no surprise that Scripture also makes it plain to believers that the real struggle for spiritual service takes place in our minds. Consider,

Rom 12:1-2

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, {which is} your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Rather than thinking like "this world", what happens when a believer "renews their mind"?

What we have seen from these passages is that the believer has been given a new nature, the spirit or mind, which can and should be transformed from it's old way of thinking (prior to salvation) to the "all things new" way of thinking. This is a lifelong process and along the way there will be inevitable battles with, and losses to, our flesh (Phil.3:12-15). But Jesus Christ our Lord can and will give us the ultimate victory!

4 What happens when a believer sins?

Now we have established that believers do indeed sin, and why. But even a cursory knowledge of God tells us that He is totally opposed to sin. We've already established that a believer's sins

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are *all* forgiven, past, present and future. So does God simply ignore the sin? Can the believer sin with no consequences? What does happen?

First, consider the following,

Eph 1:13

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

Note here that the Holy Spirit is spoken of as a "seal" for the believer. This term describes the process whereby an individual would give an engagement ring as a binding token of a future event. The individual, of course, is God, and the Holy Spirit is the actual ring or seal. Now consider,

Eph 4:30

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

First, from this verse we learn that *it is possible* to grieve the Holy Spirit. While not specifically mentioned here it is obvious that disobedience (sin) would grieve Him. When a person is saved they are at that instant "sealed" with the Holy Spirit. This truly becomes the most intimate relationship now possible with our God and Lord. He seals us to guarantee our complete

**Salvation takes care of the CONDEMNATION OF SIN.
Confession takes care of the BROKEN FELLOWSHIP OF SIN.**

redemption (eternal life) and to teach and guide us now. When a believer sins they wound Him and the fellowship is strained. The scripture nowhere indicates that the Holy Spirit leaves a New Testament believer. However, we do suffer physically, mentally, and spiritually when we sin.

Ps 51:8

Make me to hear joy and gladness, let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice.

Consider David's words after finally confessing his sin with Bathsheba. He had lost his joy and felt his bones had broken. (This is likely Jewish imagery depicting one who is in ill health). Certainly there were consequences to his sin, and so there is with us today. The obvious question is, how do we get the fellowship restored? Consider,

1 Jn 1:8-9

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

What is the process by which we are forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness?

And what is absolutely guaranteed as far as He is concerned?

And who's job is it to initiate this process?

According to Heb. 12:5-7, if there is no confession, what's next?

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And if that doesn't work, what's the final step? Jn.5:16

So the Scriptures teach that believers do sin. When that happens, we should confess immediately and have fellowship restored. If we don't He will discipline us. If we still won't confess, He may decide to prematurely take our life. In any case, there are always grievous consequences to sin.

4 What is the "unpardonable sin"?

References to an unpardonable sin are found in the gospels. Consider,

Mark 3:28-29

Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin --

The next verse gives the "why" for the eternal sin.

Mark 3:30

-- because they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit".

So the reason for the eternal sin is that they were saying Jesus had an unclean (demonic) spirit. For the full context look at the opening verses in this passage.

Mark 3:22

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebub," and "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."

Note here that the scribes (religious leaders of that day) had observed the incredible miracles that Jesus was doing and knew that only God could do such things. However, instead of recognizing Jesus as God they rejected Him and said the miracles were done by Beelzebub (another name for Satan), the ruler of the demons. They said Jesus was demon possessed! And *that* was the unpardonable sin. These powerful miracles could *only* happen by the power of God. To ascribe His power to Satan was unforgivable.

It is generally held by Bible scholars that this *specific* sin cannot be repeated today because Jesus is not here physically, doing miracles. However, Jesus does identify another sin which is also eternal, i.e. unpardonable.

John 8:24

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.

This testimony of scripture is crystal clear. Anyone who does not believe that Jesus is the Messiah, God Himself, and receive Him as their Lord, will die "in their sins", i.e. with their sins unforgiven. That is an eternal (unpardonable) sin and indeed *can* be repeated today. So the most

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crucial question for anyone is "Have you received Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?". If not, and you die in that state, you will go to judgment "in your sins".

Self exam: Have you received Christ as your Lord and Savior? _____

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Supplemental Further teaching about sin

The word "sin" means literally "to miss the mark". That portrays the reality of an individual missing God's standard. One of the most difficult scriptural truths is that God's standard is, indeed, absolute total perfection. We tend to gravitate toward "good enough" or "better than him (or her)" or "more good than bad". But IPet. 1:15-16 sets the standard *much* higher than that!

The true believer *must* come to grips with that in order to get saved. He must agree with God's total-perfection standard and that he can never do it. He calls on God to save him and God then *transfers* (imputes) the righteousness of Christ (total perfection) to the believers credit. Paul teaches this *doctrine of imputation* in Romans 4. There we see that our sins were imputed to Christ (on the cross) and His righteousness is imputed to us (at salvation). That's how we become righteous before God.

As we begin to comprehend the enormity of what Christ has done for us we also have to reconsider the believer-sinning issue. As God looks at the believer through the eyes of Romans chapter 4, He sees a believer like He sees Jesus! Perfect, holy, sinless! So if a believer *is* sinless, why does the scripture say that "if we say we have no sin we're liars" (1Jn.1:7-10)? Are we sinners or not?

The answer, of course, is yes! Yes we are sinners and yes we're not! The guilt of our sins is forever removed (Ps.103:12). We will stand before God, without spot or wrinkle or any blemish (Eph.5:27). In that sense we are *now* sinless. This is our sinless **position** in Christ. However, while we're alive, we're not yet rid of "the body of this death" (Rom.7:24). And while we're in this body

we will struggle against that flesh nature. When the flesh wins, the believer sins. In that sense we are *now* sinning. This is our **practice** (or walk) in Christ.

In Rom.12:1-2, Paul urges the believer to consider his body as being sacrificed on the altar, i.e. consider yourself already dead! In 1Cor.15:50-58, Paul shows us that this present body of flesh and blood cannot exist in heaven. God will fit the believer with a new body, incorruptible, immortal, and totally sin free! That's the hope of the believer, to finally be free of this horrible struggle with sin. Free to obey and serve and have unbroken fellowship with Christ.

1 Jn 3:2

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

John speaks of that day when we'll be like Him! In the meantime, press on in the struggle against sin. Hate the sin. Be relentless in denying your flesh in it's appetite to sin. And when you occasionally fail, confess it, know that He has forgiven you, and get back to work serving Him.

Believers tend to make two great errors about their sin. Some ignore it, refuse to confess it, and suffer deeper and deeper consequences. Others confess it, but simply can't believe that God can/has forgiven them. They live defeated lives, full of guilt. Neither of these is acceptable! Honestly judge your sins (1Cor.11:31-32), confess them, and rejoice that He has completely and totally forgiven you. That's *living* in Christ!

Basics of Biblical prophecy

There are three major prophetic events recorded in Scripture. They are 1) the rapture 2) the tribulation and 3) the second coming of Christ. There are multitudes of other prophecies but most of them revolve around or are part of one of these three. It is not within the scope of this material to go into great detail, but hopefully it will give the basic components. We believe that the Scriptures teach that these three events occur in the sequence given.

4 Just what is the rapture?

The word "rapture" is not really a Biblical term although it is one of the most widely known prophetic events. The rapture refers to the second coming of Christ when all believers, living and dead, are instantly "caught up" to be with Him. The teaching is seen here:

1Thes 4:13-18

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of {the} archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord.

18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Rapture is an old-English word meaning "shall be caught up" of vs.17. That term seemed to stick and the event described in vs.17 became known as *the rapture*. The original "shall be caught up" means "to seize or catch away, by force". To understand this significant prophetic event better we will study this passage carefully.

According to vs.13, to whom is Paul writing this passage?

From this verse we see that the "uninformed" brethren (Christians) were grieving over friends and family members who had "fallen asleep in Jesus". Fallen asleep is a term used simply to refer to those who had died. What does "fallen asleep *in Jesus*" mean then?

These brethren were grieving excessively over fellow believers who had died. They thought those who died would miss out on the glorious kingdom that Christ would establish when He returned. But Paul says in truth, those believers who have already died will be **first** (vs.15) to enter the coming kingdom. Not first by much, but first nevertheless! Notice the detailed, specific list of events (vs.16) in this rapture. The Lord himself descends, there is a shout, the archangel, the trumpet of God, and the resurrection of the "dead in Christ", i.e. believers. (Note: there are other resurrections spoken of in Scripture. This is of dead believers up to this point in time.)

Basics of Biblical prophecy

Immediately after this resurrection (of dead believers), what happens? (vs.17)

Be sure to note the expected result of this teaching. What was it supposed to achieve? (vs.18)

Paul elsewhere gives even more details about the rapture.

1 Cor 15:51-52

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Here Paul says that not all believers will be dead at the rapture, but we shall **all** be changed. The rapture takes place in the twinkling of an eye! It will be over before anyone knows it has started. Note the reference again to the trumpet. This seems to be a hallmark of the rapture event.

So, what we know about the rapture is that it's going to be the **instantaneous resurrection** of 1) believers who have already died and 2) believers who are still alive. We will all receive new imperishable bodies and will from that point forever be with the Lord! That's why the rapture is a comfort for believers. The next question is, *when* will this rapture take place?

The Scriptures only discuss the *when* question in relative, not absolute, terms. For instance, in absolute terms, Mt.24:36 and IIPet.3:10 show us that no one knows the exact moment He will return. However, in relative terms Titus 2:13 and IThess.1:10 teach the imminent return of Christ. By this we mean that there is no other prophetic event revealed in Scripture that precedes the rapture. It is beyond the scope of this session to consider all the other prophetic events, however, it is clear from IThess.4:18 that the rapture event was 1) to be a comfort and 2) imminent. Believers are to live expecting Him at any moment. We are to be,

Titus 2:13

looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus;

We don't know for sure *when* the rapture will occur, but until then, are things going to be getting better? Does Christianity spread across the whole globe until everyone is converted? Many would like to believe that is exactly what will (is) happening, but the Scriptures reveal quite a different future.

2 Tim 3:1-5

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these.

What is your assessment of the last days (before the rapture)? Better and better?

Basics of Biblical prophecy

4 What is the tribulation about?

The tribulation is a time of wars, disease, and cataclysmic events such as has never been seen. It will result in the death of billions of people. What leads up to the tribulation? Why does God allow / cause it?

First, as we have just seen, at the instant of the rapture **all** true born-again believers will be removed from this earth. We'll have new bodies and be in the presence of Christ forever. But what about all those unbelievers alive but not taken at the rapture? And what about all those promises God made to the nation of Israel?

Ezek 34:25-28

And I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land, so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit, and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. And they will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make {them} afraid.

Certainly this does not describe Israel now. And we've already seen that things are going to be getting worse and so much the more as we approach the rapture. Therefore, this and the hundreds of other promises made to Israel must be fulfilled *after* the rapture. And indeed, the tribulation is the connecting link between the rapture and the fulfillment of these promises.

There are many ways to view or interpret the tribulation time, but one of the clearest and most consistent is to see what happens to the nation of Israel. God has promised Israel that there would be a coming Messiah who would be their deliverer.

Isa 9:6-7

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of {His} government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

This passage has two aspects which greatly confuse Israel. In the very first words of verse 6, how would this Messiah come to Israel?

And yet this child, son, Messiah would be called, Mighty God! Israel as a nation still looks for their Messiah because they could not accept that Jesus, a child born to us, was indeed Mighty God. Consider the record of how they dealt with this truth.

John 5:18

Basics of Biblical prophecy

For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Had the Jews read and understood Isa.9:6-7, what would they have really been looking for?

Because Israel has *nationally* chosen to reject Jesus, God has chosen to not let them *nationally* believe. (Individual Jews can and do believe. But nationally, they cannot at this time.)

Rom 11:25

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

Why is the nation of Israel not "Christian" today? Because they rejected their own Messiah and God has "hardened" them to the gospel. When does Paul say this hardening will end?

The tribulation time is the culmination of the times of the Gentiles. God will again put His chosen nation of Israel back on center stage. The gentile nations and powers will no longer dominate this earth. Israel has been temporarily set aside while the gospel goes to the end of the earth, but the Lord will restore them.

Zech 13:8-9

"And it will come about in all the land," declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off {and} perish; but the third will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The LORD is my God.'"

This verse indicates that during the tribulation (through the fire) Israel will be refined and tested and only 1/3 will survive. However, what is the result for the 1/3 remnant? Rom.11:26

Matt 24:21-22

for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.

Here Jesus gives a glimpse into this tribulation time. How would you describe it?

The book of Revelation describes the tribulation time on this earth in graphic detail. From chapter 6 through chapter 18 this terrible time is unrolled. In addition to the ultimate salvation for the nation of Israel, the tribulation time is one of the greatest evangelistic periods known to this earth (Rev.7:9-17). It is also the final exercise of world domination by Satan and his demons (Rev.20:1-3). Truly the tribulation time is one of the great prophetic events of Scripture.

4 What about the second coming of Christ?

Basics of Biblical prophecy

Now we have seen the rapture, the catching away of all believers, followed by the tribulation. The tribulation lasts for precisely seven years and literally billions of people, Jew and Gentile, will perish. At the end of the seven years the long awaited fulfillment of the last part of Is.9:6-7 will take place. The Mighty God, Jesus, will establish His righteous kingdom on the throne of David. But let's see a little more detail of that event. Remember that at the rapture all believers at that time return with Jesus to heaven. On earth, the tribulation erupts.

Rev 19:11-16

11 And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it {is} called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

12 And His eyes {are} a flame of fire, and upon His head {are} many diadems; and He has a name written {upon Him} which no one knows except Himself.

13 And {He is} clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God.

14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white {and} clean, were following Him on white horses.

15 And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

This is the scene as Christ, the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS, leaves heaven with his armies to take full possession of the earth. Satan is removed (20:1-3), and Jesus will sit upon the throne of David in Jerusalem and will rule the earth. He will rule with a rod of iron (19:15).

In the passage above, comment on "His name is The Word of God". (Jn.1:1-3)

And what do you think is the significance of the robe dipped in blood?

Believers today refer to this event as the **second coming of Christ**, an obvious recognition of His first coming. Many Old Testament Scriptures that refer to the second coming are similar to Is.9:6-7 where you notice that the first coming (child, son) is seamlessly connected to the second coming (no end to His government...). They focused on the King, ignoring the child and missed their own Messiah! Even His disciples expected Him to move directly to the "government" phase.

John 1:49

Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

Nathanael here voices the expectation of all godly Jews. Jesus would be their King. But what they didn't understand was the cross. Between the child and the King, was the cross. But now the cross is complete, salvation is provided, and we're just waiting for the King to return.

Conclusion:

Basics of Biblical prophecy

Prophecy is God telling us beforehand what He is going to do. It's not for our amusement. It's for our comfort and edification. The imminent return of Christ, the rapture, should cause each of us to prepare. Are you ready?

Baptism and Communion

Baptism and communion are the only two sacraments or ordinances, given to the church. They are rich in symbolism and very meaningful to believers. We will look at the spiritual truths involved and discuss some of the confusion related to each one. The term "type" is often used to refer to something that is symbolic of a greater truth. Both baptism and communion are significant types.

4 What is baptism about?

The word baptize comes from the Greek *baptizo* which means "to immerse, to submerge, to make overwhelmed (i.e. fully wet)". *Baptizo* comes from another word meaning "to overwhelm, cover wholly with a fluid". Note: One reason we believe in baptism by immersion is that it's the only way to fulfill the literal meaning of the word, baptize. To understand the spiritual aspects of baptism we need to trace it in the Scriptures. In the New Testament there are four distinct baptisms recorded.

- 1) John's baptism.
 - John calls Israel to repent and prepare for the soon-coming Messiah (Mt.3:10)
- 2) Baptism of Jesus.
 - Jesus submits to John's baptism. (Mt.3:16)
- 3) Baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - The gift of the Holy Spirit to a believer at conversion. (Mt.3:11)
- 4) Believers baptism.
 - The submission of a believer to the rite of baptism. (Mt.28:19)

Note that in each of these (4) cases baptism is an act of identification.

- 1) When godly Jews came to John, their baptism gave public testimony that they identified with his message of repentance and preparing for the Messiah.
- 2) When Jesus was baptized, it was obviously NOT for repentance but was rather that Jesus was identifying with John, his message, and the other godly Jews (Mt.3:14-15).
- 3) At the moment of conversion a believer is automatically baptized by/in the Holy Spirit. This is God's way of eternally identifying and sealing the believer as His. Consider this passage;

Rom 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

- 4) Believer's baptism is when a believer gives public testimony that they are identifying Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.

Note also that there is always a clear **submission**. In each of the (4) cases above, record who is submitting and why.

Baptism and Communion

What we have found so far is that baptism is an act of obedient submission in order to identify with someone or something. Now let's consider the deeper spiritual aspect of baptism.

Rom 6:3-5

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with {Him} in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also {in the likeness} of His resurrection,

Notice that Paul speaks of being baptized *into* the death of Jesus in order that we might walk in newness of life. When a believer is submerged *in* the water, it is a picture of Jesus being fully immersed in death and we are pictured being buried *with Him*. When the believer comes up out of the water we picture being resurrected *with Him*, to walk in the new life. This is the second reason we believe in baptism by immersion. It's the only way to adequately picture the full immersion of a believer in the death of Christ, then rising to a new life.

Why does baptism only apply to believers?

Why is it impossible for infant baptism to fulfill Rom.6:3-5?

What comes first (always), salvation or baptism? Acts 8:26-38

This we believe about baptism:

- It is a matter of obedience after salvation. We do it because He said to do it.
- It is publicly identifying with Christ as our personal Lord and Savior.
- It pictures the believer dying with Christ and being resurrected with Christ.
- The name, the history, and the picture all require that it be by immersion.

4 What is communion about?

The event known as communion is a very special time for a believer. It looks back to the night of the crucifixion (Mt.26:26-30) when Jesus established this holy and intimate time. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth to give instruction to them regarding this observance.

1 Cor 11:23-26

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

Baptism and Communion

25 In the same way {He took} the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink {it,} in remembrance of Me."

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Looking at verse 24, why are believers to observe communion?

Looking at verse 24 and 26, what is happening at the communion service?

It is important with communion, just like with baptism, to understand the spiritual truths involved. We believe that the bread is a **symbol** or type of the body of Christ. When the bread is broken at communion (for distribution) it symbolizes the broken body of Christ on the cross. And the cup (grape juice) symbolizes the shed blood of Christ for the remission of sins. We do not believe that the bread and juice actually are, or become, the literal body and blood. If that were the case then Jesus would be suffering death again and again at each communion service.

Heb 10:11-12

And every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,

The Scripture is quite clear. The sacrifice of Jesus was once, for all time. So, the communion time is a beautiful memorial service. Believers are to gather together to share this solemn time of remembering the death of Jesus on the cross and giving thanks to Him for our salvation.

Paul gave the Corinthians a few strong and sober warnings about the communion time because they had begun to trivialize and abuse it. Listen carefully to Paul's warnings.

1 Cor 11:27-32

27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.

30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.

The word *unworthy* means literally "irreverent or disrespectful". According to verse 27, for someone to partake of the communion elements in this unworthy manner causes what?

To be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord means to assume guilt **for** His death instead of rejoicing in the forgiveness of His death. The specific way that the church at Corinth was being disrespectful is given here;

Baptism and Communion

1 Cor 11:20-22

Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

List some other ways believers may partake of communion disrespectfully. vs.29

According to vs.28-29, what is the divinely appointed process to avoid being disrespectful?

What are the consequences of NOT judging *ourselves* before communion? vs.30-31

This discipline from God is NOT to cause us to lose our salvation. Indeed, just the opposite! According to vs.32, why does God discipline the believer?

Some believers consider the consequences associated with abuse of communion and decide it would be better to just avoid it! Indeed, if there is unconfessed sin it is probably best to not partake of communion! But that is not really an option for any believer who is striving to walk with the Lord and live for Him. Instead, we will *want* to celebrate this communion time. Additionally, verse 24-26 states clearly that believers are to do this until He returns. To ignore or avoid communion invites God's discipline. To partake in an unworthy manner invites God's discipline. It seems He wants this time of self judging and remembrance to be an important part of our lives.

The interval for communion is not dictated except that it should be frequently. Variants include daily, weekly, or monthly. Communion is a beautiful time of individual and corporate worship. When rightly observed, it keeps our hearts pure and thankful before Him.

This we believe about Communion

- God wants all believers to regularly examine themselves and partake of communion.
- It's a time of personal and corporate reflection on the death of Christ.
- Communion is a deeply significant and reverent time.
- Abuse of communion (not partaking, partaking irreverently) invites God's severe judgment.

Are you regularly examining yourself and participating in communion? If not, why not??

Having a Godly marriage

Marriage was designed by God and He intended it to be the most fulfilling and intimate relationship man would experience, outside of fellowship with Him. Marriage has, however, been cursed because of sin and the original glory of marriage has become elusive and unnatural. God has given clear and consistent guidelines on how marriage is to work and we believe there is no way to find true fulfillment in marriage apart from Him. A blessed marriage is one where both husband and wife are first and foremost individually submitting to the Lordship of Christ. It's also interesting that most of the major issues in marriage come down to the same as that for baptism and communion - submission and obedience. Maybe that's why it's so difficult! The path to fulfillment in marriage is through personal surrender and obedience to Christ (Eph.5:21). The rest flows from that.

Probably because marriage is so important to God, it has always been under strong Satanic attack. Our culture today is filled with lies and half truths regarding marriage. The first thing a believer must do is commit to understanding what the Scriptures teach and then relentlessly purging their minds of the lies. One foundational truth is that marriage is of great concern to God, partly because it pictures the beautiful relationship between Christ and the church.

Eph 5:31-32

For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. What, in your own words, happens between a man and his wife when they marry? vs.31

This 'one flesh' concept is a type of the relationship between Christ and the church (vs.32).

At the risk of oversimplifying, we believe that virtually ALL marriage issues can be addressed by understanding and applying the Scriptural role for the husband and for the wife. Let's begin our study by understanding God's plan for the husband...

4 What is the husband's role?

We need to be clear on the **differences** between the husband and wife, the man and the woman. Our culture today has so blurred the distinctions that when the truth of Scripture is proclaimed it sounds like heresy! First, Scripture teaches that in **position** there is *no difference* between husband and wife.

Gal 3:27-28

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

As far as our *position in Christ*, what does this passage teach?

That's how God sees us - no nationality, no "caste" system, no male-female difference. We're all one in Him. No one is superior to another on any basis. We're all sinners saved by grace. Amen.

Having a Godly Marriage

However, Scripture also teaches that in **function** or role there *is a difference* between husband and wife. To say that the husband and wife are equal *in function* would be to deny the obvious. Men and women have been created with physical and emotional differences. We have been created with differences because we have different functions. Let's look at the Scriptural *function* for the husband.

Eph 5:25-28

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;
26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,
27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.
28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;

How much did Christ love the church? vs.25

How does this relate to God's command for the function of the husband? vs.25, 28

It is in this passage that Scripture asserts that a primary role for the husband is to provide for and care for his wife. It is totally sacrificial and a stark contrast to the macho role embraced by our culture. **The standard for the husband is that he should love his wife so much that he would be willing to die for her.** That's the way Christ loved the church. To love that way, to be ready to die, is a command *uniquely* given to the husband. The wife is not charged with that responsibility. Obviously, most husbands will never be called upon to physically give their life for their spouse. But what does such a sacrificial love mean in everyday living? What does it look like? Put this responsibility of the husband in your own words.

4 What is the wife's role?

The role of the wife in marriage is also very clear in Scripture. Col.3:18; IPet.3:1 and;

Eph 5:21-24

21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.
22 Wives, {be subject} to your own husbands, as to the Lord.
23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself {being} the Savior of the body.
24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives {ought to be} to their husbands in everything.

Mention submission in nearly any context and most people will immediately become defensive. I'm not submitting to that ungodly government. I'm not submitting to that boss of mine. I'm not submitting to my parents. There is such a prevalent feeling that to be submissive shows weakness or inferiority and nothing could be further from the truth. Submission shows humility. The Scriptural term for submission means to (voluntarily) line up under, in an orderly manner. Consider Christ, our example, shortly before the cross;

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Luke 22:42

saying, "Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Thine be done."
To whom is Christ here submitting? Is He inferior? Is He weak?

When the Scripture teaches that the wife is to submit to her husband, Christ's submission to His Father is the pattern. The Scripture does not teach that the woman is inferior to the man (Remember Gal.3:28) anymore than that Christ is inferior to the Father. In position there is no difference. In function or role, however, there is a difference.

Explain, in your own words, the concept of position versus function.

God has ordained that the husband is to be the leader in the marriage and the wife is to be the follower. But the husband is not to be RULING the wife! She is not a servant. She is not his inferior. He is to be ready to die for her. He lovingly cares for and provides for her. She is to submit to his leadership and provision, just like the church submits to the leadership and provision of Christ. The godly wife has a unique and powerful role in the nurturing of the children and managing of the home (Prov.31:10-31). If you want to have a godly marriage, both husband and wife need to understand their position and function and be willing to submit to Him in everything. A marriage that is working according to God's design is a beautiful and fulfilling partnership.

4 What about divorce?

In our culture today there is a prevalent teaching that if your marriage is "not working" then divorce is an acceptable, often preferable, solution. The same was true when Jesus walked this earth. He taught often and authoritatively on the subject of divorce.

Matt 5:31-32

"And it was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce'; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for {the} cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Here Jesus states clearly that there is only one legitimate cause for divorce. What is it?

Sometime later His enemies tried to trap Him publicly on this issue hoping to discredit Him with His followers. Divorce was popular and widespread then, too.

Matt 19:3-6

And {some} Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Is it lawful {for a man} to divorce his wife for any cause at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created {them} from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh'? "Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

Matt 19:9

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

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What would Jesus have to say about today's "incompatibility", "irreconcilable differences", "no common goals", "just fell out of love", etc?

There are even some today in so-called Christian circles who would teach that in a marriage between two believers, if one party feels the other is just not "with them" spiritually then divorce is allowed. To each of these, hear Jesus firmly reply, "What God has joined together, let no man separate"! That's the standard for marriage. No divorce except for adultery. Even then reconciliation is the goal if it's possible.

In any discussion about marriage and divorce there will be the inevitable, "but what if..." questions. Paul, under inspiration of the Spirit of God, gives instruction on a host of special circumstances.

- What if only one in the marriage is a believer? This can cause strife for "two cannot walk together except they be agreed" (Amos 3:3). Paul answers in ICor.7:12-17.
- What if the unbelieving partner just leaves? Can the believer remarry? (ICor.7:12-15)
- To be able to better serve the Lord, should a couple separate? (ICor.7:26-28).
- What happens when a spouse dies. Can the surviving widow remarry? (ICor.7:39-40).
- Is being single better than being married? Is it inferior? (ICor.7:1-2).
- Is a believer free to marry an unbeliever? (IICor.6:14, ICor.7:39).
- How should a godly wife submit to an unsaved husband? How can she win him to Christ? (IPet.3:1-2).
- Is sex within the marriage union unclean? (Heb.13:4)
- What does the Scripture say about abstinence within marriage? ICor.7:1-5

All these questions and more beside are specifically addressed in Scripture. We need to fill up our minds with these truths and then by the grace of God live them. A godly marriage is a mutual submission of husband and wife, first to the Lord, and then to each other. The husband gives up his "rights" in order to provide for and meet the needs of his wife. What would be an illustration of a husband NOT giving up his rights?

The wife gives up her "rights" to submit to his authority and leadership. God is honored and obeyed. What would be an illustration of a wife NOT giving up her rights?

When God's design is obeyed, unbelievers see real love at work and are drawn to understand what's different here and this becomes a natural platform for sharing the gospel (IPet.3:15). God intends for marriage to be permanent and fulfilling but it can only happen by the power of His Spirit and obedience to His Word.

*Love is not a mushy feeling.
Love is a choice, to act in a certain way.*

Eternal Security

Eternal security is the doctrine that once a person is saved, they are saved for eternity. That is, their salvation is eternally secure. This doctrine has been the source of disagreement and unfortunately, division, through the years. Some feel that teaching such an interpretation of Scripture will produce Christians that just sin however they please, because, after all, they can't lose their salvation! Others believe Scripture teaches that should not happen and point to passages warning against such abuse of God's grace. We hold to this latter view and will attempt to affirm this position from the following study.

4 Can a true believer ever lose their salvation?

There are many different ways the Scripture teaches eternal security, but one of the most obvious is to simply consider the term, *eternal life*, as in Jn.3:16.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Eternal life is the most fundamental of Biblical truths involved in salvation. God gives the believer eternal life through faith in Christ. No one could deny this truth and even be considered a Christian. But, *when* do we get this eternal life? If believers only get eternal life *after* they die then we don't *really* have it yet, and maybe then we could lose it! Let's examine the *when* a little closer and for that we'll turn to IJohn...

I Jn 5:12-13

He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.

Look carefully at these verses and tell to whom these words are specifically addressed?

John wrote this to believers so that they would specifically KNOW something. What was it?

What is John's whole point here regarding **when** a believer gets eternal life?

If a believer HAS eternal life and a few days later loses it, how long did their "eternal life" last?

Since that's an obvious contradiction of terms, how does this passage absolutely prove that a true believer cannot ever lose their salvation?

Another way to view eternal security is to consider the *work* of salvation. That is, what actually happens when a person is saved. Consider this passage...

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John 10:27-30

27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

28 and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.

29 "My Father, who has given {them} to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch {them} out of the Father's hand.

30 "I and the Father are one."

Give (3) ways Jesus describes the security of His sheep (true believers) in vs.28.

According to vs.28, where is the believer located? What does this picture to you?

In case someone thinks Jesus is not strong enough to hold us, what does vs.29 teach?

There is another very important teaching in vs.29. How does Jesus get the believer?

This teaches that **the believer is a love gift from the Father to the Son!** Do you really think that anyone or anything in all creation could break that transaction? (Rom.8:38-39). The picture here is of the (given) believer securely held in the hand of Jesus, and the hand of Jesus held by the hand of the Father! The believer is in no risk whatever! We are secure in God, vs.30. Thus, another fundamental reason for a believer's eternal security is that it's NOT our doing!

At the heart of every argument against eternal security is an underlying belief that somehow *we* do something to get our salvation or keep our salvation, and then conversely, we could do something to lose it. Consider,

Eph 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

What does this passage say salvation IS? What does it say it IS NOT?

And why is this all of God? Why is it a free gift? Why no works? In order that no one?

This is a fundamental principle of Scripture. Absolutely no one will stand in His presence and boast of anything! Especially not our salvation. And if the believer has nothing to do in getting saved, it's clear he has nothing to do with keeping saved. That all belongs to God, and He has declared plainly that once saved, we're always and forever, eternally secure, saved. AMEN!

4 Why is this such an important doctrine?

There are several answers to this question and the most basic is because God's word teaches it! He wouldn't have given us this truth if it were not important. But let's consider for a moment what the real alternative would be *if* eternal security was not true. Suppose God saved us, forgave

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all our PAST sins (only) and then said, "The past is forgiven, but sin one more time and that's it!". How long do you think we would last before that inevitable "one more..."? IJn.1:8

Suppose we could only stay saved if we confessed every sin of thought, word, and deed? What if we missed one? What if we died before confessing that last one?

Be very honest here. Who could possibly keep their salvation if it was up to them?

But, more importantly, IF a person *could* keep their own salvation, what would they be able to do before God? And why is that NOT going to happen? Eph.2:8-10

To believe that we could live sinless lives demands that we adopt a very "limited" view of our own sin. This person must define sin in his own terms so as to be sure he can avoid it! Consider the words of James on the self deception of this view.

James 2:10-11

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one {point,} he has become guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not commit murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

A person who draws up their own set of "sins" (lists of do's and don'ts) that they define as "that last one" is called a legalist. They are the ones who attempt to tell everyone else exactly how they should live and are quick to point out when someone else sins according to their standards. In fact, this view is the height of self deception for no one can live without sin (IJn.1:8-10). Another reason why the doctrine of eternal security is important is because it teaches a right view of our sin and His unbelievable grace. We are, by grace, to live a life of continual thankfulness and then our pride gets driven out. Consider this parable of Jesus...

Luke 18:9-14

And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

Note how the Pharisee with great pride told God how thankful he was that he didn't sin like others, especially the tax-gatherer. How would you apply Ephesians 2:8-10 to this man?

Many have observed that legalism strangles the life out of believers and churches. To live under the bondage of all those rules with the fear of somehow losing your salvation is a grievous burden, and one which is totally man-made! Listen to Jesus speak of a believers freedom.

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John 8:32, 36

32 and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

36 If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.

Listen to Paul's words as he concludes a detailed review of the contrast of living in bondage or living in freedom (Gal.3-4):

Gal 5:1

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

The overwhelming truth of Scripture is that believers are FREE! We are free *from* the bondage of sinning (Rom.6:6) and free *to* live righteously (Rom.6:18). Don't allow anyone to put you into their bonds! Considering these passages, why do you think Eternal Security is important?

4 Is eternal security really a "damnable heresy"?

Does this doctrine give free license to a believer to continue in sin? If we taught this to all believers everywhere would there be wholesale wanton behavior? Through the ages, opponents of the eternal security doctrine have argued exactly this. They sincerely believe that such a teaching would bring ruin to otherwise godly believers. But is this true? Does the Scripture support that viewpoint? In Romans chapter five, Paul develops the truth of a believer being justified by faith, apart from works. Then he addresses the potential abuse of grace in chapter six. His question in verse one is whether a believer *should* just continue in sin so that God would have to give more and more grace. His answer is verse two.

Eternal Security is not a license to encourage sin.
It's freedom from sin.

Rom 6:1-2

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

And, in your own words, what is his answer? Does Scripture suggest grace excuses sin?

Rom 6:11-14

11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts,

13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin {as} instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members {as} instruments of righteousness to God.

14 For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

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Here Paul sums up this teaching. Do NOT let sin reign any more. Submit your members (body) to God as though you died and have just been resurrected! Does that sound like our freedom is a license to sin? What does vs.14 teach about the believer's relationship to sin?

The doctrine of eternal security is one of the most precious truths of Scripture, but it is not an automatic way to live for the believer. We are still sinners and there is guilt with each one. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. And the devil will tell us that we finally did it. We pushed God's grace over the edge and He has forsaken us. The solution to all of this is very clear in Scripture. First, avoid sin. Act like you're dead to sin. Don't put yourself in situations where you'll be tempted to sin. But, when you do sin, confess it quickly. Repent, confess, and understand that He has promised to forgive you. And resist the devil by letting your mind dwell on the truths from Scripture we've studied here. You're free! God's forgiven ALL your sin! You're guaranteed eternal life with Him in heaven.

Rom 6:1-15

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with {Him} in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also {in the likeness} of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with {Him,} that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin {as} instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members {as} instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!

Let every true believer rejoice continually that we are free in Christ. Are you really free?

Eternal Security

Supplemental

What is a true believer?

When the doctrine of eternal security is taught it may generate other very important questions. What is a "true believer"? What other kind is there? How do I know if I'm a true believer? These are honest and legitimate issues and they are of the highest importance. Let's consider each of these in turn.

What is a true believer?

Rom 8:9

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

According to Rom.8:9, what defines a true believer?

Eph 1:13-14

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of {God's own} possession, to the praise of His glory.

What are the (2) steps in verse 13 leading to a person being sealed with the Holy Spirit?

An unsaved person (anyone without the Spirit, Rom.8:9) **listens** to the message of truth (the Gospel, the message about Christ) and when they **believe** they are then sealed with the Holy Spirit. At that instant the person passes from death to life and they now (right at that instant) have eternal life. The Holy Spirit is God's pledge (down payment, guarantee) of our ultimate and complete inheritance. Paul says that everyone who gets saved (sealed with the Spirit) must hear the truth about Christ (Rom.10:14) and then believe. ***So a true believer is one who has heard the truth about Christ and has believed and subsequently was sealed with the Holy Spirit.***

The Bible uses many different terms to capture the salvation event. The most prevalent word used is **believe**, as in John 3:16. Another is **receive**, as in John 1:12, or **trust**, as in Eph.1:12, or **faith** as in Rom.3:22, or **call**, as in Rom.10:13. It seems that each of these words reveals a slightly different facet of the salvation event. Salvation has as many forms or expressions as there are believers, but all true believers hear the truth about Christ and then believe, receive, trust, have faith in, or call upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you done that?

What other kind of "believer" is there?

Scripture warns that there are those who really think they're true believers and yet are not. Some are apparently deceiving themselves and others are deceived by Satan. The eternal consequences are devastating.

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Matt 7:21-23

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.

22 "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?'

23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'

So this passage describes those who profess to know Christ, even prophesying (preaching) and doing miracles in His name, and yet they are not saved. This describes a false believer. There are those in our churches who have a *profession* of Christ, but not a *possession* of Christ. Some of these false believers may cause disruptions in a church and may one day denounce their "faith", leaving Christianity behind. John was familiar with those.

I Jn 2:18-19

18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.

19 They went out from us, but they were not {really} of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but {they went out,} in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.

These false believers went out from the true believers. Their departure demonstrated who they really were. So Scripture shows clearly there are both true and false believers.

How can I know that I'm a true believer, really saved?

This is a somber and important question that Paul suggests we all should ask.

2 Cor 13:5 Test yourselves {to see} if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?

Just what is "the test"? Paul does not elaborate here but there are other Scriptures which suggest things to consider. For instance...

- 1) Have you {believed, received, trusted, called upon, put your faith in} the Lord Jesus Christ?
- 2) Is there fruit in your life (evidence of the indwelling Spirit)? John 15:1-8; Gal.5:22-23
- 3) Do you have genuine love for other believers? John 13:35
- 4) Do you have that inner conviction that you are saved? Romans 8:16

True salvation begins with an "event", the point of receiving the Holy Spirit. What follows is a gradual "growing in grace" in which the believer becomes more and more like Christ, having the fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit (love, joy, peace, etc). If you don't "recognize this about yourself" then maybe, to Paul's point, you "fail the test". If so, go to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to save you. Study I John 5:11-15, and ask Him to give you a confident heart! A true believer's salvation is absolutely secure because it doesn't depend on us. It's *His* promise, it's *His* Spirit, it's *His* gift, it's *His* grace. All we can do is thank Him and serve Him, forever. Amen

Eternal Security

Supplemental

Addressing those difficult passages

Here are some of the passages used to argue that a true believer's salvation is not secure.

1 Cor 9:24-27

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but {only} one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then {do it} to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;

27 but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Disqualified is translated "castaway" in the KJV, but is more properly rendered as disqualified. Some argue *disqualified* refers to salvation, but Paul is not here contemplating being disqualified in his salvation but rather disqualified in his ministry, running the race (vs.23-26). This passage is not dealing with salvation but rather the self-control required to "run" our service to Christ. Paul was always motivated to press on so as to not be set aside in his ministry.

Heb 6:1-6

1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

3 And this we shall do, if God permits.

4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

6 and {then} have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

This passage is one of the most difficult in Scripture and has been hotly debated by theologians for years. The key question seems to be, "Are these people saved or unsaved?" The argument is, if saved and they "fall away" it's impossible for them to be saved again! And if not saved to begin with and they fall away, it's impossible for them to be saved ever! The difficulty here is in reconciling either of these with "whosoever will may come", Rev.22:17.

We believe "*Are these people saved or unsaved?*" is the wrong question! This passage is not dealing with salvation. It says it's impossible to renew them again to *repentance*, not salvation. We believe this passage deals with true believers who have fallen away from following Christ and are disqualified from service. This is the same thought that haunted Paul, that after a lifetime of service he would fall in willful sin and become a castaway, disqualified for service. In recent years we have seen examples of Christian leaders who fell into sin and have been disqualified. Paul wasn't afraid of losing his salvation, just his ability to serve, and his reward.

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Heb 10:26-31

26 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,

27 but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on {the testimony of} two or three witnesses.

29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people."

31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

This passage is very similar to chapter 6. The interpretation key is found in vs. 30. "The Lord will judge **HIS PEOPLE**". Here we see, again, the "certain terrifying expectation of judgment" given to those true believers (WE, vs.26) who "go on sinning willfully". These believers are headed for a "wood, hay, and stubble" judgment (ICor.3:10-15), and/or a premature physical death (sin unto death, IJn.5:16). The message is crystal clear. A believer's salvation is never at risk, but this "eternal security" can not be abused. "The Lord will judge His people. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God". We're free in Christ to serve Him, not insult the Spirit of grace (vs.29).

There are other passages which have been used to support the teaching that a true believer may lose their salvation but none are more "powerful" than these discussed. The Scripture uses such strong language (like Heb.10:31) to describe how the Lord deals with sin in believers that some have jumped to the conclusion that loss of salvation is the only interpretation. We believe that for a believer to fall under the heavy disciplining hand of the Lord is a very serious matter. Consider David's testimony in Ps.51. After committing adultery and murder he felt the heavy hand of judgement, but he did not lose his salvation. He suffered consequences for his sins for the rest of his life, but rejoiced that he was saved.

We would agree with our brothers who urge living a pure and chaste life and hasten to point out that we who believe in the great truth of eternal security do the same. We believe sin in a believer leads to eternal loss of rewards, but NOT loss of salvation (ICor.3:10-15). Perhaps we have tended to overemphasize the "security" and under emphasized the "severity" of the consequences of sin. May God help us as believers to rejoice in the security and freedom that is ours and yet "fear the Lord" and live a Godly life.

John 6:37-40

All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.

Eternal Security

Charismatic Confusion

The dictionary defines charismatic as energetic, dynamic or vibrant and in the Christian context it is a reference to certain dynamic spiritual gifts, often called sign gifts.

Charismatic movement is a term applied to the relatively recent growth of churches and denominations that teach that these sign gifts (notably speaking in tongues and healing) are intended for all believers **today**. This has been one of the most divisive doctrines in modern Christianity. There are godly believers on both sides of this issue and countless volumes have been written to defend each side. Our position is that *we believe that the sign gifts (notably speaking in tongues and the gift of healing) were legitimate spiritual gifts for the early church, but that they have served their purpose and are no longer valid*. While we deplore the division surrounding this issue it is nevertheless mandatory to understand as best we can what the Scriptures teach. We will begin by studying the issue of speaking in tongues.

4 What is speaking in tongues really about?

For reference, here are all of the Scriptures related to the phenomenon of speaking in tongues.

- Isaiah 28:11 prophetic (as a sign of judgement on the nation of Israel)
- Mark 16:17 prophetic (as a sign to the nation of Israel)
- Acts 2, 10, 19 historic (the actual events recorded)
- ICor.12, 13, 14 doctrinal (what tongues is for, when to use it, regulations, duration)

Now, what is the Scriptural purpose of tongues? We believe this question is answered clearly in Scripture and that it is all wrapped up in the nation of Israel. To understand tongues we must understand the context of the Isaiah 28 passage. The nation of Israel has had a continued history of rebelling against God, then repenting and restoration, then rebelling, etc. God has judged them, forgiven them, restored them, over and over, only to have them rebel again. Listen to His introductory words to Ezekiel ...

Ezek 2:1-4

- 1 Then He said to me, "Son of man, stand on your feet that I may speak with you!"
- 2 And as He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard {Him} speaking to me.
- 3 Then He said to me, "Son of man, I am sending you to the sons of Israel, to a rebellious people who have rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.
- 4 "And I am sending you to them who are stubborn and obstinate children; and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD.'

How does God describe the nation of Israel in this passage? vs.3,4

There are multitudes of passages echoing these sentiments from God. The nation of Israel is a stubborn and obstinate and stiff-necked people and God's patience, after literally centuries, is finally running out. When we turn to the passage in Isaiah 28, we find the sordid details of their rebellion at that time and this is the setting in which speaking in tongues is introduced. (Paul will later tie Israel's rebellion and speaking in tongues undeniably together).

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Isaiah 28 is wholly related to God's disgust with, and pending judgement upon, the nation of Israel. They have rebelled against God and scorned His laws. Israel's political and spiritual leaders are drunkards and in their stupor are stammering with slurred speech while rendering blurred judgements. And now they have taken to mocking Isaiah, God's anointed prophet, who was sent to warn them of God's pending judgement. "Isaiah treats us like little babies, line on line, line on line, repeat after repeat" (He kept telling them the same thing - God is going to judge you.). God's judgement upon Israel was going to be, in part, that God would mock Israel like they were mocking Isaiah. God would speak the truth to the nation of Israel with another (stammering) tongue and determine that they will not hear. That's God's judgement.

Isa 28:7-14

7 And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, they are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; they reel while having visions, they totter {when rendering} judgment.

8 For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a {single clean} place.

9 "To whom would He teach knowledge? And to whom would He interpret the message? Those {just} weaned from milk? Those {just} taken from the breast?

10 "For {He says,} 'Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there.'"

11 Indeed, He will speak to this people through stammering lips and a foreign tongue,

12 He who said to them, "Here is rest, give rest to the weary," and, "Here is repose," but they would not listen.

13 So the word of the LORD to them will be, "Order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there," that they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared, and taken captive.

14 Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers, who rule this people who are in Jerusalem,

First, who is this prophecy of judgement for? vs.11, 14

And the specific prophetic event would be what? vs.11

What will be the response of the nation of Israel? vs.12, 14

It is absolutely critical to understand how this passage relates to speaking in tongues. What God did **not** reveal through Isaiah was exactly **how** this prophecy would be fulfilled. Would foreigners (Gentiles) actually speak to them? Would it be by a conquering nation? Would it be by another "Isaiah"? Scripture records that hundreds of years later when this prophecy and judgement were fulfilled, it was done so by believing Jews using the phenomenon of speaking in tongues.

Tongues are the judgement prophesized on the nation of Israel.

Rightly understanding this fundamental truth makes all the NT passages plain and obvious. It is the key to eliminating the confusion. Failure to understand this fundamental truth leads to nothing but confusion. Tongues will then erroneously become something intended for the church, a sort of spiritual status symbol. The Scripture does not support that view. Tongues are

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always a sign of judgement upon Israel. To verify this interpretation we now turn to Paul's doctrinal passage about tongues.

1 Cor 14:21-22

21 In the Law it is written, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me," says the Lord.

22 So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe, but to unbelievers; but prophecy {is for a sign} not to unbelievers, but to those who believe.

In verse 21, "in the Law..." refers to the Old Testament Scriptures and in particular quotes Is.28:11. **Paul here absolutely confirms ("so then...", vs.22) that speaking in tongues is the fulfillment of this OT prophecy.** Remember, in the original Isaiah 28 passage, this event is totally wrapped up in a judgement on Israel and Paul reinforces this truth. In ICor.14:22 Paul says clearly what "tongues are....". What does he say?

Tongues are a sign (of judgement) expressly to the nation of Israel (this people). In fact, Paul further clarifies that it is to a particular group within Israel. Who, specifically, is it to? vs.22

There are many other details regulating speaking in tongues in ICor.14 but verses 21 and 22 tell us exactly what tongues are for. And even with only these two verses it is obvious that the "sign" would not go on indefinitely. The sign was that God was speaking the truth (the Gospel of Jesus Christ) to them using "foreign" (Gentile) tongues, and they would NOT listen. Their rejection was also God's prophetic judgement, and that's exactly what happened. The book of Acts records God speaking to the nation of Israel using "foreign tongues" and at the end of the book, Israel as a nation has totally rejected the Gospel. God's judgement fell, the sign is no longer required, and tongues ceased (stopped, in and of themselves), ICor.13:8.

Acts 28:25-29

25 And when they did not agree with one another, they {began} leaving after Paul had spoken one {parting} word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,

26 saying, 'Go to this people and say, "You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; and you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;

27 For the heart of this people has become dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I should heal them."

28 "Let it be known to you therefore, that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen."

29 [And when he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]

And so it is to this day. The nation of Israel has been set aside (temporarily) while the Gospel goes to the Gentiles. Israel mocked Isaiah with slurred, drunken speech and God mocked them by speaking the truth using foreign, stammering tongues! The only speaking in tongues the Scripture describes is this judgement. It was NEVER for the church. It was NEVER for believers. It was ALWAYS for the rebellious nation of Israel.

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4 What about the gift of healing?

As we have just studied, tongues was a gift of the Holy Spirit to believers to act as a sign to the nation of Israel, thus the term "sign gift". There are numerous accounts of signs, wonders, and miracles wrought by Jesus and then, after His resurrection, also by the Apostles. All the other sign gifts also had a limited lifetime just like speaking in tongues. Beyond tongues, it is important to understand why God chose to give the early church the other sign gifts.

Heb 2:1-4

1 For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away {from it.}
2 For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, 4 God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.

The "those who heard" of verse three were the Apostles who spent three years personally listening to the incredible teachings of Jesus. Verse four identifies the sign gifts (signs, wonders, and various miracles) given by the Holy Spirit. Why did He give these gifts? vs.4

This is a very important truth to understand. *Signs, wonders, and miracles, were gifts given to the early church in order to confirm (bear witness to) the message (the Gospel) and the messengers (the Apostles) as sent from God.* Healing, miracles, etc, are all in this category. They were necessary to confirm the message until the written word of God (the New Testament) was written down and preserved. After that, there would be no need for the signs, miracles, etc.

1 Cor 13:8-10

8 Love never fails; but if {there are gifts of} prophecy, they will be done away; if {there are} tongues, they will cease; if {there is} knowledge, it will be done away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.

Here Paul notes the fate of the early church. They couldn't turn to the New Testament Scripture to learn or study the doctrines because they were not yet written. If they wanted to learn of the rapture or the resurrection or whatever, they had to wait until someone with the appropriate gift spoke about it! They got it in parts, one revelation at a time. But, what will happen when "that which is perfect" (complete, i.e. NT) comes? vs.10

History records that about AD90, when the Apostle John penned the last book of the NT (Revelation 22:18-21) that all these sign gifts had, indeed, stopped. The same truths previously communicated verbally, and confirmed by miracles and wonders, were now written in the Word for anyone, anywhere, at any time. Just a closing point about healing. We know and firmly trust that God can and does heal. We are commanded to pray for the sick. But there is a world of difference between believing that God heals and believing that someone has the gift of healing. Some of today's so-called faith healers are twisting and distorting Scripture. Avoid them and follow the Word.

Charismatic Confusion

4 Signs versus Scripture...

The whole topic of sign gifts is worthy of our further study. The Scripture says that it is a national trait for the Jews to seek after signs while, in general, that's not true of Gentiles.

1 Cor 1:22

For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom;

For the most part, Jesus accommodated this Jewish need during His three year ministry. However, on occasion He did show His displeasure with their continual lack of faith demonstrated by their constant quest for a sign.

Matt 12:38-39

Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and {yet} no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;

Mark 8:11-12

And the Pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven, to test Him. And sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."

He also recognized a Roman soldier because he believed without any signs!

Matt 8:5-10

And when He had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, entreating Him, and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering great pain." And He said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. "For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does {it} " Now when Jesus heard {this,} He marveled, and said to those who were following, "Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.

There are numerous cases where God gives signs to help people move along in their process of finding and trusting Him. But Scripture also seems clear that having faith, trusting Him, just on the basis of the Word of God, really pleases Him. And there are also times when the message is crystal clear; if you reject the Word there is no other sign or miracle that will convince you either! We believe that is one of the fundamental reasons why God has removed the sign gifts at this time. The Word of God is far more powerful (Heb.4:12)! Consider...

Luke 16:19-31

19 "Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day.

20 "And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,

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21 and longing to be fed with the {crumbs} which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

22 "Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

23 "And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.'

25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.'

26 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and {that} none may cross over from there to us.'

27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house--

28 for I have five brothers-- that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

29 "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

30 "But he said, 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'

31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'"

We understand this to be a real account of real people and beyond the insightful view of Hades, there are several important teachings here. After realizing that escape from there was impossible, what did the rich man request of Abraham? vs.27, 28

And what was Abraham's reply, in your own words? vs. 29

Then the rich man argued to send Lazarus back. What was he asking for?

And what was the very insightful answer of Abraham to this request for a miracle-sign? vs.31

What does this passage clearly teach about the relative power of Scripture vs. signs?

There are always those who will say, "Unless I see a sign, I will not believe". And these passages reply, "The Scripture is the most powerful sign given". If you reject the written Word of God, nothing else will top it.

As a believer, don't seek after signs. Don't let anyone tell you that you'll be more spiritual if you have some sign. Don't plead with God to give you a sign gift. Search the Scriptures and have the kind of faith that really pleases Him.

Heb 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please {Him} for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and {that} He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

The Grace of Giving

Giving is a subject that makes some people uncomfortable. Our minds may jump to past non-religious experiences or news accounts of financial abuse or deception. The "church" is not free of such concerns either because there have been serious breaches of integrity in the matters of money raising and spending. For others there may simply be an uneasiness because we know we should be giving in some way and aren't. And some may genuinely want to give and are just not sure how much is appropriate. Is it the tithe (i.e. 10%)? Is the tithe of the gross or the net? Why should we give? Who should we give to? Let's begin our study to answer these questions.

4 Giving in the Old Testament...

Ps 50:10-12

For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all it contains.

What does this passage say about what God owns and what we own?

One fundamental truth about our giving to God is that **we really have nothing to give!** By that we mean that God already owns everything. However, while He does own everything He *has* loaned material things to us and asked us to be good stewards of those things. He has given instructions and guidelines on how to handle our finances. In the Old Testament God gave specific instructions to the nation of Israel about when they were to give to Him as well as how much.

Deut 14:22-23

You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year. And you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the first-born of your herd and your flock, in order that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.

Deut 14:28

28 At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit {it} in your town.

The tithe (1/10) was *required* (i.e., it was part of the Mosaic Law) for Israel on a yearly basis and another tithe was added every third year. Note that the tithe was of that which comes from the field, the gross. In addition there were other special tithes and there was also provision for a "willing" offering, that is a gift to the Lord above and beyond the required tithes. How did Israel do in this area? After centuries of rebellion, God gives the nation of Israel a stinging rebuke.

Mal 3:8

Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings.

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How did God feel about how Israel had responded in this area of giving?

What two *kinds* of gifts to the Lord are mentioned in this verse?

Obviously, tithes and offerings are different things. The tithe is the mandatory tenth while the offerings are the freewill gifts to the Lord. Of what was Israel guilty of in their giving?

Before we proceed further in our study we need to establish a very important principle. The principle is: **The Church is NOT ISRAEL**. Notice that in the preceding references the tithe was mandatory for Israel. There is absolutely no such requirement for the New Testament church. Some would like to subject believers today to the OT laws and regulations regarding giving but there is no NT evidence to support such a view. Now that we understand where the tithe originates, let's look at the NT instructions for giving.

4 Giving in the New Testament...

The word "tithe" is only found two times in the NT (Mt.23:23; Lu.11:42). In both passages Jesus is rebuking the "religious" Jews for mechanically giving the tithe while omitting the spirit of the law. They were proud of their tithing on the spices used in cooking while trampling over justice and mercy and faithfulness! Jesus reinforces that the tithe *should* be given (by the Jews according to the Mosaic law) but wants the right heart attitude as well. The Jews had fallen into the trap of performing some ritual (in this case tithing) and thinking that alone pleased God. It's a solemn reminder to Christians today to avoid the same error.

Matt 23:23

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.

There are no other NT references to the tithe. Nothing in the doctrines given to the church would place the church under the Mosaic law of tithing. Indeed, we find just the opposite.

In the early years of the church there was a terrible persecution to the Jewish believers living in and around Jerusalem. The political and religious leaders of Israel had rejected Jesus all the way to the cross and now, predictably, were rejecting His followers. Jewish Christians were not allowed to buy or sell in the marketplace and in general were outcasts in their society. This resulted in extreme poverty. Paul was ever mindful of this crisis and encouraged the new Gentile churches to send relief funds to Jerusalem. He gave all the churches specific instructions on how to take up such an offering and this has become the guideline for collections within the church. There are two major passages involved, ICor.16:1-2 and IICor.8-9. We'll consider them in chronological order.

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1 Cor 16:1-2

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.

According to this passage, *when* was the church told to "put aside" their gifts? What day is this?

Instead of requiring a tithe, what is the giving guideline?

Other translations render "as he may prosper" as "in keeping with his income" (NIV) and "as God has prospered him" (KJV). They all convey the concept that our giving is to be **proportional**, according to the income with which God has prospered us. The instruction is neither a fixed amount nor a fixed percentage and is in stark contrast to the law of the tithe. It is totally at the discretion of the individual believer. This is entirely consistent with the principles we've already studied that show the incredible freedom God has given to the church. He is not going to mandate how much we give, but considering all the grace and mercy and gifts and provisions He has given us, how then should we give?

4 The right attitude for NT giving...

Jesus placed great emphasis on the heart attitude behind our giving.

Luke 21:1-4

And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all {of them;} for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

It is very likely that "the rich" in this passage were putting in the required tithe, yet how does Jesus describe their gift? Was He pleased (satisfied) with their giving?

In direct contrast, what percentage did the poor widow give? Was He pleased with her giving?

Paul wrote a second letter to the church at Corinth and in chapters 8 and 9 he addressed his pending visit to them. He had been traveling back to the many churches he had founded, encouraging and teaching them, and taking their offerings for the persecuted Christians at Jerusalem. He begins by telling the Corinthians about the amazing offering taken up by the churches of Macedonia. These believers were also impoverished (vs.2) but had literally begged Paul to allow them to participate in this collection. They are forever our examples...

2 Cor 8:1-5

1 Now, brethren, we {wish to} make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,

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2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.

3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability {they gave} of their own accord,

4 begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,

5 and {this,} not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

Notice that Paul identifies their giving as "the grace of God". This is the foundation of NT giving. Giving as God has prospered us, not out of compulsion but willingly, is a grace gift from the Lord.

2 Cor 8:7

7 But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, {see} that you abound in this gracious work also.

Here he recognizes that they were doing well in other spiritual areas and urges them to abound in this gracious work of giving. Mark it well, giving in the NT is to be a deeply spiritual act. In the remainder of chapter eight he gives them more encouragement to abound in giving and also some very practical guidelines on being above reproach in financial matters (vs.20-24). In chapter 9:1-5 he gives more details on the specific collection event and then in the remainder of the chapter gives detailed doctrine on giving.

2 Cor 9:6-15

6 Now this {I say,} he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully.

7 Let each one {do} just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

9 as it is written, "He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness abides forever."

10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;

11 you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

12 For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.

13 Because of the proof given by this ministry they will glorify God for {your} obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,

14 while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.

15 Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

How much are we to give according to verse 7?

And what spiritual promise guides us in setting the voluntary amount? vs.6

Can we outgive the Lord? What does the Scripture teach in this area? vs.8, 9, 10, 11

What is our *heart attitude* supposed to be? vs.7

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Note: "cheerful" comes from a Greek word, "hilaros", from which we get hilarious. This attitude comes from a deep realization that it's our privilege and opportunity to give to the Lord and He will bless us many times over. It is crucial to understand that our giving is a spiritual ministry to the Lord. We have the opportunity to take the material things of this world which are corrupt and will pass away and turn them into eternal, incorruptible blessings that will never pass away! To really grasp this truth will make your giving cheerful! And God loves it!

What will be the response of those who are the direct beneficiaries of our giving? vs.13,14

To conclude this teaching on giving, what is Paul's point in verse 15?

Here are some observations and guidelines gleaned from the NT Scripture about giving.

- NT giving goes far beyond the OT law of tithing
- Our giving, in general, should be to the Lord, through the church
- Our giving should be a heart matter, not a mechanical routine
- Our giving should be proportional
- Proper giving brings many blessings
- God loves a cheerful giver!

If our giving is sparing, grudging, and burdensome, it is strong evidence of a spiritual problem of some sort. If our giving is bountiful, cheerful, and seen as a ministry of grace, there is fruit abounding. May God add His blessing to the grace of giving in our lives.

Amen.

