

- Accept one another. (**Rom. 15:7**)
- Admonish one another. (**Rom. 15:14**)
- Greet one another. (**Rom. 16:3-6, 16**)
- Serve one another. (**Gal. 5:13**)
- Bear one another's burdens. (**Gal. 6:2**)
- Bearing with one another. (**Eph. 4:2**)
- Submit to one another. (**Eph. 5:21**)
- Encourage one another. (**I Th. 5:11**)

Finally, if we look deeper into Ac. 2, 4, I Cor.12-14 and Jas. 2, 4 and 5 (among other passages), we will see that a group of gathered Christians is SUPPOSED to be something that, by God's grace and power, might **amaze** visiting lost people, because it is **real, supernatural** and full of **genuine love**, relationship and **power**—not *spectatorship*! The church members do not need to vote for it or even **want** it, for it **IS** what New Testament "church" **IS**.

See Also: Building Up One Another, by Gene A. Getz (Victor Books: Wheaton, IL), 1979

24. “Relational Discipleship” (Defined, Described and Defended)

RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP: WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO DO IT

(II Tim. 3:14, II Th. 2:7-8, Ac. 15:36, I Cor. 4:15, II Cor. 11:2, etc.)

When speaking of “discipling Christians,” I have a specific **methodology** in mind, which originated with **Christ**, apparently was performed by **Paul** at times, has been *mastered* by many para-church organizations (Ex.: the Navigators, Campus Crusade for Christ, etc.), but is **virtually ignored** by most churches, even though it is arguably the **most effective** way to **grow up believers** in the Lord in the shortest period of time! I personally learned more on how to grow in Christ in a few week’s time as the recipient of this method than with years of hearing Sunday School lessons and sermons.

Jesus Christ Himself took 12 men, and by **spending time with them** and personally teaching them from His life and heart—often truths the *multitudes* were not taught—by His power these men “**turned the world upside down**” in a short period of time. Christ “**duplicated Himself**” to a great degree in these men before He left earth, as should we in our discipleship ministries! You will *note* that Christ’s group was small, and He had differences in the level of relationship/intimacy from that with John the beloved, with Peter and James and Christ to the other nine.

Just as human babies cannot feed themselves but need their parents to nurture them as they learn to **crawl, sit, stand, then walk**, all *new* Christians (and long-time *stunted-growthed* or “**carnal**” Christians) need a spiritual parent *figure*, acting as a “**tutor**,” to TEACH and TRAIN them till they can **walk with God on their own two spiritual feet**. The spiritual baby’s milk is the Bible (I Pet. 2:2), and one of the main goals of discipleship is to get Christians to know how to walk by faith (i.e., be led by the Spirit and do God’s will), and ready for the meatier truths of the word of God, from having **regularly applied it** to their lives, under grace, through the habit of a Quiet Time. (I Cor. 3:1-3, Heb. 5:12-6:1)

If churches never systematically and consciously (i.e., intentionally, organizedly and personally, including grace-based **accountability**) teach the “**basics**” of Christianity to believers—either because they have never identified them or because they believe church members have a lifetime to discover them—how do we expect our churches to grow spiritually mature or grow up at any acceptable rate? This sporadic, random approach is in part responsible for the **majority of American Christians living in carnality**, either innocently (through lack of knowledge on how to grow or the need to do so), or willfully (i.e., letting our culture and the “world” dominate, or even compete with the One Master alone man can serve—God). Statistics show that it takes only **4 or 5 ‘generations’** of 1 on 12 training (where the 12 train others) to reach any size church, so **churches have zero excuses** (like being “too big”) for not implementing this *better way* to grow mature believers.

It is not just the topics covered which are important, but **HOW** those truths are conveyed to the hearers’ hearts. Specifically, training/mentoring, or as I like to call it, “**pouring your life into someone**,” involves at least four important elements: (**See:** I Th. 2:8; II Tim. 2:2)

1. An Experienced, Spiritually Mature Leader.

A “discipler” (teacher/leader) who knows the important growth topics *from the heart and life experience* through having walked with Jesus *awhile*. He (or she, when women disciple women) is not merely reciting information he/she studied the night before or other men’s thoughts, with no **personal insights** or illustrations for how the truth played out in his or her own experience.

2. Personal and Individualized: Not Just Information Dissemination.

- A) The group can maximize at around twelve persons per training session (i.e., *smaller groups*), so the **personal attention** and aspects of biblical Christian caring can be fully realized.
- B) Biblical “Church,” ultimately, is the responsibility of the pastor (I Pet. 5:1-3), so under the chain of authority (i.e., pastor, staff and elders, deacons, lay leaders and teachers and committed believers) each “leader” should be encouraged and instructed to **“leverage their relationships”** to invite people they know to be part of the group (Ex.: pastor discipled any spiritually needy family and friends, including ensuring all disciplers in the church-wide program are properly executing the program). Once trained, the “graduates” become the new teachers of another group. Thus, **spiritual multiplication** by discipleship occurs, generation to generation.

3. RELATIONSHIPS are Built Through Planned Social Interaction.

The leader/discipler should make it a point to have at least **one social event** with each individual (or small group of individuals) to show that he **truly cares** about their life and spiritual success, and is not just *disseminating information*. Relational Discipleship should be a long-term, ongoing program within the church, though participants needn’t repeat this short-term process, save possibly to train more to become leaders/teachers/”disciplers” themselves.

The *ultimate* goal of discipleship is to produce Christ-likeness in Christians, and getting them person on his own two spiritual feet is goal number one. Achievement of that goal is exemplified in part by their having **formed a daily Quiet Time habit**—a term you rarely hear

discussed or recommended in sermons, though it is the **key** to a *close* walk with God!

4. FOUNDATIONAL Truths are Taught and Applied.

- A) Training is hands-on and action-oriented *implementation of truth*... not just learning information without using it in one’s lifestyle. Testimonies and asking questions about how certain truths can and have been understood and *incorporated* into one’s life are **certainly** part of the training, and **daily** “homework,” such as a Quiet Time lessons should be required.

“Disciples” are to be **taught to disciple others** (i.e., “multiplication discipleship” or “duplication”), and on an important technical note, no one is the disciple of any other human—only Jesus Christ. The discipler’s role is more that of a mentor or tutor in the faith.

- B) **Scripture meditation and memorization** are ESSENTIAL requirements of a good discipleship “program.” This author suggests, at a minimum, the following **memory verses**: **Josh. 1:8, Pv. 3:5-7, Mt. 6:19-21, Mk. 11:22, Jn. 3:16, Rom. 1:16, 3:23, 6:23, 8:37, 12:1-2, 1 Cor. 10:13, 13:4-8a, 2 Cor. 5:17, Gal. 5:22-24, Eph. 2:8-9, Phil. 4:6-8, Col. 3:1-4, 2 Tim. 1:7, 2:15, 3:16-17, Heb. 11:6, 13:5, Jas. 1:2-4, 1 Pet. 5:7-9, 1 Jn. 1:9.**
- C) Finally, the CONTENTS of what is taught are *essential*. Having studied the Bible for more

than 30 years and researched an over 5,000 page New Testament Commentary and Topication focused on **evangelism** and **discipleship**, I have sought the Lord to determine *the most pertinent* and *powerful truths in His Word* to grow up Christians as quickly as possible.

The criteria used to determine these topics included their intrinsic subject matter value, the quantity of verses addressing that subject, Bible author's identifying them as key/essential/foundational, historic discipleship programs having used them, and the Bible's own description of how these specific truths have *transformed* lives. Though the Bible is fully **inerrant**, and all of it is **equally inspired**, there are distinctions made, even by the Bible itself between what is appropriate for babes vs. maturer men, and **common sense** can distinguish between some subjects which are less pertinent to rapid spiritual growth! The selected topics appear to be *not easily* arguable as **essential** and **important** to the quickest and most successful Christian growth in the life of a believer. **See:** 18 Discipleship Topics Overview, below.

Once a church's *majority* have become committed to Christ, the others will feel natural peer pressure to get on the disciple bandwagon themselves (or switch membership to a more carnal church). A church that has successfully implemented a program like this should **use and promote their success** to help encourage other pastors and churches do the same at their churches, as we are co-laborers in Christ—not competitors. By the way, pastors, maturer Christians generally get more involved than surfacy ones, including the area of giving.

Application

God *blessed me* with the encouragement that there are still **SOME** people who understand the *value* of and do relational discipling. In conversing with Ken Horton (former Pastor at McKinney Bible Church of Ft. Worth, now with **Ministry Catalysts**), his version involves discipling around 15 men a year, each *one on one*, between 6 and 8 months, answering all their questions, teaching them (usually businessmen) the basics and meeting in the early weekday mornings. He agrees it is not a church "program," and tells of one man who disciplined 6 men in a Methodist church, were now the Pastor is inquiring about the ministry, due to the zeal, understanding and involvement of the participants. It is not enough to have *experienced* this type of ministry, as I have, to have *done* it, as I have to 25 men, to *write* about it, as I have, or even to *exhort pastors* to do it, as I have—it must get to EVERY church, because it's the best way to grow up believers (Christ's example to the 11 as Exhibit A).

25. The 18 Most Important Discipleship Subjects

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP

Introduction

30 years of studying the Scriptures trying to correctly interpret their meaning has now yielded a rough-draft 5,000 page Commentary and Topication. This web site is the **HEART** of those materials, with many details and explanations left for later. However, over those years, I have felt consistently convicted that the following **18 subjects** are the **most impactful** and **efficient** for believers to know and apply in order to lead **successful** Christian lives.

Sadly, some think these topics are too heavy or deep for many believers, but from what I read in Scripture **these are the BASICS**. As such, we have no right to teach *lesser* things before **every** Christian has mastered the “milk” and learned to walk with Christ independently. I hope you will find gratification reading these materials, and start your own investigation of them beyond just what is presented here.

DISCIPLESHIP

1. Definitions

- a) “**Disciple:**” A learner or student of something or someone.
- b) **Bible Illustrations:** The Bible refers to believers as sons, bond-slaves and students, among other things. Each of these word pictures shed light on our role in learning from God (i.e., as our Father, Master and Teacher). (**Gal. 4:6, I Pet. 2:16, Mt. 10:24**)
- c) “**Discipleship:**” The life-long process of following Christ and increasing in moral and spiritual growth. “Making disciples” (**Mt. 28:18-20**) is a three-step process, but *HERE* we are not referring to evangelism or baptism—those steps are *assumed* to have already taken place (though that fact will be confirmed during an appropriate lesson).
- d) **Venue(s):** The Biblical evidence is that most ministry to Christians occurred at “church” (whether in a building, home, or other venues). Our challenge is to get new converts to join us wherever we can disciple them, because, in Acts, new believers gathered in part because Christianity was new, they were in the minority and persecuted, there were miracles, awe and excitement, and Jesus had just departed the earth. Our modern church practice does not have most of these “lures.”

2. Requirements

In order to be a disciple of Jesus Christ one must be totally committed to Him *without reservation*. Such devotion usually produces involvement in **ministry**, and certainly manifests itself in an increasingly **moral life**, by God’s power. To be ‘on the fence,’ half-hearted or carnally-minded about one’s Christian spirituality **DOES NOT** and cannot qualify as meeting the conditions for being either a disciple of Jesus Christ or filled with His Spirit. (**Lk. 9:23-26, ETC.**)

A wonderful para church organization is famous for teaching that the three critical personal requirements of a disciple's are to be "**F.A.T.**"—Faithful, Available and Teachable. (the Navigators, I believe).

3. **"Relational Discipleship" (i.e., "Pouring Your Life Into Others") defined and Described**

Although several means were employed to produce Christian disciples in the New Testament (Ex.: Church Elders/Pastors—I **Tim. 1:3-4**; Letters—**Rom-Rev.**; Messengers—I **Th. 3:5**; Prayer—**Eph. 3:14-17**; Sermons—**Ac. 5:32**; Other Disciplers—I **Cor. 4:15**; Commendation to God—**Ac. 20:32**; and even NO action—**Ac. 8:39**), "relational discipleship" appears to be the **MOST effective**, given Christ's model.

Relational Discipleship is the unique method of discipling which Christ used to train 11 apostles to eventually turn the world upside down for the Gospel (**Ac. 17:6**). It is marked by His spending time with them, teaching them truths more explicitly than what the crowds often received, and multiplying Himself and His ministry through pouring His own life and experience into those He loved so dearly. (**II Tim. 2:2, I Th. 2:7-8, etc.**)

Applied today, Relational Discipleship is the ministry of **leveraging relationships** to bring believers into an focused time of intense spiritual development, personally and lovingly administered (as described in "Elements," below).

4. **Goals**

a) **Short-Term**: Getting believers "on their own two spiritual feet." (**Gal. 4:19, Col. 2:6-7, II Pet. 1:19, I Pet. 2:1-3, I Jn. 2:12-14, Heb. 5:12-13**). A newborn doesn't feed himself, nor should an eight year old still be drinking from a bottle. (**I Cor. 3:1-3**) Growth is *expected* by God, over time. (**Lk. 13:6-9—three to four years**) Christ spent three years with the men who *changed* the world. (**Ac. 17:6**)

b) **Long-Term**: A life-time of continual sanctification, or moral growth in Christ. (**Mt. 28:18-20**)

c) **Bottom Line**: At a MINIMUM, discipleship should ensure that believers have established the habit of having a daily Quiet Time. Research shows that habits are formed after 30 days of *persistent practice*, and developing the *joy* of a daily Quiet Time should be no different. For an excellent and effective way to bring this about in the lives of *individuals*, please see how I was *pushed* to this lifestyle by a loving brother, at: "About 'Us'/Personal Testimony."

5. **Elements**

a) **Small Group**: Christ disciplined 12 men more deeply than all others. There is a sacred intimacy of *fellowship* and ability to be honest, open and *personal* with people in that size of group.

b) **Intimate/Personal (i.e., Customized and Individualized)**: Disciplers are not speaking "at" people, but "to" them, looking eye-to-eye and sharing their experiences of applying the word of God. Discipleses can see our heart, sincerity and zeal, and know we truly care about them and personally know them as human beings—not just people in a crowd or names on a church membership roster.

c) **Caring/Social**: Every discipler in a relational discipleship ministry should have at least one one-on-one **social event** with each disciplee, not only to get to know (and help) them, but

especially to make it apparent that disciplers are not **JUST** interested in them as *spiritual beings*.

d) Intense: Relational discipleship has a prioritized curriculum. It is not like memorizing the “begats” sections of the book of Numbers, inspired as they are. This is a **grace-based** spiritual “boot camp” of sorts, where we have a unique opportunity to jump start and turbo-boost men’s spiritual lives in ways the normal pace and time of church life **cannot**. Disciplers need to use this *precious time* wisely and strategically to achieve that goal.

e) Accountability: Politicians “throw money at problems;” Preachers often “throw sermons” at problems. No pastor can ensure that his church members are **APPLYING** what he is preaching (as led by the Holy Spirit) unless there is **FOLLOW-THROUGH!** One-on-one and lovingly, disciplers are able to *INQUIRE* and learn about laymen’s evangelism and Quiet Time habits.

Pastor, don’t leave sermon results to chance, or **hope** personal discipleship is getting done. You can’t ‘wash your hands’ of **leadership responsibility** by just having given them the word! Give them **YOURSELF**, your staff, deacons and lay leaders as personal disciplers. Show your congregation how important discipleship and evangelism are to God and yourself by ensuring that some discipler is *personally* responsible to “hand hold” and “spoon feed” disciples into a **successful** beginning to their spiritual growth.

We would no more **tell an infant** how to obtain and drink milk for himself as we can preach to believers and **never ensure** they get their needed nourishment! Show them **HOW!** **MANY** Christians are in this infant stage, no matter how long they have been Christians!

f) Short-Term: Christ spent 3 years with His men, and then they were ready for their mission (though they did not think so). There are **too many** Christians needing spiritual growth to make relational discipleship a **long-term course for a few**. The Bible itself indicates that a *reasonable time* having passed is *sufficient* for Christians to grow up and be able to “bottle feed” on their own. We may serve as their tutors, or spiritual parents for a time, but **you don’t breast feed five year olds!** (**Heb. 5:12-13, I Pet. 4:1-3**)

g) Impactful Subjects: I trust with exposure to the Bible you will see the wisdom of the selected 18 relational discipleship topics for producing the most effective and efficient **spurred** (vs. *stunted*) spiritual growth in believers. *Rest assured* I am *not* the only minister to have recognized their importance! **See:** 18 Discipleship Topics Overview, below

h) Leveraged Relationships: A church should NOT rely on offering a discipleship “program” only to *those interested*. Few will attend, and God wants **ALL** believers to be disciplined! Pastoral leadership should *ensure* that deacons and lay leaders engage the relational discipleship process and **leverage their existing relationships** until every person has been through the program and reached 12 others (or so), and ensured that those twelve have reached 12 others, until an entire mega church (as the case may be) has been personally, intimately and relationally disciplined. The first church was a mega church, and had **no problem** experiencing maturity and “body life,” and a *change of culture* is no excuse to miss out on this great ministry! (**Ac. 2, 4**)

i) Duplication: (i.e., “Multiplication Discipleship”): No discipleship ministry is fully on track or successful until those who **complete the program** continue training and teaching it to others (the process continuing indefinitely for many spiritual generations of “spiritual grandchildren” to come). You don’t explicitly “graduate” from this “program” or have any status before men—your success is demonstrated in increased moral growth (Quiet Time as the basis), habitual

evangelism for a lifetime and an “each one teach one” philosophy of ministry, *continuing* to pass on what you have learned to *others*.

j) **Faithfulness:** Participants are asked and expected to complete **every** session and faithfully do their ‘homework.’ Sessions missed can be made up by listening to tapes (if made) or reading class notes, but the topics should be important enough to not want to miss them.

6. Content

As previously touted, here is a list of what I believe to be the most important subjects all believers should KNOW *in practice*:

18 Discipleship Topics Overview

1. **Discipleship** (Theology, Overview, Expectations, Subjects)
2. **Gospel** (Contents, Tract, Key Verses, Three Tenses of Salvation, Baptism)
3. **Salvation Requirements** (10 “Additions to Faith, Faith Alone Verses and Lordship Salvation Critique, Bibliography, Gospel Misstatements)
4. **Eternal Security** (Assurance of Salvation, Key Opposing Verses, Reasons for Assurance)
5. **Quiet Time: Bible Study** (Why and How to Study the Bible)
6. **Quiet Time: Prayer** (How to Effectively Pray and Why)
7. **Faith-Walking** (Defined and Described, Claiming Promises, Mind-Renewal)
8. **Identity in Christ** (and Our Inheritance, Role of in Sanctification)
9. **Lordship Commitment** (Reasons to “Totally Sell Out”)
10. **God’s Will** (Spirit-Filled and Led Living, 4 Types of Men)
11. **Grace Living** (vs. Law/Legalism or License/Lawlessness, Freedom, Gray Areas/All Things Lawful)
12. **Trials, Temptation and Suffering** (and Other Challenges, Defined and Differentiated)
13. **Spiritual Warfare** (Weapons, Devil Schemes, Victory in Christ)
14. **Doctrine I** (God/Trinity, Christ, Holy Spirit, Bible, Salvation/Sanctification)
15. **Doctrine II** (Man, Sin, Devil/Angels/Demons, Church, Prophecy)
16. **Spiritual Gifts** (Theology and Identification of)
17. **Spiritual Gifts** (Used in Biblical Ministry, Body Life and the Ideal Church)
18. **Evangelism** (and Follow-Up)

OTHER: Various Proffered Key Topics ***Briefly*** Addressed:

Love, Spiritual Anatomy, Godly Relationships, Fear of God, Humility, Fasting?, Praise?, the Obedience of Faith, Worship and Fellowship, Biblical Giving, “Body Life.”

7. Homework

- a) Most importantly, ***daily*** have a Quiet Time.
- b) **Read Handouts** (Ex.: On Charismatic, Calvinism, Relational Evangelism and Lordship Salvation Errors, and any other Handouts developed).
- c) **Memorize** the identified **20 Scripture verses** during the length of the program.

8. Outcomes

a) Significant progress toward spiritual maturity (i.e., building up life-long spiritual momentum). (**I Pet. 2:1-3, II Pet. 3:18**)

b) “Multiplication Discipleship.” (i.e., participants growing into being able to train others after they have been trained themselves). (**II Tim. 2:1-2, etc.**)

9. Clarifications

a) RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP is **not necessarily** for church services (i.e., sermons) or Sunday School/Adult Bible Fellowship classes, *principally* because it is **intimate** fellowship and teaching and applying the word of God in **individuals’** lives (not something conducive for mass, corporate application). Also, because it is a uniquely *focused* and short-term event and supports interaction between members of **all** groups within the church (disciples preferably hand-selected by the discipler), Bible Fellowship does not seem to be the ideal venue either.

b) RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP does **not** condone cliquiness, even though deep **spiritual** bonds may begin between participants because of how personally they get to know each others’ spiritual (and moral) lives, struggles, accomplishments and prayer *needs*.

c) RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP is not a **denominational “program,”** or one which you graduate and get a certificate from (or any other official acknowledgement for that matter). Success is achieved if the “program” prompts a life-long habit of **evangelism** and **discipleship**—the program being merely the beginning of that that life-long process.

d) RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP is not an *optional* course for those who may be interested. Neither is it **mandatory** in order to be a church member. Gracious leveraging of relationships and use of leadership authority is what brings about involvement or so-called “compliance.”

e) RELATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP is NOT people sharing “too much information” or too personal of information, nor is it anything other than supportive of all other ministries and leaders of the church!

10. Disclaimers

a) As was stated before, no man is a disciple of any person—only of Jesus Christ. Disciplers merely help and assist in developing that growth process in disciples. Even these *materials* are not replacements for following Christ through EVERY verse in the Bible! (**Mt. 10:24-25; Ac. 20:27**)

b) Relational discipleship does not require the “spiritual parent” of a disciplee (i.e., the person who brought them to Christ) to be their discipler. Disciplers serve as “tutors,” coaches, trainers and spiritual mentors to whoever is under their charge. Of course, a “spiritual parent” would *do well* to disciple **all** of their converts!—which I hope number **MANY**. (**I Cor. 4:15, etc.**)

See Also:

Pv. 27:17, Mt. 10:37-39, Jn. 8:31-32, (Ac. 20:20), Col. 1:28-29, Eph. 3:14-17, I Tim. 1:5

THE GOSPEL

Definition

The word, “Gospel,” means “good news.” The Gospel is the **good news** that because of Christ’s *sacrificial death* on the cross as **payment** for man’s sins, everyone who trusts Him can immediately and eternally receive the forgiveness of all their sins, as a gift of God’s benevolent grace. That payment means we do not have to serve our own *deserved sentence*, in hell. (**Lk. 2:10, Ac. 13:32, Rom. 10:15, I Cor. 15:1-4, Eph. 1:6, etc.**)

Importance

The Gospel is no *old-fashioned* or *impotent* message, **nor is it like** any other religious message. All other religions condition entry into heaven upon good works by man. The Gospel is the **ONLY** message by which men can be saved, and this message we speak to lost people **IS** God’s power unto salvation. It contains words of *eternal life*, and speaks of our **only** way to God. The Gospel is clearly the most important message mankind has ever heard, or ever will. We have the privilege of taking it to otherwise hell-bound individuals! (**Jn. 14:6, Ac. 4:12, Rom. 1:15-16, I Cor. 1:17-18**)

Message

At a **minimum**, what do we tell lost people when we *evangelize*? We could trace the message back to Abraham, the Garden of Eden, and give *much more* detail, but what is the core Gospel message without which our message would not be “the Gospel?”

I propose that there are **three essential elements**, but a total of four to five which make it *understandable* and *actionable*. They are (the **essential ones** having the *asterisk*):

1. God’s Motive: GOD LOVES YOU.

It is wise to start a “*good news*” presentation with positive news! This element presents **God’s heart and motive** for offering Christ as the solution to man’s sin problem, and gives **hope** that our condition can be solved. (Pv. 16:25, Jer. 31:3, Jn. 3:16, Rom. 5:8, Eph. 2:4-5, Tit. 3:5, I Pet. 1:3, I Jn. 4:10)

2. *Problem: YOU ARE A SINNER.

All men have sinned, and even just **ONE** sin makes a person guilty of having committed ALL sins against God. *Not fair* you say? That standard simply shows how evil sin is (at least to God)! God does not balance our “good” and bad deeds on a scale.

His standard for heaven is **moral perfection**, and only Christ passed the test. Salvation is **NOT** by works, and all men’s so-called “good” deeds are filthy rags before God—external only, sin-wrought and tainted, and *non-meritorious*. If those sins are not forgiven, the individual **WILL** be punished—eternally—in **hell**.

If anyone *denies* they have ever sinned, ask them if they have ever lied, cheated or stolen. That question will usually silence their *over-blown opinion* of their morality. (Ecc. 7:20, Isa. 1:18, 64:6, 59:2, Rom. 3:10-12, 19-20, 6:23, Gal. 3:10, Eph. 2:8-9, I Tim. 15, Jas. 2:10, etc.)

3. Consequences: SIN LEADS TO DEATH.

We are not merely speaking of *physical death* here.

- a) In this life, there is an un-bridgeable **absence of FELLOWSHIP** between the lost person and God.
- b) There are *natural consequences* for their sins in this life.
- c) All men die, but that is *just the beginning* of a **HORRIBLE eternity** for lost people—ultimate punishment in the *Lake of Fire* (Hell).” There is **no** reincarnation, Purgatory or cessation of life—it just continues, only *worse*, “on the other side.”. (Rom. 2:16, 3:23-24, II Cor. 5:10, Heb. 9:27, 2:15, Rev. 20:14-15, etc.)

4. *Solution: CHRIST DIED FOR YOUR SINS.

The **GOOD NEWS** is that God has a **solution** to our sin problem. The *innocent* Christ *paid our debt* to God through His *sacrificial* death on the cross. Christ, figuratively speaking, went to spiritual jail to pay our death sentence!

That’s the best news you’ll ever hear and the core of the Gospel message—**Christ’s death, burial and resurrection** (i.e., what Christ has done for us). (Isa. 53:6, Rom. 4:6-8, I Pet. 2:24)

5. *Action: YOU NEED TO RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST BY FAITH.

Hearing about Jesus will not benefit you until you “*appropriate*” it (that is, **accept it by faith**). You need to ask Christ to save you and forgive all of your sins so you can be *eternally forgiven*, and have **Christ living in you**. **No Gospel presentation is complete without inviting people to respond!**

The sins you may commit *thereafter—hopefully ever decreasingly*—do not affect your relationship with God—only your **fellowship** with Him (like if a husband were to slap his wife—he’s *still married* but there’s a disruption in their getting along until it’s **remedied**). When a believer sins, he needs to **admit it**, ask **forgiveness**, and pray to be **re-filled with God’s Spirit** (I Jn. 1:9, Eph. 5:18). This is *not* to *encourage* or *minimize* sin but to explain what to do when a Christian has sinned.

See: Jn. 1:12, 3:16-18, 36, Ac. 16:31, Rom. 10:11, 13,; post-salvation ‘familial’ sins: Jn. 15:3, 13:10, Ac. 15:7, Col. 1:14, 2:13, Heb. 4:2, I Jn. 2:12, 1:9, etc.)

See Also: Lordship Salvation Errors

THE THREE TENSES OF SALVATION

Upon receiving Christ every Christian is **forever saved** (“**salvation**”). How they live out that salvation is commonly called “**sanctification**.” When we reach heaven, that phase is commonly called “**glorification**.” A famous illustration makes this *very* clear:

- 1st Tense—Justification, or Salvation: Saved from the **Penalty** of Sin (spirit)
- 2nd Tense –Sanctification: Saved from the **Power** of Sin (soul)
- 3rd Tense –Glorification: Saved from the **Presence** of Sin (body)

Interpreting Scripture shouldn’t be *confusing*, and is usually not *extremely* difficult if we keep some distinctions clear. The following chart can aid in your understanding of when the same term is being used for a different “tense” of salvation:

THREE TENSE TERMINOLOGY

TERM	Past	Present	Future
Adoption	Eph. 1:5	Gal. 4:(5)-6	Rom. 8:23
Justification	I Cor. 6:11	Jas. 2:21	Basis for Heaven
Redemption	Gal. 3:13-14	Tit. 2:14?	Rom. 8:23
Glorification	Heb. 10:10	II Th. 1:12	I Cor. 15:43
Sanctification	I Cor. 6:11	I Th. 4:3, Jn. 17:17	Separation in Heaven
Salvation	Eph. 2:8	Jas. 2:14, II Cor. 2:15?	Heb. 9:28
Forgiveness	Heb. 10:18?	I Jn. 1:9	Rom. 4:8?
Mercy	I Pet. 2:10	Heb. 4:6	Jude 1:21?
Grace	Eph. 2:8-9	Ac. 13:43, 20:32, Rom. 5:2	I Pet. 1:13?
Blood	I Pet. 1:2?, 18-19	I Jn. 1:7	Rom. 5:9

WATER BAPTISM

These discipleship materials assume the reader has been saved and baptized in water. For any who have *not*, the **Gospel** is first presented, and the subject of baptism is appropriate thereafter:

Water baptism never saved anyone. It is the *first act of obedience* for the Christian, and *symbolizes* our death, burial and resurrection with Christ at salvation. No other means but full immersion adequately portrays what God did for us, as we were *fully washed* of our sins by His forgiveness and cleansing.

The word “baptism” means to *immerse*, and when Christ *fully immersed* Himself in the experience of mankind, He had a “*baptism*” to undergo—**full and complete** death on the cross. Baptism is not a matter of *denominational preference* but our proper public demonstration—to witnesses and before God—of what God has done for us on the *inside*. The way to illustrate that experience is through immersion in water. (Mt. 3:6, 14-15, Ac. 8:35-39, I Pet. 3:21, etc.)

SALVATION REQUIREMENTS

When we speak of **the MOST important subject in life—THE GOSPEL**—what exactly is required of man in order to be *saved*? This question is *not academic*, for determining the correct answer affects what message and invitation we offer in *evangelism*. It can also *potentially* affect whether lost people **respond** to that message and the **legitimacy** of their responses. **Giving the wrong Gospel message** is about as *serious a sin* as one could *imagine*, as Paul noted in Galatians 1:8.

Several acts (or decisions) have been proposed by believers to answer this question. An example of how **all over the map** Christians are on the subject can be found by reading the “Statements and Misstatements of the Gospel” at the very bottom of this lesson. One thing we can *all agree* on is that **man has a sin problem** between himself and God, and **Jesus Christ is the answer** to that problem.

There are essentially **2 Gospels** circulating *within* the Church, which could **NEVER** be the same, be fully harmonized, or both be true. One of them *must be false*, as the chief advocates on both side agree [we will address them beginning with sub-point 8 (and in the lesson entitled “Lordship Salvation Errors”)]. This issue is “*controversial*” because it cuts to the heart of our salvation, our Gospel and our evangelism. Yet, it **needs** to be understood, confronted and addressed in the open (and **not just** by theologians and academics!) if we are to **evangelize accurately** and be **sanctified properly** (i.e., on the correct basis and by the correct means from the outset—Gal. 3:3).

We will start by addressing several “additions” often added to “sola fide” (faith alone). The first seven proffered conditions of salvation are significantly *easier to debunk* than the last three. Almost every one of the ten is a **very good deed for Christians to do**, and even **expected** in the Christian life. But our focus of inquiry is whether these specific acts are biblically required to obtain salvation. That is, **would I go to hell if I did not do these acts?** Viewed another way, if we omit them from our Gospel presentation when *evangelizing*, would we be guilty of preaching a false Gospel?

ADDITIONS TO FAITH

1. Water Baptism

Does a lost person have to receive water baptism in order to be saved? If he believes in Christ, but **has not yet been baptized**, is he saved? If he **never** gets baptized, will he go to hell? In *theological* terms, is water baptism “salvific?” (that is, does it save you?)

The main verse *touted* by those who believe the answer is “yes” is Ac. 2:38. Peter gives his hearers the first 2 steps of the Christian life—become a believer, then be water baptized. The phrase “for the forgiveness of your sins” refers to *step one*—repenting (defined in sub-point 8 as “a change of mind”). You get your sins forgiven and then are baptized **BECAUSE of**—*not in order to get*—that forgiveness. Baptism outwardly demonstration our internal change.

It’s like someone saying, “**Say ‘I do’ and go on your honeymoon** in order to be married.” No one believes the honeymoon makes you married though it naturally follows, and that point is lost on *no one*.

Ac. 22:16 may be asserted, but using it to assert water baptism is required for salvation *breaks down* when **the verse says** that sins are washed away by calling on Jesus' name—a synonym for *trusting Christ*—not by water baptism. Paul simply encourages them to be baptized—something they **need to do AFTER** calling on the Lord.

The clearest way to refute the “*baptismal regeneration*” contention is found in these passages:

I Cor. 1:17. Paul, perhaps the *greatest evangelist* of all time **won so many people to Christ, yet baptized so few**, and he explains *why*, here... **Christ sent him to preach** the Gospel—the message of salvation—**NOT to baptize** (i.e., he did not participate in something of *lesser importance* to evangelism, as it is not essential to *evangelism* or the *salvation* it produces). The few exceptions that he did baptize could be counted on one or two hands, but you could not find enough hands to count ‘his’ **converts**.

Jn. 4:1-2: Relatedly, **Jesus did not do the baptizing of saved persons—His disciples did.** **Would Jesus OMIT** something ESSENTIAL to men's salvation, given *all that He did* for our salvation on the cross?

I Pet. 3:21: Yes, “baptism saves you,” if you understand, as this verse clearly states, that **the saving baptism is our baptism with the Holy Spirit—our salvation**—in which our *consciences are cleansed* of their guilt from unforgiven sin, through a faith-based appeal to God. **The verse itself STATES that the baptism which saves is not the baptism which washes the body.**

Lk. 23:39-43: Jesus clearly promises the **thief on the cross** he would be with Him that day in Paradise, though that thief **never received any form of baptism**.

The **clarity** of these three passages compared to the anomalous interpretation offered by the other viewpoint in direct contradiction of the **great weight of biblical evidence** makes it clear to an honest Bible interpreter that baptism FOLLOWS salvation but does not secure it. It is our first act of obedience, but it does NOT save.

Verses on **Spiritual** (vs. Water) Baptism: ~Ac. 19:3-5, Rom. 6:3, Gal. 3:27, Eph. 4:5, Col. 2:12.

Other Key Challenge Verses: Ac. 22:16, ~Tit. 3:5, Heb. 10:22.

2. Verbal Public Confession

Does one have to publicly tell people of their conversion before they are saved? If they prayed to receive Jesus (i.e., trusted Christ) but were suddenly struck with a heart attack and died, where would they go—to heaven or hell?

The main verse proffered by those who believe the answer is “yes” is Romans 10:9-10. A *very similar grammatical pattern* happens as was found in Acts 2:38. The confession naturally follows, as is addressed in verse 9. However, when verse 10 details the process *more precisely* we see the *exact* breakdown, where **faith** leads to **justification**/salvation (“righteousness”), **confession following** as expected in **sanctification** (i.e., second-tense “salvation”). Furthermore, v. 11 only mentions believing, v. 12 talks of calling on Christ (a synonym for faith), v. 14 more specifically indicates that when you believe, you call on Him through prayer, v. 16 speaks of heeding the Gospel (i.e., believing the message), and v. 17 mentions faith alone. The clear conclusion is that **faith alone** saves, and confessing one's faith to others is an ongoing and needed act of *sanctification*.

If a person trusted Christ and *is confessing Him* to others, **WE** (as compared to God) believe they are saved, because their **internal** change is being **externally expressed** (as with *water baptism*). **Heart faith** got them saved, and **verbal confession** makes them more Christ-like—the expected outcome of a true salvation (whether testifying to conversion or actual evangelism).

Another verse often cited to claim that public confession is required for salvation is Mt. 10:32. This verse is addressed to believers, in a discipleship/*sanctification* context (vv. 24-25, 34-39), and teaches that if a Christian denies Jesus in this life (i.e., in sanctification), Christ will **deny his prayers, and him blessings**, as a result. And as we see in the confession of II Tim. 2:11-13, even if we deny Christ in this life, God remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself (i.e., “eternal security”). He has made a promise and commitment to Himself to *save to the uttermost* those who trust in Christ, and He will not go back on his word, even though we, like Peter three times before the cock crowed, may deny Him.

Public **confession is a great thing** to do, and faith naturally speaks. However **speech is the outgrowth** of faith, not its synonym. Believers are commanded and called to confess Christ, and **we should!** But doing so apart from trusting Christ will **never save anyone**. Tares, false brethren and “confessors” as opposed to possessors confess a salvation they have never experienced. We, on the other hand, confess what we believe, but one **must believe before** they have something to speak about. (II Cor. 4:13)

3. Good Works

Are there any *good deeds* a person *has to* perform before he is a Christian? Besides trusting/receiving Christ, must a person do any deeds in order for **God** to consider him *saved*?

The main verse espoused by those who believe the answer is “yes” is James 2:21-25. That book was written to Christians (1:1, 9, 16, 19, 2:2, 5, 21, 3:1,10, 4:11, 5:7, 9-10, 19)—**not** to tell lost people how to get saved! As we learned in the “Three Tenses of Salvation” section, the word “justified,” here, refers to middle-tense salvation (i.e., “sanctification;” vv. 21, 24-25).

The book of James’ **over-arching purpose** is to show believers how to be sanctified (i.e., how to *grow up* in the Lord). James uses the following **word pictures** to demonstrate that **purpose**: Perfection/maturity and completion, approved, life vs. death, saving the soul, achieving the righteousness of God, being doers of the word, useful faith, not stumbling, fulfilling the Law, living by the law of Christ and liberty, decreased fleshliness and worldliness, true and useful religion, godly (vs. worldly) wisdom, commitment, humility and repentance, being the friend of God, submission to God, turning a sinning brother around, various specific ethics injunctions, etc.

Although mere intellectual assent to a set of beliefs or propositions does not save anyone (vv. 19-20), those advocating that James 2 teaches works are required for one’s faith to be true should back off that assertion when they read that their view would teach that **giving food or money** to a needy Christian brother is required for salvation (vv. 14-17). And as we have said before, giving it to a “brother” means the giver is already a “brother,” or Christian (i.e., saved).

History also *confirms* this interpretation. **Abraham was saved 30 years or so earlier** than the event mentioned in vv. 21-24. He was matured by his later offering of Isaac *test*, but his salvation (evidenced as a *first* in that day, by **circumcision**) came **much EARLIER**. Having faith from God to do a certain thing, and not doing it is sin for a believer. However, if we obey the

faith God gives us we are thereby **matured** up into greater Christ-likeness, and pass that test. And, as my friend Tom Eckman has noted concerning v. 26, a dead and dormant body had to have at one time had life and the spirit within it, even though it does not presently.

The Bible teaches that salvation is NOT earned by works. **To require a lifetime of works in order to qualify for salvation IS salvation by works** and would cause Christianity to lose one of its most distinguishing features from all other religions—salvation as the *free gift* of God. Christians are expected and enabled to live *unto* good works all their lives, but that is because they **WERE** saved—not in order to get saved. (Rom. 3:20, 31-4:8, I Cor. 4:7, Gal. 2:16, Eph. 2:8-10, etc.)

4. Tongues

Does the Bible teach that *everyone* who gets saved **will speak in tongues** as proof of their salvation? Will you go to hell if you didn't speak in tongues upon conversion? *If* that were a salvation requirement, all Christians of all ages would have spoken in tongues, and those who didn't would go to *hell*.

The main verse advocated by those who believe that tongues are required for salvation is Mark 16:15-18. Their position is easily refuted by noting how many times in Acts (not to mention the Gospels) a person got saved and **did not start speaking in tongues**.

Mark 16 speaks to evidence some believers exhibited at the *initiation* of the Church to corroborate their experience to people who might *doubt* it yet have no New Testament with which to confirm or deny the claims. **Manifestations** of salvation (in any form) can never be *substituted* or *confused* with **requirements** for receiving it. And if you read all the book of Acts, it is only the minority of evangelism encounters which manifested this gift—NOT the norm!

It's also interesting that those who cling to this verse for support **never** seem to *fully follow* it in **resurrecting people** from the dead, and few of them ever **drink poison** or **handle snakes**. Also, the verse says these are **signs** which **ACCOMPANY** those who HAVE believed. Even if they were to have been normative experiences, faith (and hence, salvation) **precedes** these signs of faith' *existence*.

The **clearest of all refutations** is found in I Cor. 12:28-31, where the Greek (i.e., original language) makes it clear that the answer to, “all do not speak in tongues, do they?” is **emphatically “No!”**

5. Baptism of the Spirit (as a “**Second Blessing**”)

Does the Bible teach that a person must experience a “second blessing” of receiving the Holy Spirit and His **power AFTER** salvation? Is the initial experience of being indwelt with the Spirit all that's required to be a Christian, or is a *second work* of grace necessary, sometimes with *miraculous* manifestations?

Those who espouse the “*second blessing*” theory usually **confuse** indwelling with infilling, and **misuse the historical examples** of the only recorded times when anyone received the Spirit post-conversion.

The Bible records **four distinct events** where the Spirit fell upon new believers **AFTER** they had believed in Christ. Theologians generally agree God was telling mankind that salvation

is for every person, because the Spirit fell in this *unique way* on the **four major groups of people in that day**—full-Jews (Ac. 2:1-13), half-Jews (Samaritans—Ac. 8:14-17), fully-informed Gentiles (Ac. 10:1-46) and half-informed Gentiles (Ac. 19:6-7). [to paraphrase the *category types* from a sermon by the great Rev. John Bisagno of First Baptist Church, Houston, Texas]

It is very clear from the doctrinal sections of the New Testament—the *Epistles*—that **the Spirit’s reception is contemporaneous with receiving Christ**. When you receive Jesus you receive His Spirit. Also, it is always best to interpret experience in light of CLEAR doctrinal teaching, and to not make blanket conclusions from isolated, non-normal Bible events.

There certainly is a blessed and continual experience of the Spirit’s **power** in believers’ lives, typically called being “**filled with the Spirit!**” But a *second blessing* of **power after having trusted Christ**, though *special*, is **NOT salvific**, nor to be confused with the Spirit’s eternally sealing and forever *immersing* or **baptizing** us in one body at salvation. (I Cor. 12:13, Eph. 4:5, ~Gal. 3:26-27, I Pet. 3:21, etc.) The following verses *make it clear* that the Holy Spirit is received at salvation. (Rom. 5:5-6, 8:9, 16, I Cor. 12:13, 2:12, II Cor. 1:21-22, Gal. 3:1-3, 26-27, Eph. 1:13, 4:30, II Tim. 1:14, I Jn. 5:11-13, etc.)

6. Endurance

Does a person have to live a lifetime of holiness before we can be sure they were saved OR *can you be sure* of your salvation **the moment you receive Jesus**? Do other Christians have the **right** to doubt your conversion (or at least not encourage you to have assurance of salvation) until you are on your *deathbed*?

If so, how bad does one have to get before these doubts are appropriate? What about *occasional* lapses? Backsliding? **Serious sins**? Habitual serious sin? If ‘serious and habitual’ is your STANDARD, what about the many examples of Christians in the New Testament behaving quite morally reprehensibly where their salvation is not questioned? **See:** ADDITIONS/REPENTANCE/On Saviorhood Salvation

The primary passages used to claim endurance (i.e., life-long perseverance in good works) is required for salvation come from prophecy contexts. Enduring to the end is natural for and expected of a believer, but **not guaranteed**. God having saved us **IS** guaranteed, but our persevering in sanctification takes faithful effort. (Mt. 10:22, 24:13, I Cor. 6:9-11; 15:10, Phil. 2:2, 3:3-17, I Tim. 4:7, II Pet. 1:5⁺, II Cor. 6:1, I Th. 4:1, 10, Tit. 3:14, etc.)

It is not that believers are not expected to endure to the end, but **their enduring is not what saves them**—Christ saves them upon believing faith. Their salvation status before God WILL persevere to the end of life, and to eternity. However, the Bible *repeatedly* exhorts us to **make every effort** to be able to say, as did Paul, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (II Tim. 4:7-8).

If a lifetime of good deeds is required to be saved, salvation is the **result of good works**, and not by grace through faith.

7. Other (Various and Sundry Traditions)

I hope my former challenges to asserted “additions to faith” will make it obvious that acts in this “Other” category are also **not required** for salvation. Most if not all of these are **never**

stated as required, but lost and newly-saved people *could get the impression* they were, as they are often *insisted upon* in *public* evangelistic presentations.

Examples:

- Walk the aisle and come forward to *speak with a preacher*.
- Publicly confess specific sins you have committed.
- Raise your hand (i.e., to indicate you have *prayed to receive Christ*).
- Close your eyes and bow your head, before saying “*the sinner’s prayer*” **word for-word** as the preacher states it.*
- Make restitution with people you have offended.
- Get your life “straightened out.”
- Seek the Lord (a great thing to do; tell them **how** to actually **FIND** Him by telling them the Gospel, and invite them to respond!).
- Attend our church before you can hear the Gospel (never stated, but the clear though implied “message” of much of what is nowadays called “evangelism”). **See:** Relationship Evangelism Errors
- Get to know a Christian *decently well* before you can **hear** the Gospel. Another clear but implied message. Again, **See:** Relationship Evangelism Errors
- Study world religions (so you can supposedly make a more informed and ‘objective’ decision).
- Take a course or hear a Bible study on the Book of John before you are “**prepared**” to hear the Gospel. **God prepares hearts**, and we should pray for that, but don’t withhold the Bread of Life to a spiritually **starving person**, waiting until he knows more than is necessary... the contents of the Gospel, *powerfully presented* in **love**.
- Tell God you’re sorry you’ve sinned against Him and **promise you won’t do it again**. You can’t fulfill that promise *perfectly*, so you’d be lying, and God does not require you to sin in order to be saved. He never asked you to **feel** anything, but to **trust** His Son for *eternal life*.*
- Etc.: Feel free to add to this list as you, **sadly**, hear other *misrepresentations* of the Gospel.

* The only issues listed above I wish to address more specifically are the “**sinner’s prayer**” and “**tell God you’re sorry**” concepts. These two do get close to being biblical, if properly interpreted and defined.

- a) **On the “Sinner’s Prayer.”** There is no prescribed prayer one recites in order to get saved. However, when a sinner sincerely from his heart wants and is asking for salvation to be given him, **this is done, by faith, through prayer**. Whatever the words—if based on an accurate Gospel presentation and proper understanding—the content of that prayer is commonly called the “the sinner’s prayer” and that praying for salvation IS a *legitimate activity* to engage in.

Does one have to pray to God in order to be saved? Some theologians teach that you can have faith in God and not pray or ask for His salvation. Although to receive

salvation, **faith alone** is required, and *perhaps* one could believe without *outwardly expressing* it to others, if one **never** expresses their desire to be saved and forgiven, to God, and therefore **never trusts** Him to answer that prayer, it's *hard to believe* he has truly exercised saving faith in God for salvation.

- b) **On Feeling Sorry for Your Sins.** Feeling sorrow about your being a sinner is not a bad **emotion** to experience! We all need *more* of it. If that feeling is the work of God's Holy Spirit convicting your heart through the word of God that you are a sinner and need salvation, that's a legitimate experience. However, salvation is not *apologizing* for your sins. It IS acknowledging that we have done **morally wrong**—that we are **sinner**s, realizing that Christ died to pay our **deserved punishment** and asking God to forgive and completely and eternally save us from that condition and its consequences. Emotions can be involved.

On the other hand, I maintain that anyone who has the *conscious* heart attitude, “I'll just receive Christ and stay committed to being sinful,” is **NOT under the conviction of God,** and therefore is, at present, not in an *savable condition.* That attitude depicts a person with whom God has yet to fully work in their heart and life to **prepare them** to receive salvation. (Ex.: Jn. 1:12-13's “will of the flesh” **un**-spiritual decisions)

8. **Repentance/Turn,**

9. **Surrender/Commitment,**

10. **Faith in Christ Alone**

These last three purported *conditions for salvation*—repentance, surrender and faith in Christ will introduce a subject too lengthy to address here in full, concerning the two major Gospels circulating within the *Church* (and *world*), often referred to as “**Lordship Salvation**” and **Saviorhood Salvation.**” [See a fuller discussion in the Appendix]

Both groups agree that the Church is far too uncommitted to Christ, lost people have a sin problem only **Christ** can solve, and only one of these views can be biblical; therefore the other must be a **false Gospel** and *not of God.* The danger of anyone **missing heaven** for having heard the *wrong requirements* for salvation is a *risk* no believer should ever place on a lost person (no matter how remote that possibility may be)! (Gal. 1:8)

The **major bone of contention** is whether lost people must undertake 3 steps (i.e., repent, surrender and believe) or only **one** (**FAITH IN CHRIST**) in order to be saved. *What do we tell lost people* when we *EVANGELIZE*, and is commitment to being a **life-long disciple** of Jesus Christ a **requirement** for receiving His **free gift**?

This question goes to the nature of salvation, whether, when and how one can be sure of their salvation and whether Christians are **guaranteed to live a holy life** till they die. These are *not* insignificant issues, and many books have been written to address the *specifics* of this controversy (some of which are listed in the **Bibliography**, below).

It is **NOT sufficient** for pastors to remain ignorant of this controversy, to not address it (or at least to not be *solid* in their own beliefs on the subject), or to use the **cover** of seeming to be a “**peace-maker**” to gloss over, merge or blur distinctions by offering evangelistic invitations with **smatterings of both** views alternated at various times!

For purposes of this web site, the author's position will be CLEARLY STATED, but the extensive documentation, research and reasonings behind the his position (over 200 pages in

length) *will not appear* here, in the interest of brevity (at least until a *later date*, if **extensive DETAIL** would be appropriate to this web site's format).

I am most certainly a SAVIORHOOD SALVATION advocate! I lost my first career ministry position over this subject in 1986, and began a Ph.D. dissertation study on the subject thereafter (though only the research was completed). I **know** how serious the debate is, and how passionate people are on both sides! But since it pertains to the nature of **God's salvation**, issues of **Heaven and Hell**, and what we are to **say** in **evangelism**, it *should be* no other way.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

I was saved at age 8, and it was *only* when I reached age 18 that—due to the *discipleship* efforts of a godly friend—I became *totally committed* to Christ. When God called me to salvation, it was **unmistakable**, and it came through a *proper* Gospel presentation at church. Although I have experienced **so many great things** since being totally committed, I will **never** be more *thankful* to God than I am for my initial salvation as a child!

That being said, my Saviorhood position has **NOTHING to do with** my *experiences*. Good theology is **never** derived from experience—experience merely corroborates good theology by activating that theology in one's life.

ON SAVIORHOOD SALVATION

I believe a person **receives eternal life** on the basis of **trusting God through Jesus Christ** to eternally save him. The moment one prays in faith, asking to be *forgiven of all their sins* (i.e., to accept or receive God's gift of salvation), he is **forever** saved. **God** and His **grace** are the source, and **faith** is the instrument.

How did I come to this position? Did I pull it out of *thin air*? No, I hold the Saviorhood Salvation position for the following **Bible-based** reasons:

- 1. The Quantity and Clarity of "Faith Alone" Verses.** There are far too many verses stating faith as the only requirement (**over 220 total**). To say that faith, repentance and surrender are *always* expressed as being the same synonymous action is to be dishonest with the whole of what Scripture teaches. **See:** Salvation By Faith Verses, far below (and in the Appendix).
- 2. The Bible Calls CHRISTIANS to Total Commitment to Jesus Christ.** Note how many times Epistles are addressed to identified believers/saints—**Christians**—educating them on salvation and theology, **THEN** calling them to total commitment!: ~Mt. 5:18, Rom. Chs. 6-7, 12:1-2, 13:12-14, I Cor. 15:33-34, II Cor. 6:16-7:1, Gal. 4:19, 5:1, 13-16, 24, 6:1, 9, Eph. 1:13, 19, 3:12, 17, 19, 4:1-3, 11-17, 22-23, 5:1, 5-10, 15-17, Phil. 1:6, 9, 24, 27-30, 2:1-4, 12, 15, 3:17, 4:1, 5, 9, Col. 1:9-11, 18, 23, 2:2, 5-6, 20, 3:1-10, 4:12, (17), I Th. 3:1-8, (4:1, 10, commitment can be *enhanced*), II Th. 2:15-17, I Tim. 6:12, 19, II Tim. (1:13), 2:19, Tit. 3:8, 14, Heb. 12:3-11, Jas. 4:1-10, I Pet. 1:22, 2:1-3, 3:15, 4:1-5, II Pet. 1:2-11, 3:14, much of I Jn., Jude 1:1-4, Rev. 3:2, etc.
- 3. CHRISTIANS Behaving Quite Morally Reprehensibly, Yet Their Salvation Is Not Questioned.** (Pv. 14:14), Mt. 24:12, Lk. 18:7-8, Ac. 5:3-5, 8:13, 18-24, Rom. 7:15-25, I Cor. 3:1-3, 12-15, 5:1-5 (sin worse than lost people and physical death as judgment on a Christian), 11:28-32, II Cor. 12:21, Col. 3:7-9, I Tim. 1:18-20 (a spiritual train wreck), 4:16, II Tim. 4:1-5, 9-10 (Paul forsaken for a world-loving Christian), Heb. 5:11-14, Jas. 3:8-10, 4:1-8, 5:19-20, I Pet. 4:15 (**possible**, or

prohibition wouldn't make *sense*), II Pet. 2:17-19, I Jn. 5:16-17, Rev. 3:15-16, etc.

4. **Repentance Verses Often Mis-Defined.** When you insert the typical (Ex.: Baptist) definition of “repent” in *EVERY* instance of that word’s derivative, the definition does not 100% of the time make sense, because “repentance” is essentially a “change of mind.” THAT definition, taken from the *original languages*, **does work 100% of the time.** A quick and **OBVIOUS EXAMPLE... GOD repented 37 out of 47 times** that word is used and translated “repent” in the Old Testament. **Has God ever sinned**, so as to need “repentance” the way so MANY define that term (i.e., a U-turn decision to renounce and forsake a sinful life)? Of course not.
5. **In the Bible, Salvation is Presented as a “Free Gift” (i.e., not conditional—except for faith, which is required—and NEVER by works).** (Jn. 4:10, Ac. 2:38, 8:20, 10:45, 11:17, Rom. 3:4, 5:15-17, 6:23, Gal. 2:16, Eph. 2:8-10, 4:7, 6:23, Heb. 6:4). Even that one faith response and condition is not a **work** which merits salvation. (Rom. 3:27)
6. **Salvation Occurs at a MOMENT in Time But LASTS FOR ETERNITY and Affects You Forever.** Want proof? Try the *thief on the cross* and the *Ethiopian Eunuch*, for starters! (Lk. 23:40-43, Ac. 8:35-39)
7. **The Bible Distinguishing “Justification” from “Sanctification” (though they are organically tied).** (I Cor. 1:6-7, ~II Th. 1:2-8, Tit. 2:11-13, I Pet. 1:3-9, 13-16, ETC.) **See:** GOSPEL/The Three Tenses of Salvation (and related chart)
8. **Assurance of Salvation is Promised the Moment One Trusts Christ, by the Holy Spirit (vs. AFTER a life-time of good works).** Salvation is **not** a process of life-long works, though **sanctification is**. Sanctificational good works may *buoy* your faith that you were saved, but they don’t change the **fact** that you were saved. Assurance of salvation is provided by God’s Spirit based on His word, and **God does not lie!** (Rom. 8:1-17, Tit. 1:2) **See Also:** ASSURANCE, and Salvation By Faith Verses, below, especially Jn. 3:16, 18, 36, 5:24, 6:40, 47, 11:25-26, 20:31, Eph. 1:13, I Jn. 5:10-13, etc.
9. **Christ Calling the APOSTLES to Discipleship Sometimes LATE in Their Spiritual Walk.** (Jn. 2:1 vs. Jn. 8:31, 12:24-25, 13:35, 15:8, Lk. 9:23-24, 57-62, 14:26-31, etc.)
10. **“Disciples” Withdrawing from Christ (and their “losing salvation” or doubts about their ever having been “disciples” is never raised).** (Jn. 6:66-68)
11. **The Role of Rewards and Works in the “Christian Life.”** Christians are exhorted to **do good works**, and part of their “*payoff*” is rewards. Because **God decided** this concept, it is **NOT sinful selfishness** to desire heavenly rewards, and it is *more so stoic arrogance* to think you would do good (and evangelize) **ONLY** because you’re such a ‘good’ person (i.e., obedience from *obligation* alone). The Bible gives **thousands** of promises and godly incentives to obey God, and we’d have to ignore them (or tear them out of our Bibles) if that is the case. (Heb. 11:6, ETC) **See:** “Why Be Totally Committed to Jesus Christ?”
12. **Biblical Discipleship is a Life-Long Process.** Salvation (i.e., “justification”) does **NOT** take a lifetime for one to be certain it is **possessed**. (Mt. 28:18-20, Jn. 8:31, 13:35, 15:8, Mk. 1:17, etc.)

ALSO...

- The Bible shows a **RANGE of responses** *immediately* upon conversion, both good and bad. (Ac. 16:15, 31-34 vs. Ac. 8:13-24, etc.)
- **Faith** is the one “*step*” that is **not a work** at all. Faith is **letting God do ALL** the saving, and even your willingness to be saved is due to **His work** in your heart (though not *forced* upon you). (Rom. 3:27, I Cor. 4:7)
- “Repentance” can be a change of mind about a variety of things, including sin, but it is *necessary* in order to trust Christ—one must have a change of mind **so as to put their faith** in Jesus (i.e., a change of mind from whatever mind-set they held **prior to** believing). **See:** Bibliography (especially Coccoris and Hodges books)
- There is a difference between an **experiential-** and **positional disciple**. Some may phrase this the difference between a “believer” and a “disciple,” but the following verse tends to *negate* that **terminology distinction**—though not the **concept distinction**, unless Timothy’s mother was *carnal*: (Ac. 16:1)
- When you review the “10 Commandments of ‘FREE’ Eternal Salvation,” **requirements** start *stacking up!* Have you ever heard any evangelist **present them all** in one evangelistic invitation? For that matter, do you know anyone who has **met all** these requirements at salvation? *Are there no Christians on the earth*, if Lordship Salvation is consistent with its teaching (which applies **discipleship commands to salvation requirements**)?
- A difference can be made between **physical** and **spiritual followers** of Christ. Not all in the *throngs* of people who followed Jesus were believers, and **Christ called the apostles to full-time Christian service** the first contact He had with them. Is every believer called to full-time ministry because believers are to live committed to and following Christ? (Mt. 4:25, 8:1, 10, 19:2, 20:29, 34, etc.)
- Though the Corinthian challengers to Paul’s apostleship were instructed to ‘**test themselves** to see if they were in the faith,’ **all true believers** can have the joy and peace (i.e., “assurance”) that God saved them. No believer needs to *suffer* other’s **attacks** on their spiritual growth by instructing that they can never be sure till they die. A **stable sanctification** is founded upon a **sure and solid salvation**. (II Cor. 13:5-6, Rom. 5:1, Phil. 1:25, etc.)
- A **child-like faith** is what is *required* for salvation, and any **normal kid** can discern there is **no “free gift”** element to the leading Lordship Salvation proponent’s analogizing salvation to **joining the army...** free to join but a very costly commitment. **Salvation IS free**, and even the costliness of discipleship is **far outweighed** by its *benefits*, if we “understand the grace of God in truth.” (Mk. 10:14-15, Col. 1:3-6, II Pet. 3:18, Rom. 5:1-2, ETC.)
- **The “ISSUE”** addressed by salvation is **FORGIVENESS of sins**. If you could live the remainder of your life perfectly, you would still not enter heaven without the forgiveness of sins Christ offers. Christ **paid the penalty** for sins, and once He is received, we have the **power** to live **victoriously**. (I Cor. 15:3-4, Eph. 1:17, Col. 1:14, etc.)

Disclaimers

- **License.** I am NOT teaching that Christians should tell lost people to keep living sinfully and just ‘throw in’ Christ *to boot*. A lost person who is under the

conviction of God knows he is a sinner, that sin is deadly (eternally, and otherwise) and **throws himself** on the grace of God for **forgiveness**. (i.e., “throws” used as a synonym for *faith*). (Heb. 10:26, I Cor. 15:34, I Pet. 4:3, etc.)

- **Actual ‘Lordship Salvations.’** Lordship commitment to Christ **can occur at the same time as salvation** (Paul, for example). However, even Paul **credited *faith*** as the instrument of his salvation. (Ac. 26:11-19, II Tim. 1:12)
- **Distinctions.** God wants all Christians **committed** to Him, and He wants **all men saved**, and **committed** to Him. **HOW** that occurs, in my Saviorhood viewpoint, is to first **be saved**. Discipleship (in its various forms, **See:** Relational Discipleship Defined and Described) **follows *after*** water baptism, which follows conversion. (I Tim. 2:4, Mt. 28:18-20, etc.)
- **Tares.** There is no doubt that people can **profess** to be *Christians* and not **possess Christ**. “*Tares*” do exist and **lost people can lie** about having been saved. (Mt. 13:25-40, II Cor. 11:13, ~Tit. 1:16)

“Saviorhood” is NOT (as Alleged)...

---**A 2-STEP SALVATION “PROCESS** any more than receiving a gift and using that gift can be seen as two steps to **receiving that gift**.

---“**SAND-BAGGING” THE LOST** as to the **real COST** they have to pay. Even sanctification is **by grace** through **faith**, and though full commitment is required, the **joys** and **blessings** truly make it a **positive life-long experience** we would *never* consider “bad news” or try to hide from *anyone*. It’s just not the message of “initial salvation.” (i.e., justification).

---“**CHEAP GRACE,**” because the gift of grace was **so COSTLY TO OUR SAVIOR!** Also, any *attitude* either presenting the Gospel as **cheap** and worthless, or treating it’s reception as such, is merely evidence the evangelist or lost person is **NOT under the convicting power** and *hand of God!* (I Th. 2:13)

---“**EASY BELIEVISM,**” as **salvation is impossible** for man (Lk. 18:18-30), takes God’s miraculous intervention (through the *Gospel*), and, on a human level, it is not “easy” for someone to trust in a Person who lived 2,000+ years ago, and to believe He lived perfectly, is **alive today**, and will come live inside them forever if they will simply ask for that gift (in faith, based on a 2,000⁺ year old **holy Book**)! (Jn. 1:12-13, 15:16, I Cor. 5:10, etc.)

---“**ETERNAL LIFE INSURANCE.**” To be sure, **eternity is secured**, but no Saviorhooder I know ever encourages or promotes or condones believers *living in sin* once they are saved. **Because we are citizens** of heaven, we are to **live like it**.

---“**ANTINOMIAN” OR “GRACE ABUSE.”** **See:** immediately-preceding sub-point.

---**A GOSPEL CONTRARY TO CHRIST’S GOSPEL.** The Epistles do not contradict the Gospels, and if the more theological portions of the New Testament explain salvation as distinct from (though *organically tied* to) sanctification, our understanding and interpretation of history and experience needs to *comport* with these teachings.

---**Momentary BELIEF, INTELLECTUAL ASSENT OR A MERE EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE.**

We are **personally, sincerely** and “really and truly” (in spiritual actuality) **receiving God the Son** into our hearts. Ultimately, the only difference between a lost and saved person is Christ within—the hope of glory. (Col. 1:27)

--**TEACHING THAT CHRIST IS SAVIOR BUT IS NOT LORD.** He is **Lord (God) of all** (i.e., deity and divinity). He just may not be **personally lording over** the life of all believers until they *submit* and *relate to* Him in that position.

--**A THEOLOGY WHICH ENCOURAGES OR TEACHES CHRISTIANS TO LIVE CARNALLY.** If you haven't gotten that sense from reading this web site, you must have just started reading it at this *current sentence*! We simply believe that **salvation** is a free gift, accepted by faith, and **discipleship** is a call to all believers, facilitated by growth and exposure to the word of God, and exhorted and encouraged by maturer Christians **discipling** less mature believers, the way a natural parent would feed a baby.

CONCLUSION

In *summary*, trying to solve the prevalent **carnality problem** in the Church (especially in America) with a **false solution** will *never work*! The solution to this problem is to **disciple believers**—something this web site has provided instruction for and which pastors and leaders rarely do any more in the fashion proposed by this web site and based on Christ's model.

Lordship Salvation may keep some people out of heaven. If followed in a *logically consistent* manner, it starts believers' sanctification on a works basis. The thinking goes like this: works won't save, but you must **keep them up** or you never were saved (or lost your salvation somewhere along the way, if Arminian). Both legalism and license lead to increased sinfulness—though from *opposite* directions and intentions—and only the **liberty** brought about **in Christ**, on the basis of faith can truly **free** a person to live as God would have them live.

SOME THINGS TO PONDER...

- Philosophically, the **greatest gift** any human could ever give a “god” would be to give that god “their life,” or live totally committed to that deity. Salvation is not a **gift exchange**, and all you can offer God is **sin**. (Isa. 64:6, Rom. 3:9-12)
- By analogy, if a wealthy person were to offer you a **Maseratti** automobile as a Christmas gift, but **made you promise** you'd read the owner's manual, wash it every 2 weeks, change the oil every 3,000 miles, do regular tune-ups and maintenance, and **be sure you drove and used it as your habit of life**, can *anyone in their right mind* call that a “free” gift (as opposed to a conditional one)? It is precisely because **salvation is a miracle** and a **gift**, and something we cannot qualify for, earn, or even trade our own life for that we live the remainder of our lives unto God, out of gratitude for ‘**so great a salvation!**’
- Gandhi—as “good” a man as he was—certainly made a decision to not live sinfully and to live ethically, and you see where those two decisions (**apart from faith in Christ**) got him! Sure his ethics varied some from Christian ethics, but even a commitment to obey ALL God's laws and to never break a one will never save you.
- Is the Lordship Salvation Gospel “good news?” (i.e., you can be saved if you'll only commit to doing things even people under the law could not do?). Or, will you

alter these commands to say God only wants you willing to do them, but doesn't expect you to *actually* do them, in which case He commands us to **lie** by making promises we cannot keep?

- **Apart from faith in Christ**, what is the difference between the Christian Gospel presented by *Lordship Salvationists* and the message of **how to get to heaven EVERY OTHER RELIGION** espouses?

A SELECT LORDSHIP VS. SAVIORHOOD BIBLIOGRAPHY

Saviorhood Salvation

Absolutely Free, by Zane C. Hodges (Redencion Viva: Dallas TX), 1989

Grace in Eclipse: A Study On Eternal Rewards, by Zane C. Hodges (Redencion Viva: Dallas, TX), 1985

Lordship Salvation: Is It Biblical?, by G. Michael Coccoris, (Redencion Viva: Dallas, TX), 1983

Balancing the Christian Life, by Charles C. Ryrie (Moody Press: Chicago, IL), 1969

Evangelism: A Biblical Approach, by G. Michael Coccoris (Moody Press: Chicago, IL), 1984

The Gospel Under Siege, by Zane C. Hodges (Redencion Viva: Dallas, TX), 1981

Sin, Savior and Salvation, by Robert Lightner, (Thomas Nelson: Nashville, TN), 1991

So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe In Jesus Christ, by Charles C. Ryrie (Victor Books: U.S.A.), 1989

Free and Clear, by R. Larry Moyer (Kregel Publications: Grand Rapids, MI), 1997

Lordship Salvation: A Biblical Evaluation and Response, Charles C. Bing (Dallas Theological Seminary Dissertation), 1991

Systematic Theology, Vol. 3, by Lewis Sperry Chafer (Vail-Ballou Press: Binghampton, N.Y.), 1978

Walvoord: A Tribute, by Donald K. Campbell (Moody Press: Chicago, IL), 1982

Lordship Salvation

The Gospel According to Jesus, by John MacArthur (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI), 1994

Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles, by John MacArthur (W Publishing Group: Nashville, TN*), 1993

A Layman's Guide to the Lordship Controversy, by Richard P. Belcher (Richbarry Press: Columbia, S.C.), 1990

Lordship Salvation: The Only Kind There Is!, Curtis I. Crenshaw (Footstool Publications: Memphis, TN), 1994

Lordship Controversy (Part 1 and 2), Darryl Bock, (Dallas Theological Seminary Library Cassette), 1993*)

* = date or city/state uncertain at this time.

SELECT SALVATION BY FAITH VERSES

He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that **all might believe** through him. (Jn. 1:7)

But as many as **received** Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who **believe in His name**, (Jn. 1:12)

This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His **disciples believed in Him**. (Jn. 2:11)

Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, **many believed in His name**, beholding His signs which He was doing. (Jn. 2:23)

that **whoever believes** may in Him **have eternal life**. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes** in Him should not perish, but **have eternal life**. (Jn. 3:15-16)

"**He who believes in Him** is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because **he has not believed in the name** of the only begotten Son of God. (Jn. 3:18)

"**He who believes** in the Son **has eternal life**; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (Jn. 3:36)

And from that city **many of the Samaritans believed** in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I have done." (Jn. 4:39)

And **many more believed** because of His word; and they were saying to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that **we believe**, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world." (Jn. 4:41-42)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and **believes Him who sent Me**, **has eternal life**, and does not come into judgment, but **has passed** out of death into life. (Jn. 5:24)

"How can you **believe**, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have **set your hope**. For if you believed Moses, you would **believe Me**; for he wrote of Me. But if you **do not believe** his writings, how will you **believe My words**?" (Jn. 5:44-47)

Jesus answered and said to them, "**This is the work of God, that you believe in Him** whom He has sent." They said therefore to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and **believe You**? What work do You perform? (Jn. 6:29-30)

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and **he who believes in Me** shall never thirst. But I said to you, that you have seen Me, and **yet do not believe**. (Jn. 6:35-36)

"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and **believes in Him**, **may have eternal life**; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." (Jn. 6:40)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, **he who believes has eternal life**. (Jn. 6:47)

"But there are some of you who **do not believe**." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who **did not believe**, and who it was that would betray Him. (Jn. 6:64)

"And **we have believed** and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." (Jn. 6:69)

For not even His brothers were **believing in Him**. (Jn. 7:5)

But many of the multitude **believed in Him**; and they were saying, "When the Christ shall come, He will **not perform more signs** than those which this man has, will He?" (Jn. 7:31)

But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom **those who believed in Him** were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (Jn. 7:39)

"No one of the rulers or Pharisees **has believed in Him**, has he? (Jn. 7:48)

"I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for **unless you believe** that I am He, you shall **die in your sins**." (Jn. 8:24)

As He spoke these things, **many came to believe in Him**. Jesus therefore was saying to those **Jews who had believed Him**, "If you **abide** in My word, then you are truly **disciples** of Mine; (Jn. 8:30-31)

"But because I speak the truth, **you do not believe Me**. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? **If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me?** (Jn. 8:45-46)

Jesus heard that they had put him out; and finding him, He said, "**Do you believe in** the Son of Man?" (Jn. 9:35)

Jesus said to him, "You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you. And he said, "**Lord, I believe**." And he **worshiped** Him. (Jn. 9:37-38)

Jesus answered them, "I told you, and **you do not believe**; the works that I do in My Father's name, these **bear witness** of Me. But **you do not believe**, because you are not of My **sheep**. (Jn. 10:25-26)

"**If I do not** do the works of My Father, **do not believe Me**; but **if I do** them, **though you do not believe Me, believe the works**, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." (Jn. 10:37-38)

And **many believed in Him** there. (Jn. 10:42)

and everyone who **lives** and **believes in Me** shall **never die**. Do you **believe** this?" (Jn. 11:26)

"And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around I said it, **that they may believe** that Thou didst send Me." (Jn. 11:42)

"If we let Him go on like this, **all men will believe in Him**, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." (Jn. 11:48)

GET THE HINT?

"While you have the light, **believe in the light**, in order that you may **become sons of light**." These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them. But though He had **performed so many signs** before them, yet they were **not believing in Him**; that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "LORD, WHO HAS **BELIEVED OUR REPORT?** AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?" For this cause **they could not believe**, for Isaiah said again, (Jn. 12:36-39)

Nevertheless **many even of the rulers believed in Him**, but because of the Pharisees they were not **confessing** Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; (Jn. 12:42)

And Jesus cried out and said, "**He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me. (Jn. 12:44)**

"I have come as light into the world, that **everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. (Jn. 12:46)**

"**Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves. (Jn. 14:11)**

concerning sin, because **they do not believe in Me; (Jn. 16:9)**

for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and **have believed that I came forth from the Father. (Jn. 16:27)**

"Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this **we believe that You came from God.**" Jesus answered them, "**Do you now believe?**" (Jn. 16:30-31)

for the words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them; and **they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst send Me. (Jn. 17:8)**

"I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for **those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. (Jn. 17:20-21)**

And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, **so that you also may believe. (Jn. 19:35)**

Jesus said[^] to him, "Because you have seen Me, **have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.**" (Jn. 20:29)

but these have been **written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (Jn. 20:31)**

And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said[^], "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" <And Philip said, "**If you believe with all your heart, you may.**" And he answered and said, "**I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."**> (Ac. 8:36-37)

And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who **believed turned to the Lord. (Ac. 11:21)**

And when they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report all things that God had done with them and how He had **opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. (Ac. 14:27)**

and He made no distinction between us and them, **cleansing their hearts by faith. (Ac. 15:9)**

solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of **repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ac. 20:21)**

But some days later, Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him **speak about faith in Christ Jesus. (Ac. 24:24)**

to open their eyes so that they may **turn from darkness** to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may **receive forgiveness** of sins and an inheritance among those who have been **sanctified by faith in Me.**' "Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and

then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should **repent and turn to God**, performing deeds appropriate to **repentance**. (Ac. 26:18-20)

SEE A PATTERN?

through whom we have received grace and apostleship to **bring about the obedience of faith** among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake, (Rom. 1:5)

even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; (Rom. 3:22)

whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation in His blood through faith**. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He **passed over** the sins previously committed; (Rom. 3:25)

For we maintain that **a man is justified by faith** apart from **works** of the Law. (Rom. 3:28)

But to the one who **does not work, but believes in Him** who justifies the ungodly, **his faith** is reckoned as righteousness, (Rom. 4:5)

Is this blessing then upon the circumcised, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say, "**FAITH WAS RECKONED TO ABRAHAM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS**." (Rom. 4:9)

and he received the sign of circumcision, **a seal of the righteousness of the faith** which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the **father of all who believe** without being circumcised, that **righteousness might be reckoned** to them, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also **follow in the steps of the faith** of our father Abraham which he had while uncircumcised. For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was **not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith**. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, **faith is made void** and the **promise is nullified**; (Rom. 4:11-14)

For this reason **it is by faith**, that it might **be in accordance with grace**, in order that the **promise may be certain** to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are **of the faith** of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (Rom. 14:16)

Therefore **having been justified by faith**, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have **obtained our introduction by faith into this grace** in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. (Rom. 5:1-2)

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who **did not pursue righteousness**, attained righteousness, even **the righteousness which is by faith**; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, **did not arrive** at that law. Why? Because **they did not pursue it by faith**, but as though it were by **works**. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, (Rom. 9:30-32)

But the **righteousness based on faith** speaks thus, "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?'" (that is, to bring Christ down), (Rom. 10:6)

But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"—that is, **the word of faith** which **we are preaching**, (Rom. 10:8)

So **faith comes from hearing**, and hearing **by the word of Christ**. (Rom. 10:17)

And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, **that your faith** should not **rest** on the wisdom of men, but **on the power of God**. (I Cor. 2:4)

nevertheless knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the Law but through faith** in Christ Jesus, even **we have believed** in Christ Jesus, that we may **be justified by faith** in Christ, and **not by the works of the Law**; since **by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.** (Gal. 2:16)

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you **receive the Spirit** by the **works** of the Law, or by **hearing with faith**? (Gal. 3:2) [hearing God's voice prior to believing is God's conviction]

So then **those who are of faith** are blessed with Abraham, the **believer**. (Gal. 3:9)

in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might **receive the promise of the Spirit through faith**. (Gal. 3:14)

But the Scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the **promise by faith** in Jesus Christ might be given **to those who believe**. But before **faith** came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that **we may be justified by faith**. But now that **faith has come**, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God **through faith** in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:22-26)

For this reason I too, **having heard of the faith** in the Lord Jesus which exists among you, and your **love** for all the saints, (Eph. 1:15)

and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own **derived from the Law**, but **that which is through faith** in Christ, the righteousness which **comes from God on the basis of faith**, (Phil. 3:9)

since we **heard of your faith** in Christ Jesus and the **love** which you have for all the saints; (Col. 1:4)

having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him **through faith in the working of God**, who raised Him from the dead. (Col. 2:12)

For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in **every place your faith toward God** has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. (I Th. 1:8)

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has **chosen** you from the beginning for **salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth**. (II Th. 2:13)

and that we may be delivered from **perverse and evil men**; for **not all have faith**. (II Th. 3:2)

GOT A CLUE?

And yet for this reason I found mercy, in order that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience, as an **example for those who would believe** in Him **for eternal life**. (I Tim. 1:6)

and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the **faith** and **love** which are **found** in Christ Jesus. (I Tim. 1:14)

For I am mindful of the **sincere faith** **within you**, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am **sure** that it is **in you** as well. (II Tim. 1:5)

and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to **give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.** (II Tim. 3:15)

Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, **for the faith** of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, (Tit. 1:1)

because I hear of your love, and of the **faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus**, and toward all the saints; (Phm. 1:5)

And again, "I WILL PUT MY **TRUST** IN HIM." And again, "BEHOLD, I AND THE CHILDREN WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN ME." (Heb. 2:13)

For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. (Heb. 4:2)

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of **faith toward God**, (Heb. 6:1)

let us draw near with a sincere heart in **full assurance of faith**, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb. 10:22)

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the **author and perfecter of faith**, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb. 12:2)

who **through Him are believers** in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that **your faith and hope** are in God. (I Pet. 1:21)

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, **in your faith** supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; (II Pet. 1:5)

But you, beloved, **building yourselves up on your most holy faith**; praying in the Holy Spirit; (Jude 1:20)

FIGURED IT OUT YEY?

Salvation is By Faith!

NEED I SAY MORE?

FAITH SYNONYMS: Trust, believe, rely/reliance, depend, lean, ask, come to, join self to, eat, drink, receive, turned to the Lord, eat His flesh, drink His blood, call on the Lord, entrust, etc.

STATEMENTS AND MISSTATEMENTS OF THE GOSPEL

“If we gave even half of them to an unsaved person, which and what would he be expected to believe?”

(1) Repent, believe, confess your sin to God, and confess Him before men and you will be saved.

(2) The clearest statement of the Gospel in the New Testament is found in Luke 9:23: ‘If any man wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’

(3) Perhaps the most comprehensive invitation to salvation in the epistles comes in James 4:7-10: ‘Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify your hearts you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.’

(4) May the Lord reveal to the sinners that the only way for them to be saved from their sins is to repent with a godly sorrow in their hearts to the Lord.

(5) Utter the prayer of the prodigal son—ask Jesus to be your Lord and Master.

(6) Come forward and follow Christ in baptism.

(7) Place your hand in the nail-scarred hands of Jesus.

(8) Find Christ by praying through to Him.

(9) Believe in Him, trust Him, accept Him, commit your life to Him.

(10) We have the warning of Christ that He will not receive us into His kingdom until we are ready to give up all, until we are ready to turn from all sin in our lives.

(11) God offers eternal life freely to sinners who will surrender to Him in humble, repentant faith.

(12) Do we literally have to give away everything we own to become Christians? No, but we have to be willing to forsake all.

(13) Matthew 7:13-14 is pure Gospel” ‘Enter by the narrow gate...’

(14) No one can receive Christ as his Savior while he rejects Him as his Lord.

(15) Give your heart to Christ.

Not all these statements are incorrect or equally good or bad. But they are not saying the same thing.” “...words are the means we use to explain the Gospel to others. Therefore, a correct choice of words is important, even essential in stating the Gospel well.”

So Great Salvation: What It Means to Believe In Jesus Christ, pp. 23-24, by Charles C. Ryrie (Victor Books: U.S.A.), 1989

ETERNAL SECURITY

Let's first make a distinction between “**eternal security**” and “**assurance of salvation.**” The former is a **fact**—that Christians will remain saved from their day of salvation to eternity. The latter is the **confidence** we have regarding that fact's *truthfulness*, which can *wane*, with doubt and sinful lapses.

The fact (eternal security) is fundamental to a stable and growing Christian life—a proper *foundation* upon which to build. There may be a place for doubting *very sinful* people's salvation, and *lapses* in confidence *may* be normal in some circumstances, but one has to know that they were saved by God, and that knowledge certainty is based on the **promises** of God's word—promises which never change. The Holy Spirit residing within bears *inner witness* to the certainty of our salvation, and **God never lies** or un-does His miraculous work. Know for certain that if you trusted Christ you **already have** eternal life. (II Cor. 13:5, Rom. 8:16, ETC.)

The main issue often debated is whether one who has been saved can ever lose that salvation. I hold strongly to the *well-established* and *Scripturally justified* position that once one is saved, they are saved forever. That's what **eternal** life is, in its *quantitative* (as distinguished from its *qualitative*) sense. The *overwhelming weight* of biblical evidence supports this view!

Let's view some of the Bible **MANY** clear passages on the security of our salvation, and YOU determine whether the **few** proffered verses offered by the opposing view are being interpreted correctly:

KEY ASSURANCE OF SALVATION VERSES:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him **have** eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but **have** eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (Jn. 3:14-18)

“He who believes in the Son **has** *eternal* life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (Jn. 3:36)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” (Jn. 5:24)

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes **has** eternal life.” (Jn. 6:47)

The one who believes in the Son of God **has** the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son. And the witness is this, that God **has given** us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son **has the life**; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may **know** that you *have* eternal life. (I Jn. 5:10-13)

Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL **NEVER DESERT YOU**, NOR WILL I EVER **FORSAKE YOU**," (Heb. 13:5)

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and **they shall never perish**; and **no one** shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and **no one is able** to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." (Jn. 10:27-30)

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him... The **Spirit Himself bears witness** with our spirit that we **are** children of God, (Rom. 8:9, 16, I Jn. 4:13)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is **imperishable** and *undefiled* and **will not fade away**, *reserved* in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (I Pet. 1:3-5)

PROFFERED LOSE SALVATION VERSES

- (Rev. 3:5) "Not erase" is the inverse way of stating his name is **securely in the books**. No clear evidence is found that God *erases* what He has written.
- (Rev. 3:16) God in essence *vomits* at the sight of a luke-warm believer, *as should we*. Does that prove His "*swallowing*" us is a synonymous with salvation?
- (Heb. 12:14) The "sanctification" could easily refer to salvation, as has been the case before. (Ex.: I Pet. 1:2, Heb. 10:14, Eph. 5:26, I Cor. 6:11, etc.)
- (Mk. 13:13) Prophetic context (as likely with Rev. 3:16), and the salvation can be interpreted as physical preservation instead of annihilation through *persecution*.
- (Col. 1:21-23) "If" is the expectation for believers and an **encouragement** so to do. Nothing is stated about losing eternal life "if" the opposite proves true (though it is implicitly discouraged). The word "if" can be interpreted either as expectant (i.e., equivalent to "as") or conditional (i.e., responding action will occur "**IF**" the precondition is met).
- (I Cor. 6:8-11, Gal. 5:19-21) Such behavior is not the normal expectation for believers' *behavioral* habits!

REASONS FOR ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

The following are Bible-based reasons why I believe it is **impossible** for a believer to lose his salvation:

1. **The Nature of God.** God is eternal, good, *unchanging* and He **never lies**. The gift exhibits the nature and character of the Giver—it is *eternal*. (Rom. 16:26, Ps. 34:8, Jas. 1:17, Heb. 6:18)
2. **The Promise of God.** God has promised salvation to all who believe and He is **faithful** to His Himself and His promises. (I Jn. 2:23, 25, 5:11-13, 18)
3. **The Power of God.** No one is **strong enough** to take us out of His hand/control.

4. **The Intercession of Christ.** Christ is **continually** praying for us, and His prayers are *effective*. (Rom. 8:34, Heb. 7:25)
5. **The Possession and Nature of “Eternal” Life.** God’s word says we (already) **HAVE** eternal life, and such life—**abundant** in quality—is also **eternal** in quantity. He did not give us “**temporary life**” but **eternal** life, and He didn’t **lend** it out to us it on *consignment*.
6. **The Irrevocability of God’s Gifts and Callings.** God doesn’t **un-do** His miraculous work, nor is He an “**Indian giver.**” (Rom. 11:29)
7. **The Biblical Word Pictures of Eternal Life.** As my College best friend, Tom Eckman, used to teach:
 - a) **We are Adopted Sons.** No good father *abandons* or *orphans* his adopted son. (Rom. 8:14-17, Gal. 4:4-7, Eph. 1:5)
 - b) **We Have Been Sealed with the Spirit.** Roman seals were very **hard to break**, but God’s Spirit is **much stronger** than mere human seals. (Eph. 1:13-14, 4:30)
 - c) **Our Certificate of Debt Has Been Paid.** You cannot *owe* a debt that’s been “**PAID IN FULL.**” (Col. 2:13-15)

The doctrine of eternal security does **NOT** teach that we are **free to sin**, or encourage any such behavior. **Quite the opposite.** We have been **freed** and **enabled** to live a life **pleasing** to God as *holy bond-slaves* of Jesus Christ, so we *need* to do so.

QUIET TIME: BIBLE STUDY

See: Quiet Time: Why have a Quiet Time, and Why Read the Bible?

QUIET TIME: PRAYER

See: Pointers for Prayer

FAITH-WALKING

Christians are called to “**walk by faith.**” (II Cor. 5:7, Rom. 1:17) This lifestyle is contrasted with the *average* way life is lived—“walking by sight.” It’s easy to understand the latter lifestyle—men make decisions and establish their desires and priorities according to what is **seen** in this world. Because *spiritual things*—especially God Himself—are **not seen**, the faith walk is **relying on God** to empower and lead your life based on what is seen in God’s word. A life *dependent* on God **IS** the normal Christian life!

Faith-walking is contrasted by two lifestyles the believer is not to be engaged in—“**law**” and “**license.**” Christianity is a relationship—not a “rule book”-type of religion where one tries to get close to God based on “good works” and merit. Sanctification is God living His life **through** you, working out His desires **in** you, your life being wrapped up in His and your living the Christian life **in His** power. It is **trusting**, not trying (i.e., in the *flesh* or *self will power*). It is letting go (of control) and letting God (be *in charge*). All these word pictures depict the **same marvelous** experience—**a life lived by faith.** (Gal. 2:20, Eph. 2:8-10, Col. 3:3, etc.)

I liken time lived “in the Spirit” (that is, Spirit-empowered) to an astronaut on a space walk. The stronger his endurance (and the greater his oxygen source), the **LONGER** he can remain free from the *confines* of the space capsule. With practice, The Christian should experience longer and longer periods of **not committing willful sins** he needs to confess and get re-Spirit-filled over. *That is true* freedom... God’s enablement to not have sin as **master over you**—free to live the life God *intended*. (Rom. 6:12-14)

ILLUSTRATIONS

The adage, “**God said it, I believe it, that settles it**” is so true for the obedient Christian.

Evangelism Explosion has the illustration of sitting on a chair. You can *believe* all day that the chair is capable of supporting you, but until you sit down, you have never truly **trusted** in that chair. Some camps teach campers to fall back into the arms of their peers, to illustrate the principle.

Faith is putting trust in Bible **facts**. *Feelings* may or may not follow.

HOW TO WALK BY FAITH

How Do We Learn to “Walk by Faith?”

First, let’s **DEFINE** faith. Heb. 11:1 and 6 say:

“Now faith is the *assurance* of things hoped for, the *conviction* of things not seen.”

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

Faith *believes* God’s word, and lives accordingly, *progressively*, under **grace** and by His power. Faith is *being sure* of what you hope for and don’t see, based on the **Bible** empowered by God’s **Spirit**.

Where Do We Get Faith?

Rom. 10:17 says:

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the **word of Christ**.”

What Does Having Faith in God Do for Us?

Mk. 11:22-24 says:

And Jesus answered[^] saying to them, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but **believes** that what he says is going to happen, **it shall be granted him**. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you **pray and ask**, believe that you have received them, and they *shall be granted* you.”

What is the Relationship Between Faith and Works?

Do works PROVE faith, or does true sanctificational faith **produce** works? If you read Hebrews 11, **ACTIONS come from** truly trusting God. In James 2—(a book written to Christians), James tells believers that **works inspired by faith are supposed to occur/happen**, or *that* faith is stifled, *unproductive* and not exercised properly. The “salvation” being spoken of here is salvation from the **POWER** of sin (i.e., Sanctification), and if God gives you faith to do something, and you don’t do it, to you it is sin, and your **faith** is NOT perfected until you **pass that test** and do what He gave you faith to do. This is **how works work with faith**. It is not works of the law, but truths personally God-given which instill faith (i.e., a conviction to do it), and the obedience based on faith **implements** that given command, whereby your faith is **matured** as are you, *morally*.

What Are the Imposters to Faith?

1. Doubt

The opposite of trusting God is **doubting** Him. You pray for something you need (or want) which is *consistent* with Scripture, tell Him you trust Him to provide it, and if it doesn't appear soon you're **wondering whether He's going to provide it**. If you did as Mark 11:22-24 says, you have already believed that you have it (i.e., in the spiritual realm), and may even have *confessed* that it was yours. Be patient, **keep trusting**. This, in part, is the testing of our faith, to see if we really mean it in sincerity. (Jas. 1:5-8)

2. Hope (if by itself)

Another false substitute to faith is hope ALONE. Hope is a great and positive thing, but it is no substitute to trusting God. Our eternal salvation gives us an eternal hope—an optimistic expectation of a sure future thing, but when you are living dependent on God to supply all your needs, it does no good to **ONLY hope He will do it**—that's *unbelief* in God if He said He would.

3. Worry

Anxiety and worry are further symptoms that one is *not* walking by faith. There is a calm peace about a person who is certain God is providing his needs. If God is thus providing, what is there to be worried about? Certainly life brings us *stresses*, but Philippians 4:6-8 teaches us how to deal **peacefully** with them. (Mt. 6:19-34, etc.)

4. Fear

Finally, one who is timid or lives fearfully is **not exercising their full confidence** in God. “God has not given us a spirit of fear” and timidity and “if **God is *for us*** who can be against us?” (II Tim. 1:7, Rom. 8:31). In fact, the Bible instructs us to only fear Him: “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Mt. 10:28)

5. Self-Reliance

Probably the **most prominent** alternative to faith-walking is trusting in ourselves. To be the one in charge of your own life (‘calling the shots’) is the essence of *not* relying on God, and living *carnally*, because unless you are fully surrendered to God’s will, you are merely doing your own. (Pv. 3:5-7; II Cor. 3:5-6; Jn. 15:5)

Living by faith means claiming God’s promises for yourself. Find one that meets your needs, claim it in prayer, and **hold to that faith** until it’s yours in *this* realm. That **IS** the life of faith—humble *submission to* and *dependence upon* God and His power to supply all we need.

Some great verses and quotations on faith-walking are:

VERSES

“Trust in the LORD with *all* your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways *acknowledge* Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.” (Pv. 3:5-7)

“while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are **not seen**; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are **eternal**.” (II Cor. 4:18)

And Jesus said to him, "If You can!" **All things** are possible to him who believes." (Mk. 9:23)

And He said[^] to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and **nothing** shall be impossible to you. (Mt. 17:20)

"For **nothing** will be impossible with God." (Lk. 1:37)

See Also: I Cor. 2:9, II Cor. 4:13, Eph. 3:20, Jude 1:24, Heb.11:17-19

QUOTATIONS

“There are a number of kinds of faith. Everyone, saved and unsaved alike, has a natural, human faith. The above Scripture, however, is talking about a supernatural faith—a faith that believes with the heart rather than believing what our *physical senses* may tell us. Faith, in other words, is grasping the unrealities of hope and bringing them into the realm of reality. And faith grows out of the Word of God...

You hope for physical strength to do the work you must do. Faith says, ‘The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?’ (Ps. 27:1). **Faith will say about itself everything that the Word says**, for faith in God is simply faith in His Word...

“Many people want to receive and then believe they’ve got it. It doesn’t work that way, though. You have to **believe first**, and then you will receive.

“When Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said ‘And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity’ (I Cor. 13:13), he was not inferring that hope and faith are not important. Each has its place, and one cannot be *substituted* for another... Hope looks to the *future*. It is always future tense. Faith is **now**. Faith says, ‘I’ll receive the answer right now. I have it now.’ It is not hoping that gets the job done; it is **believing**.”

--**Kenneth Hagin**, New Thresholds of Faith, p. 9, by Kenneth Hagin, (Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc.: Tulsa, OK), 1985 [Not a ministry I generally suggest]

“Here is a formula for faith that you can make work for you: First, **have God’s word** for whatever you may be seeking; second, **believe** God’s word; third, refuse to consider the contradictory circumstances, or what your physical senses may tell you about it; and, fourth, give praise to God for the answer.” --Kenneth Hagin, New Thresholds of Faith, p. 25, by Kenneth Hagin, (Kenneth Hagin Ministries, Inc.: Tulsa, OK), 1985

Homework: Read Hebrews 11 and take notes on actions and attitudes prompted by faith (especially vv. 10-16, 17-19, 23-26 and 33-38)

MIND-RENEWAL

Closely related to faith-walking is knowing what God’s word says. If we are to live by God’s promises, we need to know what they are. This takes **mind renewal**. We are *completely* new creatures in Christ on the inside, but our mental habits and attitudes need *renewing*, and that begins with laying God’s word on our heart. (II Pet. 1:2-4, II Cor. 7:1, 1:20, 5:17, Rom. 12:1-2, Eph. 4:23, Col. 3:10, Ps. 119:9-11, etc.)

The adage goes, “**garbage in, garbage out**,” and the Bible says “as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” (Pv. 23:7) We are the product of what we allow in our minds. Salvation in Christ **does not miraculously impart** to us a knowledge of God’s word or 100% purity in our thought life. Our attitudes need changing as we were *completely changed* on the inside, and this comes through meditating on God’s word—getting **His** thoughts on our minds and hearts.

A great booklet entitled, My Heart Christ’s Home vividly describes the Christian life as the homeowner having ownership title, and in time his inhabiting, indwelling and decorating **EVERY** room in that house—the *symbolism* being God progressively taking control—*eventually*—of all areas of our lives as we are led, and yield them to Him.

It is my firm belief that until a Christian has an eternal perspective on life, his priorities will not be **fully right**. My good friend David Strawn says we spend so much time and effort working and investing for retirement—even to the point of preparing our own funeral arrangements sometimes—yet we spend **so little time** planning for our **eternal** future.

Getting God’s word in your mind, through Bible study and meditation is the **surest** way to have SUCCESS in the Christian life. My most respected Minister hero (besides Billy Graham)—Rev. Don Anderson—taught me the following at an *early* spiritual age:

Meditation, from the original languages, is the word picture of a cow **chewing his cud**. Cows don't merely eat food. They swallow, regurgitate (i.e., burp it up) and then continue to muse and munch on it *over and over* again. A bit graphic—but not in matters of the Spirit.

He also told of the FBI practice for **identifying counterfeit one dollar bills**. Inspectors assigned to this duty DID NOT research and study all the examples of *creative counterfeiting*. Instead, they **spent HOURS** staring at and analyzing a *genuine* dollar bill till they knew a 'George Washington' "like the back of their hands."

CONVERSELY, if we're not going to **USE** our Bibles—and a *recent* survey indicated only **13%** of us *regularly* do—why wouldn't we simply **burn** them, or, more constructively give them away to someone who lacks one (as in some *foreign countries*)? A Bible is not an **accessory** to church clothes, and if you don't believe it is fully the word of God," **CUT OUT** the parts you consider inferior so you don't *hypocritically* carry the *entirety* of it with you.

We need our minds **renewed** to the thoughts of God, and this will **NOT happen** through prayer ALONE or by **OSMOSIS!**

See: Deut. 6:5, Josh. 1:8, Ps. 1:1-3, 119:9-11, Rom. 7:25, 8:6-7, 12:1-2, I Cor. 2:16, II Cor. 4:16, 10:5, Eph. 4:17, 23, Phil. 3:17-20, 4:6-8, Col. 3:2-3, I Pet. 1:13, 22, etc.

See Also: Why Read the Bible?

CLAIMING GOD'S PROMISES

Faith-walking requires renewing your mind with the word of God because it is *essentially* **LIVING off of His promises** in Christ! Books are available on the subject of God's promises (I recommend All The Promises Of The Bible, by Dr. Herbert Lockyer, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, MI), 1962), but the following is a mere sample of the **thousands** of promises which are true in Jesus:

Claiming Your INHERITANCE

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has **granted to us everything** pertaining to life and godliness, through the **true knowledge of Him** who called us by His own glory and excellence. For **by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises**, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having *escaped* the corruption that is in the world by lust. **(II Pet. 1:2-4)**

and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the **knowledge of every good thing which is in you** for Christ's sake. **(Phm. 1:6)**

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God. **(II Cor. 7:1)**

For **as many as may be the promises of God, in Him** they are **yes**; wherefore also by Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. **(II Cor. 1:20)**

Select Precious PROMISES

Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "**I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,**" (Heb. 13:5)

And looking upon them Jesus said to them, "With men this is impossible, but **with God all things are possible**." (Mt. 19:26)

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:13)

The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in **perfect peace**, Because he trusts in Thee. (Isa. 26:3)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. 8:38-39)

But thanks be to God, who **always leads us in His triumph** in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in *every place*. (II Cor. 2:14)

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but **My words will not pass away**." (Lk. 21:33)

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to **do** according to all that is written in it; for **then you will make your way prosperous**, and then you will have **success**. (Josh. 1:8)

These things I have written to **you who believe** in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may **know that you have eternal life**. (I Jn. 5:13)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a **living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **to obtain an inheritance** which is imperishable and undefiled and **will not fade away**, reserved in heaven for you, (I Pet. 1:3-4)

And without **faith** it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a **rewarder of those who seek Him**. (Heb. 11:6)

"Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, **lift up your eyes**, and look on the fields, that they are **white for harvest**. Already he who reaps is **receiving wages**, and is gathering **fruit** for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may **rejoice together**." (Jn. 4:35-36)

IDENTITY AND INHERITANCE

OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Let me ask you, **who are you?** I can get your name and you may tell me your profession, but, again, **who are you?** Who you are as a Christian is **essential** to your **success** in the Christian life. Do you think of yourself as a “sinner saved by grace?” If so, to continually sin might be **expected** and **normal**. **Are you a saint?** I’m not talking about the *false* religious concept of designating certain *moral heroes* “saints.”

Let me be *clear*—you **ARE** a saint, and you **WERE** a sinner, and you have been saved by grace. Your “position” (or status before God) **SHOULD BE** your **attitude** about yourself as a Christian (i.e., “in Christ). Of course, those moments where you (hopefully only *occasionally*) slip up and get in the power of the flesh, you will **not act** like it or necessarily **feel** like it or even **believe** it, but **you are ALWAYS a saint**, because you are always in Christ.

This is one of the “*secrets*” Paul learned in Romans 7 when he was struggling so mightily with how he **desired good** in his *inner man* yet found himself doing just the opposite (because he was living life according to **obeying laws** as opposed to **obeying God** through His word, by **faith**). He had not been living according to the *new nature* and **NEW IDENTITY** God had given him. In the end he **thanks God** when he realizes that **victory** comes from Christ—not *increased will power*. (Rom. 7:25-8:2)

When *you* are in the **throes** of carnality—that is **NOT you**. That is, it is not an accurate expression of the **new person** God has made you. It is **NOT** that you are not responsible for those sins, but that you are completely changed and different on the inside, and it is **your flesh** (i.e., sin nature), spurred on through the **holy law**, which is *causing* you to act in ways you do not want to. Confess it, trust God’s forgiveness and get re-filled with His Spirit.

The **VERY few** instances in the New Testament where a believer is referred to as a “*sinner*” refer either to an attitude of **humility** (reflecting on **who they are in and of themselves**, and acknowledging that **we all are NOTHING** without Christ in us), or to their times of sinful experience as a believer—**NOT** their true identity “in Christ.” (I Tim. 1:15, Jas. 4:8, 5:20, Gal. 2:17, Jn. 15:5, II Cor. 3:5, etc.). The **VAST majority** of Scriptures focus on **who we ARE—forever “in Christ.”** (II Cor. 10, Jn. 15:1-15, etc.). See also: Rom. 5:8 (past tense), Jude 1:15.

In theological terms, our position IS our identity, and when we *renew our mind* and reckon ourselves to this fact, it will **also become our *experience***, as we walk in the Spirit’s power, *conscious* of what the Bible says about us.

Some Bible teachers, using Gal. 6:7-8, teach that your spiritual walk is like a war between TWO DOGS. The one you **feed** most is the one who will **win**. While completely true regarding what you feed your mind and how it affects your behavior, it is also true that even when a believer wrongly acts like the *junk yard dog*, he is still a new creation in Christ.

As an example of the **impact** this doctrine can have on the success of your spiritual life, **a cat does not bark** and a dog does not meow. That’s not what’s expected, normal or “*natural*.” The best example I’ve found of how our **identity in Christ** positively affects our sanctification comes from an *illustration* from David Needham:

So, just who are we “in Christ?” Lets take a look...

“In Search of the Deepest Meaning

Are you ready for another illustration—a mini-melodrama? This time imagine that you are a very typical boy in high school who likes two things most of all: food and girls (in either order). If someone asked you who you were and you were quite honest you would have to express both your identity and your reason for living in those terms (with a long list of other ones, of course).

One day you’re standing by your locker in the hall and the track coach spots you. He takes you by surprise when he strolls purposefully over to your locker to talk to you. (the *track* coach talking to *me*?)

‘Say, I’ve been watching the way you walk—gotta lot of bounce to your step. Whether you know it or not, you’re a sprinter. With a little training you could be setting records in the 100-yard dash. I just know it!’

‘Aw c’mon, Coach. I’m no sprinter. I might win a gold medal in eating or girl-watching, but a sprinter? You’ve got to be kidding.’

‘No, I’m not kidding. And I’ll prove it to you. This afternoon—at practice.’ Now he’s hooked you. You go to practice that afternoon...and every afternoon for weeks to follow. Your first clockings aren’t that outstanding but you sense a strange exhilaration as you run that maybe—just maybe—the coach was right. In the days that follow you read biographies of great sprinters; you watch films of great races. You run and run and run. It hurts so much sometimes, yet always deeper is a growing sense of identity. You *are* a sprinter! Before long the whole shape of your life bends to this new sense of personhood. If someone walks up to you on the street and asks, ‘Who are you?’, even before you can give your name you spontaneously respond, ‘I’m a sprinter at Madison High! The big meet with Wilson High is Saturday—you gonna be there?’

And Saturday comes. The crowd stirs as you walk across the cinders to your starting block. Suddenly the prettiest girl from Madison High walks straight up to you with a large, juicy piece of Apple pie fresh from the oven and topped with a big glob of ice cream. ‘Hi,’ she coos. ‘I brought this for you...just for you.’

Now comes the decision. You are free to do what you want. But what will you do?

It all depends on your concept of those two words: IDENTITY and MEANING.

Who are you? Are you a skin-wrapped package of taste buds, salivary glands, and sex drives? If this is your identity, there isn’t much question where you will find meaning.

Or are you sure of something else? A new identity. An identity reinforced by warm, relational times with your coach, by a new focus on personhood, a new set of values. If these things are true, your response to sweet Sue will be automatic—and conclusive. On the other hand, if you have missed out on track practice, if you have allowed your mind to focus on those very tangible, “fleshly” things where you had always found life before, you will respond in one of two ways: ‘All right! Who cares about the race anyway; you’re quite a gal, Susie.’ Or, if not that it will be, ‘Sorry Sue, I want that hunk of pie but I can’t have it.’

What is your response as the sprinter you know yourself to be? With scarcely a second look at her pretty face, you turn to focus on that tape 100 yards away.

‘Sorry, Sue. I’m a sprinter. I don’t want that apple pie (not simply I Can’t have it). Life for me is touching that tape before anyone else. What you offer just doesn’t fit in. Thanks anyway.’

‘Oh! You must want it...and me.’

‘No, Sue, you just don’t realize that there’s something far deeper about me than that. I’m not just a mouth connected to a stomach; I’m not just a guy who gets turned on by good-looking girls. *I’m a sprinter*, Sue. That’s who I am. That’s living. There’s nothing like it in the world. I’m gonna win, Susie!’ BANG! Off you go...and you win.

Oh Christian, do you get the point? If you don’t know most deeply who you are—if you have allowed your sense of personhood to be shaped by your own flesh, by Satan, and by the meaning-mad media that saturates the world, you are either consciously or unconsciously a most miserable, frustrated Christian. Your Bible reading, such as it is, is self-condemning. I John 1:9 is your life verse. God is almost your adversary. Strange that He could be both your Savior and adversary. But it’s true. It seems as though the things you want most in life He says you should want least...or not at all. In your view, a Christian is one who must continually say “No” to himself, “No” to his dreams, and “No” to his desires, all the while saying “Yes” to God and His demands. **Surrender**. That awful word.

To such statements Paul would shout with flaming indignation, “God forbid! What travesty! Whoever had the audacity to paint the Christian life in such a way? What a shambles of God’s truth. For me *to live* is Christ!” For you see, even as Sam discovered a deeper identity, so God’s intention is that every believer become literally obsessed with his own true IDENTITY—MEANING—LIFE!”

Birthright: Christian, Do You Know Who You Are?, pp. 72-72, by David C. Needham, (Multnomah Press: Portland, OR), 1979

SELECT IDENTITIES

Victory can be *continually* had when we realize that the **holy life** of Christ in and through us is **NORMAL** as Christians, no matter what any others may believe or demonstrate. What are some of the **hundreds** of *identity titles* the Bible refers to us as? A sampling includes:

- New Creations (II Cor. 5:17)
- Dead to Sin (Rom. 6:6-11)
- Alive to God (Rom. 6:11)
- Holy Brethren (Heb. 3:1)
- Royal Priesthood (I Pet. 2:9)
- The Righteousness of God in Christ (II Cor. 5:21)
- Saints (I Cor. 1:2)
- More than Conquerors (Rom. 8:37)
- Chosen (II Tim. 2:10)
- Beloved of God (I Jn. 4:10-11)
- Accepted in the Beloved (Rom. 15:7)
- God’s Workmanship, Created unto Good Works (Eph. 2:10)

- **ETC.** (go discover **hundreds** more!)

Can you **VERBALIZE** these truths about yourself? (i.e., SAY, **I am a saint,**” etc.) To see how **prevalent** this subject is in the New Testament, here are but a few of the **hundreds** of references:

Jn. 1:12, Rom. 8:16-17, 9:23, 25, I Cor. 6:11, II Cor. 3:3, 5:20, Gal. 3:29, 4:5, 28, 6:10, Eph. 2:19, 3:6, Col. 3:3, Tit. 2:14, Heb. 3:12, I Pet. 1:3, 2:5, 11, etc.

OUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST

Finally, a word about your **inheritance** in Christ, What an awful tragedy it would be to observe a life-long suffering homeless person continue in that condition only to find **he had been the beneficiary of millions in inheritance**, and never knew it! This is how many believers live their Christian life! The Bible says God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, given us all things pertaining to life and godliness, and that our fellowship with one another can become effective through knowledge of all (good) things given to us by God. **Don't live a lowly, unfruitful and disappointing life** toward God, having such a **large 'heavenly bank account'** and *treasure chest* from which to draw upon!

Some of these **MANY** blessings, obtained by claiming God's promises (which are all '**yes**' in Christ) include:

- Answered Prayer (Mt. 7:7-8, Jn. 16:24)
- Power (Ac. 1:8, I Cor. 4:19-20)
- Victory Over Sin (Rom. 6:14, Jude 1:24-25, I Cor. 10:13)
- Heaven as Your Home (I Pet. 1:3-4, Phil. 3:17-20)
- Personal Relationship with God (I Jn. 1:3, 6, I Cor. 6:15-17, Rev. 3:20)
- Leadership and Guidance in Life (Gal. 5:18, Jn. 16:13)
- Joy and Peace (Jude 1:24-25, Jn. 16:22-24; Rom. 5:1, Jn. 16:33)
- Future Glory and Rewards in the Next Life (II Pet. 1:3, II Th. 2:14; I Cor. 3:6-8, Jn. 4:36, II Jn. 1:8)
- No Fear of Death (I Cor. 15:54-57, Heb. 2:14-15)
- Understanding of Life and Fulfillment therein (i.e., Purpose in Life) (I Jn. 5:20; Phil. 3:8-14, Rom. 15:17, I Cor. 15:10, 9:23-27)
- Access to God's Wisdom (Jas. 1:5-8, I Cor. 1:23-24, Eph. 2:17-18)
- Favor and Blessing from God, and Favor with Man (Ac. 2:46-47, I Pet. 2:20; I Pet. 3:9, 4:14, Jas. 1:12)
- **ETC.** (go discover **hundreds** more!)

See: Eph. 1:3, 18-19, I Cor. 1:30, Phm. 1:6, II Pet. 1:3-4

See also: Rom. 6:4, 7:6, I Cor. 6:11, Gal. 3:29, Col. 1:5, 13, I Th. 4:13, Tit. 3:7, Heb. 10:22, I Pet. 2:21, etc.

LORDSHIP COMMITMENT

See: Why Be Totally Committed to Jesus Christ?

GOD'S WILL

Definition

God's will is simply God's plan for your life in all its facets (i.e., large, small and everything in between). IF God has a specific desire for what you are to do in a matter, He will reveal it, and your "tuning into" that desire or "will" comes through prayer and Bible study, with practice doing what He has revealed to you is His will, to-date.

His is a *positive* plan, whether pertaining to who to marry, what career to choose, having kids, ministries to get involved with, where to live, etc. It can be **as large** as career and marriage or **as "detailed"** as *which* person to approach with the Gospel (and anywhere in-between). It would unlikely apply to which color of socks to wear, and it is not **IMPERSONAL**, as with the phrase: 'God gave you a brain—use it,' or 'God gave you the Bible'—you figure it out *from there*.' Those aren't attitudes consistent with a **PERSONAL relationship** with God!

Features

God's will for you directs and guides your life in a *powerful* and *positive* way. Romans 12:1-2 says:

"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be *conformed* to this world, but be *transformed* by the *renewing* of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is **good** and **acceptable** and **perfect**." (Rom. 12:1-2)

Imposters

What alternatives exist to doing God's will?

Christians are either "in the flesh" or "in the Spirit" in their *practice*, therefore they must be either be **doing God's will** or **not**. There are certainly degrees of *obedience*, *intensity* and *commitment* within that Spirit-filled lifestyle, and there can be ranges from naive to guilty motives and intentions, but ultimately a Christian is either doing **God's will** or the **DEVIL'S will**, often stated as "doing your own will." One need do *nothing more* than never 'selling out' to God to, by default, be guilty of the latter. (Rom. 8:5-8, Heb. 11:6, Col. 1:9-11, Eph. 5:9-10, etc.).

Satan's plan for your life can come in a variety of forms:

- **LIVING FOR YOURSELF/CARNALITY**. **Synonymous** with worldliness or licentiousness, this is living with yourself as "lord" of your life, or living "in the flesh" or **carnally**. It can be by either **innocent** ignorance or **willful** disobedience. (Pv. 3:5-7, Gal. 2:20, II Cor. 5:15; I Pet. 2:1-3 vs. I Cor. 3:1-3 and Heb. 5:11-6:1)
- **LUKE-WARMNESS**. **Half hearted** commitment to God, "*wanting your cake and eating it too*," or "*riding the fence*" between following your own desires and those of the Lord. It can manifest in trying to live "**balanced**" or "moderate" in EQUALLY serving God and *money*, usually excused as trying to avoid being '*too heavenly-minded* for any earthly good.' (i.e., living with the Bible as a token, intellectually assented to with a nod and a wink which amounts to a virtual **ignoring** of it's application. (Rev. 3:16-18, Mt. 6:24, etc.)
- **SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS OR LEGALISM**. Either working to *earn* God's pleasure with you,

or knowing that doesn't work and **TRYING to obey rules that YOU decide** to apply—never *relying* on His leadership through His alivened word. (Jn. 6:63, Rom. 6:14, Gal. 3:1-5, etc.).

- **WORLDLINESS OR LICENTIOUSNESS.** Either a **greater desire** for the things of this world than the things of God (*worldliness*), or pure and honest like or **love of sin** as a *lifestyle* (i.e., with little to NO interest in spiritual things—*licentiousness*). (I Jn. 2:15-17, Jude 1:4, etc.). Worldliness need not appear any more blatant than a Christian simply **living like any average American lost** person. (Rom. 12:2a, I Cor. 3:3, etc.)
- **TARES AND GOATS.** LOST people acting like Christians, or deceived into thinking their religious activities can gain them favor with God. This category is *distinguished* from legalism or self-righteousness in MY categorizations because tares and goats are LOST people. (Mt. 13:25-40, 7:21-22, 25:31-46)

Means

10 WAYS TO DISCOVER GOD'S WILL

1. **Bible** (applied by faith)—(Rom. 2:17-20, etc.)
2. **Prayer** (asked with faith)—(Jn. 14:14, I Jn. 5:14-15)
3. Wise **counsel** (of informed fellow believers)—(Pv. 1:5)
4. **Circumstances** (though not ruled by them—live above them)—(Phil. 1:12, 4:11-3, ~Col. 4:8)
5. **Wisdom and knowledge** (i.e., the Bible known, and learned through application) **See:** the book of Proverbs, etc.
6. **Senses trained** through Spirit-led practice (i.e., impressions, unction, the 'still small voice of God,' etc.)—(Heb. 4:12, Heb. 5:14)
7. **Decisions consistent** with the word of God. The Spirit's leading **never contradicts** the word of God! (Jn. 16:13, ~I Jn. 2:27, I Cor. 14:33)
8. Though "*fleeces*" are **likely not a great way to go** (as it may border on 'testing God'), **confirmation** is an excellent hind-sight way of *corroborating* God's leading. (Judg. 6:37, Mt. 4:7; I Pet. 5:10, ~Phil. 1:7, etc.)
9. Mind and heart, **logic and wisdom**, discernment, judgment, knowledge (i.e., serve God with all your heart and mind)—(Deut. 6:5, I Cor. 2:16, Jas. 3:17)
10. **Inner peace** and calmness sustained vs. restless, anxiety in your spirit (Ac. 17:16~; Jas. 3:17-18, II Th. 3:16)

KEY VERSES

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the **knowledge of His will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **so that** you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the *inheritance* of the saints in light. **(Col. 1:9-12)**

Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bond slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and **fully assured** in all the will of God. (Col. 4:12)

Now the God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to **do His will**, working in us that which is *pleasing* in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20-21)

And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever **does the will** of My Father who is in heaven, he is My *brother* and *sister* and *mother*." (Mt. 12:49-50)

"And after He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.' (Ac. 13:22)

not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. (Eph. 6:6)

Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but **the one who does the will of God** *abides forever*. (I Jn. 2:15-17)

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has **ceased from sin**, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but **for the will of God**. For the **time already past is sufficient** for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. (Pet. 4:1-3)

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have **done the will of God**, you may receive what was promised. FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS **NO PLEASURE** IN HIM. (Heb. 10:36-38)

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything **according to His will**, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we **have** the requests which we have asked from Him. (I Jn. 5:14-15)

in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (I Th. 5:18)

So then do not be foolish, but **understand** what the will of the Lord is. (Eph. 5:17)

SPIRIT FILLED AND LED

Believers are to be "filled with the Spirit," but what does that *mean*? What else could a Christian be filled with? The term basically means *controlled*, much like one is 'under the influence' when intoxicated. In fact, that's the exact *word picture* Spirit-filledness is contrasted with. (Eph. 5:18)

What is the OPPOSITE of This Type of Life?

CARNALITY! ANY Christian who is not willfully and consciously filled with God's Spirit is *carnal, by definition* (whether innocently or culpably). And the one requirement for filledness is **total commitment** to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit indwells (i.e., resides in or inhabits) **all** believers at salvation, but He only fills those *totally submitted* to God's will.

What Does the Spirit's Filling Do for Us?

Spirit-filledness is the **SOLE** means by which a Christian can live the "Christian life." The nature of sanctification (i.e., spiritual life in this world) is that we **cannot** live it in our **own power** and **strength**. We need **supernatural power** to live and enjoy the *abundant life* Christ promised us. (Jn. 10:10, Col. 1:29, II Th. 1:11, etc.)

To live this way is **normal, miraculously "natural,"** and **expected** of ALL believers. To live *otherwise* (i.e., to live by sight, like a "natural man") is to displease the Lord and **NOT** be living the way God wants us to—whether the *majority* joins us or not.

To manifest the beautiful fruit and godly behavior of such a lifestyle (Gal. 5:22-23, etc.) requires **three steps**. These must be **continually repeated** whenever we sin, in order to restore our *fellowship* with God:

1. Admission/Confession: **Admit** to God that you have sinned, and ask for His *forgiveness*. (I Jn. 1:9). Campus Crusade calls *this verse* our "*spiritual soap bar*." "Confession" means to agree with, or "to say the same thing as" **God says** about the *nature* of the deeds we have done.
2. **Believe** that God has done what He promised—forgiven you freely. And,
3. Ask to be **re-empowered** with the Spirit so you can *continue* the walk. You never lose His Spirit, but you can hinder His power until you are renewed to fellowship. One para-church ministry teaches to "*keep short accounts with God*"—**don't let much time elapse** from the moment of know sin, and your prayer to regain your Spirit-filledness! (Eph. 5:18, Mt. 7:7-8, Lk. 11:13, etc.)

This way of life begins when a believer decides to **totally commit himself** to **living for God**, yet it is maintained daily, even as *frequently* as his sins are brought to his attention by the Holy Spirit. It is not legalism, where **WE** design a process of when to apply what verses (and how). It's an intimate, **REAL** relationship with a heavenly Person, Who will—rest assured—**lead** and **convict** and *nudge* you in the *right* direction. He is alive and **able** to *communicate* with those *close to Him*, who, having their "*spiritual senses*" *trained* by God's word *obey* what they are prompted to do and *regularly draw close* to Him in prayer. (Heb. 5:14, Jn. 2:5, Jas. 2:22, 4:17, 8)

I analogize the Spirit-filled and led life to an astronaut on a space walk. The *further* we go in our Christian walk, the more time we should be able to live with **less and less need to go through these three steps**. This is because *with practice*, over time, we become more *acclimated* to **obeying the first time** we are told, and more *sensitive* to His unctions, impressions and sensings in our spirit—all based on **knowing** and **doing** God's word by faith. The Bible even teaches that **we do not HAVE TO yield to temptation!** (I Cor. 10:13, Jude 1:24, ETC.)

This is **NOT Christian perfectionism**, but "**living up to the standard** to which we have attained." God has us where we are, and there's no use comparing His standard for us to others. Just relate to Christ personally, honestly and directly in *all* matters, by a **continual attitude of**

prayer. It's a *miraculous* life which MANY believers do not experience. The longer we live “*in the Spirit*” (i.e., Spirit- vs. flesh-filled), the *greater* our **heavenly rewards** will be. Become a ‘*spiritual pilot*’ who logs MANY hours and *long* time-spans without **grieving** or **quenching** the Holy Spirit (*defined below*). This is not only rewarding, but *fulfilling* and **expected**. (Phil. 3:15-16, II Cor. 10:12, I Th. 5:17, Rom. 14:4)

This is perhaps as good a place as any to mention a concept some people teach of the “**faith rest**” **life**—a more *semi-automatic* and natural living in the Spirit as a habit of life vs. occasional thing or teaching that sanctification is either automatic or **VERY** difficult)—(Heb. Chs. 3-4, I Cor. 2:4-5, Mt. 11:28-30, I Jn. 5:3-4, Phil 2:12-13—both sides of the sanctification responsibility coin, etc.).

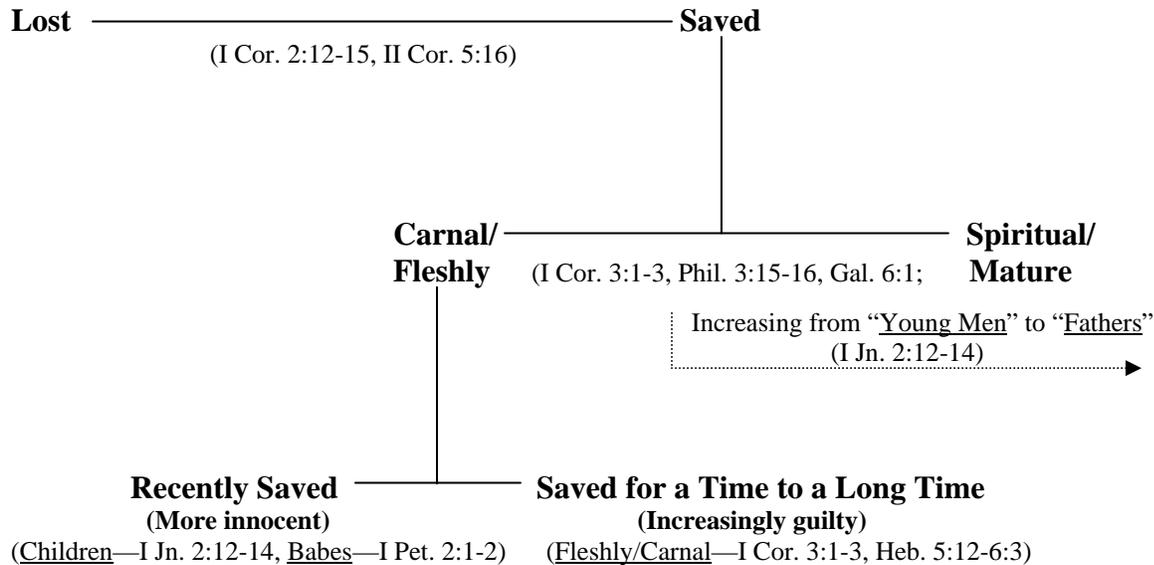
Finally, a short word to identify **what sins do to our fellowship** with God. “**Grieving**” (i.e., saddening) the Holy Spirit appears to refer to *smaller* or “*accidental*” sins—all sins being **evil** but not equal—whereas “**quenching**” Him (i.e., putting the flame out) is *more serious*, perhaps in a more willful, conscious or *so-called* “**big sin**” way. **Both should be avoided** as we *increasingly* “excel still more.”

See: Jn. 15:1-11, Rom. 6:1-8:17, Gal 5:1-6:4, Eph. 4:17-30, Col. 2:18-3:17, I Th. 4:1, 10, I Jn. 2:1.)

More-Unusual Ways God Has Led (Representative Sample): Ac. 1:26, 8:39, 20:22, II Cor. 12:2-4, etc.

ILLUSTRATION: FOUR TYPES OF MEN

(Adapted from Dr. Robert P. Lightner)



This author distinguishes “carnal” vs. “spiritual” by their **total commitment** to Christ/**Spirit-filledness**. Both “carnals” and “babes/children” need the **milk** of the word, as they *cannot* handle the **meat/solid food** of the truth. All Christians need *disciplining*, but “babes” and “carnals” need it even *more* intensely, and “carnals” (as opposed to “babes”) need *exhortation*, **reproof** and even **WARNING**, as the longer that condition continues, the more subject they are not only to God’s **discipline** but His **judgment** of His people. (Heb. 10:30, etc.)

“Young Men” and “Fathers” are *not clearly definable* statuses, but reflect maturity and time as a believer. I John *distinguishes* them by their getting strong from *ingesting* the word of God, as compared to those who have done so for apparently longer and thereby **KNOW** God. We are not to call anyone “father,” so the title as I have used is *descriptive* of those older in the Lord (not necessarily *chronologically*) who are mature and *rest* in the fact of their **knowing God**.

Finally, beware that the term, “children,” does not always refer to the more carnal Christians, as **all believers** are called children in such books as **I John** and **John**.

Note: Some authors distinguish between “spiritual” and “mature,” **Spirit-filled, excited/zealous** and **committed** younger-in-the-Lord believers in the Lord being referred to as “spiritual,” though not *yet* real (*morally* or *knowledge-wise*) mature.

GRACE LIVING

Definition

“Grace” has been accurately defined as “**unmerited favor**” with God. A colloquial acronym is: “**God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense.**” (G.R.A.C.E.)

Description

The life lived under grace can be described as living in **personal relationship** with Christ, *day by day*, with a faith standard you **are able** to live up to, which increases **progressively**, gradually and surely over time. It is living life in the power of God, dependent upon His leadership and is neither under the law nor licentious. It is seeking to *serve* Him in **holiness**, **victory** and **joy** according to our **new nature** and identity in Christ.

Elements

Grace is:

- Given Freely.
- Unmerited and Undeserved.
- Based in Mercy and Forgiveness.
- Involves Unconditional Love.
- Holds No Condemnation or Guilt. And ,
- Results in a Life Lived Ethically Out of Joy and Gratitude.

Imposters

To live under grace is to **live as a committed follower** of Christ. *Sanctification* is *always* by grace (i.e., the **source** of our spiritual life) through faith (i.e., the **means** of our spiritual life). These two elements are consistently *found together* working hand-in-hand in Scripture. As Rev. Don Anderson has said,

“God wants a relationship—not a performance.”

There are two **erroneous ways** to live life as a believer which, although completely opposite of each other in *intention*, yield the same result—**sin**. We’ll identify *all three* choices as either **Law**, **License** or **Liberty** (i.e., *freedom* in Christ).

License (Lawlessness)	Liberty (Freedom of Grace)	Legalism (Law)
I Pet. 2:16	Gal. 5:1	Rom. 6:14

LAW

For the Christian to **not be under the Law**, means that their *standard* for whether they are living **right with God** is **NOT** 100% perfect obedience to the first five books of the Old Testament (i.e., the Law). Not being under the law can extend to meaning that believer’s success in the Christian life is **NOT** determined by whether they **PERFECTLY OBEY** all the **6468** **commands** of the Bible—right now—or else they are **spiritual failures** and **sinfully**

disobedient! Christ's commandments are light, His load is easy, and His commandments are not burdensome, **BECAUSE** we apply them by faith (i.e., based in a *personal relationship* with God)—**not by law** (i.e., a rule book mentality). (Mt. 11:28-30, I Jn. 5:3-4; ChristianTeens.about.com)

Moral perfection **IS** the standard for *lost men* entering heaven **by their own merit** (an *impossible* feat), and is also what God requires of any *believer trying to live unto God based on WORKS (i.e. their own *self-effort*)—again, an *impossible* feat. (Rom. 11:6, etc.). It is also His ultimate goal for all believers.*

The great news is that since our sins are forgiven, a **new standard** for how to walk with God has been established. We are called to maintain daily fellowship with the living God, and it is **not based on works or performance** any more than having a good relationship with your wife would be based on your doing everything perfectly. Our sins have been FORGIVEN!

God **does** say for us to “**be perfect**,” and “**be holy**, for I am holy,” and our maturity toward that *standard* is **gained by faith**, daily. That's the **GOAL** (though *never achievable* in this life), and progressing by **faith** is the means. As the Scripture says, we are to **grow in grace** and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we have received our **introduction** into this **grace** in which we *stand*. (Mt. 5:48, I Pet. 1:16, II Pet. 3:18, Rom. 5:1-2)

The reason Christians are *not under law* is **NOT** because the law is evil. In fact, the Bible says the Law is holy and righteous (Rom. 7:12), spiritual. (Rom. 7:14), and good (Rom. 7:12, 16). The problem is that **WE**—in ourselves—are just sinful flesh. As such, **we cannot** on our own *effort*, decision-making, self-discipline or **will power** OBEY a spiritual book without His life and power working *in* and *through* us to give us that **spiritual** power. Fortunately, we are **no longer estranged** from God and are **no longer flesh** as our true *identity*, and we are freed to be able to live that life, by **faith**. (Jn. 6:63, 5:39, II Cor. 3:3-6, Rom. 8:3-8, Heb. 4:12, ETC.)

LICENSE

The final imposter to grace is what some call ‘**grace abuse**’... taking *advantage* of the system God has established by **NOT trying to grow or obey God**—called “**license**.” Lawlessness, carnality, luke-warmness, worldliness, self-righteousness and pure living for yourself (i.e., just like a *lost person naturally* would) are other synonyms of **license** in its various forms. **See Also:** God's Will/Imposters

In short, believers who are **NOT totally committed** to Christ are **NOT filled** with His Spirit and live a life **only** the way they *want* to—doing what they please (which always involves living according to *fleshly desires*). Such a life will **NEVER please God**, will ultimately cause **PAUPERS in heaven** (if such people *were* saved) and brings down the reputation of Christianity as a *Church* ‘full of *hypocrites*.’

The life of grace is the **most fulfilling** and **wonderfully abundant** life, for in it God provides the opportunity to **live in true VICTORY**. We are (or at least *can be*) free from habitual, willful and knowing sinning against the One we love, by His power and leading. We are also sure that we are **fully forgiven** and **unconditionally loved**, and are thereby free to love and serve God in holiness, victory and joy.

If this is not the life you are living, you are NOT living the Christian life, though you may be a *Christian*. Get your viewpoint corrected from these two *grace imposters* of Law and

License and start *enjoying* the **fruitful benefits** and **rewards** of FULLY PLEASING Him. Walk by **faith**, live grow under grace, be led by the Spirit, **follow** Christ and **walk with God** (along with all the other **word pictures** associated with this most **GLORIOUS** and NORMAL Christian life).

Applied

The Christian is *not without law*, but is *under* a **Person**, and what the New Testament calls:

- “The Law of Christ.” (I Cor. 9:21, Gal. 6:2)
- “The Royal Law” (Jas. 2:8)
- “The Law of Liberty.” (Jas. 1:25, 2:12)
- “The Law of Faith.” (Rom. 3:27)

In other words, while all God’s word is applicable to believers and is what we are submitted to, **He decides** which parts and at what time and how we *progressively apply* it, based on our *personal growth* and fellowship with Him.

Abused

Grace can be *abused*, either by manipulatively “**taking advantage**” of it’s *freedom*, or by **ignoring the Bible altogether** in favor of sin. The *proper* response to God’s *grace* in sanctification is to live as bond-servants of God (i.e., **freed** from slavery to sin, and thereby **free** to choose to *make oneself* His slave—the very definition of a bond-slave, and *synonymous* with living as His disciple).

Valued

God’s grace is **unparalleled** and **unmatched** No other religion has the concept of heaven as a **free GIFT**, or righteousness in this life as a *privilege* one is EMPOWERED to live from God’s life within and claiming His promises by **faith**. Here are a few verses *extolling* God’s great idea called “**grace**.”

See: II Cor. 1:12, 6:1, 8:9, 9:8, Eph. 1:6-7, Phil. 1:7, Col. 1:6, II Th. 2:16, I Tim. 1:14, II Tim. 1:9, 2:1, Tit. 2:11, 3:7, Heb. 4:16, 10:29, 12:15, 13:9, Jas. 4:6, I Pet. 4:10, 5:5, 12, II Pet. 3:18

GRAY AREAS AND ‘ALL THINGS LAWFUL’

In the Bible there are many passages which contain **no commandments** to obey. However, where there are commands, with an attitude of willingness to obey and serve God, we **apply the word of God by FAITH**—that is, as the **Spirit lays His word** on our hearts (or “convicts us” to apply it). There are many black and white moral issues in our life to confront, and in His power and timing we (*eventually*) will.

There are some issues which are “*amoral*” (i.e., **not moral or immoral in themselves**), that can become a **moral** issue for us either if:

1. We are unsure what to do and act against our conscience, or
2. We know or are alerted to the *effect* our decision will have in sinfully influencing a “weaker brother.” (i.e., a *less mature* Christian with a *less-strong* conscience in these matters).

The Bible has some examples from the days of its writing, but we are not much tempted to buy food from a local pagan religious temple as our grocery store (among *other* examples), so let me give you a **few examples** of how this concept can still be in play for the modern believer. **Can an adult believer ever drink alcohol?** What about Christian women wearing certain types of bikinis or believers dancing certain types of dances or watching certain types of TV shows or movies? Can you say “*string bikini?*”

The ‘rule’ is: Anything you are *free* to do that is **not an objective sin** but you know will negatively impact the moral decision-making of a weaker brother **DON’T DO** (at least *around* that person).

Finally, under the topic of **grace**, when we understand that we have been freed up and **enabled** to obey and serve God in and by the power of the **Spirit**, we can finally **understand** four passages which describe our general decision-making process on **amoral** subjects, often called “**gray areas**” or “**principles of conscience.**” The “*formula*” we are to apply is:

“**All things are lawful**, BUT...

1. Not all things edify (i.e., my brother)—(I Cor. 10:23)
2. Not all things are profitable. (I Cor. 6:12, 10:23)
3. I will not be mastered by anything. (I Cor. 6:12)

Let this *standard* guide you in any **gray area** decisions you may face. Remember, it is not the activity that is evil, or that you don’t have the right to do it. It is *considering* the **other person’s** conscience which affects your OWN conscience’s clarity before God. An action can be perfectly morally neutral and still be a SIN for **you** if your decision is not “*from faith.*” (Rom. 14:21-23)

This is not the previously popular “What Would Jesus Do?” (**WWJD**) philosophy, which essentially came about because Christians don’t know the Bible well (because they *hardly* read it). They may have some “**image**” of what Jesus would do—which cannot be *completely accurate* if we don’t search the Scriptures. We are blessed with **full access** to ASK HIM **directly** what to do and we have His final written revelation to *teach* us His will! Don’t ask what He would do—*ask* Him, and *see* what he’s already TOLD you!

Many believers have no idea what He was like or wants, because they have a “Jesus **meek and mild** only” mentality of **just “loving on” people**. If that were the only issue for believers were to consider in *sanctification*, we could be justified in throwing out all Bible pages but those speaking about love! It’s **not that simple**, though it’s **not very complicated** either.

See: Rom, 14:1-15:3, I Cor. 8:1-3, 10:14-11:1

KEY VERSES

LIBERTY

But by the **grace** of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the **grace** of God with me. (**I Cor. 15:10**) [i.e., grace when experienced produces more goodness than any law ever could—Gal. 5:22-25]

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by **faith** into this **grace** in which we stand; and we exult in *hope* of the glory of God. (**Rom. 5:1-2**)

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness, but **grow in the grace** and **knowledge of our Lord** and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (**II Pet. 3:17-18**)

It was for **freedom** that Christ **set us free**; therefore keep **standing firm** and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. (**Gal. 5:1-3**)

Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (**Jn. 8:31-32**)

"If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed. (**Jn. 8:36**)

LAW

For sin shall not be master over you, for **you are not under law, but under grace**. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? *May it never be!* Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as **slaves for obedience**, you are slaves of the one whom you **obey**, either of **sin** resulting in death, or of **obedience** resulting in righteousness? (**Rom. 6:14-16**)

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet **stumbles in one point**, he has become **guilty of all**. For He who said, "DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," also said, "DO NOT COMMIT MURDER." Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. (**Jas. 2:10-12**)

For as many as are of the works of the Law are **under a curse**; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT **ABIDE BY ALL THINGS** WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." However, **the Law is not of faith**; on the contrary, "HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM." (**Gal. 3:10-12**)

LICENSE

Act as **free** men, and do not use your **freedom** as a covering for **evil**, but use it as bondslaves of God. (**I Pet. 2:16**)

For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, **ungodly** persons who **turn the grace** of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (**Jude 1:4**)

TRIALS, TEMPTATION AND SUFFERING

In my New Testament “Color Charts” (which *graphically* portray the contents and *themes* of every New Testament book), the major section heading for James chapter 1 is:

- I. **Seeming Non-Gifts:** Trials (1:1-12)
- II. **Non-Gifts:** Temptation (1:13-15), and
- III. **Gifts:** Salvation⁺ (1:16-18)

So what is the difference between the various “*tough times*” and challenges all true believers will face?

1. First, there are **trials**—tough times which *test our faith* and make us morally stronger.
2. Next, **temptation** is NEVER a lure to make us morally stronger—just the *opposite* (as is its source, the devil).
3. **Suffering**, though very *tough to endure*, is within the providence of God, even if its direct agency is sometimes the *devil* and his *forces*.

Please read the following **key passages** on the various challenges we face, and *learn* how God wants you to handle them. You will quickly learn that someone claiming to be living in a “bed of roses” or “the life of Riley” or on “Easy Street” is **LIKELY not fully** serving within the *will of God*:

TRIALS

Consider it all **joy**, my brethren, when you encounter **various trials**, knowing that the testing of your faith produces *endurance*. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be **perfect and complete, lacking in nothing**. (Jas. 1:2-4)

In this you greatly **rejoice**, even though now for a little while, *if necessary*, you have been distressed by **various trials**, that the proof of your faith, being **more precious than gold** which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with **joy** inexpressible and full of glory, (I Pet. 1:6-8)

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take **courage**; I have overcome the world.” (Jn. 16:33)

“Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will *care for itself*. Each day has enough **trouble** of its own.” (Mt. 6:34)

TEMPTATION

Let no one say when he is tempted, “**I am being tempted by God**”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and **He Himself does not tempt anyone**. But each one is tempted when he is **carried away** and **enticed** by his own lust. Then when lust has *conceived*, it gives birth to **sin**; and when sin is *accomplished*, it brings forth **death**. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. (Jas. 1:13-16)

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is *common* to man; and God is faithful, who will **not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able**, but with the temptation will **provide the way of escape** also, that you may be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to *wise* men; you judge what I say. **(I Cor. 10:13-15)**

then the Lord knows how to **rescue** the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of **judgment**, **(II Pet. 2:9)**

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot **sympathize** with our weaknesses, but **One who has been tempted in all things** as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need. **(Heb. 4:14-16)**

And He said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. 'Give us each day our daily bread. 'And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And **lead us not into temptation**.'" **(Lk. 11:2-4)**

Now to Him who is **able** to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. **(Jude 1:24-25)**

The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is **no cause for stumbling** in him. **(I Jn. 2:10)**

"Keep **watching** and **praying**, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." **(Mt. 26:41)**

SUFFERING

Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, **arm yourselves also with the same purpose**, because he who has suffered in the flesh has **ceased from sin**, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. **(I Pet. 4:1-2)**

For you have been called for this purpose, since *Christ* also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to **follow in His steps**, **(I Pet. 2:21)**

Beloved, **do not be surprised** at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though *some strange thing* were happening to you; but **to the degree that you share the sufferings** of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may **rejoice** with exultation. **(I Pet. 4:12-13)**

Suffer hardship with me, as a *good soldier* of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. **(II Tim. 2:3-4)**

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also **lay aside** every encumbrance, and the **sin** which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the **joy** set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may **not grow weary** and lose heart. You have **not yet resisted** to the point of shedding

blood in your **striving against sin**; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, **DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.**" It is **for discipline** that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But **if you are without discipline**, of which **all** have become partakers, then you are *illegitimate children* and **not sons**. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we *respected* them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a *short time* as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our good**, that we may **share His holiness**. All discipline for the moment seems **not to be joyful**, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been **trained** by it, *afterwards* it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (**Heb. 12:1-11**)

And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a **thorn in the flesh**, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, "My **grace** is sufficient for you, for **power** is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the **power** of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with **persecutions**, with **difficulties**, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am **strong**. (**II Cor. 12:7-10**)

OTHER CHALLENGES

Finally, there are other challenges believers *can* face, and the Bible addresses these as well:

Thorn in Flesh (**See:** II Cor. 12:7-10, above)

Strongholds (II Cor. 10:4)

Weaknesses (I Cor. 2:3, Rom. 8:26, Heb. 5:2, etc.)

"Blind Spots" (Jas. 1:23-25, Mt. 7:4)

Addictions (**See:** Strongholds, above)

Natural Consequences of Sin (Ex.: physical death for ALL men, going to jail for a **crime**—Christians are not immune) (Heb. 9:27, Rom. 13:1-7, etc.)

Etc. (do you know of any others?)

It appears that the consistent teaching on **how to handle** these stresses is to:

- **Rely** on God's *Power* and *Deliverance*.
- Have an *Attitude* of **joy**.
- **Pray**.
- Know the **Word**. And
- **ENDURE!** (**deliverance** is promised, **ultimately** if not *sooner!*)

See Also: Warfare

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Definition

Spiritual warfare is defined as the attempt and **efforts** of satan and his demons to **defeat** believers in their ministries and ethical growth and to **keep lost people** from 'coming to Christ'. The **devils' plan** for *believers* is clearly laid out in **John 10:10** and **I Peter 5:7-10**. He will do anything to keep us from **growing morally**, and **evangelizing**, and he seems to be **quite SUCCESSFUL** in the average American church. (II Cor. 10:3)

Opposition

Even as believers the devil is a **greater power** than we can handle on our own. It is only by reliance on the One *so much greater than the devil*, that we can experience *glorious **victory***, in Christ. The devil may be "the **god of this world**," but he is **NOT God of all**. His actions are restricted and limited within the sovereignty of God, and WE are allowed to **experience** and promised **victory over the devil** if we trust God and **put on His full armor**. (Jas. 4:5-10, II Cor. 4:4, I Jn. 4:4, 5:4)

Weapons

For the Christian to experience **victory** over **sin** and the **devil** and *reign triumphant* in this life takes both offensive and defensive weapons. Several passages detail the armor God has provided for us to **stand firm** against our enemy in the *evil day*.

If you have not personally appropriated these weapons for your life, you leave yourself **exposed**, vulnerable and subject to **defeat**. Our weapons are **strong**, and **divinely** (vs. *humanly*) **POWERFUL**, and the *devil knows it*.

WE are to know how the devil operates, and **not be *surprised*** by or **ignorant** of his schemes lest we **fall prey** to them. Study how he has acted, as revealed in Scripture, and you will see some of his **CLEVER tactics**. They are intended for and aimed at **YOU**, his **target**, to **ruin** your spiritual growth and life. No need to give him **any more victories** than he has already accomplished!

God has provided our armament, and a believer needs only to "**put it on**." The pieces include:

1. **Truth**. (Loins covered)—(Eph. 6:14) Knowledge of God's word. Mind-renewal, Scripture **memory** and **meditation**.
2. **Righteousness**. (Breastplate)—(Eph. 6:14) **Holy character** protecting our hearts.
3. **Gospel**. (Feet deliver it)—(Eph. 6:15) Evangelism is a *weapon* against the devil, and requires FEET taking the Gospel message to the people!
4. **Faith**. (Shield that can defeat **all** the devil's fiery attacks)—(Eph. 6:16)
5. **Salvation**. (Head helmet)—(Eph. 6:17) Likely means either to **make sure** you are saved, or *more likely* to have your mind-set focused on our great SALVATION. **See:** "Salvation. (the blood of Christ)," below
6. **Bible**. (Sword of the Spirit)—(Eph. 6:17) Likely distinguishing the word the Spirit calls to our mind, after having **studied the word** as the loin-covering truth.
7. **Prayer**. (if **not** a weapon, the **only way** faith can be *exercised*)—(Eph. 6:18, Mk.

11:22-24))

- a) Pray. (always in the **Spirit**)—(Eph. 6:18)
 - b) Petition. (always *in the Spirit*, and for ALL **Christians**, including for their *boldness* in *evangelism*)—(Eph. 6:18)
 - c) Pray with alertness. (Eph. 6:18)
 - d) Pray with perseverance. (Eph. 6:18)
8. **Faith**. (*Soberly* put on the breastplate)—(I Th. 5:8) **See**: “Shield of Faith,” above
 9. **Love**. (*Soberly* put on the breastplate)—(I Th. 5:8) The **greatest ethic**. Learn to love *lost men* and *believers*. (I Cor. 13:13, Mt. 22:36-40)
 10. **Hope of Salvation**. (Head helmet)—(I Th. 5:8) **Mind fixed** on our future *hope*. (I Pet. 1:13)
 11. **God’s power?** (II Cor. 6:7) Whether *explicitly* a weapon or not, all that is done in Christ is done in the **power of the Spirit**—including *spiritual warfare*.
 12. **Right Hand Weapons of Righteousness**. (II Cor. 6:7) Likely the shield of faith or sword of the Spirit (unless you have *more than* two hands)
 13. **Left Hand Weapons of Righteousness**. (II Cor. 6:7) Again, likely the shield of faith or sword of the Spirit (unless you have *more than* two hands)
 1. **Salvation**. (the blood of Christ)—(Rev. 12:11) Likely means either to make sure you are saved, or, *more likely* to have your mind-set focused on our great SALVATION
 15. **Testimony**. (i.e., *verbal*)—(Rev. 12:11) **Tell people** you were *saved*!
 2. **Commitment**. (i.e., *not* loving life *more than* Christ)—(Rev. 12:11) Be **totally committed** to Christ.

Not everyone believes all of these are Christian weapons, but all can agree that it’s

Time to GET TO WORK because there’s a lot of military clothing to put on!

See Also: Rom. 5:17, 8:35-39, I Cor. 15:57, II Cor. 1:10, 6:7, 10:1-6, Eph. 6:10-18, I Th. 2:18, II Tim. 4:18, I Jn. 4:4, Rev. 12:11, etc.

OUR VICTORY IN CHRIST

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, *much more* those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness **will reign in life** through the One, Jesus Christ. (**Rom. 5:17**)

But **in all these things** we **overwhelmingly conquer** through Him who loved us. (**Rom. 8:37**)

But thanks be to God, who **always leads us in His triumph** in *Christ*, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. (**II Cor. 2:14**)

You are from God, little children, and have **overcome them**; because *greater* is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (**I Jn. 4:4**)

‘For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome. For **whatever is born of God overcomes the world**; and this is **the victory** that has overcome the world—our faith. (**I Jn. 5:3-4**) **See Also:** Trials, Temptation and Suffering