

NOW THAT
YOU ARE
SAVED

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Crossroads Full Gospel
International Ministries

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Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

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NOW THAT YOU ARE SAVED

THERE'S A NEW NAME WRITTEN IN THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE

CONGRATULATIONS on receiving Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour. In doing so, you have made the most important decision of your life!

By **accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour** you have escaped an eternal future of everlasting torment in the Lake of Fire. As a result of your commitment, your name is now written in a book in heaven called the LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE. As Revelation Ch.20 tells us:

REVELATION 20:10 And the devil who deceived them was cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone . . . and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

REVELATION 20:15 . . . And whosoever was not found written in the BOOK OF LIFE was cast into the Lake of Fire (and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever).

BASIC CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

Background Reading: John 11:25-27

There is life after physical death. Though your body will die, you (the spirit-man, the real you) will live on forever - for you are an eternal personality. God's Word also tells us that we are three-part beings. We each have a spirit and a soul (mind), and we live in a physical body. The body can be thought of as the suitcase which houses the real us while we live on the earth.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23 . . . And I pray God (that) your whole spirit, soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When a person's physical body dies, their spirit and soul, the real person, will continue to live on for eternity. Therefore, in a million years time, we will all still be in existence. Where we live for eternity, however, will be determined by whether or not we received Jesus into our lives as Lord and Saviour while we lived on earth. When a person dies, their spirit and soul will go immediately to either heaven or hell, depending on whether they belong to Jesus or not.

***“. . .There is life after physical death –
for you are an eternal personality. . .”***

As you grow in your new life in Christ, you can come to a greater understanding (revelation) of God and experience greater intimacy with Him - our Creator and Lord. To grow in Christ we need the good food, “*the sincere milk*” (1 Peter 2:2) of God's Word.

THE BIBLE - OUR ROAD MAP

The Bible, otherwise known as the Word of God, is just that - God speaking directly to us. While there are many writers, the Bible has only one Author, that being Almighty God.

We, as Christians, learn about God through His written Word, which is divinely inspired and full of Divine truth.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

God will communicate with you through His written Word, the Bible. God will reveal Himself to you, or indeed anyone who will take the time to read His Word with an open mind.

HEBREWS 4:12 For the Word of God is quick (living) and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the

thoughts and intents of the heart (exposing our motives, desires and thoughts for what they are - as God sees them).

The truth of God's Word leads us both to the power of deliverance and the Deliverer of that power. We can, with all confidence, depend on the authoritative written Word of God, for it is impossible for God to lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2). The Bible is our "Manual of Life," and tells us of God's commandments and principles. It is our detailed roadmap which shows us, as Christians, how to live the saved life (Joshua 1:8; John 17:17). It is the foundation of all Christian doctrine and should be the foundation on which our Christian life is built, and the filter through which every thought should be passed.

SAVED BY GRACE – NOT WORKS

Only by a willing acceptance of Jesus' Lordship can God's saving grace be obtained, by which we are saved. And this has nothing to do with any "good works" we may have done, as Ephesians 2:8 and 9 tell us:

EPHESIANS 2:8 For by grace (God's unmerited favour) are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

EPHESIANS 2:9 Not of works (man cannot merit salvation), lest any man should boast (try to take the credit).

In other words, salvation can never be based on one's own works. For this reason no-one can take personal pride in it, and the glory belongs to the Lord. Sadly many people think that after this life, because they have lead good lives and harmed nobody, then their "good works" will give them favour with their Creator, and an entrance to heaven. But "good works" cannot save. Otherwise Jesus Christ would not have had to shed His Blood and die on the cross at Calvary.

The Bible tells us that:

ACTS 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else (except Jesus), for there is no other Name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (N.I.V.)

Jesus Himself said:

JOHN 14:6 . . . “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father, but by Me.”

Therefore our so called “good works” outside Christ cannot earn our salvation. Also, if people try to come to God through Mohammed or Buddah or even Mary, for example, it will not work. The Name of Jesus is the only Name through which we can be saved. There is no other way - no other Saviour, no other Redeemer. All roads do not lead to heaven - there is only one road which does. This is the road that leads from the Cross of Calvary to heaven. This road is a narrow way, but the Light of God’s presence is on it, and God has promised those who come via the Cross, a place in heaven (Matthew 7:13-14; John 14:2).

“. . . The Name of Jesus is the only Name through which we can be saved. There is no other way - no other Saviour, no other Redeemer. . . ”

This way, however, involves faith, for to receive anything from God, faith is required. And scripture tells us that faith comes as a result of believing on God’s Word.

HEBREWS 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him (God): for he who comes to God must believe that He is (that He exists), and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him.

To every person who yields to the message of the Gospel, by repenting of their sin and making Jesus their Lord and Saviour, God will give the ability to trust in the reality of the Gospel. This reality is Christ crucified, buried and raised from the dead - and us abiding in Him (John 15:5).

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY ?

Christianity is not a religion, a system of ethics or a set of traditions which are relied upon to produce the goal of pleasing God. For as we have learned, man has no way of earning his own salvation. Rather, Christianity is a personal relationship between born-again Believers and God. And in this relationship, Christians know God to be their Heavenly Father (Romans 8:14-17). Christians are people who have made Jesus Christ their personal Lord and Saviour, and who continue to follow Him through the teachings contained in God's written Word. Therefore Christianity is not based on practices, rituals or methods but on a relationship which then orders the Believer's faith-walk (John 14:23; Hebrews 5:9).

***“ . . . The Resurrection of Christ then
became the ultimate proof to Believer
and unbeliever alike of the truth
of the Gospel. . . ”***

As Christians grow in the knowledge and love of God, they can allow this love to flow through them so that they perform righteous works of faith and love (John 15:5). This is one of the Bible's promises, and in this way, the Father is truly glorified. Indeed as Christians express the love of God and display the power of God in their lives, men and women will be drawn to the Saviour. Believers, with God's grace at work in and through them, become banners of His love, showing others the truth of the Gospel through their attitudes and actions (John 13:34-35). Indeed the finished work of the Cross defeated the power of sin. This results in a transformed life, a changed character and a new Lord. Only the power of the

Blood can produce these radical changes in the heart and life of a man (2 Corinthians 5:17).

SPIRITUAL REGENERATION IS NEEDED

Background Reading: Romans 5:6-11

Spiritual regeneration is another term for being “born again.” This regeneration takes place because of God’s saving grace. We were born sinners, and because of the sin nature which permeated us from birth, we sinned continually (Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10). Sin’s stain kept our soul in darkness.

But upon regeneration (being born again), the Holy Spirit came to dwell within us (1 Corinthians 6:19) and God’s saving presence surrounded our spirit. In this, darkness was driven out of our spirit - for He Who has come is the true Light of the world. He is, in fact, the Father of Lights (James 1:17).

JOHN 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again (regenerated), he cannot see (enter) the Kingdom of God.”

Regeneration (to be born again by the Spirit) is the only way the sin problem can be dealt with and the gulf between man and God bridged - for God alone could forgive our sins and give us spiritual life in exchange for spiritual death.

JOHN 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him (Jesus) should not perish, but have (with God) everlasting life.

Through the action of accepting Jesus as Lord and Saviour, man can be reunited with God. However we must be sorry for the sins of the past and turn from them, forsaking our old life to follow Jesus. This is what the word “repentance” means. As we do this, God will give us the power, through His grace, to walk away from our old life and our old ways of sin.

“ . . Sin is not only doing that which is wrong, in thought, word or deed, sin is also not doing that which is right, morally and spiritually. . . ”

There was no other way God could bring mankind back to Himself but by allowing His only begotten Son Jesus to shed His Blood and to die. Jesus, Who was God the Word clothed in flesh, became the perfect sacrifice. Through this, God could then legally bring mankind out from under the authority of darkness, otherwise known as spiritual death. John 1:1 and 1:14 tell us about God the Word taking on human form - being clothed in flesh.

JOHN 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (God the Word).

JOHN 1:14 And the Word was made flesh (a human being) and dwelt among us . . .

These scriptures are speaking of God the Word, the second member of the Holy Trinity.

God the Word took on flesh through the virgin birth and became a human being called Jesus. He was called the Son of God and the Son of Man, being truly identified with both God and man. He became, without ceasing to be God (God the Word), a perfect sinless man. He stripped Himself of the right to use His Godly power while on earth, including the knowledge He possessed as God the Word, and forsook His heavenly rights as God. Therefore during Jesus' earthly ministry, God's miraculous power was released by the faith that Jesus obtained as a man.

Jesus' life displayed the fruit of the Divine Nature which energized Jesus' human nature, empowering Him to walk in fellowship with the Father all the days of His earthly life. Indeed He

said to His Disciple Phillip, “*He who has seen Me has seen the Father*” (John 14:9), His sacrificial love showing forth the Father’s nature and character. Fallen man, however, did not have access to this Divine Nature until after the Cross. Access to the graces and energies of God’s Divine Nature had been denied following Adam’s sin, and the descent of man into spiritual death. At the Cross, man’s redemption was paid for, and man once again gained the right to access God’s Divine Nature through Jesus the Saviour. When God brings man back into spiritual union with Himself, man becomes a partaker of the Divine Nature as he yields to the Spirit of God.

“ . . .Regeneration (to be born again by the Spirit) is the only way the sin problem can be dealt with and the gulf between man and God bridged. . . ”

Jesus died on the cross at Calvary and was resurrected by God’s mighty power. Today He is seated at the right hand of God the Father, and all power and authority in heaven and on earth have been given to Him (Matthew 28:18).

This is Jesus, our wonderful Saviour, the Prince of Peace, the King of kings, the Lord of lords and our Kinsman Redeemer. Amen.

REPENTANCE

2 CORINTHIANS 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

Repentance leads to salvation, but is not something that earns one eternal life. Repentance is not a reward for works, for we are saved by grace through faith. Rather it is an integral part of saving faith. The heart of genuine repentance towards God is not wanting to continue to be led by our own ideas or to continue to follow our own ways. Repentance encapsulates a desire to be led by God - His truths and His ways.

The Holy Spirit will bring conviction of sin and a revelation of who Jesus is. It is up to the individual to respond accordingly. Man must cooperate with God in order to be saved, but salvation is a work of grace from beginning (conviction) to end (repentance and acceptance).

EPHESIANS 2:8 For by grace (God's unmerited favour) are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

EPHESIANS 2:9 Not of works (man cannot merit salvation), lest any man should boast (try to take the credit).

Repentance for the purpose of salvation is repentance from unbelief in Jesus. By the Holy Spirit's grace, we gain a faith that resides in our heart so that we confess that Jesus is Lord and Saviour of our life. The evidence of salvation is the belief and trust that resides in the heart of the Believer.

Repentance is only a condition of salvation and not its meritorious ground. True repentance leads a person to say, I am a sinner and have sinned, and to prove this repentance with a 180° change in direction. Repentance requires true brokenness and humility. Repentance is not asking the Lord for forgiveness with the intent to sin again. Repentance is an honest, regretful acknowledgement of sin with an ongoing commitment to change. Repentance leads us to cultivate godliness while eradicating habits that lead into sin.

The most important thing that repentance does is that it allows the grace of God to influence us and empower us to be able to make that 180° turn, and so to live a different life. This is accomplished by the grace of God acting upon the heart and mind of man to cause man to change and so to please his Heavenly Father. This change of heart and direction cannot take place without man cooperating with the graces and energies of the Holy Spirit.

“. . . Repentance for the purpose of salvation is repentance from unbelief in Jesus. By the Holy Spirit's grace we gain a faith that resides in our heart so that we confess that Jesus is Lord and Saviour of our life. . . ”

Ongoing repentance will be needed for the purposes of sanctification of the mind and flesh, as evidenced in 1 John 1:9. Then God's grace for us, as promised in His Covenant for all in Christ, will not be frustrated or blocked.

1 JOHN 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Sin needs to be dealt with by the Blood through true repentance so that God's grace can forgive, cleanse and empower the Christian to live righteously in Christ.

The practice of sin in a person's life will block the grace needed for that person to live victoriously. This is to frustrate the grace of God from touching the Christian so as to empower them (Galatians 2:21). Some serious sins will even fast-track people into unbelief in Jesus, so that they then deny Him as Lord and Saviour in a relational way (1 John 2:4, John 10:27).

Repentance and faith

Salvation demands “Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21).

Why is it in this order?

Repentance comes first because God has been offended by the sin in the lives of unbelievers; consequently, the sinner must repent of that sin. It is not so much the word said, but rather the attitude of the

heart. Along with Repentance, there must be Faith evidenced in Jesus Christ relative to what He did at Calvary and the Resurrection in paying the price for man's sins. To be sure, the sinner may understand very little of what Jesus actually did, but there must be Faith extended in some manner, even though little understood, as to what Christ did at Calvary. In fact, as the Gospel is preached and heard, with the Holy Spirit then bringing about conviction, the Holy Spirit will also give Faith to the unbeliever, without which it would not be possible for such a one to be saved.

The Scripture teaches total depravity, meaning that unbelieving man cannot know God, cannot understand God, and cannot have any true leanings toward God. Any understanding he thinks he has of the Lord is twisted and perverted.

Concerning the unredeemed, the Scripture says, "And you has He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). As should be understood, "dead" is "dead." Of course, it is speaking of spiritual death. Inasmuch as such a person is dead to the Lord, this means they can have no understanding of the Lord. So whatever it is they must have in order to accept Christ as Saviour, the Holy Spirit has to supply such, which He does!(S.B.C. Mark pg. 191)

***“ . . . Salvation demands “Repentance
toward God, and Faith toward our Lord
Jesus Christ”. . . ”***

THE BOOK OF LIFE

Background Reading: Luke 10:17-20

Your name is now written in the Book of Life because you have:

1. Acknowledged you were a sinner born in a state of sin, and needed God's saving grace to be set free from the grip of sin and death (Romans 3:23).

2. Received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour according to Romans 10:9-10:

ROMANS 10:9 That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

ROMANS 10:10 For with the heart man believes (faith is exercised) unto righteousness (rightstanding with God); and with the mouth, confession (open acknowledgement) is made unto salvation (action with your faith).

Because of this you are made righteous in Christ. You need now to:

3. Continue to follow and serve Jesus as Lord of your whole life, through acting on the direction God has given in His written Word (Hebrews 5:9).

4. Continue to turn your back on all sin through repentance. This involves making a complete “about face” in regard to sin, i.e. making a 180 degree turn. To do anything against God’s commandments, knowingly or unknowingly, is called sinning. (Know, however, that after this quality decision, God will give you, through His grace, the spiritual strength to walk in the righteous standard that He has set).

1 JOHN 1:9 If we confess (acknowledge then forsake) our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (the results of sin).

5. Diligently study God’s Word so you can know and obey all God’s commandments (2 Timothy 2:15).

6. Set aside a special time each day when you can read the Word of God, pray and fellowship with the Lord. This is called your

“quiet-time” and is best done at the start of each day, before daily responsibilities and pressures take precedence. Remember, to draw close to God, you need to spend consistent time with Him (Psalm 5:1-3).

7. Rely not on willpower but the empowerment of the Holy Spirit through the Divine Nature both to desire and then to do the things He asks (2 Peter 1:4).

CAN YOUR NAME BE TAKEN OUT OF THE BOOK OF LIFE ?

YES! - you can forfeit your salvation after becoming a Christian. The following scriptures show that this is possible:

EXODUS 32:33 And the Lord said unto Moses, “Whosoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book” (this shows that one’s name can be added or taken out).

In scripture God is warning Christians not to fall into the types of sin described in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. He is also showing the world His moral standard so that the mirror of truth can reveal sin for what it is, and that as sinners, we all need God’s grace and forgiveness.

See also - 2 Peter 2:20-22; Luke 8:13; 1 Timothy 4:1; Galatians 5:4.

BUT

REVELATION 3:5 He who overcomes (by staying in Christ), the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.

First Corinthians gives us an outline of the types of sins, that if practised without repentance, will cause people to be fast-tracked

into unbelief, thereby bringing them to deny Jesus at a relational level - whereby forfeiting their salvation:

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10 Do you not know that the unrighteous (all who reject God's Son) shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (shall not go to heaven)? Be not deceived: neither fornicators (sexually immoral), nor idolators (idol worshippers), nor adulterers, nor effeminate (sexual perverts), nor abusers of themselves with mankind (homosexual offenders), nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers (slanderers), nor extortioners (swindlers), shall inherit the Kingdom of God.

REVELATION 21:7 He that overcomes (by staying in Christ) shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son (adopted into the family of God and treated as a son forever).

REVELATION 21:8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers (the sexually immoral), and sorcerers (those who practise magic arts), and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (the Lake of Fire): which is the second death (eternal separation from God following the Great White Throne judgement).

If former Christians practice these types of sin and in doing so, lose their faith in Jesus' Lordship, God calls them to repent. They can then be restored to salvation, for God calls all sinners, everywhere, to repent so that they may be cleansed by the Blood of the Lamb (1 John 1:9). The Blood is sufficient, even in such cases.

***“...YES! - you can forfeit your salvation
after becoming a Christian. . .”***

Note: Sin always pulls us away from God's influence and grace. Repentance and the Blood of Jesus applied to sin cause us to come back under the influence of His grace. Some types of sin exert a greater gravity to pull us into a dark place, this place being that of man thinking and living without God's influence and grace (Hebrews 3:12-14).

Sin will take us on a journey away from God's influence. Sins of greater gravity can help fast-track us into darkness, causing a change in our hearts so that relational truth in Christ becomes historical truth outside of Christ. This means that heart-belief shrinks to mental assent, and we then only believe with our minds, not our hearts. In this way, the faith required for salvation is extinguished.

These scriptures give Christians a warning that practising these types of sins will fast-track Christians into unbelief, resulting in them stepping out of Christ and therefore forfeiting their salvation.

If unbelief is left to run its race through the Christian not maintaining the proper object for their faith, i.e. the Cross, the finished work of Christ at Calvary, then ultimately they will forfeit their salvation. This is because man is saved by faith in Christ and His finished work. Only by this means can man be joined to Christ and so be saved.

Jesus saves from sin, and not in sin. Christians who think they can practise sin with immunity are sadly mistaken – for such “*shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*” (1 Corinthians 6:9).

Such sins will cause Christians who practice them to deny Jesus on a relational level, thereby shifting their belief to a religious or historical level which means only meaning mental assent that He is Lord.

***“ . . . Jesus saves from sin, and not in sin.
Christians who think they can practise
sin with immunity are sadly mistaken. . . ”***

In regard to people who live in a de facto relationship, and let's say in a church service give their hearts to the Lord, these people should not return to that de facto relationship. To do so would be to continue to commit the sin of adultery (or fornication). Because of a lack of repentance from the sin about which scripture warns, they would not have truly made Jesus Lord. If they truly have had a conversion experience, then to stay in this type of relationship will help fast-track them into unbelief. As we have said, this means that the relational truth of Jesus as Lord, which is heart-truth and constitutes faith, would eventually change to mere historical truth about Jesus. We must meet the conditions to be "in Christ" if we are to abide in Him. Sin is sin, and we are saved from it, not saved so we can return to it with impunity.

Repentance for salvation purposes is an attitude and commitment of the heart to go God's way and not any other way, including the way of the flesh.

Salvation May Be Forfeited or Abandoned by Rejecting Christ

"God, as a loving Heavenly Father, does not desire that any person fall away from the salvation He has graciously provided in Christ. "Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

But, the Bible also teaches that believers who have accepted Christ as Savior can be lost if they repeatedly disregard the teachings of Scripture, continue to resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and finally reach the point where they have turned away from their Savior. Jesus makes that point in the Parable of the Sower where, speaking of some who have become believers, He said, "They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away" (Luke 8:13). A.O.G. USA Position Paper 2017.

However, be assured that, providing you truly purpose to live within the Biblical boundaries of salvation and continue to have faith in Christ's finished work on the Cross, nothing can remove you from the Father's hand (John 10:27-29). This guarantee is valid for eternity, as long as Jesus remains your Lord. Indeed He has prepared a place in heaven for all who receive Him and continue in His love (John 14:1-3).

“ . . . Repentance for salvation purposes is an attitude and commitment of the heart to go God’s way and not any other way, including the way of the flesh. . . ”

Those who reject making Jesus Lord and Saviour (or do not, with an open heart, seek God Who will show them the truth of Calvary) will remain spiritually bankrupt, walking in spiritual darkness. After physical death they will live in everlasting torment. Rejection through ignorance or the avoidance of truth will be no excuse (John 12:48), for man is accountable for his position of sin.

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Background Reading: 1 John 3:1-3; John 10:27-29

If you have made Jesus your Lord and Saviour and are following Him, you can rest assured that you are saved and that you are a child of the living God. Jesus declared in John 5:24:

JOHN 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He who hears (and receives) My Word, and believes on Him (the Father) Who sent Me, has everlasting life (with God), and shall not come into condemnation (shall not go to hell); but is passed from death (separation from God) unto life (union with God through Jesus Christ).

This scripture gives us great assurance for it declares that we, as Believers, have eternal life and are no longer separated from God, but united with Him forever (as we remain “in Christ”). This is the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

ROMANS 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation (no guilt) to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (according to His leading and empowerment).

ROMANS 8:2 For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

Some people, on receiving Jesus, sense a dramatic change in their lives and feel very different within themselves. Others, however, are not conscious of any change at all. This does not make one person more saved than another, nor does it mean that God loves one person more than another. Such differences occur because we are all individuals and respond differently to life's experiences. Therefore we cannot base our salvation on the way we feel, for our emotions can vary from day to day and are by no means reliable indicators of our spiritual position in Christ. We can therefore only base our salvation on what God's Word declares - for the Word of God is our assurance of salvation, and the only proper foundation for our faith. Eventually, however, Christians, with proper study and openness to the Spirit of Truth, obtain that blessed assurance of their salvation and union with Christ through His precious Blood.

Be aware, however, that Satan will try to influence you with thoughts of doubt concerning the reality of your salvation. For example, he may try to convince you that you're not really saved, or that God doesn't really love you or that the whole thing is all a figment of your imagination. You need to ignore such suggestions and declare that you are a child of God, saved by grace through Jesus' sacrifice. God's Word is the final authority on the matter. Hold fast to your conviction regardless of what the devil, your emotions or other people may try to tell you. Speak out the truths of God's Word in the face of any uncertainty, and learn to rely on it in every situation. Other scriptures to look over are (John 3:16; Romans 10:9; 10:13; 5:1; Colossians 1:12-13; 1 Timothy 2:4).

“...We can only base our salvation on what God's Word declares - for the Word of God is our assurance of salvation. . .”

Our Lord said “*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10). This should settle it if Jesus is your Lord!!

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MAKING JESUS LORD ?

Background Reading: Psalm 23

1. When we took this step we were taken out of the Kingdom of Darkness and placed into the Kingdom of Light (the Kingdom of God).

COLOSSIANS 1:13 Who (God) has Delivered (rescued us - all who have received Jesus as Lord) from the power (dominion) of darkness, and has translated (placed) us into the Kingdom of His Son

2. With Jesus as our Lord at the time of our physical death, we will go to heaven rather than hell. This is the guaranteed promise of an eternal future spent with God rather than in everlasting torment (2 Corinthians 5:8).

3. With our names written in the Book of Life, God becomes our eternal Provider. Today He can provide:

(a) SPIRITUALLY -

The Lord has promised to help us grow and prosper spiritually as we follow the leading of His Word.

3 JOHN 1:2 Beloved, I wish (pray) above all things that you may prosper and be in health (physical prosperity), even as your soul prospers (spiritual prosperity).

This verse is telling us that God wants our souls to prosper along with our physical bodies. If our souls are to prosper, our minds must first be renewed by studying God’s Word. In this way we come to

know and accept His principles. Then we must willingly act in faith on this renewal of our minds. Some of the fruits which can be produced in our lives as a result are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These are known as “*the fruit of the Spirit.*” In other words God desires for us, as His children, to develop, by His grace, in character, displaying these fruits in our lives. In this He is well pleased.

(b) PHYSICALLY (Health) -

Although it was completely unjust, Jesus’ suffering and death constitute the Sacrifice of Atonement which took place so that mankind could be made whole, spirit, soul and body (Hebrews 13:12). Therefore both His suffering and death together constitute the Sacrifice of Atonement - that has set free all those who believe and trust in Christ and His redemptive work. The Atonement itself was then brought to completion by the Resurrection.

“ . . . Satan will try to influence you with thoughts of doubt concerning the reality of your salvation. . . ”

In the context of the Atonement, Christ’s finished work on our behalf, we can now understand that He paid the price for our healing by the stripes (wounds) He endured both prior to and during the crucifixion. This means that we can claim healing by believing and trusting on His Word.

ISAIAH 53:4 Surely He (Jesus) has borne our griefs (taken our sickness, weakness and disease), and carried our sorrows: yet we did (ignorantly) esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

ISAIAH 53:5 But He was wounded (pierced) for our transgressions (rebellion), He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace (the

*punishment that brought us peace) **was upon Him** (and Him alone); **and with His stripes** (by His wounds) **we are healed** (and made whole - if we believe to receive from God).*

Jesus, the Bible tells us, is the same yesterday, today and forevermore (Hebrews 13:8). He healed people by the power of God when He walked upon the earth, and God's power is still available today to bring healing into our lives. We receive healing, and any other of God's promises, by having faith in His Word and praying in the Name of Jesus - with our focus on Calvary and Christ's finished work. Sin and everything it has brought into this world, including sickness and disease, have been defeated by "Christ's finished work." Amen. We need to pray with faith (trust and belief), not wavering but being fully persuaded that God's Word is true, and will accomplish what it declares for those who receive its promises.

(c) MATERIALLY -

The Lord has promised to provide for our needs as we live according to His Word.

***MALACHI 3:10** "Bring all your tithes (and offerings v.8) into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now in this," says the Lord of Hosts, "if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to hold it.*

***MALACHI 3:11** And I will rebuke the devourer (Satan and his forces) for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field . . . "*

As we give our tithes and offerings in faith, with a willing heart, and continue to live a surrendered life, trusting in Him in every area of our lives, God has promised to bless us, provide for us and protect our provision. He will then be Jehovah Jireh, our Provider (Matthew 6:25-34).

***“...Jesus, the Bible tells us, is the same
yesterday, today and forevermore:
Hebrews 13:8...”***

This is only an outline of some of the benefits of making Jesus Lord. Indeed God’s Word contains many more promises and they are available to all who believe according to the Word and surrender their lives according to the Word.

TO HAVE VICTORY IN JESUS

Background Reading: 1 John 5:1-4

To have victory in Jesus, we need, with God’s grace at work in and through us, to obey all His commandments. So first we must acknowledge the truths in His Word. Then we must choose to act on them, believing for God’s empowerment to live according to His will, not ours. Doing this will bring us into a victorious life in the Christian faith. To just believe that God’s Word is true will not change people’s lives, or indeed be of any benefit. In fact the Bible tells us that even the demons believe in God . . . *“and tremble”* (James 2:19). What is needed is that we combine our belief with action - that we purpose to obey the truths contained in God’s Word from our hearts. Only from the vantage point of commitment is God’s power made available to us to live the saved life. This power comes through the Divine Nature that we, in Christ, are partakers of (2 Peter 1:4).

Willing acts of obedience will develop a mature, true love in our lives. From this will come lasting spiritual fruits, and so prosperity of our spirit, soul and body. If we live in this love, the lives of those around us will be affected, for they will see the reality of Christ’s love in us as we allow God’s grace to work through us. Amen.

Indeed the Word of God tells us that the measure of our love for God will be the level of our obedience. Jesus stated in John 14:21:

JOHN 14:21 He who has My commandments, and keeps (obeys) them, he it is who loves Me: and he who

loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest (reveal) Myself to him.

As we, by God's empowering grace, keep His commandments, we will be pleasing Him - being at one with Him, asking according to His will and having our prayers answered:

1 JOHN 3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

THE FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS OF CHRISTIANITY

1. We were all born in a state of sin, and need God's grace to overcome sin:

ROMANS 3:23 For all have sinned (all are born in a state of sin and are sinners), and come short of the glory of God (as a consequence, are deprived of God's saving presence).

See also Romans 6:3-4.

2. The shedding of Jesus' sinless Blood on the cross was the redemptive price needed to release us from the bondage of sin. However for us to be released from sin's eternal grip, we needed to repent of (turn our backs on) sin, and receive Jesus as our Lord and Saviour:

ROMANS 10:9 That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus (that Jesus is your Lord), and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.

ROMANS 10:10 For with the heart man believes unto righteousness (rightstanding with God); and with the mouth confession (open acknowledgement) is made unto salvation (action with our faith).

3. Jesus was raised from the dead by God's power and is alive forevermore:

REVELATION 1:18 I am He Who lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

All power and authority in heaven and on earth have been given to Him by God the Father:

MATTHEW 28:18 And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth."

4. Jesus is God the Word, Who forsook His heavenly privileges and clothed Himself with flesh through the virgin birth:

JOHN 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Jesus' father was God, and therefore He was a sinless man, as Adam (man's federal head) was before he committed high treason.

5. Man is responsible for seeking God's truths so that he may be set free, spiritually and physically. And God has revealed to us in His Word that if we diligently seek truth with an open, sincere and unbiased heart, we will find it:

MATTHEW 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

MATTHEW 7:8 For every one who asks receives; and he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks it shall be opened.

6. The chief heartfelt confession the sinner must make is the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Before sinners come to Jesus they cannot, through their own efforts, obtain God's favour or power to overcome sin:

EPHESIANS 2:8 For by grace (God's unmerited favour) are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

EPHESIANS 2:9 Not of works (nothing man does can earn him salvation), lest any man should boast.

However when Jesus is allowed to be Lord of our lives, we have access to the power of God to help us overcome sin:

PHILIPPIANS 4:13 I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me.

Because:

Philippians 2:13 . . . it is God Who works in you (through Divine enablement) both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

When you became a Christian according to Romans 10:9 and 10, two things happened:

1. Jesus became your Lord and Saviour.

2. You became a righteous child of God. Death and darkness were removed from your spirit, and the Holy Spirit came to dwell within you (1 Corinthians 3:16).

This experience is called "salvation." In other words, you have been saved (past tense). The Book of Colossians tells us that:

COLOSSIANS 1:13 (God) Who has delivered (rescued or saved) us (all who have received Jesus as Lord) from the power (authority) of darkness (spiritual death), and

has (past tense) translated (placed) us into the Kingdom of His dear Son

Salvation in this context means that through your faith in Jesus and His finished work on the Cross, and your action in making Him Lord and confessing Him as such, you have been taken out of the authority of darkness (Satan's kingdom) and placed into God's Kingdom. This is the "Gospel" or the good news of Jesus Christ - for the word "Gospel" means "good news."

OUR ENEMY TODAY

Background Reading: Ephesians 6:10-18

It is important to realize that, as Christians, we fight a spiritual battle - for the Word of God tells us that our real enemy today is not other people but Satan and his forces of wickedness working through yielded vessels:

EPHESIANS 6:12 For we wrestle (fight) not against flesh and blood (people), but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (speaks of forces of wickedness ranked in various levels of authority).

We cannot see this enemy with our physical eyes, but we can see the effects of his influence in the wars, famines, diseases and suffering that oppress mankind today. Indeed the devil is not a fictitious figure but a real spiritual being who seeks to pervert and destroy all that is good.

JOHN 10:10 The thief (the devil) comes not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. . . .

1 PETER 5:8 Be sober (be aware), be vigilant (be watchful); because your adversary (enemy) the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour (destroy)

Our spiritual enemy will tempt us to go against God's commandments and commit sin. As we submit to God, however, we can resist him through God's grace and empowerment, and gain the victory in Christ.

JAMES 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God (His Word and His will). Resist the devil (in faith), and he will flee from you (in terror because of God's power).

WHAT IS SIN ?

Sin was first manifested when Lucifer, the archangel, chose to self-rule, and challenge God's throne. His name was then changed to Satan (meaning "Adversary"), for he had become totally corrupt and evil, with no chance of redemption. Then in the natural physical world, in the Garden of Eden, sin was manifested when the first man and woman disobeyed God's command. Adam and Even entered into a state of sin and this became universal, being inherited by all their descendants. This resulted in spiritual death (separation from God) for all mankind.

At the Fall, man also lost access to the energies and graces of the Divine Nature which empowered him to desire and then to do God's will. From this point onwards, man became dominated by the sin nature that then gave him the power to sin. So not only is fallen man born in a state of sin, he is controlled by the sin nature - which empowers him to do the wrong he desires to do, the sin he has decided to commit. Empowerment to sin comes only after a person first wills to do the wrong thing, i.e. to sin. In the Believer, the will is the trigger which causes either the sin nature or the Divine Nature to be enthroned, giving power to the Believer to act according to that which is yielded to.

“...As a new Christian, you cannot afford to stay in deep fellowship with non-believers who practise a lifestyle of sin. . .”

Briefly, sin can be an action or a state (position). We are born into a state of sin because we are descendants of Adam. And we commit actions of sin when we violate God's commandments and laws.

So sin can be referenced to:

1. The state of sin into which we are all born (separation from God, also called "spiritual death"). Another term used in this context is "original sin."

2. Actions (deeds, thoughts etc.) which violate God's Word and commands, and are thus acts of unfaithfulness to our commitment to Jesus.

3. The sin nature which empowers us to commit the sin we have willed to do.

For the Believer, to do anything outside the boundaries of the commandments and principles contained in God's Word is an action of sin which will allow the enemy to legally attack us in that area of wrong. Also, concerning the Believer, sin will cause the Divine Nature to be dethroned at an experiential level and the sin nature to again assume the throne - to block the grace of God delivering us from evil. Note that Divine love, by its very nature, cannot intervene or intrude upon the decision of the Saint by supplying something which is against the wishes of that Saint. Willing or deciding to do wrong is the trigger for the Divine Nature to be dethroned and the sin nature to be enthroned. However we need to understand that we do not have to be dominated by sin because Christ defeated sin on our behalf and for our benefit at the Cross. We also need to remember that we have been raised with Him in His Resurrection, as Romans Chapter 6 tells us. Therefore we can use our will to focus on the truths contained in the Bible in regard to the power of the Cross. With this focus we can deny self the opportunity to sin, allowing the faith God has put in our hearts to rise up so we can grab our inheritance with both hands (that is, if we have bothered to seek and therefore understand these precious truths).

ROMANS 6:5 For in view of the fact that we are those who have become permanently united with Him with

respect to this likeness of His death, certainly also we shall be those who as logical result have become permanently united with Him with respect to the likeness of His resurrection, (Wuest)

ROMANS 6:6 knowing this experientially, that our old [unregenerate] self was crucified once for all with Him in order that the physical body [heretofore] dominated by the sinful nature might be rendered inoperative [in that respect], with the result that no longer are we rendering a slave's habitual obedience to the sinful nature, (Wuest)

ROMANS 6:7 for the one who died once for all stands in the position of a permanent relationship of freedom from the sinful nature. (Wuest)

Therefore when we, as Believers, sin, we need to repent, ask God's forgiveness and also thank Him for the cleansing of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). This takes away the enemy's legal ground, dethrones the sin nature in that area, and restores us to full fellowship with the Father.

When we hold on to unconfessed sin, however, we give the devil legal ground to remain in our lives, and the sin nature remains enthroned. The degree of sin will determine how much legal ground is given. Sin of greater magnitude will give greater legal ground to the enemy to establish a stronghold, from which evil can make greater inroads.

“. . . In the Believer, the will is the trigger which causes either the sin nature or the Divine Nature to be enthroned, giving power to the Believer to act according to that which is yielded to. . . ”

Concerning the Believer, there are many types of sin that will not break our legal “father and son” relationship with God. However any kind of sin will interfere with our fellowship with Him. If you have sinned in any area, you can be restored to full fellowship with God through repentance and acceptance of His forgiveness. Once you have received His forgiveness, then believe also for the cleansing of all unrighteousness, according to 1 John 1:9:

1 JOHN 1:9 If we confess (and repent of) our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (any spiritual results of that sin).

In First Corinthians 6:9-10 and Revelation 21:8 as we have previously addressed, we are given an outline of the types of sins that if practised without repentance will eventually lead to unbelief, even the denial of Jesus' Lordship, and this will then break our legal “father and son” relationship with God. This is because of their potency and strong gravitational pull to not only help keep people out of the Kingdom, but to also help transport those who are in the Kingdom of Light back into the Kingdom of Darkness. Murder, drunkenness, and sexual sins such as adultery and homosexuality, are prime examples. If former Christians practice these types of sins and in so doing, lose their faith in Jesus' Lordship, God calls them to repent. They can then be restored to salvation, for God calls sinners of all kinds to repent so that they may be cleansed by the Blood of the Lamb (1 John 1:9).

Sin causes the lowering of our inhibitions so that the flesh can flow without restraint within that prevailing darkness. Sin always pulls us away from God's influence and grace. Repentance and the Blood of Jesus applied to that sin will cause us to come back under the influence of His grace. Some types of sin have a greater gravity to influence us, to pull us into a dark place, which constitutes man thinking and living without God's influence and grace. Sin will take us on a journey away from God's influence. The degree of that influence will depend on the type of sin involved and the person themselves. One person may be affected to a small degree while

another person may be seriously affected.

Sin in certain areas will cause a “searing of the conscience”, a hardening of the heart. Certain more serious sin will cause one’s thinking to be drawn away from God’s holy standards and His perspective on things that matter. Therefore sins of greater gravity (as in Revelation 21:8 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10) can help fast-track us into darkness by promoting this change from relational truth in Christ to historical truth outside of Christ. In other words, serious sin can change heart-faith to mere mental assent, which is really unbelief (Hebrews 3:12-14).

In other words, the relational truth of Jesus would eventually change to historical truth about Him. We would then cease to know Him, we would only know about Him. We must meet the conditions to be “in Christ” if we are to abide in Him. Sin is sin, and we are saved from it, not saved so we can return to it with impunity.

Repentance for salvation purposes is an attitude and commitment of the heart to go God’s way and not any other way, including the way of the flesh. Revelation 21:8 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, along with many other scriptures provide Christians with a warning that to practise the types of sins described will fast-track them into unbelief, thereby causing them to deny Christ and His Lordship. This will of course result in such former Christians stepping out of Christ and therefore forfeiting their salvation.

***“. . .Repentance for salvation purposes is
an attitude and commitment of the heart
to go God’s way and not any other way,
including the way of the flesh. . .”***

God has given us the Bible as our “Manual of Life” so we can know right from wrong, so we can make informed choices and not let our feet tread on unstable ground. Therefore we need to look into God’s Word diligently so we can know what God requires of us, and then live accordingly.

We are told, for instance:

EPHESIANS 4:29 *Let no corrupt communication (unwholesome talk e.g. swearing, vulgarity, slander, suggestive speech) proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying (building others up), that it may minister grace unto the hearers (be a blessing, a benefit, to those who hear it).*

EPHESIANS 4:30 *And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God (proclaims the fact that the utterance of evil or worthless words is repugnant to the Holiness of the Spirit), whereby you are sealed unto the Day of Redemption. (This should have been translated, “In Whom you are sealed unto the Day of Redemption.” The Holy Spirit is Himself the Seal God has placed on us.) (E.S.B.)*

EPHESIANS 4:31 *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour (brawling), and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:*

EPHESIANS 4:32 *And be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another (be quick to forgive), even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you. (Christ’s forgiveness of us is to always be the basis of our forgiveness of others.) (E.S.B.)*

So let us not give the devil any legal ground to attack us by either being ignorant of, or disobedient to, God’s Word (Ephesians 4:27).

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP AFTER SALVATION ?

Background Reading: Romans 12:1-2

After salvation, you need to renew your mind (the way you think) through studying the Word of God, and listening to anointed preaching and teaching. As we have already learned, God’s Word

states that we are three-part beings. You are a spirit, you have a soul (spiritual mind) and you live in a body of flesh and bones. While your spirit is made pure at salvation, your mind is not. Yes it is positionally (legally) saved - but for the most part, it takes time to bring our condition (our experience) into line with our position. Let's face it, many Christians don't act as though they are saved, but the fact is that they are saved if "in Christ." This process of bringing our condition (how we live on a daily basis) up to our legal position (of righteousness) is called "ongoing sanctification." Part of this process takes place through "the renewing of the mind."

***“ . . Sin's power was crushed and
defeated at the Cross of Calvary - we
need to focus our minds on this fact and
let it become a living reality in our daily
lives, . . ”***

As a new Christian, much of your thinking, and therefore many of your attitudes and opinions, will still oppose God's ways and His will in your life. For this reason your mind needs to be renewed or washed with the principles of God, so you can begin to think in the way that God thinks - with help of course from God's grace, which comes to us through the Holy Spirit.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:23 And the very God of peace sanctify you (Christians) wholly (entirely); and I pray God (that) your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

EPHESIANS 4:23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind (this is meant to be a continuous process)

To have your mind renewed, you must come to the knowledge of God's Word - the Bible. This means that you need to diligently study God's principles and adopt His way of thinking as your own.

To do this you need to work with the Holy Spirit. You cannot do it by yourself because the change involves the heart, not just the head. The renewed mind is therefore a mind which has learned, by God's grace, to live according to His Word - in any area. This needs to be, of course, a continuing process, and this process is called "ongoing sanctification".

JOSHUA 1:8 This Book of the Law (God's Word) shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night (think about God's Word constantly), that you may observe (be watchful) to do (act) according to all that is written therein: (and this is the promise) for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success.

God's law for us as Christians is to be written on our hearts, and it should govern our behaviour. It can be summed up as follows:- we are to love God with all our heart, mind and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Mark 12:29-31).

" . . . As a new Christian, much of your thinking, and therefore many of your attitudes and opinions, will still oppose God's ways and His will in your life. . . "

God has revealed many things in His Word that we need to know so we can be empowered by God's grace to fulfil this greatest commandment of all. This then becomes a way of life whereby we love with the love of God.

JAMES 1:21 Wherefore . . . receive with meekness the engrafted (implanted) Word which is able to save your souls.

Until our minds are renewed, we may not know what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. We may inadvertently do

something wrong and thereby sin against God, knowingly or unknowingly. Most basically defined, sin is anything that does not confirm to the character and nature of God. Sin is not only doing that which is wrong, in thought, word or deed, sin is also not doing that which is right, morally and spiritually. This means that there are sins of commission - wrongdoing - and sins of omission - not doing right. Without God in your life, positionally and experientially, you will sin. Only through Jesus Christ, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit, can we avoid sin and walk in righteousness. Only through yielding to the Lord and seeking His empowerment can we truly do so.

When convicted of sin, we should always come to God through repentance and allow His full blessing back into our lives. If we don't, the enemy will, in some way, take advantage of our wrongdoing. However we have the assurance that:

1 JOHN 1:9 If we confess (acknowledge then forsake) our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (the results of sin).

God is faithful and just. So if you have sinned, confess that you have sinned, repent and receive His forgiveness. Then receive your cleansing of all unrighteousness (any consequence of that sin), so that the enemy can have no hold on you. Amen.

Note: Once we have truly repented of any sin, turning our back on that sin with the help of God's grace, it is forgiven and forgotten as far as God is concerned. So we need to forget about it also. But be aware that our spiritual enemy will try to use any feelings of condemnation which we may still be harbouring concerning past sin. He will try to convince us that we are not really forgiven or that we are unworthy to receive God's love etc. We need to recognize all such accusations as lies, and cast them down in the Name of Jesus the moment they appear. We need to declare what God's Word tells us, e.g. "*Their sin and iniquities will I remember no more*" (Hebrews 10:17). (Also look at Micah 7:18-19; Isaiah 43:25; 1 John 1:9.) By declaring and truly agreeing with the truth of God's Word, we can

know victory in this area.

You see man was originally created to be a partaker of God's Divine Nature - which was lost to man when Adam sinned in the garden. At the Fall man not only lost access to the Divine Nature, he became controlled by the sin nature - which is the reason man is not only born in a state of sin but also receives power from this nature to sin.

Born-again Christians, however, have nailed the old man (the old unregenerate self) to the Cross. This occurred when they were saved, being identified with Christ's death.

ROMANS 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized (spiritually) into Jesus Christ were baptized (spiritually) into His death?

When they were resurrected, spiritually speaking, after this funeral of the old man, God gave back that which had been lost, i.e. the graces and energies of His Divine Nature. Therefore Christians again have the power, which comes through the Divine Nature, to do God's will fully.

“...Most basically defined, sin is anything that does not confirm to the character and nature of God. . .”

We know, however, that the sin nature, the lower weaker nature of man, remains an issue which saved man still needs to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Concerning the Christian, while the sin nature was positionally (or legally) defeated, and thus taken care of, at Calvary, conditionally (or experientially) it is a different matter. It remains the Christian's responsibility to allow God to help them renew their mind and then to act according to this renewal, in any particular area, so that the sin nature is conditionally defeated in that area.

Note: The sin nature, broadly speaking, concerns man thinking and working out his own ideas without God. Quite often this is

described in terms of the wording “the flesh,” a term which can also mean the mind and senses of man and even the physical body of man.

We therefore need God’s help (His grace) on a daily basis in order for our condition (our walk) to match our legal position in Christ. The empowerment to do this is provided by the graces of the Divine Nature. As the Believer yields to the Holy Spirit, the power to resist the dictates of the sin nature (the flesh) now comes through the Divine Nature. This too is the good news of the Gospel - we don’t have to sin! Amen.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (a new creation): old things (the old unregenerate self) are (is) passed away; behold, all things are become new.

GROWING IN THE LORD

Background Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

Through accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, you now have a legal “father and son” relationship with God; but He also desires to have a personal relationship with you.

As you spend time fellowshiping daily with God through prayer, devotion and the study of His Word, a deeper knowledge of God and His ways can be developed. Through this a greater trust can grow, and in this way a deeper personal fellowship can develop.

“. . . We must remember it is not our will-power that will help us overcome sin but rather us walking in “newness of life. . .”

We all need to be taught God’s Word so we can know right from wrong. First we need to hear the basic principles, and then after this, we need to come to understand the meat of the Word.

HEBREWS 5:13 *For every one who uses milk is unskillful in the Word of righteousness: for he is a babe (not necessarily a new Christian, but certainly an immature one).*

“Spiritual milk” = the truths pertaining to the facts of the Cross that one accepts so that one understands the positional relationship they have with Christ through the Cross. In the position of son or daughter (Romans 8:14-16), we can call out “*Abba Father*” when in need. We know, in this position, that we are now citizens of heaven, having been rescued from hell. We are also made aware, through scripture, of the basic behaviour required of the Christian in relation to God and man (Matthew 22:37-39). We are not to just know these truths, we are to experience them - to live them - in our Christian walk.

HEBREWS 5:14 *But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age (mature Christians of faith and love), even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern (to know the difference between) both good and evil.*

“Spiritual meat” = the deeper truths of the Cross which bring us into an experiential relationship with God so we can cry “*Abba Father*” out of honour and appreciation for what He has done. In this condition of relational living, we start to understand, by Holy Spirit illumination, the deeper things of the Cross.

God has provided the Church worldwide with preachers and teachers to help us understand God’s Word:

ROMANS 10:14 *How then shall they call on Him (Jesus) in Whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him (Jesus) of Whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?*

ROMANS 10:15 *And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of them who preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad*

tidings of good things (salvation)!” (Isaiah 52:7)

To help you grow and mature in the Lord, as well as studying His Word and having a personal quiet-time with Him each day, you should also find a place of fellowship. This means that after accepting Jesus as Lord, you need to set down your roots and become established in a local church which will help you become stable in the Lord. Indeed Christians were never meant to be islands unto themselves and we all need the fellowship of other Christians in order to grow in Christ. In fact as new-born babes, we need the structure of a spiritual nursery which can feed us the right milk formula at the right time so that our baby spirit may grow in the things of God. Then as we progress, our spiritual diet needs to be changed to that of an adult so we may continue to grow in the things of God.

THE CHURCH IS GOD’S VEHICLE AND CHRIST’S BODY

Background Reading: Ephesians 4:1-16

God has ordained, in this age, a vehicle to work through on the earth. This vehicle is called His “Church of Believers,” of which Jesus is the Head. Another name for the Church worldwide is “the Body of Christ.”

COLOSSIANS 1:18 And He (Jesus) is the Head of the Body, the Church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence (first place).

EPHESIANS 4:11 And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

EPHESIANS 4:12 For the perfecting of the Saints (to prepare God’s people for works of service), for the work of the ministry (the preaching of the Gospel), for the edifying of the Body of Christ (so that the Body of Christ may be built up)

The word “church” is used to describe a corporate assembly of Believers. It can be a local gathering or can refer to the entire Body of Christ. The Church (in the context of all Believers worldwide) belongs to the Lord, and its members have been called to be separate from the world (while at the same time, living in the world). (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

1 PETER 2:9 But you are (this is all Christians) a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people (a people set apart, each Saint is God’s unique possession); that you should show forth the praises of Him Who has called you out of darkness (spiritual death) into His marvellous light

When we call the Church “the Body of Christ,” we are saying that Christ is the Head of a living body of which all Believers are members.

EPHESIANS 5:30 For we are members of His (Christ’s) Body, of His flesh, and of His bones.

Even though Jesus has ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father, He is still working today through His Body, the Church, that is when the people in it are being led by the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Church is not merely an organization, as many people think. It is God’s vehicle to help bring about His will on the earth. And God’s will on the earth is that all have the opportunity to hear the Gospel and enter into His glorious Kingdom (1 Timothy 2:4). It is also God’s will that Christians continue to grow in knowledge and maturity with the help of the local church structure.

“...The Church belongs to the Lord, and its members have been called to be separate from the world. . .”

As a new Christian you will need a church with mature faith-filled Christians to help feed you with the milk of the Word of God,

and then take you into the deeper truths of the Cross concerning Christ's finished work. Although you may be an adult physically, at the beginning of your Christian walk, you are only a baby spiritually, a babe in Christ. Therefore:

1 PETER 2:2 As newborn babes, desire pure spiritual milk (the Word at a level a new-born Christian needs) of the Word, so that you may grow up (and become mature) in your salvation:

HEBREWS 10:25 Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together . . . (at church and teaching meetings etc.), as is the habit of some people, but admonishing - warning, urging and encouraging - one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching (the return of our Lord Jesus Christ). (Amp.)

In the natural world, babies can do very little for themselves and need their parents to feed and clothe them, and provide total care. Babies rely on parents for their every need and accept all that is given to them. In some degree, the same could be said with regard to new Christians. God does all they cannot do for themselves - if they allow Him, by willingly obeying Him in faith and love, and receiving what He has for them. The key is for them to trust the Lord as their Father, even if they do not fully understand. Children may not understand their parents' directions, but trust helps them to obey.

Some people, however, be they baby Christians or those who have been Christians for some time, are so over-cautious that they let their natural reasoning cheat them out of God's best for them. Some people may be too cautious to step out and do something new, even though it may be right and according to God's will for their lives. Rather than grow in their faith-walk, they cocoon themselves through fear of being wrong or making a mistake. This could relate to finding the right church, receiving healing or being released from bondage in some area, etc. As the Word of God says, some people are ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth that would set them free (2 Timothy 3:7).

So we need not only to be grounded in the Word, we need to apply it, trust the Lord, and step out in faith as He directs. Of course, all this is done by His grace at work in our lives, from the process of study to the point of stepping out in faith.

PROVERBS 3:5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding (do not rely on your own wisdom).

PROVERBS 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A HOME BASE

Background Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

God has given us the church structure in order to provide for our need for fellowship and spiritual growth. In His wisdom He knew we needed such a structure, for Christians are not designed to live in isolation from other Christians. Those who try to do so are saying that God was wrong and that we do not need the church structure which He has provided.

***“...The key is for us to trust the Lord as
our Father, even if we do not fully
understand. . .”***

The Bible says nothing in regard to solo Believers. In fact it directs us all to seek out fellow Believers so that we can praise, worship and obtain teaching together from a home base. An example of this is seen in the early church, as recorded in the Book of Acts:

ACTS 2:41 Then they who gladly received his (the Apostle Peter's) word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

ACTS 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread (communion), and in prayers.

The Apostle Paul spoke of this same principle in Romans 1:12, that in coming together:

ROMANS 1:12 . . . we may be mutually strengthened and encouraged and comforted by each other's faith . . . (Amp.)

MATTHEW 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them (but only in the unity of the Spirit).

Those who try to live their Christian lives in isolation from other Christians often fall prey to the enemy. This is why the Lord warns us that there is safety in numbers. For example, soldiers can only operate effectively when they are properly equipped and each given a position in the army. Soldiers who do not allow themselves to be placed under direction will remain scattered and become easier targets for their enemy. It is usually then not long before those who are scattered are taken captive. This is one reason God has directed Christians not to neglect fellowship on a public level. In fact the Lord says in Hebrews 10:25 that we are not to forsake “*the assembling of ourselves together*,” which is a direct reference to Christians participating in public worship, i.e. church.

Also, if Christians are to grow to their full potential, they need to belong to a church that promotes both the Word of God and the power of God, undergirded of course by the love of God. Where possible, it is advisable to attend a church which promotes the whole Gospel, rather than a church where the main emphasis is on secular and social issues. In other words, you should seek a church of Believers who expect the manifestation of God's power - healing of the body, deliverance from evil in any form, the operation of the power of the Holy Spirit, the evidence of transformed lives and people living in victory over sin. Only through the Word of God and the power of God can people become free, and develop their lives

effectively for Christian service. The church you seek, in order to operate in the power of God, should teach the foundational doctrines of Christ's finished work on the Cross, the Atonement (1 Corinthians 1:17-18; Hebrews 9:22; 1 Peter 1:18-19) and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in other tongues (Isaiah 28:11; Acts 2:4, Acts 10:45-46). It should also teach the doctrines of the Rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), and the Second Coming of Christ (Zechariah 12:10; Zechariah 14:3-4; Revelation Chapter 19).

“. . . Those who try to live their Christian lives in isolation from other Christians often fall prey to the enemy. . . ”

A church is God's two-way valve for us. It is a place where we can not only receive, but also a place where we can give of ourselves to help those in need (and bring them to a position of faith in God and His Word). This happens as we give of our time, our abilities and our finances - for a church is designed to be an agency of love and service to the world. Christians who allow God to motivate them will have the desire to serve in whatever capacity they are able to do so. And within a proper church structure, a person will have avenues in which they can serve God according to the opportunities that arise and their talents and abilities in Him.

Therefore we should attend church not only with the attitude of wanting to receive from God, but also with the attitude of wanting to give of ourselves. Hopefully the church you attend will preach and teach the Gospel in its entirety, and give you an opportunity to give praise and thanksgiving to God with others of like faith. The combination of sound doctrine and true worship will inspire unity among the Believers in a local church and help people grow in Christ and become strengthened spiritually. A church which is led and empowered by the Holy Spirit is a vehicle which can help transport us to a position where we, along with others, may focus our faith and love on Christ and His finished work on the Cross.

When we give from a heart of faith, love and willingness, we not

only bless our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as the unsaved, we also, ourselves, are blessed. This applies to the giving of tithes and offerings, the giving of our time and the giving of ourselves in the Lord's service. We should therefore not obey God's laws (for example, in regard to tithing) merely out of a sense of duty, but because we, by His grace, love and trust God and His holy Word. It is the heart attitude accompanying the obedience which is so important.

If people commit themselves to a church structure, they are surrounding themselves with fellow Christians who can watch over them and help steer them away from the rocks of life. This is important at any time, but is particularly vital for new Christians who are only babes in Christ, with, at this stage, very little faith, strength or knowledge.

Sometimes when praying for situations to be dealt with or needs to be met, we may find our own level of faith is insufficient. In such cases, it may well be advisable to pray within a group setting with people of stronger faith. This also gives God more avenues to work through regarding direction which is relevant to the prayers being prayed - for where one is limited in their ability to discern God's leading, another may not be. In this way, the situation or need can be dealt with effectively.

***“...Christians who allow God to
motivate them will have the desire to
serve in whatever capacity they are
able to do so...”***

Nevertheless, we need to take all things to the Lord in prayer - and believe for, and wait for, confirmation or direction concerning that which we have prayed about. Direction may come instantly or within days. Whatever it takes, we are to seek God's will on the matter. This may come via a specific leading to a scripture to confirm what we are to do, or it may come through an inner witness that gives us peace beyond the natural. There are many ways God can speak to us if we seek His counsel - but we must make a quality

decision to do what He says before we even hear Him. At times direction from the Lord will come through a word from our Pastor or another Godly minister. God's direction could come from the sermon we will hear next week, the tape we will listen to, our personal study or all of these together. All of this is God speaking to us, and is called the "Rhema" Word of God. Anything which is the Lord's will and He reveals to us becomes a Rhema Word. To take another example, sometimes when a Christian is listening to or reading scripture, a verse or two will suddenly "come alive" and the written Word of God will speak. In other words the scripture, for that moment, becomes a special revealed revelation. When God speaks to us like this, the Logos Word (written Word) becomes the Rhema Word (revealed Word). Anything that the Holy Spirit tells us or reveals to us in regard to truth and direction (which is His will on any matter for us) is called the "Rhema" Word.

Both the Logos Word of God and the Rhema Word of God are vital to our Christian walk and growth in the Lord. We also need to be "*vigilant*" because the enemy is trying to win back the ground he lost when Christ come into our life. And we need all the help God can give us (and we can receive) - for we are not strong enough by ourselves (Philippians 4:13). To combat the enemy's plans we should also, with God's help, love one another, submit to one another in the Lord and always be careful to watch over one another. God gives us a clear warning in 1 Peter 5:8:

1 PETER 5:8 Be sober (aware), be vigilant (watchful); because your adversary (enemy) the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking (people not in faith) whom he may devour (destroy)

The devil preys on Christians who leave the flock and wander by themselves from place to place without ever thinking of making a commitment to membership in a church (after, of course, taking it to the Lord in prayer). Therefore we need to heed the direction God gave through the Apostle Paul:

EPHESIANS 5:21 Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

HEBREWS 13:17 Obey them who have the rule over (guide) you, and submit yourselves (to their authority in the Lord): for they watch for your souls (and guard your spiritual welfare), as they who must give account (to the Lord), that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

We are not saying that you are to be locked into a particular church, through membership, for the rest of your life - for you should always allow God's Spirit to direct you in this and other areas. If you are a member of a church, however, you should commit yourself to it according to the Word as long as you remain a member (Hebrews 13:17). When and if you leave to attend another church, you should do so only under God's direction, not just because you got a "bent nose" or you didn't agree with something that was said or the way something was done!

“. . . We need to take all things to the Lord in prayer - and believe for, and wait for, confirmation or direction concerning that which we have prayed about. . . ”

As people are different, so will churches be different. You will need to find a church which preaches God's Word and which you think suits you (although this does not necessarily mean it will be comfortable to your "flesh"). Then you will need to pray about whether or not this is the church the Lord wants you to attend at this particular point in time. So we find that learning to be led by the Holy Spirit is a vital part of our Christian walk, and we need to acknowledge Him in all we do (Proverbs 3:5-6).

We need the Church on earth because we are creatures of flesh and blood living in an imperfect world, full of Satan's influence. A loving, caring church, full of God's power, can help steer many away from life's dangerous waters, and help keep its members strong and victorious as they surrender to the Lord. Now let us warn you that many, in fact most churches will not be functioning as we have

described here - as they ought to be! Therefore, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you should seek the best one possible from those available to you.

YOU ARE HOLY UNTO GOD

Background Reading: Ephesians 5:1-12

The reason we must separate ourselves from both the works and the workers of iniquity (sin) is because we are now a holy people unto God in Christ Jesus, through His shed Blood.

1 PETER 2:9 But you (this is all Christians) are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people (a people set apart); that you should show forth the praises of Him Who has called you out of darkness (spiritual death) into His marvellous light:

2 CORINTHIANS 6:17 “Wherefore come out from among them (the works and workers of iniquity), and be ye separate,” says the Lord, “and touch not the unclean thing (refers to Christians avoiding all unholy contact with a vain and polluted world (E.S.B.)); and I will receive you,

2 CORINTHIANS 6:18 And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty.

1 Corinthians 5:11 But now I have written unto you not to keep company (Believers should not condone this kind of immoral activity in other so-called Christians who do not repent), if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner (plainly tells us that many will call themselves “Christian” or “Brother,” who practise these types of sins (E.S.B.)); with such an one no not to eat (speaks more so of the Lord’s Supper than anything else. (E.S.B.))

To be set apart is not to negate our responsibility towards civil authority in the land in which we live - for we are to obey the law of the land as well as God's Law. Of course God's moral law is always to be above the law of the land if there is a conflict, e.g. abortion. In the overwhelming majority of cases, however, this will not occur.

1 PETER 2:13 Submit yourselves to every Ordinance of man for the Lord's sake (Peter is speaking here of Civil Government): whether it be to the king, as supreme (providing the Ordinance does not violate the Word of God); (E.S.B.)

1 PETER 2:14 Or unto Governors, as unto them who are sent by him (the local police) for the punishment of evildoers (covers all Civil Government), and for the praise of them that do well. (Evil is to be punished and doing right is to be rewarded, which pertains to a stable society) (E.S.B.)

1 PETER 2:15 For so is the Will of God (Civil Government is ordained by God), that with well doing you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (presents the fact that true Christians are the greatest asset of any nation): (E.S.B.)

1 PETER 2:16 As free (the freedom we have in Christ), and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. (The liberty we have in Christ does not make us above the Law of the Land.) (E.S.B.)

Jesus had made this point previously, in response to the question of the Pharisees as to whether Israel should pay the hated Roman taxes. Calling for a coin, Jesus dealt with the matter in this way:

MARK 12:16... And He said unto them, "Whose is this image and superscription?" And they said unto him, "Caesar's."

MARK 12:17 And Jesus answering said unto them,

“Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they marvelled at him (the Jewish leaders had used the word “give” respecting tribute or taxes paid to Caesar, while Jesus used the word, “render,” which speaks of paying something as a debt; in other words, He was saying that Israel owed Rome certain obligations, such as taxes, etc.; it also means that Believers are obligated to pay taxes, and as well, to submit to Civil Government in every respect, providing its demands do not abrogate the Word of God. (E.S.B.).

As we know, the Word of God is to be our guide in all such matters of conduct and conscience, so that we may live a life which pleases our Father and glorifies Him. To be holy is to be set apart, separated from all ungodliness. In this regard we should be aware of our conduct, our speech, what we watch and hear, and the way we dress (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). When we go to church and teaching meetings we should dress in a neat manner, whether formal or casual, according to our means, remembering into Whose presence we are coming, and setting a standard that shows respect for God’s presence.

Note: God is not concerned with how elaborately we dress because He looks on the heart. Nevertheless He does expect us to dress sensibly and neatly, according to our means, for the sake of others. For this reason we should not dress in a manner that could cause undue distraction, e.g. if we were to wear excessively short skirts, low cut fronts or tight fitting clothing which highlights the body. A dress code of this kind may become a stumbling block to others, leading them into wrong thinking.

Also, as a holy people unto God, we are directed to abstain from and avoid all appearances (forms) of evil.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:22 Abstain from all appearance (forms) of evil. (The question is, “Does this please God?” (E.S.B.)

1 PETER 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims (no one is really a pilgrim in the

*Biblical sense who has not first become a stranger to this world), **abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul** (tells us that the “sin nature” is still with us as Christians); (E.S.B.)*

This means that as well as avoiding sin directly, we should not place ourselves or others in a position of strong temptation that could lead to sin. Also publicly we should avoid anything that could be perceived as being immoral, illegal or wrong. Even though something may be totally innocent and without any evil intent, if it appears to be wrong, it may bring disrepute upon those concerned. For example, if two unmarried Christians of the opposite sex were to share a house together, even though they continued to live as separate individuals, it could be perceived by others that they are living in a defacto relationship. This of course is contrary to God’s Word, and so the situation could be perceived by onlookers as being contrary to Christian moral standards. Also, on a personal level, it could only take a weak moment when one or both may succumb to sexual temptation and fall into sin, whether this be through thought or action. To place oneself in this position, for some, could be likened to a person standing in the middle of a freeway and hoping they do not get hit by a vehicle.

***“ . . . God has given us the Bible as our
“Manual of Life” so we can know right
from wrong, so we can make informed
choices and not let our feet
tread on unstable ground. . . ”***

Also, those who conduct themselves in such a way may cause younger or weaker fellow Christians to follow their example. As such they may become a “*stumbling block*” for others to fall into sin. The Bible gives warning in this regard:

***1 CORINTHIANS 8:9 But take heed lest by any means
this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them***

who are weak.

So as Christians, we need to be careful, both for our own sakes and for the sake of the unsaved. Our conduct and lifestyle need to correspond to that of followers of Christ so that we display Godly fruits and do not bring discredit upon the Gospel.

GOD COMMANDS US TO SEPARATE OURSELVES FROM WORKERS OF INIQUITY (SIN)

Background Reading: Proverbs 4:14-19; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

As we have been learning, while we are not to be isolated, we are directed by God to be separate from the world, and to be a people holy to Himself. We must therefore separate ourselves from those who engage in the following practices, and we are certainly not to participate in these practices ourselves.

GALATIANS 5:19 *Now the works of the flesh (sinful nature) are manifest (obvious, clearly seen), which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness (impurity), lasciviousness (lustfulness, indecency),*

GALATIANS 5:20 *Idolatry, witchcraft (sorcery), hatred, variance (discord), emulations (jealousy), wrath (outbursts of anger), strife (selfish ambition), seditions (dissensions), heresies (factions),*

GALATIANS 5:21 *Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings (carousing), and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do (practise) such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

Note: Galatians speaks of “adultery” and “fornication.” Adultery in the Greek means unlawful sexual relations between men and women, single or married (but not married to each other). Fornication in the Greek means repeated adultery of married or single people. It can also refer to sexual relations not between men

and women, including perversion such as pedophilia, homosexuality and bestiality.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-10 Know ye not that the unrighteous (all who reject God's Son) shall not inherit the Kingdom of God (shall not go to heaven)? **Be not deceived: neither fornicators** (sexually immoral), **nor idolaters** (idol worshippers), **nor adulterers, nor effeminate** (sexual perverts), **nor abusers of themselves with mankind** (homosexual offenders), **nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers** (slanderers), **nor extortioners** (swindlers), **shall inherit the Kingdom of God.**

***1 CORINTHIANS 15:33 Do not be misled (deceived):
“Bad company corrupts good character.” (N.I.V.)***

The Lord warns us against such things, for the enemy uses these actions and practices to perpetuate evil, and by them, to attempt to lure Christians back into the Kingdom of Darkness.

GOD HAS COMMANDED ALL CHRISTIANS:

- 1. To diligently study His Word - the Bible** (Joshua 1:8).
- 2. To obey His Word**, being not only “*hearers*” of the Word of God but “*doers*” of it as well (James 1:22; Hebrews 5:9).
- 3. To be water-baptized** (fully immersed in water) according to Matthew 28:19. (In later studies you will be taught in depth both the reasons for, and the benefits of, being water-baptized, other than it being just an act of obedience to God’s command [Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:4].)
- 4. To give**, in faith and love, tithes and offerings from the substance (provision) which the Lord blesses us with, to help support His work (Malachi 3:8-12; Numbers 18:20-21; Deuteronomy 14:28-29; Exodus 35:5; 1 Chronicles 29:6-9; Matthew 10:41; Joshua 21:2-3).

5. To be baptized in the Holy Spirit, with the evidence of speaking in other tongues (Isaiah 28:11-12; Acts 2:4; Acts 10:45-46; Acts 19:6; 1 Corinthians 14:18).

Christians are also:

6. To commit themselves to a local Word-based church, one which proclaims the truth of God's Word, and to attend meetings regularly (Hebrews 10:25).

7. To fellowship with faith-filled committed Christians (Romans 1:12).

TITHING PRINCIPLES

***PROVERBS 3:9 Honour the Lord with your substance,
and with the firstfruits of all your increase***

The principle of giving tithes and offerings appears throughout the Old Testament, being concerned with God's commandments in regard to giving. (We will only briefly refer to this subject here and go into much greater detail in the study book "Tithes and Offerings." A small booklet on this subject is also available). Note that the giving of the tithe is the giving of a tenth of one's income to God through the local church. Offerings are a separate form of giving and are of no stipulated amount.

The tithes and offerings from the people of Israel were first given to God and then distributed to those in need, according to the guidelines set down in the Law of Moses. Thus the various commandments concerning tithes and offerings were set in place so the people could honour the Lord with their giving, and so the financial and physical needs of the Israelite people could be met.

Our Christian community and the community at large today have similar physical needs to the Israelite community. The needs of the Christian community are to be primarily met through the same set of commandments outlined in the Old Testament. God's ministers today still need to be provided for (1 Corinthians 9:14), as do the spiritually and physically poor. The local church still has

running costs, ministers still need housing, and churches still need money with which to purchase church buildings. All these needs are addressed by God's commandments concerning giving.

Some object to the practice of tithing from the standpoint that we are no longer under the Mosaic Law. We find, however, in searching the scriptures, that we as Christians now come under something far weightier than the Law of Moses. Indeed this is the law of love, identified by the Lord Jesus in the following statements:

MATTHEW 22:37 Jesus said unto him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

MATTHEW 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.

MATTHEW 22:39 And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

MATTHEW 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets."

So we have been commanded by Jesus to love God and our fellow man. This means we are obligated to try to help our fellow man gain what he needs, on both the spiritual and physical levels. And in obeying the law of love, we will give. God in turn will then give us what is needed to provide for our own needs and those of our neighbours, i.e. so we may help them in an appropriate capacity.

Indeed the only time the Lord gives instruction in the scriptures to prove Him occurs in Malachi 3:10 where He is speaking to the Israelites directly about tithing. Here He promises a blessing if the people will simply obey Him in this area.

MALACHI 3:10 "Bring all your tithes (and offerings v.8) into the storehouse, that there may be meat in My house, and prove Me now in this," says the Lord of Hosts, "if I will not open (for) you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to hold (receive) it."

In doing this, we will not only be receiving a blessing, we will be honouring and indeed worshipping God as Jehovah Jireh our Provider. Without tithing our worship will be incomplete, for tithing proves our trust in our God. Indeed He is the Provider of every good and perfect gift for the enrichment of our souls and the expansion of His Kingdom. This expansion takes place not only in a numerical sense, but also in terms of character, as we and others conform more closely to the stature and likeness of Christ.

***“ . . In doing this, we will not only be
receiving a blessing, we will be
honouring and indeed worshipping God
as Jehovah Jireh our Provider. . . ”***

So let us see the broader picture in this area of giving, and count it a privilege to give back to our God from willing cheerful hearts, in faith and love. As we do so, the Lord promises that He will provide for our needs and give us sufficient to meet the needs of others (2 Corinthians 9:6-8). This heart response may not be immediate, but as we obey Him in this area, our hearts will be changed by His grace. As a result our character will be developed. Instead of our thinking being inward and self-centred, it will become more outward and God-centred. Only His grace at work in us can produce these changes as we flow in Christ.

THE SINNER'S PRAYER

Use this prayer as a reference for helping others receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Dear Father, scripture tells me that I am separated from You and Your love. I want to put this right and enter into a relationship with You as Your child. I acknowledge I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died on the cross and shed His Blood for my sin. I also believe that Jesus was raised from the dead by the power of Your Spirit. I am now willing to turn from my way and go Your way, and I

ask forgiveness for the things I have done wrong, the sins I have committed. I ask You Jesus into my heart as my personal Lord and Saviour. I will now live for You Lord, with the help of Your grace at work in me, and serve You, day by day. I believe I am now forgiven and washed of all sin. I believe I am now born again and that my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. I thank You Lord, and pray all this in the precious Name of Jesus. Amen.

Remember: You are now a child of God and have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you:

1 CORINTHIANS 6:19 . . . do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have (received) of (from) God, and you are not your own?

You have found the greatest treasure life offers, the Lord Jesus Christ. As you continue in your new life in Christ, you can come to know God in a deeper way - as your Father, your healer, your provider, your refuge and your eternal home. Remember too that we will all still exist a billion years from now. Therefore the most important aspect of each person's brief earthly life is to gain the saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing else gained in our earthly life, no success or wealth or power, can compensate for an eternity spent in the Lake of Fire where the weight of man's sin is so great that it will keep him there forever. We cannot take with us anything gained outside Christ - indeed temporal riches and fame will be left behind to fade and rot (Matthew 6:19-21). Only the love of God, if taken hold of in this life, will last for eternity in the heart of the Believer.

So continue to grow in your new life in Christ through obeying God's Word in the knowledge that God through Christ has made us partakers of the Divine Nature. Always remember that the gift you have received is the greatest gift of all, and that you have indeed been bought with a great price - the precious Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. As you surrender your life to the leading of the Spirit, you will then be a blessing to all who come across your path. Indeed if

you, by the Spirit's leading, then share the good news of the Gospel with all who have ears to hear and an open heart towards Jesus, many lives will be changed to the glory of God. We all have some part to play in God's plan on earth. This is not in question. Whether or not we become part of this plan is up to us. Let us therefore always look beyond ourselves and our flesh-based desires to the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2) - so that we may be accounted worthy to serve Him, in whatever capacity He has called us to do so (2 Timothy 2:20-21).

God bless you and may you have the victory in your new life in Christ. Amen.

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

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NOTES

*"We have a vision
to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



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