

# BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT

Matthew 5:48

Thirty-eight Sermonettes on The Same Theme:

**SIN, SALVATION and RIGHTEOUSNESS**

By  
Richard H. Strand  
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## CONTENTS

Page

3. PREFACE
4. WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK
  
6. THE GREAT NEED FOR RIGHTEOUS BEHAVIOR
7. KEEPING GOD'S LAW IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE
8. LIVE IN THE SPIRIT – NOT THE FLESH
9. HATE YOUR LIFE SO YOU CAN LIVE FOREVER
10. SALVATION GIVES YOU FREEDOM TO BECOME PERFECT
11. DO NOT SIN AGAINST GOD
13. ABIDE IN HIM AND BE PERFECTED
14. CLEANSE ME AND LEAD ME IN THE WAY EVERLASTING
17. RUN THE RACE OF YOUR LIFE
17. DO NOT FEAR BECOMING A “GOODY-GOODY”
18. FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD
20. BE ONE OF GOD'S CHILDREN
21. COME TO LIFE AND LIGHT
21. WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING
23. UNDERSTAND SOME ESSENTIALS OF THE FAITH
25. IS YOUR SPIRITUAL FATHER THE ARCH LIAR?
26. THE WORK OF BEING A CHRISTIAN
27. THE RIGHT WAY TO HEAVEN
27. THE WRONG WAY TO HEAVEN
29. STOP LOVING THE “WORLD” AND BE YE HOLY
30. OBEY “THE LAW”
32. DON'T BECOME A REPROBATE
34. FOLLOW CHRIST'S SPIRIT AND BECOME GOD'S SON
35. GROW UP AND REPLACE YOUR “OLD MAN”
36. KEEP CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE AND KEEP LIVING
38. FOLLOW CHRIST AND DEVELOP HIS CHARACTER IN YOU
39. KEEP FIGHTING AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF YOUR SOUL
40. LIVE LIKE A SAINT TO BECOME ONE
43. SIN IS IMPERFECTION THAT GOD HATES

45. LOVE AND FEAR GOD
47. AVOID FALSE TEACHING AND SAVE YOUR SOUL
49. FOLLOW JESUS – DON’T JUST TALK ABOUT IT
52. YOU WERE MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE –DON’T SPOIL IT
57. HOLINESS REQUIRES WORK
59. HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST AND PURSUE HOLINESS
60. KEEP GOD’S COMMANDMENTS AND DO NOT LIE
62. FINAL CONCLUSION – BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT

## PREFACE

About a third of the contents of this document was originally written to recommend to teachers of adult Sunday school classes a study of *The First Epistle of John*. That book inspired this treatise.

Now this paper has grown legs and is broken into a series of small Biblical studies that vary in length from two paragraphs to four pages as the Spirit moved. They are all *exhortations* on the importance of righteous behavior, so I call them *sermonettes*. I have always wanted to preach!

Each message makes a fairly unified statement about its own title. Each one stands on its own two feet, so they can be studied one at a time in any order. Instead of a logical development of ideas, this book is a collection of different approaches to the same conclusion, namely, the absolute necessity of being a *good* person if you expect to go to heaven when you die. Being a born-again believer, I didn’t think that was either possible or necessary, but I have changed my mind.

You should expect some redundancy if the articles are read consecutively, since they are all on the same subject and pointed toward the same conclusion. It is probably more useful for you to choose a title that interests you from the list of “Contents” and then check it off after you have read it. (Or don’t check it off. I would be happy if you read it again accidentally!)

I have a doctorate in education, so I use teaching methods in my writing. Redundancy is valuable. It is like repeating your telephone number so it gets copied down correctly or can be remembered.

In case you cannot see it at first glance, I use the King James Authorized Version so I can find the references I need from my memory of the words I have learned. Besides, I find the language beautiful.

### WHY I WROTE THIS BOOK

I personally am much farther away from being conformed to the image of Christ than the Apostle Paul was, but, by delving deeply into the Bible, I have now come to the conclusion that I have at least been “saved!”

I knew I had thought the right thoughts and said the right things, but I was frightened when I read the third chapter of *The First Epistle of John*. It said many things like this: Verse 6: “*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*” Verse 9: “*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*” Please see my message on “Some Essentials of the Faith” for other scary statements that I had never learned about the gospel.

I still have some sinful habits, and was not even trying to stop them. I had just been continuing “business as usual” most of the years since being saved. So, “Was I really saved sixty years ago, and am I going to hell?” That is the question those passages made me ask. I actually doubted my salvation. That is why I ask my readers to doubt theirs more than once.

It is very ironic that the *First Epistle of John* is the work that is most often cited to convince newborn Christians that they have eternal security. It did precisely the opposite for me! It frightened me.

To see if I could find some reason to tell God that I was saved, I did a lot of Bible study. The messages in this book were all written to me, and I now believe everything is all right with me. But I also know I had *not* been doing the most important thing God expects me to do. As the above verses say, he wants me to stop sinning!

I am very thankful he showed it to me in His Word while there was still time for me to do something about it. I cannot say for sure that it would have been a fatal sin of omission; and the fact that I now have started to amend my ways may actually be a validation of the doctrine of eternal security. But the thought was scary.

So this Bible study has changed my life. I now am in the process of deliberately stopping my sinning and am working to accomplish God’s plan for my life. I hope reading these little messages will do the same for many of my readers. If I did not think so, I would not have worked so hard writing and printing this book.

I love Jesus and now I am trying to act like he would act in every situation, and I see some growth. By praying for his help, I have learned that I am now able to resist temptations and stifle some evil thoughts and desires, which no one had ever told me I could do – and which a faulty interpretation of the Bible had convinced me that I could *not* do! I have faith that with the help of his Holy Spirit in me, I will continue growing to become more like Jesus, which I am now sure God wants me to do.

I am a very old man, but the *older* man inside me still has sinful attitudes and habits that need to be changed. One that I am working on is the difficult task of controlling my temper as I should. Everyone gets mad, but they should not sin in the process. Another one is sometimes still using God’s name in vain when I get frustrated with myself. I ask his forgiveness every time and am ashamed that his name still pops up in non-worshipful situations. I see myself making some progress, little by little.

I believe God will forgive me if I were to die tomorrow, because “*God looketh on the heart.*” (1 Sam. 16:7) He knows that my heart is right because my heart confirms it. As John says, “*Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*” (1 John 3:21).

I even know that now my prayers for help will be answered, because the very next verse (1 John 3:22) says, “*And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.*” That is what I am now trying to do. I hope that some people who study my writings will conclude that perhaps they should do that also, even though no one has made it sound as important as I do.

As I have been writing these little sermons, with much studying of the Bible, I am firmly convinced that Christ still wants me to become a better man, husband and father than I have been. I also am

convinced that by seeking his help when I cannot see any change in myself, I will be able to make some real progress toward that goal!

Then I will go joyfully to see him and serve him forevermore in the incorruptible body that will make me sinless like Jesus. My voice is not great, but when I sing praises to the Lord in heaven, and sing "All My Sins Are Gone," it will be true! They will not only be forgiven; they will not exist.

There is no limit to the number of Biblical verses and other resources available to help me grow more like Christ. I recently discovered Jerry Bridges' book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*; and I also bought another book called *Sacred Marriage* by Gary Thomas. The latter tells how being married can help us grow toward holiness. When confronted with the inevitable conflicts that married couples have, we can practice resolving them the way Christ would. I have been married 56 years and am finally trying that – as a last resort!

I believe the kind of sermons I have written are the kind that America needs to bring the great revival she must have if she is going to avoid God's wrathful judgment. These studies revived me. They might, if people have an ear to hear, convince many readers that they need to get down on their knees and rededicate themselves to the Lord. That is my prayer for them.

#### THE GREAT NEED FOR RIGHTEOUS BEHAVIOR

Jesus said unless you do what I tell you in my teaching you are building your house on sand and it will be totally destroyed. This is the King James Version (KJV) of Matthew 7:24-27:

<sup>24</sup> *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

<sup>25</sup> *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*

<sup>26</sup> *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*

<sup>27</sup> *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.* Matt. 7:24-27

Later Jesus told his disciples that He, His Father, and the Holy Spirit will come and dwell or reside in "whosoever will" love Christ and keep his commandments. So, all three parts of the one and only true God will be in us, and the Holy Spirit will be reminding us of Jesus' teachings, sayings, words, and commandments. Here is the way Jesus says all those things in verses selected from John 14:

<sup>20</sup> *At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.*

<sup>21</sup> *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.* [Then Judas Iscariot asked a question.]

<sup>23</sup> *Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*

<sup>24</sup> *He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me.*

<sup>16</sup> *And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*

<sup>17</sup>*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you*

<sup>26</sup>*But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*

Why does the Lord give us all this marvelous help? Obviously so we will be able to remember and follow what he says and also realize that he is close by, empowering us, answering all our prayers and comforting us. Have you ever heard any greater news?

The apostle Paul knew those things and worked all his life following Jesus and the Lord's will for his life; but his doctrine that "faith alone saves us without us having to do any "works" is still true, because living a righteous life is not "works" in the common meaning of the term. It takes a lot of work – and it is necessary work – but it is not the kind of unrighteous work Paul said could never save us. Salvation comes only from our faith in Jesus and his words.

Jesus was talking about what the new birth does for people like you and me. It gives us the motivation and the power to become righteous with the personal help of the Lord who is in us. I do not mean "perfectly" righteous although that was Paul's goal, and mine, and that of all the apostles who wrote letters that we read. But I think, like Paul implied in his testimony, that working fulltime toward perfection in moral character is what God wants us to do. And we should want that also.

So how then shall we live after we are saved? We should live righteously, morally, and grow toward being holy like he and the apostles tell us to be. That is what Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation also said. "The just shall live by faith" means that it is faith in Jesus that makes us righteous (or "just") and we then live righteous lives. That is exactly what Paul believed and did, and what he meant by salvation. So our faith takes us to heaven, but we must cooperate with God's plan by doing what he tells us to do. We apply our faith in Jesus by praying to him and doing what he tells us to do in our daily life. We do not simply worship him on Sunday.

The reason God created man, who failed to live righteously by obeying the Lord, then sent Christ to die for our sins and re-created us in Him by our new birth, is so that we would become good people who would love and obey Him and love our neighbors and even our enemies. Then we could have eternal life and live and serve Him forever.

### KEEPING GOD'S LAW IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE

The Apostle Paul's Chapter 7 of Romans seems to say that trying to follow God's commandments in one's own strength is impossible. That may be true, but it can be done with the help of Christ in us. They are simply laws of good behavior. However, many people use that chapter as an excuse to stop trying to follow God's laws and to excuse their own continued sinning. They then simply call it *stumbling* instead of calling it sin! Today *sin* is a *dirty word* and *dirty words* are not *sins*!

People like to listen to the reading of Romans 7, which seems to say that people cannot stop sinning because we were all born in sin and have Adam's nature. They fail to understand the whole Romans Chapter 6, Romans 7:25, and 8:1-16. Those passages completely refute that misinterpretation of Chapter 7. Instead of telling us that we cannot ever stop sinning, Paul tells us to get rid of that old nature and live in the spirit so we can be victorious over temptation and stop living in sin.

The *new birth* gives us the beginning of a *new life* in which we are alive in the spirit instead of the flesh. “***And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.***” (Rom. 8:10) We thereby can now get rid of the influence of our carnal nature and break free from Satan’s enslavement. We can become righteous and please God, avoid eternal damnation, and live forever with God and Jesus.

We all desire those results, but we do not understand that we must try to achieve them, with God’s offer of help. It does not happen automatically by simply believing in Christ. It is a process of “ever becoming” more like Christ, which will not occur without self-discipline and work. God will provide the supernatural power and some discipline of his own, but we must do the work.

### LIVE IN THE SPIRIT – NOT THE FLESH

***There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.*** (Rom. 8:1)

All the moral problems of men and nations are caused by “fleshly” lusts, which are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. “***For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.***” (1 John 2:16)

Those are the lusts or desires that the devil exploits by tempting us to commit sin and disobey God’s laws. So sin – immorality, illegal or unethical behavior that disobeys God’s standards – is not a physical problem but a spiritual one. It is simply a matter of which Spirit you follow, whether the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Satan.

The Apostle Paul in Romans Chapter 6 and much of Chapter 8 tells us that God sent Christ to extricate us out of our carnal condition. “***God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.***” (Rom. 8:3,4)

That is what Christ himself meant when he said, “***Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.***” (Matt. 5:17) After he was resurrected he sent the Holy Spirit, which I call “Christ’s Spirit,” and told us He and his Father would also be *in* us, and we can be *in* him so we do not need to stay living “in the flesh.” This is obviously only true for “born again” believers – the only people who are “saved” and can grow to become mature “sons of God” and saints in God’s Kingdom.

How is this marvelous thing possible? We put our faith in Christ and our life is transformed by being resurrected from sin and death and into righteousness and life in Christ which gives us the ability to overcome our fleshly lusts. This is how we change: “***For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.***” (Rom. 8:5) Then in verse 8:13 he tells what we must do in order to have life eternal: “***For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.***”

That does not mean we are to cut ourselves up or live in sackcloth and ashes; nor to take every word literally in Jesus’ statement about fleshly lust in Mark 9:43-48 and Matt. 5:30. In Romans Chapter 6 Paul says, “***Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord***” (vs. 11) because, “***Our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might***

***be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.***” (vs. 6) It means to bury the lusts of the flesh and the many worldly desires and keep our eyes focused on the righteousness of our Lord, Jesus Christ and our desire to be righteous like he wants us to be.

Christ expects us to change our thoughts and emotions from worldly lusts to righteous desires and to follow him in word and deed. We cannot do it alone; but we can do it with His help. In order to receive that help we need to abide in Christ and learn to manifest his righteousness in every aspect of our daily lives.

### HATE YOUR LIFE SO YOU CAN LIVE FOREVER

When Jesus was speaking of his own coming death he said, ***“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”*** (John 12:25) To hate our life sounds absurd, but various translations agree that this is Christ’s message to us! Most people do not want to heed those words.

Then in Matthew 16:24-25, and Luke 9:23-24 (with Luke’s slight wording variations shown in parentheses), Jesus tells us we should want to lose our life! ***“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross (daily), and follow me. He that saveth his life shall lose it; and (but) whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find (save) it.”*** Did you ever wonder what he meant? That does not sound like common sense, so only believers can believe it.

Jesus meant denying ourselves in our daily life as well as being a martyr for him if persecution gets that bad. We must keep killing the “Old Man” in us, dying to self and the lusts of the flesh and the world, denying ourselves so “that henceforth we should not serve sin.” (Rom. 6:6. Read all of Romans chapter 6 to understand this.)

We cannot kill that old man all at once. It requires self-discipline and we have to do it piecemeal as the Holy Spirit directs us. That is why Luke’s gospel account of the same message by Jesus has the word ***daily*** in it. It is not an instantaneous change, but a process of growth, maturing in Christ, purifying ourselves to be like Christ (1 John 3:2, 3); and as Peter says, doing so by ***“obeying the truth through the Spirit”*** (1 Peter 1: 22) ***“Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”*** (1 Peter 1:16) When we are **wholly** cleansed, we will be **holy**, which will not fully occur till death parts us from our corruptible bodies.

Christ used strong metaphors in his Sermon on the Mount: ***“And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.”*** (Matt. 5:30) He also talked about plucking out your eye, and cutting off your foot in Mark’s gospel. (9:43-48) The actions he tells you to take are figurative, but the word ***hell*** is literal, which he describes in some detail. Jesus is saying that ***hell*** exists and people who keep sinning will go there! He nowhere makes an exception for people who say they believe in him or love him.

Our heavenly commander-in-chief is ordering us to ***“Stop sinning – or else!”*** He does not make it optional. He expects his followers to do it. Jesus does ***not*** say, “Keep on sinning and confessing and asking my Father to forgive you because you believe in me.” He expects you to work to ***get free from sin*** because you believe in him and pray to him for help. He says he will answer your prayers if they are in God’s will for your life, and to get rid of your sins is God’s main purpose for you. That is why he sent Christ to die for you.

## SALVATION GIVES YOU FREEDOM TO BECOME PERFECT

Becoming free from sin is what “freedom in Christ” means. Being “born again” does not make you free *to* sin, but free *from* sin’s hold on you. You are freed from the devil’s grip so you can do what the Father wants you to do – the right thing, the Godly thing. You are free to grow to perfection in God’s sight, which is the purpose for which you were created. Our righteous God created man to be righteous like he is, so he could have fellowship with men and women forever, but without Christ most men and women fail.

Let us be honest: It really is *not* impossible to stop breaking the moral laws of God that were only written for our own good. He did not write them to make life difficult. He knew it is possible for “whosoever will” to obey them if he or she could be strong enough to resist the devil. Then he sent Jesus to give you his power, which is greater than Satan’s. He now tells you to “go, and sin no more,” like he told the woman taken in adultery. (John 8:11)

Therefore, if you do not *try* to do what he says you will probably die in your sins. If you do not want to keep fighting the devil, Jesus does not want you to come to heaven with him, even though you *say* you love him. If you love him he says you will keep his commandments. “***For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.***” (1 John 5:3) In the gospel written by the same John, Christ says, “***If ye love me, keep my commandments.***” (John 14:15) And Jesus repeats that injunction two more times in the same chapter as he explains salvation to his disciples.

I challenge any seminary professor to find in the scriptures where it promises that you can go to heaven if you continue breaking God’s commandments after you think you are saved, and simply confess those breaches instead of repenting and *seriously trying* to turn away from them.

Romans 10:9-10 is the verse someone might use to challenge my statement. “***That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***”

There Paul tells us that “***with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.***” Notice that we receive Christ’s gift of righteousness *in our heart*. That means that in addition to loving the behavior and messages of Christ, we also love the righteousness of Christ, so he then gives us the power to become righteous in thought and deed. The devil had power to make it very difficult, so Christ came to overcome Satan’s power over us.

To me, that is what being “saved” or “born again” means. Salvation and righteousness are not a simple act of the mind and tongue. They are the commitment of one’s mind and heart to the Lord and what he wants us to do. One’s heart is then right and one has peace with God.

We have no right to say “We have been born again,” or “We are *in* Christ and he is *in* us” unless we are working to stop our unrighteous thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. We are to trust Christ and commit our whole life to him, and then we will do what he and his father tell us to do and stop doing what they tell us not to do.

That is the Christian's journey to spiritual maturity and to heaven. It is our duty and our joy. It is what Christ meant when he said, "***Be ye perfect as your father in heaven is perfect.***" (Matt.5:48) He did not make that statement to frighten or discourage us, but to challenge us.

Do you accept his challenge? I guarantee that when you become perfect, as God intends for you, you will not pat yourself on the back with pride, which is a fleshly sin. You will be eternally thankful to Christ who gave his life to make it all possible for you.

### DO NOT SIN AGAINST GOD

I don't hear Christian psychologists "telling it like it is" much anymore. For example, in counseling someone who is sexually immoral, here is the gist of what they often say: "You need to confess what you have done and God will forgive you. We will always stumble or make mistakes sometimes. You should stop having sex outside marriage because that will hurt you or your marriage. God wants you to stop it for your own good because he loves you and wants you to be happy. And you surely do not want to displease your Heavenly Father who loves you so much, do you?"

All those statements are true, but that is not why God tells you to stop being immoral. The Bible says you should stop being immoral because it is a sin against God and the penalty for even a single sin is death – spiritual death now and a penalty worse than death in the hereafter – unless you can get God to forgive you. He will forgive you if you sincerely confess your sin and keep trying with all your heart to stop it. With the help of the Holy Spirit you can. But if you do not really try, and you depend on your confession to save you, it won't. You do not really love the Lord and he cannot let you attain the reward.

As King David confessed to the Lord, "***Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil thing.***" (Ps.53:4) Illicitly stealing Bathsheba and having her husband killed broke two of God's laws. Here is how Saint John the Divine defines sin: "***Sin is the transgression of the law.***" (1 John 3:4)

God's laws comprise the non-revoked Ten Commandments plus many rules spoken of by Christ and the writers of both the Old and New Testaments who tell us how to live today. Breaking any of them is sin. You will be accountable to God for it. Jesus said, "***But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.***" (Matt. 12:36, 37) He was not joking; nor was he speaking about simply getting a lesser reward in heaven when he used the word ***condemned***. Elsewhere he said, "***Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.***" (Matt. 5:22) These are just two of his "rules" for our daily life that many people are simply ignoring.

If you say you "believe in Jesus," you should believe what he says! So reading those statements in the Bible should "convict" you of sin and should motivate you to stop talking the way most people talk today. What right do you have to keep swearing and cursing people or using God's name in vain? You surely are not being forced to do it. You do it to show yourself and others how manly and powerful you think you are.

You may not be able to break such habits immediately, because such a habit is deeply ingrained and becomes addictive, but you certainly need to ask God to help you and see that you can gain at least some victories over it; then keep up the good work. Then God, who "looketh on the heart," (1 Sam. 16:7) will know that your heart is right and you put your best effort into it so he will forgive you if

you do not fully succeed before you die. But if you do not try, I think you are “in danger of hell fire” – those are the Lord’s words.

We should do what Jesus and his Apostles told us. And some of their exhortations are very difficult to cope with because they are telling us to become holy, as he is holy. “***As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.***” (1 Peter 1:15, 16) ***Conversation*** here means all your actions, not just your words.

Christ did not die for you so that you may go on deliberately committing sins that you know are sins against him. He knows you can stop them and you are not trying. That is rebellion against God – exactly the same as Eve’s, and it puts you on the devil’s team in his war against God. “***He that committeth sin is of the devil.***” (1 John 3:8) The devil is your spiritual father. (Read 1 John chapter 3 and see if you can interpret it differently!)

God is not only a God of love; he is, as David wrote, “***Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth.***” (Ps. 94:1) God said to Ezekiel. “***And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord GOD.***” (Ezek. 25:14)

“***Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.***” (2 Tim. 2:19) If you know the Lord and he knows you as one of his children, you ***can*** “depart from iniquity.” Just leave it alone and do not go back to it. If you find yourself going back to it, pray for the power to resist. That is a prayer that undoubtedly will be answered. Christ promises to help you: “***Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.***” (Matt.7:7) He keeps his promises.

I pray that on judgment day you will ***not*** be “a sinner in the hands of an angry god.” That was Jonathan Edwards’ sermon title during America’s first “Great Awakening.” I hope you will be “A sinner saved [from sin] by grace.” And, believe me, you can do it, with the help of Christ. Imagine how good that will make you feel!

### ABIDE IN HIM AND BE PERFECTED

Reading the scriptures tells me that “being born again” makes it possible for me to have the mind and spirit of Jesus, thinking His thoughts after him and beginning to act like He would act. First John 1:6 says, “***He that saith he abideth in him ought also himself so to walk, even as he walked.***”

Behave yourself! Only by behaving the way Jesus would behave can we be victorious over the devil. That is why Christ comes into us when he knocks on the door of our heart and we invite him in. He does not come in only to be able to comfort us and persuade his Father to forgive our sins. His Spirit, which is called the Holy Spirit, is in us in order to lead us into truth and righteousness; in other words to teach us how to think and how to live.

God first made rules that we could follow if we really wanted to. Later Christ came in person to ask us to love and obey him directly, this time by his own words spoken in his human body, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. After dying for us he then sent his “Spirit of truth” who “***will guide you into all truth.***” (John 16:13)

That is also one of God's purposes for inspiring the whole Bible: "***All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in RIGHTEOUSNESS: That the man of God may BE PERFECT, thoroughly furnished unto all good WORKS.***" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) I capitalized the terms *righteousness*, *be perfect*, and *works*. These are in the title and subtitle of my little book. They are the Lord's plans for us. Another word in the subtitle is *sin*, meaning disobedience to God. This is Satan's plan that takes us with him to death and hell.

### CLEANSE ME AND LEAD ME IN THE WAY EVERLASTING

Christ wants you to be one of the people who ask him, as David did, to "***Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.***" (Ps.51:10) Also, "***Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.***" (Ps.139:23, 24) Those prayers show David's desire to be cleansed from sin and stay free from it. They are in the Bible as models of what we Christians also should desire. This particular statement in Psalm 139 tells us how we can be sure of going to heaven and live eternally in God's Kingdom.

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) and we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23) From the beginning, the sin of Adam resulted in condemnation falling upon all men because we have all sinned in similar fashion. (Rom.5:12) Likewise, through Christ's death, his righteousness results in justification (freedom from condemnation for the sins we have committed) for all who receive him as their savior. "***For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.***" (Rom.5:17) Righteousness shall reign in our life in place of death because Jesus will come into us and give us his power to overcome the devil.

After our "new birth" we must follow Christ, walking in "the way everlasting" that Christ's gift of righteousness makes possible. This gives us the ability to overcome our old life "in the flesh" which still yields to Satan's temptations. That carnal self was not completely killed when we woke up spiritually at the foot of the cross or were baptized into Christ's death. Paul tells us to "mortify" or "crucify" our "old selves." (Rom. 8:13)

Romans 10:9-10 says, "***If we confess our sins God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.***" Cleansing us from all sin does not happen instantaneously at the Crucifixion or at the new birth. If we keep our same old sins after we are "saved" we are still rebelling against God, which will require us to repent, ask forgiveness and continue trying to stop our sins.

If we do not try to stop the sins we know about, we probably do not really want to obey God – we merely want forgiveness. He will keep forgiving us if we really try to obey Him, but I do not believe he will if we are not sincere. He knows what is in our hearts, even if we do not.

Faith without works is dead. We cannot hide behind words that say we repent of our sins and ask forgiveness without following it with action. Those words are hypocritical unless we want to rid ourselves of sin and will actually try to do it.

If we try, and pray for his help, God will complete the good work for us and we will be cleansed. Christ has given us his righteousness for that very purpose, namely, to overcome Satan's power over

us and save us from the “second death.” (Rev. 21:8). We must keep working to overcome temptation, but we will succeed because he will honor our work, give us the ways to escape, and complete the process if death comes and interrupts us. We may not become perfect on earth, but we must be trying to be the kind of holy “overcomers” that God will allow in heaven with Him. (Rev. 21:7, 8)

Many people infer (subconsciously) that “regeneration” is a lifetime license to keep sinning instead of a duty to stop. We originally go to the altar accompanied by “Just as I Am without One Plea,” perhaps hoping that this may create a transformation in our life. It will, provided we really desire it. But if we do not sincerely desire it and then we sing words like “All my sins are gone,” and “buried in the deepest sea” we may believe we are already sinless and do not have to resist temptation any more. Satan put that idea into our heads, because it is not in the Bible that I read. Unfortunately we hear it many times in church and do not understand that we still need to keep fighting against the devil.

**Regeneration**, the new birth, produces **justification** and **positional sanctification** in the eyes of God for sins that we had or that we want to get rid of, but that does not mean “all our sins are gone.” We are all still sinners. To work to “experience” our “sanctification” is the way we get rid of our sins.

Sanctification is the process of perfecting one’s character, which man has to do with the Lord’s help in everyday life. To develop a holy character in us is God’s purpose for our lives, but he does not do it for us; he made man responsible for that when he created him, and he will not make any exceptions. He guides us and gives us Christ’s resurrected power “to become the sons of God.” (John 1:12) When we are sanctified we are set apart from all the other people in the world for the holy purposes of God. Ultimate sanctification is saintly-ness or holiness in heaven when “all our sins are really gone.”

To be sanctified we must follow Christ’s leadership. He is “THE WAY EVERLASTING” that David talks about. (Ps.139:24) Christ said, “***I am the way, the truth and the life.***” (John 14:6) He is the way out of Satan’s lies that bring darkness and death and into the light of truth and a life that will last forever. And we must **walk** on that straight and narrow pathway to everlasting life in heaven.

A convert should want to follow that “way everlasting” like David did. Christ had not come yet, but David evidently knew the LORD. The convert should also hide “The Word” in his heart, so that he will not sin against God. (Ps. 119:11) He should not expect a happy life after death if he has never made a subconscious or conscious commitment to Jesus and to the concepts of “Where He Leads Me, I Will Follow;” or “Trust and Obey.” We must follow Christ, who John also calls “The Word.” We will not get to the right destination without his leadership. He is our “Good Shepherd.”

To follow Christ after you have believed and accepted him requires a changed attitude which one gets when he is born again. It includes a desire to grow to become righteous like He is, which his death and resurrection has made possible. Our desire should not be merely for heavenly or earthly blessings that he promises. That is selfish motivation that God will not honor unless it also based on the sincere, heartfelt desire to become **righteous** and, yes, **holy** like Christ.

Jesus said, “***But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.***” (Matt. 6:33) He also said, “***Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.***” (Matt. 5:6) The desire for righteousness is unselfish. It means you want to work to fulfill your Lord’s expectations of you and to serve him. To do that you

must want to get rid of every sin you possess by working toward the perfection that God demands – yes I said “demands.”

If you do not possess an inkling of a desire for Christ’s kind of “righteousness” and are continuing to behave the same as usual, you probably have not been born again. Your conversion was an imitation of the real thing – it was simply a desire to get something for nothing from your heavenly Santa Claus.

If that is the case, numerous scriptures say that you are a hypocrite like the Pharisees. Here is what Jesus said about them: ***“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”*** (Matt. 15:8) Jesus castigated them severely for being sinners. ***“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”*** (John 8:44) That is what Jesus thinks of people who do not want to follow him and live the way he tells them to. They prefer thinking that they are already righteous and do not need to make any changes in their behavior.

If you have the smallest suspicion that this might describe your status with God, you had better come to God with repentance and ask him to give you a new start in life because your first one “didn’t take!” He will do it if you are sincere, because “whosoever will may come.”

This time commit yourself to trying to do what God wants you to do and also then start doing it. You will then experience some of “the joy of the Lord” (Nehemiah 8:10) and the “peace that passeth all understanding” (Phil. 4:7), because you finally have found the “way everlasting” and Christ has opened the gate so you can walk on it.

He doesn’t do that for “just anybody.” When he does it for you it is because God has chosen you to be one of his children. You will know you have been chosen when you see your first victory over some sin in your life. You will then praise the Lord and know why you are praising him. It will not be because of the church music. You will be worshipping him in spirit and in truth because he will be at work in your life.

### RUN THE RACE OF YOUR LIFE

Many people claim to be born again Christians, but any person ***really*** born again should see that his new life is much different from business as usual. He must not keep doing all the things that the world the flesh and the devil want him to do. He is a new person. “Old things have passed away” – or at least “are passing away.” A Christian should be experiencing the difference.

If we are seeking righteousness and are fighting the good fight, we will see some personal victories over the devil. Then we can say with Saint John that we are “children of God.” (1 John 3, whole chapter) Then, as the Apostle Paul did, we should continue “pressing toward the mark of the high calling of God.” (Read Phil. 3:8-19 for a picture of the race, or the walk, that Paul was talking about.)

We are walking or running a race to final victory when we shall receive the glorious prize of eternal life in God’s kingdom. Like Paul, none of us has yet arrived, or attained the goal, but we can feel ***“persuaded that God will keep that which we have committed to him against that day.”*** (2 Tim 1:12) We can feel comforted that our redemption on Judgment Day is assured. That is the good news of the gospel.

## DO NOT FEAR BECOMING A “GOODY-GOODY”

Peer pressure and the standards of the group keep us sinning. “Goody-goodies” are the butt of jokes, because they are equated with sissies. People fear appearing righteous or holy more than they fear God or the fiery consequences of failing to believe in him. You sometimes hear, “I am not worried about going to hell because all my friends will be there.” They are saying this as a joke, but it is probably true, so it is not very funny.

The person who jokes that way probably never heard about *hell* from anyone who did not use it as a swear word. So he thinks it is a mythical place that only fuddy-duddies worry about – or a place they see Christians walk down an aisle to avoid without ever changing their behavior. He probably also says that churches are full of such hypocrites so he stays away from them.

Christians are called to be saints, but they are afraid to become saintly because they might appear sanctimonious to people who do not believe that saints are real people. Since many who call themselves “Christian” hear that we are all sinners, which seems to make us all equally bad in God’s eyes; and since we are guilty if we commit even the smallest sin; therefore, why should anyone try to be spiritually superior to others by trying to stop sinning? We know that this will alienate our friends. So, “Goodbye holiness” and “may the devil take the hindmost” – which he will!

Contrary to popular opinion, being a Christian takes a very brave person, not a sissy. You have to withstand peer pressure and do what God implores you to do in the face of ridicule. It is sometimes difficult even to accept Christ publicly; but it can be very costly of friends if you start actually following him. You may even lose close relatives. The world will hate you because it hated Jesus and crucified him. “*Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*” (1 John 3:13)

In Matthew 10:34-38 and Luke 12:51-53 Jesus said he came to cause that very thing to happen! He said, “*Suppose ye that I have come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.*” (Luke 12:51) In Matthew 10:36 he says, “*A MAN’S FOES WILL BE THEY OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD.*” This is in capital letters in the KJV because it was even prophesied in the Old Testament. Christ said, “*He that loveth father or mother ... son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*” (Matt. 10:37) He asks you to be willing to separate from them and take up your cross and follow after him. (Matt.10:38)

To be a Christian is much more difficult than sinning and remaining popular. It sacrifices some friends and a lot of pleasurable sins! The way to heaven is a *straight* and narrow way (Matt.7:13, 14) and it takes a *straight* person to travel it! Yes, it requires you to stop your addiction to sin, and to face rejection by many acquaintances and friends. “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*” (2 Tim. 2:12)

A person who lives godly is called a saint, and saints are never popular because they do not follow the crowd; they follow Jesus. Remember what happened to them in Rome and Greece. Are you sure you want to be a Christian?

The sinners’ world is the devil’s kingdom. He is the “Prince of this world.” (John 12:31 and John 16:11). This is “the world” that Christ asks you to leave behind in order to be in the Kingdom of God. And this world will hate you for it. If you are in a Muslim family, you will be ostracized and perhaps even killed by your family if you start following Christ.

The division that Christ came to bring is between the saved and the lost; the good and the bad; those who seek after righteousness and hate sin, and those who seek after sin and hate righteousness; those who want to go to heaven and those who chide Christians for merely seeking a fire escape.

God is *not* asking you to be a “goody-goody” who tells people to be good like you think you are! God is asking you to become good like Christ and be willing to suffer persecution for it.

### FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

Our fathers in the faith had great difficulty accepting the Epistle of James into the canon of Scripture. They preferred thinking that a profession of faith and a semblance of righteousness is all that salvation requires. They did not like James’ statement that “*Faith without works is dead,*” because something that is dead does not exist. (Jas.2:17-26) They preferred to think that works of righteousness are *not* necessary for salvation; and they quote the Old Testament which says “*all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” in God’s eyes. (Isa.64:6)

But Saint John concurs one-hundred percent with James. He calls us liars if we say we love God and do not keep His commandments. (1 John 2:4) Keeping the commandments means obeying God, and is the major work of righteousness that God desires for us. It requires effort – *much* effort – because our satanic culture is continually tempting us to do all the things that God hates; and to oppose the world’s values is very difficult.

People who think they are “Christian” who lie about loving Jesus probably just have an infatuation with their perception of Jesus. They do not really know him and do not love his righteousness or want to be like him. They are like the multitude that followed him mainly to see miracles or to have one happen to them. Or they have come to Jesus only because he says they could have the gift of eternal life. These people have either never been “born again” into the new life of the Spirit, or they are not living that life; they are still living in the flesh and thinking that it makes them happy. So they praise the Lord with their lips, but their hearts are far from Him.

James explains how *work* makes faith “perfect” and how Abraham was justified by his works, not his faith alone. (Read Jas. 2:17-26.) “*Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?*” (vs. 21) His faith had stood alone when Abraham first heard God’s promise. But even after Abraham had worked hard to relocate his family and had made many great changes in his life following God’s orders God still tested Abraham’s faith by telling him to be willing to kill Isaac, whom God had given him miraculously so Abraham could be the patriarch of many generations.

So righteousness was “imputed” to Abraham because his faith in God’s promise was “perfected” by his willingness to put his son of promise on the firewood and raise the dagger to thrust it into him. I think Abraham was almost sweating blood and tears, like Jesus, but he still trusted God. How does all the work of Abraham compare with “accepting Jesus as Savior” and then expecting to acquire Christ’s righteousness without ever having to do anything for God?

Faith alone can produce salvation without works in a person who is dying, because God looks into the person’s soul and sees if he wants to do the work that God tells us to do. But everyone who lives after being saved must do those “good works.” The Apostle Paul says, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.* (Ephesians 2:10)

Paul is the one who wants us to understand that faith saves us without works (Romans 4:1-8), but he is talking about works in the flesh. In Philippians 2:12 Paul says, “***work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.***” Then he tells why he is working until he dies (Phil. 3:8-12). Here are the key excerpts: <sup>8</sup> *that I may win Christ,* <sup>9</sup> *And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:* <sup>10</sup> *That I may know him ...* <sup>11</sup> *If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.* <sup>12</sup> *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.* Paul was doing those works because God ordained or required him to do them in order to be resurrected.

Salvation comes by the faith that trusts God so much that you will obey him, and your salvation is not complete until you do obey him. There is no other way but to trust and obey! Your obedience is the only proof of your faith. Mere “profession” is not enough, because, “***Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.***” (Jas. 2:17 and 20)

### BE ONE OF GOD’S CHILDREN

What is the test of your faith and your salvation? “***Ye shall know them by their fruits.***” (Matt. 7:16) Jesus compares us to trees that produce good or bad fruit. God gives us fruit to eat, but there is no tree or vine to produce fruit unless it has been planted, fertilized, watered, fed, and then matures. God (who many call Mother Nature !) does that work for wild trees because he did ***not*** give plants the right to choose whether to work or not. But man was given independence from God and can choose not to work, so after the fall God forced man to work to produce any fruit in his life, either material or spiritual. Man must work for the fruit he produces.

I believe that examining the fruit that we produce in and by our life, and seeing that it is “good” – the way God saw His original creation – that is the only way we can be sure of our salvation.

“***In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.***” (1 John 3:10) In other words, your righteousness itself (or lack of it) is the “fruit” that proves whose child you are. Are you a child of God? Are you even trying to be? I hope so!

The fruit God wants to see more than any other is a righteous character. And this is not going to develop without work on our part. Our human nature wants to sin and we are going to remain in sin unless we do something to change it with God’s help. The reason Christ came, died, arose, and then sent the Holy Spirit to be with you was to give you the desire, knowledge and power to overcome the devil and become the person God wants you to be. He wants you to be a man after God’s heart – a righteous man. (Please excuse me for not mentioning ***woman*** when I mention ***man***; it would take more pages!).

“***As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.***” (John 1:12) That is the rebirth that happens at conversion, rededication, or revival. The ***power to become*** is the power you must ***use*** to become! You are not a son of God until you start manifesting some fruit of righteousness. It is the use of Christ’s power that produces the fruit that God will not compare to the “filthy rags” of people who try to do it without God being in their heart.

If you are in the process of becoming or being a righteous son of God, you can feel comfortable in believing that you will go to heaven. If you are not, you had better question your salvation and start

praying to God to help you be that kind of person. You can do it if you will ask Christ into your heart and then take up your cross and follow him. Merely saying you believe in him is not sufficient.

### COME TO LIFE AND LIGHT

From the Gospel of John: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” (John.1:1) “*In him was life and the life was the light of men.*” (John.1:4) Jesus is our life!

We cannot *sit* around and think we have it made it in the *shade*. If we find ourselves doing that, we are still *dead* in our trespasses and sins. We must stop *sitting* in *darkness* and start *walking* in the *light* of the *Word, Jesus*. Then and only then will we *come to life in Christ and someday live forever in the light of God’s presence!*

### WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING

Does this title sound heretical? These are Saint Paul’s words in Philippians 2:12: “*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*” Paul is telling us to keep *doing* something to be saved! Most Christians are not even aware of his statement.

The words “fear and trembling” are also ignored. “*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*” (Ps. 111:10 and Pr. 9:10) We are accountable to God. If we fail him our punishment will be severe. Many Christians do not want to hear that. They prefer to think that God is *only* “love” and he forgives their sins so they will not have to do anything about them.

“*The fear of the Lord*” means real *fear*, rather than the popular belief that it should simply be “awe” and “reverence.” Awe and reverence are important meanings also, for God wants us to worship him and him only. But worship is thankfulness for what *He* does, whereas “fear of God” is the awareness of God’s wrath over things *we* do.

When Moses brought down the commandments and there was lightning, thunder, a trumpet sounding and a mountain smoking, the people were truly afraid and backed away. Then Moses said, “*Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.*” (Exodus. 20:20) God wants you to be afraid of him so you will stop sinning. That is why Paul said to work out your salvation with fear and trembling – not with awe and reverence, because the latter are not so motivating.

Christ forgives you, but after he does that he tells you to “*go and sin no more.*” (John 8:11) The word *repent* means to turn around and go the other way. That is what the whole ministry of John the Baptist was about. If you are not trying to do that you should fear God’s wrath. If you are, then worshipping him is all you need to do.

You will be very thankful when you find yourself actually working out your salvation and beginning to get the victory over Satan, because then you can be confident that you are saved. And when you get to heaven you will be thanking him eternally by working for him *and* worshipping him.

That is the message that I understand from his Word, from the Holy Spirit, and from my own experience. It is what I keep writing in this book. You still need to *work* after you are born again. Your labor is *not* over till the trumpet blows. Are you getting the message? If not, then read on, because your eternal destiny is at stake. It will be either heaven or hell; you have no other choice.

If saying “***Thou fool!***” puts people in danger of hell fire, which Jesus said (Matt. 5:22), what about your other “little” sins? What about “***looking on a woman*** (or a picture of a woman or man) ***to lust after her?***” (Matt. 5:28) Christ calls that adultery and God made that one of his basic ten “shalt nots.” (See Exodus 20, whole chapter.)

Are you guilty of such things as cursing people or mental adultery after you became a Christian? Most of us are. We think we cannot help it, but we can if we have been born again. But we should stop doing those things so we will not have to ask God to forgive us and hope that Jesus will defend our case after we die!

We all have habits like those that are extremely difficult to break, because they seem pleasurable and the disobedience involved in sin gives us a feeling of power and independence. It is often quite thrilling, because we think we are getting away with something, like Adam and Eve thought when they ate the “apple.” People laugh at dirty jokes even when they are not funny, but simply because they are taboo.

But we will ***not*** get away with anything! If we are still following the “***broad way that leadeth to destruction***” instead of stopping what Christ tells us to stop, we can expect destruction to occur. If we do not follow what he says, we are not following him – we only think we are.

We must try to stop sinning, instead of excusing ourselves with “Everybody does it, we can’t help it, and God has forgiven us.” If we are not working to build Christ’s sinless-ness into our character we should be afraid that we have not been saved. We should then ask his forgiveness, repent, and ask Him to give us a new life that we apparently have missed out on or have backslidden from.

Jesus clearly explains the purpose of the way ***he*** behaved, in John 8:29: “***And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.***” (John 8:29) The rebirth has made us able to be children of God so that we can do exactly the same thing. And the most important thing to him is that we should stop sinning. “***Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.***” (2 Tim. 2:19) Paul was speaking to Christians. Are you doing what he said?

If we are not even trying to do that, we are not following Christ like we think we are. Worshipping him is then hypocrisy. We remain spiritually dead. We have the physical life God gave us, but the spirit that can commune with God is ***dead*** – or “asleep,” the word Christ used regarding a ruler’s dead daughter: “The maid is not dead, but sleepeth.” (Matt. 9:24) We need to call on Christ to awaken or resurrect our spirit as he resurrected her body. In other words, to revive us!

Unless we are working to please God – like Jesus was – we had better fear God as the Bible says. It is true that “***God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind***” (2 Tim 1:7); but the fear of God is what gives us that sound mind. Expanding Psalm 111:10, which I cited above, “***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.***”

Having wisdom and understanding so that one can know and do what God wants us to do is what a sound mind is all about. And to know that you are doing what the Lord wants will dispel all other fear because then you will feel that you are forever protected from personal destruction and He will help you cope with the rest of life’s trials.

I believe that our *work* is not over until we die or fall ill into a state of non-accountability. 1 Corinthians 15:58 in the *New KJV* (selected so you won't misspell three important words) urges us to "***Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.***" Do not abandon the doctrine and the teaching and get sidetracked by the devil or by false teachers. We must persevere till the end of our life and not stop pursuing the righteousness of Christ that is ours when we trust in him. We cannot retire from Christianity.

### UNDERSTAND SOME ESSENTIALS OF THE FAITH

In order to be certain of salvation one needs to understand several essentials of the faith that include the following things, which are not being emphasized much in modern churches: What is sin? What is righteousness? Who can love God, be born again, be able to call God "Father" and know that He is in us and we are in him?

Saint John, the beloved disciple, discusses the above issues throughout his First Epistle to exhort, as well as to comfort, the true believers. Here are just a few excerpts. There are many more that he aims pointedly at the importance and non-optional nature of righteous behavior (elsewhere called "good works"). Remember that he is writing to true believers in Christ years after Jesus' death and several hundred years after the last book in the Old Testament, but he keeps emphasizing the *law* and *commandments* of God.

- The definition of sin:  
***"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."*** (1 John 3:4) John is writing in the New Testament, the covenant of "grace," yet disobedience to the law remains as his definition of sin.
- The definition of a righteous person:  
***"He that doeth righteousness is righteous."*** (3:7) Righteousness is not the mere profession of faith. It is right action in daily life.
- The definition of "the love of God," and how it is perfected:  
***"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."*** (5:3)  
***"But whoso keepeth his word, to him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."*** (2:5) To love God is not only to trust and praise him, but to obey him. Then we will really love him.
- • How we can know that we are "born again" – spiritually "born of God" – that God, not the devil, is our father – and that God is *in* us and we are *in* him:  
***"Everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him."*** (2:29); and  
***"He that commiteth sin is of the devil."*** (3:8)  
***"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."*** (3:10)

***“He that is begotten of God keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not.”*** (5:18) Is he saying a born-again person keeps himself from sinning with the help of Christ who is in him? Fathom that!

***“He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us.”*** (3:24)

***“He that sayeth, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.”*** (2:4)

The above ideas are essential understandings of being a true believer, and they should make us all assess our standing with God. John was talking to Christians. The first statement in Chapter Two of his epistle says, ***“These things I write unto you, that ye sin not.”*** (1 John 2:1) That exhortation pervades his entire epistle as you can guess from the repetition of that idea in the above excerpts from his letter. To stop sinning is ***not*** an option in our life ***in*** Christ; it is a major purpose of it.

Christ came to take away our sins – but with our help! Getting rid of our slavery to sin is what really frees us from guilt, but God does not expect it all to happen instantaneously. He expects us to earnestly work at it and mature in Christ with his help.

#### IS YOUR SPIRITUAL FATHER THE ARCH LIAR?

John says, ***“He that committeth sin is of the devil... (and)...the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”*** (1 John 3:6) In other words, God sent Christ to die for the sins of people to give them a clean start in a new spiritual life, in which they can “walk in the Spirit” (the Holy Spirit of God and Christ) so they can resist or flee future temptations to sin. First John 5:18 says, ***“Whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not.”*** In this way the works of the devil are destroyed in the believers. Then eventually Christ will destroy the devil himself.

If we confess our known sins and let the Holy Spirit reveal others to us ***and*** if we use Christ’s power and God’s Word to overcome them, we will be sons of God and someday will live with him forever. God will not have eternal fellowship with sinners. He has other plans for them.

The group of self-righteous Pharisees Jesus was talking to, as written in John 8:30-47, had been intellectually converted to him (vs.31) but they claimed that they were not born of fornication, they were descendants of Abraham, and were God’s children. But in verses 42 and 44 he corrects them:  
<sup>42</sup>***“If God were your father, ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.”*** <sup>44</sup>***“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye do. He was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth for there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar and the father of it.”***

The Apostle Paul makes the same charge about anyone who yields to his lusts in illicit ways: ***“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”*** (Rom. 6:16) He too is writing “to the saints” in various cities in his epistles. This message is to believers, yet he reminds everyone that their allegiance is to the devil instead of to Christ, if they sin.

The particular Pharisees Christ was addressing believed in him as a teacher who knew what he was talking about and were asking his opinion. But they were not “born of God” and were not really listening! They did not know God, and they had never really wanted to. Many of them probably were in the crowd that later shouted for Christ’s crucifixion. They thought they knew God and were following a lot of rules and doing works to get to heaven, but they were doing wicked things and their work and prayers were only to be seen of men. **“For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”** (Matt.6:5) In many other places Christ used very strong language in giving other reasons why they were hypocrites.

Like those hypocritical Pharisees, a person can call himself a Christian and appear to be making a great effort to be good in order to be happy with himself and to be seen of men. But unless he is really trying to do what the Lord’s words and His Spirit tells him to do he is a hypocrite. He is not a child of God. Satan is still his father and, just like him, he is lying. He is saying that he knows God, but **“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”** (1 John.2:4) God will never allow such liars and hypocrites to live with him.

### THE WORK OF BEING A CHRISTIAN

The work a Christian must do is not work that men reward. . A primary purpose of your work is “Self-Purification” (1 John 3:3); to “work out your own salvation” (Phil. 2:12); to become “sanctified” unto God. (1 Thes. 4:1-3):

- <sup>1</sup> ***Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.***
- <sup>2</sup> ***For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.***
- <sup>3</sup> ***For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.***

God is your boss and your paymaster. His Holy Spirit is your lead man who also provides extra muscle that your work sometimes requires.

The activities in your job description are:

To carry a cross and allow your old carnal self to be crucified on it piece by piece after your spirit has been resurrected with Lord Jesus in your conversion or baptism. To grow up in him by thinking his thoughts and doing what he would do in your situation. To trust and obey him, doing everything he asks. To voluntarily confess your sin when you have disobeyed or failed to fulfill a command or request; then to work harder to not disobey that directive again; and to thankfully accept whatever punishment you receive as a consequence of your sin.

All your work will be done while you are traveling on a path (the WAY) in a vehicle (the Lord) that carries you to the destination that God has planned for you because He loves you. The reason you choose to work at this job is because you want to do what the boss’s SON asks you; and you also want to reach the ultimate destination which is the only one that is not eternally and infernally disastrous.

To travel this way we must live in Christ and allow Christ to live in us and control our actions. Then we will reach our heavenly destination and our Lord will reward us with everlasting life and a crown of righteousness that will give us joy forever serving God and Christ from our home base in heaven.

## THE RIGHT WAY TO HEAVEN

The job we have to do on the road to heaven requires supernatural power; therefore your boss, your path or route, your transportation, and your destination are all the same divine and human entity! You are having a fourth dimensional experience! All four dimensions are called “THE WAY” and it is a person! His name is **JESUS**. He said, “*I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the father but by me.*” (Matt.14:6).

- YOUR BOSS: **Jesus** is your LORD and master who tells you the work you have to do and judges your works and gives you the rewards you deserve.
- YOUR PATH: **Jesus** is the WAY, the straight gate and the narrow way, and also the light along the way – the TRUTH you must know – and He gives you the spiritual LIFE in which you must live as you travel to your destination.
- YOUR TRAIN: The *Alpha and Omega* train is **Jesus in** whom you must travel and put your faith, hope and trust. You must be *in* Him and He *in* you for the entire journey. You had better not try to travel without him.
- YOUR DESTINATION: You will be with **Jesus** and **his Father** who have prepared a place for you, so that where they are you will be also, serving them forever and ever with joy.

CAUTION: Another train claims to arrive at the same “WAY” Station but it will be side tracked. Avoid it at all cost, and if you are on it, get off! Everything about it is deceptive and it will arrive at a dreadful destination that not even its crew anticipates!

## THE WRONG WAY TO HEAVEN

“*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*” (Prov. 16:25) It is the wrong way to heaven. People who take this train will not get there. They will arrive where they sometimes tell other people to go.

People work hard on this train but their work will be judged worthless, and they will be punished instead of rewarded. The judge of their work will not be the boss they work for. On this trip they work for different human leaders whose supernatural boss hides behind a curtain of darkness and only a few of the leaders, the so-called “elect” of various secret societies and organizations, ever know who he is. The workers are deceived about their real boss, the purpose of their work and the reason why they are asked to do it.

The train is now traveling rapidly toward what they think will be a wonderful “New Atlantis” or “New Order” that the *elect* of the dark side have envisioned since the Tower of Babel. But when the train finally reaches its destination, the excited passengers who have not died *en route* will be very shocked and disappointed about what they will find. Their work will gradually become slavery for them under their human bosses and many people will be penalized, jailed, or killed if they protest anything.

Then, when the miracle-working world emperor declares himself – who is the long-awaited Messiah of the people who live in darkness – all the workers will be put to death unless they do precisely what

they are told. And there will be no place for anyone to escape or hide because they will be living in a total surveillance society that was built in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries for this new government to use.

- **THE HIDDEN BOSS** – the dark power behind the scenes – is Satan, the devil, the dragon, the serpent, *the power of darkness* (Col. 1:13), or other Biblical names for the same supernatural entity. But most of his workers do not know they are working for him! They think they are working for themselves under human bosses. The main job of the workers is to try to acquire things for their own pleasure and aggrandizement, to enjoy the lusts of the flesh, and to do their own thing instead of the godly thing, for their own glory instead of God’s glory. Their supernatural boss does not force them to work that way, but he entices them with false promises of rewards that he never produces. His method is to appeal to the workers’ fallen nature and his purpose is to make them his slaves.
- **THE PATH** is the broad way that most people travel.
- **THE TRAIN** is a very attractive and comfortable train called *The Luciferian*. The passengers are everyone on earth who have either put their faith and trust in themselves, which the serpent suggested to Eve, or in any god other than the "LORD of the Bible. But the engineers and conductors on the train have secretly put their faith and trust in Lucifer without letting the passengers know about it, to prevent passengers from fleeing in terror to the closest emergency exit.
- **THE FIRST DESTINATION** is a man-made heaven on earth where there is supposed to be peace and security and everyone is “properly taken care of” by the government.
- **THE SECOND DESTINATION**, which will be a horrible surprise to everyone, including the engineers and crew members, is a lake of fire and brimstone. God will sidetrack the train and plunge it into the fiery lake, and there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth forever by everyone who never asked Jesus to rescue them from this train.

*If you are on this train please find God’s emergency door  
that is code-marked “THE WAY.” It is your only hope.*

#### STOP LOVING THE “WORLD” AND BE YE HOLY

We should work toward holiness in everything we do. To me holiness has several components related to obeying His orders and taking His suggestions. Keep the Ten Commandments and the two major commandments that Christ says sum up the other ten, namely, to love God and “your neighbor.” (Matt. 22:37-40) Also follow the precepts in the Sermon on the Mount and many other exhortations to righteous behavior throughout the entire Holy Bible, which you should study to learn.

Under girding those components is the basic requirement to stop loving “the world.” Loving the world is breaking the First Commandment, because “*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*” (1 John 2:15, 16). The love of the Father, which is demonstrated by obeying him, is the first commandment and should be the first priority of a Christian’s life. John’s Epistle tells us in several ways that a man who does not try to stop loving the devil’s world cannot and does not love God. He is making the world an “other god.”

That is scary, because most people do “love the world.” That is easily seen in the desires, aspirations, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of the average person. The chief sins displayed in loving the world are “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” (1 John 2:16)

Immediately after Jesus tells us that we cannot serve two masters, God and mammon, (material wealth and possessions) (Matt. 6:24) he seems to expand *mammon* to mean almost all the customary pursuits of everyday life! Matt. 6:25: “**Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?**” Then after explaining why he said that, he concluded with, “**Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**” (Matt. 6:33)

In other words, Christ tells us to seek after righteousness to be part of God’s kingdom and then trust the Lord to reward our work for food, drink, shelter, and raiment without worrying about it.

In that passage Christ certainly did not tell us to stop working for the necessities of life or planning how we can provide them for our families. A man doing that would be “worse than an infidel.” (1 Tim. 5:8) God told Adam he would always have to work “by the sweat of his face” (Gen. 3:19) in order to survive on this earth. But the Christian should be growing toward righteousness in and through all the work that he does. Jesus is telling us to not worry about the necessities and not be interested in piling up luxuries.

His words are in the context of not worshipping mammon, so they are telling us to not make wealth or material possessions the purpose of our life. As he said in Matthew 16:24: “**If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.**” That is just another way of saying “**Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness**” (Matt. 6:33) and do not make material things your God.

Not many of us will arrive at perfection on earth, but God is trying to perfect us so we will enjoy associating with Jesus and the saints. That is one of the main reasons God inspired the Bible to be written. “**All scripture is given by inspiration of God ... That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.** (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) That is the purpose of hundreds of exhortations in scripture. The Bible is the Christian’s manual for living, and holiness is to be the ultimate result – *not* mediocrity.

John says, “**When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him like he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.**” (1 John 3:2, 3) Only a person who loves Jesus enough to “purify himself” will ever be like him. The Apostle Paul agrees with John and also looks forward to seeing Christ *face to face*, and they will know each other completely as two kindred spirits. (1 Cor. 13:12) That meeting will not be between Christ and someone who was still addicted to worldly wickedness when he was beheaded for Christ.

How could such a transformation into Christ-like perfection happen to Paul who called himself “the chief of sinners”? (1 Tim. 1:15) He had many Christians put to death. It is a combination of three processes: Saul’s (Paul’s) new birth on the Damascus road, his growth toward the image of Christ, and finally the complete burying of the “old man” when Paul’s spirit left the “world” that he did not love and he went to be with the Lord.

His matured spirit is still the Apostle Paul, only now completely purified as a reward for his faithfulness. He will have an incorruptible body to go with it. (1 Cor. 15:53) I have not resolved the

controversy about whether that occurred for him at the time of his death, or it will be a new physical body at the resurrection of the dead-in-Christ which is yet to come. But I am happy to think of either situation. His spirit is with Christ right now the same as Moses and Abraham.

### OBEY "THE LAW"

***"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments."*** (1 John 5:3) King David was "a man after God's heart" even though he committed some horrible sins in his life. Read Psalm 119 and notice that David praises God's "***commandments***" sixteen times. In verse 172 he says, "***My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.***"

In the same Psalm, David praises God's "***law***" 25 times. As one example, "***So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.***" (vs. 44) "Thy law" is just another name for the commandments or behavioral imperatives that are in the scriptures. David also means the same thing when he uses the terms such as "thy truth" and "thy word." He tells God, "***Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.***" (Psalm 119:11). Breaking God's Law is the definition of ***sin***. "***Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.***" (1 John 3:4)

Christians should all respect God's law the way King David did. Obeying God's law is a purposeful activity, not a happenstance occurrence. We have to read the STOP and GO signs and learn how to obey them. Some of them are conspicuous and may ***not*** be difficult to obey in our own strength, but some require the help of the Spirit that Christ has given us.

We have all been blinded by our culture to many of God's **STOP** and **GO** signs. Satan's helpers have cleverly and deceptively influenced our society to remove many of God's signs from public view and to change the colors of many signs while we were sleeping or watching television. We are now in grave danger of being judged by God for doing things that we think are perfectly legal. We need the Holy Spirit to tell our conscience the true color of the signs we see on most of the street corners of life.

But even if we see clearly that a sign means STOP, we may not have enough strength in our ankle or leg to push the brake pedal down fast and hard enough to obey it. Our leg is still under the control of our old sinful nature. It is as though we were demon possessed, and "***This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.***" (Matt. 17:21) If we can't stop on our own, we need the Holy Spirit to give us supernatural energy and power to strengthen our leg. In order for this to happen we must be following His leadership and calling upon his power, through prayer or the quotation of scripture, to defeat Satan. Remember how Christ quoted scripture to the devil. (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10)

That is the way we can stop "transgressing God's law" (sinning) and falling short of the glory of God. Christ cannot stop you – it is your choice. Christ says, "***Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.***" (Matt. 5:17, 18) You have to build your own character, which means to learn to make right choices, because God gave you free will.

To me that means that Christ died, was resurrected, ascended and then sent the Holy Ghost to earth to lead us into the truth and give us the knowledge and power we need to obey any "jot or tittle" of God's commandments that he reveals to us. The jots and tittles are the rules of proper behavior that are in addition to the Ten Commandments, and we need the Holy Spirit to give us insight into some

of them. I am not referring to Judaic codes, or the sacrifices of the Old Testament, but to the rules of right living.

God's Word makes it very clear what God wants us to avoid. The Bible is full of his STOP signs. The Old Testament describes them as "***the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought NOT to be done.***" (Leviticus 4:2)

Jesus said we will receive the Holy Spirit to comfort us by leading us into truth and help us keep his commandments if we love him. Here are three consecutive verses from ***The Gospel According to John*** 14:15-17:

- <sup>15</sup> ***If ye love me, keep my commandments.***  
<sup>16</sup> ***And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;***  
<sup>17</sup> ***Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.***

Unless you think Jesus was speaking of ***his own*** commandments, as distinct from his Father's, recall these words: "***I and my Father are one.***" (John 10:30)

Jesus defeated Satan by destroying Satan's power over us by sending us the "Holy Ghost" (KJV) who is stronger than Satan. John tells us that we can get the victory over Satan. He even goes so far as to say, in 1 John 5:18: "***We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.***" Other passages in his epistle show us that the devil cannot destroy us because being born of God gives us the power to resist his temptations.

The Apostle Paul concurs: "***God is faithful and will with the temptation make a way of escape.***" (Rom. 10:13) In his letter to Timothy he simply tells us to "***depart from iniquity.***" (1 Tim. 2:19) Leave it alone! We can even stop sin from being conceived in our imagination – this is the highest level of Christian maturity. But every stage takes conscious effort, and some fine points of the law need the help of the Holy Spirit.

### DON'T BECOME A REPROBATE

Sin is not primarily an action, but a thought in our mind or "heart." Sin is first conceived and then acted out. In the first book of the Bible God destroyed all living things because man had this problem. "***And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.***" (Gen. 6:5) As Jesus said about looking at a woman: "***But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.***" (Matt. 5:28). That should convict every man of breaking one of God's commandments! It is easy to understand that "***All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God.***" (Rom. 3:23)

***"All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."*** (1 John 2:16) Lusting is imagining. In other words, one's thoughts, aspirations, and attitudes can be sins, as well as the behaviors they produce.

That is why we should probably keep the television turned off most of the time, or at least turn it off as soon as we start to *enjoy* vicarious sex, violence, swearing, dirty jokes and filthy language. Those all stimulate “the lust of the flesh or eyes,” which God hates.

Much of what we see in movies and in commercial advertising deliberately exploits sensationalism, producing “jaded emotions.” Hollywood goes out of its way to include so-called “realism” to incite lust, anger and hatred because that is good for the box-office or the ratings because it is so ‘enjoyable’ to watch. I think it also salves the conscience of Hollywood entrepreneurs, who think that many people approve and admire their own immoral and indulgent lifestyles and will copy them.

Philippians 4:8 advises us to ‘think on’ the things that are pure, true, and edifying. You find very few of those things in the mass media. From the moral standpoint, newspapers are the least harmful because the absence of sound and motion limits the vicarious passions they can inflame.

People begin to develop “*a reprobate mind*” by indulging in vicarious pleasure watching other people do sinful things. The Apostle Paul, without knowing about or mass media, describes unrighteousness of men by saying, “*Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them... And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” (Rom. 1:32, 28)*

I copied those two verses in reverse order to show the sequence of degeneracy. A reprobate mind is being developed by simply watching or reading about the misbehavior of others. It is fully developed when people actually do things that their flesh has been stimulated to do. The spectator enjoying sinful behavior in that way is actually on the broad road away from God and into the Devil’s kingdom which may easily capture him forever, even if he thinks he is safe as a Christian.

Parents can use this “sermonette” to explain why they need to monitor the theater, TV, reading and Internet habits, and, unfortunately, now even the school curriculum of children and adolescents. They must try to keep their children from being educated to become reprobates. And parents should watch their own habits to keep from becoming victims themselves because sinful thoughts of sins against God, and being an adult does not make one immune to “having pleasure in [watching] them that do them.”

That produces a reprobate mind at any age. It hardens the conscience by increasing the naturally great attraction of sinful behavior and causes mental rebellion against God’s standards of behavior. A hardened conscience and reprobate mind causes the “unforgivable sin” against the Holy Spirit because He is the Christian’s conscience.

So neither being an adult nor a Christian can prevent the degeneration of our character; we have to stop it by our own deliberate actions and by prayer to Jesus, who will strengthen our resolve. Otherwise we could easily lose our salvation and end up in the eternal destination that Jesus tells us about, “into the fire that never shall be quenched.” (Mark 9:43) Jesus was not kidding, and neither am I.

### FOLLOW CHRIST’S SPIRIT AND BECOME GOD’S SON

Some of us will never become holy or sinless before we die. But God will keep us in his kingdom of righteousness if we live up to the light that we have. He will forgive sins that we have not eliminated if we confess them and are *really* sorry for them. (1 John 1:9). But we must keep following the

leading of the Holy Spirit, doing what he tells us to do and stopping what he tells us to stop. The *Holy Spirit* is the conscience or heart of a Christian. “*And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*” (1 John 3:24) “*Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.*” (1 John 3:21)

Paul explains the significance of a Christian’s conscience: “*For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the children of God*” (Rom.8:14); but “*He that commiteth sin is of the devil.*” (Rom. 3:8) If you are not following the Holy Spirit, your Christian conscience, you are not a child of God. To say that you are does not make you one.

If we are following the Holy Spirit, we have been reborn to become children of God. Christ is in us (Rom. 8:9, 10) and we are living a new life that is different from the life of the flesh with its lusts and worldly desires. That is what “rebirth” means. It is our spiritual birth that starts us growing toward moral and spiritual maturity.

And here is how it can save us from the wrath to come: If “*He that keepeth his [God’s] commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*” (1 John 3:24 again)

Christ gave us the right and power to *become* sons of God. “*As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*” (John 1:12) But as babes in Christ we must grow, and, to do that, we must let Christ’s Spirit live in us and tell us what to do. Otherwise we will neither have the right, nor the power to become sons of God.

If we choose to stay in our old life of the flesh after we have been converted we will experience spiritual death in infancy or childhood. It is Christ in us and us in Him that is the hope of glory— not an external Christ that we merely *say* we believe, nor the fact that Christ died on the Cross for our sins. It is our choice to remain faithful to him as ‘children of God.’ If we become unfaithful we have forsaken Him and he is now our judge instead of our Savior.

Christ’s death has not supernaturally purified us for our whole life. John says that every man who hopes to be like Christ “*purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*” (1 John 3:2-3). Christ makes it possible for us to gradually become pure by our own effort with the help of the Holy Spirit who will lead us into all truth and empower us to defeat Satan.

Christ’s righteousness is a gift for the taking – but we must put it into practice. That means more than merely holding out our hands and grabbing the gift to gratify our selfish desire for heaven. It requires us to start becoming righteous in thought and deed.

### GROW UP AND REPLACE YOUR “OLD MAN”

Christian growth into righteousness means to keep discovering that we have not rid ourselves of all our sins yet and to keep fighting battles and winning victories over Satan. We must keep moving toward *spiritual maturity* and do not revert to childishness. That is what Jesus meant when he said, “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.*” (Matt. 5:48) He knew it was not going to happen immediately, but it would happen if you keep trying and make some serious effort.

Most people misunderstand the meaning of Jesus’ use of the word *perfect*, so they give up. It seems impossible to be perfect in our mortal frame. People accept with eager ears the false doctrine that says that *all* they must do is to mentally *accept* a story about Jesus that will assure them of heaven

and they will be “saved.” That encourages many people to keep sinning which is the well worn road to destruction. “***The way is broad that leadeth to destruction; and strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there be that find it.***” (Matt. 7:13,14)

In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul did not separate chapters six, seven and eight. But since translators have done so, the spirit of darkness easily took advantage of those breaks to make people believe that Paul says it is impossible for a human being to behave himself. That is a false interpretation. Paul appeared to be in a dilemma about it. Here is a short excerpt that summarizes his dilemma in Romans Chapter 7:

- <sup>21</sup> ***I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.***  
<sup>22</sup> ***For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:***  
<sup>23</sup> ***But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.***  
<sup>24</sup> ***O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?***  
<sup>25</sup> ***I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.***

In the next chapter, Paul gets out of the dilemma and solves the problem for himself and for us by saying that a man who lives “in the Spirit,” can mortify the flesh and break his sinful habits. Here is that quotation from Romans 8:

- <sup>12</sup> ***Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.***  
<sup>13</sup> ***For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.***  
<sup>14</sup> ***For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.***

In Romans 6 and elsewhere he calls our old life in the flesh our “old man” which hangs on awhile after we are born again. He is the part of us which sins. We get rid of him by considering that he is dead; we “crucify” him, like Christ was crucified for our sins. That is what Paul means when he tells his various audiences “to mortify the flesh” by living in the Spirit, and then to no longer be servants to sin.

The result of being led by the Spirit makes it possible for Paul to seriously exhort his readers with these words: “***I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, HOLY, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.***” (Rom. 12:1) He is telling us to do something to be acceptable in heaven and not assume that we have it already “made in the shade.” We must get into the light of the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Truth, and follow him to heaven.

Being led by the Spirit of God and being a son or daughter of God is the whole answer to getting rid of one’s sin and maturing toward perfection. We cannot do it all at once, because we do not even realize that we are sinning much of the time. But, if we ask the Holy Spirit to search us and cleanse us, like King David did, He can reveal our sins as we go through life and also give us the strength to get out of the devil’s clutches and stop committing those sins. We can mature in Christ and gradually, if not sooner, replace our “old man” (which is the spirit of the flesh) with the spirit of our new life which Christ has given us.

God sent his Son to make it possible for believers to get transformed from sin and death to liberty and life so they can someday be in heaven with Him. In the beginning God created people so that he

could have fellowship with them. Un-holiness as exemplified by the first man is unacceptable to God. He will not stand for it. People who do not seriously *try* to keep from sinning, using excuses such as “the old man,” or peer pressure, or the devil (like Adam and Eve did) – will *not* be on God’s team in the spiritual war with Satan and will go where the devil goes after the return of the Lord.

### KEEP CHRIST IN YOUR LIFE AND KEEP LIVING

Every little message in this book contradicts the idea that a mere mental agreement with the claims of Christ makes one a child of God who is righteous and bound for heaven. Christ was happy that he had not lost any of his disciples whom the Father had given him. “***While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.***” (John 17:12) He had not lost the disciples whom God had “given him” who were “born again” *and* were following his teachings instead of wandering away. If you are reborn, God gave you to Christ as he did with the disciples. You are a child of God.

If merely *professing* faith in Christ were enough to keep anyone faithful, why had Christ lost Judas, the son of perdition? It was because Judas became a child of the devil after he had been a disciple of Christ. The Father first *gave* him to Jesus (John 17:12) – so he seemed to be “born again” – but at some point he decided not to follow Jesus and he accepted money to betray him. He was the treasurer of the group of disciples. He only paid lip-service to Christ after following him for awhile. He voluntarily abandoned his Lord.

It takes more than the knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, the savior, to be saved. Demons actually know everything that we believe as we come to the altar to “accept” Christ as our savior – but they remain demons. That is because the knowledge of Christ is only in their head, but certainly not in their heart. “***With the heart man believeth unto righteousness ...***” (Rom. 10:10). And Jesus’ first Great Commandment tells us we need to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. In other words, the “belief” that we need to be “saved” is deep and wide, like God’s love for us.

Nicodemus asked Jesus a question and he responded, “***Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.***” (John 3:3) Jesus then explained that the new birth is spiritual. John describing the same thing says, “***That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.***” (John 3:6)

The spiritual rebirth is the deeply heartfelt experience of desiring to trust Christ with your life, follow his leadership, and even have the light of his character shine through you. This transformation makes you a real Christian – not one in name only.

This does not have to happen instantaneously, in any special way, at a particular time, place, or situation, or with the help of a pastor or priest. You can make this decision at any time, alone or with other people. It may even happen incrementally, but the net result will be that you really want Jesus to be in your heart to stay.

The rebirth into the spiritual dimension of your life is what removes you from Satan’s kingdom, the kingdom of darkness, and puts you into God’s kingdom, the kingdom of light. It puts *your spirit in Christ*, and Christ puts *his Spirit in you* to meet your every need for wisdom or strength. So you then can live *in* Christ and he lives *in* you. That certainly weakens the influence of Satan over you, but Satan will fight very hard to get you back into his kingdom of darkness.

What happens to you when you are reborn is fantastic. Christ comes to live with you and he promises to never leave you. However you may leave him, because you are *in* him as a matter of your *will* and your *will* must keep you there. God, the “hound of heaven,” hunted for you until you listened to Christ’s knock at the door of your heart, but nobody forced you to open it. So you are still in danger of “*quenching the Spirit*” (1 Thes. 5:19) and going your own way without him – like Judas did. Remaining a Christian is a choice you make.

So be sure you *abide in Christ* all your life and do not listen to the devil telling you to go your own way, to make your own decisions about right or wrong, and to do your own thing. That is what your first ancestors Adam and Eve did. That was the sin that led to their death, the death of every one of your ancestors and relatives, and your future physical death. They had disobeyed the only command God gave them and He took away their eternal life. So keep following and obeying Christ so you can have the eternal life that God had planned for all the other people who since then have chosen to leave him or reject him.

### FOLLOW CHRIST AND DEVELOP HIS CHARACTER IN YOU

When we first accept Christ we are babes who must grow or die. Those are the only choices we have. In the physical realm we have to eat and drink and exercise in order to grow properly. In the spiritual realm we have to eat and drink Christ’s body and his blood (Mat 26:26-28) and the spiritual food in the Bible; and exercise our spirit by doing what the Bible tells us. That is the path to maturity.

“In the beginning” God said to Christ, “*Let us make man in our image*” – and he did! (Gen.1:26, 27) Someday we will arrive at the maturity of that image and still be our same selves! How marvelous! We will not complete the process on earth, but at the end of our journey to Paradise we shall be like him! (1 John 3:2)

The Apostle Paul gives us a glimpse of the remarkable culmination of a Christian’s development. Paraphrasing it: Someday we will be like Him, because we will see him face to face, completely, as a whole person, instead of seeing through a glass darkly and knowing only in part. (1 Cor. 13:12) And the Apostle John concurs: “*We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*” (1 John 3:2)

Our death will occur before we reach that full spiritual maturity, but the process will be completed and we will become “perfect” when our bodies are resurrected and “put on incorruption.” (1 Cor. 15:53) God will have watched our development and seen our intention, and will complete the process for us by giving us new, perfect bodies.

Purifying oneself (1 John 3:3) is the process called *sanctification*. That is another name for *character building*, which *we – not* God – must do. It can only be done by being in Christ and working to make as much progress as we can in whatever time we have left on earth. That is the way we grow to become like Jesus in whose image we were created.

The entire maturing transformation is Christ’s work. We first opened the door of our heart and wanted him to come into our life. That awakened the spiritual part of us that can communicate with God. We were reborn into a new life of the spirit. Therefore we can now do what Christ tells us to do.

But while we are still in our earthly frames, having free will and having to fight the devil, we must work with Christ in order to grow, calling on God’s Holy Spirit, which he sent into us to educate and

empower us. If we do not work to become sanctified, we remain babes in Christ and cannot even digest some of the spiritual “meat” in the Bible. (1 Cor. 3:2) And, if we *never* grow from that childhood stage, we have become spiritually dead, and need to be resuscitated, or revived.

We have to gradually get rid of the weight of our old carnal selves until we mature to complete freedom from it in heaven. Suppressing the desires of that carnal self is probably the “burden” that Christ says we will have to bear. It is the burden of self-denial. It is a light burden (Matt. 11:30) because he helps us with it and we have great joy when we do it; but it is still a burden until we become experts at it.

Will you be one of those who develop a character that will reflect that of Christ, in whose image you were created? Or do you still think that telling God that you love his Son and praising him on Sundays is all that he expects of you? If so, think again!

Christians are on a journey from earth to heaven. Jesus is the only gateway and his burden is very light, but the path he provides is very narrow and easy to lose without him as our guide. The ascent is steep, the rocks are rough, and there are many deceptive detour signs posted by Satan and a multitude of hidden booby traps. Therefore, abiding in Christ and doing his will for your life is the only way to bring you safely to your destination. Only a few people will make it to the high place. You will praise God forever if you reach it – but it is up to you! Jesus is not going to drag you there.

### KEEP FIGHTING AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF YOUR SOUL

Paul knew that his entire group of “beloved children” had to be continually exhorted and educated. He told them to put on the whole armor of God, to keep wrestling against principalities and powers, to run the race to win the prize, to “hold fast” and stand strong against all the wiles of the devil. In other words, keep working. Do not sit around thinking that the Lord will do it all for you. He won’t do it! It is your responsibility. His dying on the cross for you was just the beginning of your journey to eternal salvation.

Christ’s death was “once and for all” but our inner “old man” still has a lot of life in him. We have not completely killed him yet and we must stop letting him lead us around by the nose. We need to attack our sins, one or many at a time, and get rid of all of them if we can before we die; and apologize (confess) to God and keep praying for his help to get rid of any that hang on tenaciously. He will forgive us if he knows we really want to stop sinning – otherwise he won’t.

It is not enough to confess a sin and then keep on doing the same thing. That will get us nowhere. It tells God that our repentance is not sincere. If we really saw the sinfulness of what we did through the eyes of Christ, our hatred of it would over-ride the pleasure of doing it. By confessing it over and over again, we are merely fooling ourselves about wanting to get rid of it. Every confession should be repentance, a change of behavior. We need to pray for God’s spirit in us to help us stop that sin and He will.

Christ has given us all the power we need to avoid or purge sin from us. The seventh chapter of Romans, which people use to excuse their continued sinning, only describes the problem we have; it is between the two chapters that tell us how to solve the problem. People misinterpret Chapter 7 to mean that we cannot stop our sins. Paul is only talking about the sins we commit as we live “in the flesh” when we are not living in the spirit.

In the first verse of Chapter 8 Paul explains that ***“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*** Most people remember only the first half of the sentence, which does not require them to do anything. Please remember the second half, which tells us to do something about it, namely, to start living in the spirit that we were given at our new birth.

Foolish people who think they are smart say we cannot get rid of our sins. Jesus forgave the woman taken “in the very act” (John 8:4) of adultery after she had heard him say who he was, and that he had the power to forgive sins. She had faith in him. So, when all her accusers had left, ***“Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”*** (John 8:11)

Christ expects the same thing from us that he told the adulteress after he forgave her for her sin. He would not have told her that if it were impossible for her to do. He knew she appreciated his forgiveness of her past sins and many “husbands.” And he knew she trusted him (had faith in him) as the one who had the power to forgive sins. Therefore the devil’s hold on her had been broken and she would be able to stop sinning. If you have been born again, you have the same power, and his command to you is the same as to her – stop sinning.

Fallen human nature is the Old Man (Adam’s human nature) that causes us to sin; but, because of the New Man (Christ in us) who died on the cross for our sins, we now have the power to crucify that Old Man (our former self) so we can grow unencumbered by the weight of the past. We become like a newborn child that puts its trust in its mother. Jesus described this in Matthew 18:3-4:

- <sup>3</sup> <sup>3</sup> ***And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.***  
<sup>4</sup> ***Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.***

That is the same thing that the adulteress had done. She had become like a trusting little child. That is why Jesus said, “Go and sin no more” and we can believe that she changed her lifestyle. We as Christians must do the same with any sins that we still have.

### LIVE LIKE A SAINT TO BECOME ONE

I do not say we must attain sinless perfection in this mortal body although I believe all the disciples except Judas Iscariot did so. But we should realize that God wants us to get the victory over Satan and become as holy as we can in this life. That is the very reason that Christ died for us. If we do not do our part by successfully resisting the devil’s temptations we will fail to fulfill God’s purpose for our lives. In fact we will have not done what the whole Bible and all of Christ’s teachings tell us to do.

When Christ forgave the woman taken in adultery, it did not remove her ability to keep on sinning. And we all know that his forgiveness of us does not prevent us from sinning. But we need to understand that he only paid the death penalty for sins that we are unable to stop committing. And when we first come to the Cross with sincere repentance only brings cleansing for all our past unrighteousness (Romans 3:25, 2 Peter 1:9) but it does not make us righteous forever. If it did, we would simply be like robots, not having a will of our own.

If God wanted us to be his robots why did he create us with the power to choose how we will live? Does he want to see us continue to behave badly and then graciously tell us “It is all right son,

because you say you love me”? That is not what any father would do, and is not what our Heavenly Father does. No part of the Bible, including all of Paul’s writings, teaches that. That doctrine has been invented by men who have misinterpreted Paul’s writings about “being saved.” (Ephesians 2: 8-10 and in other Epistles)

Our Heavenly Father wants us to be righteous after we become his children and he has done everything he could to encourage and help us do so:

- By commandments first given to Moses
- By the flood and saving a faithful family to begin again for God’s chosen people
- By Christ’s death for the lusts and sins of the flesh
- By the new birth giving us a fresh start with a new spirit that can make us righteous and can override the fleshly spirit we were born with
- And by Christ coming to reside in born-again believers to guide and help us be victorious over the Devil and any temptation

Now it is up to us! All those things God has done for us do not develop our character while we are asleep at the switch. That is not what Christ meant he had done for us when he said “It is finished!” He bore the penalty for the sins that we can really not stop (Romans 3:25) and he empowers us to avoid or rid ourselves of all sin in the future. But we must do it. Only righteous people will go to heaven. That is why Jesus said “*few there be that find it.*” (Matt. 7:14) He does not expect millions or billions to be there.

Our past sins are forgiven at Calvary, like those of the adulteress, but we too must “*Go, and sin no more.*” We must stop doing bad things that He, by his Word or the Holy Spirit, calls to our attention. And God even wants us to ask him like David did in Psalm 139:22-23, “*Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*” That prayer was written for all of us. When God tells us what our sins are, let us follow Jesus, “in the way everlasting,” to eliminate any and all of them.

The First Epistle of John (3:2-12) explains the responsibility of “sons of God” to stop our sins and he tells us how. Verses 2 and 3: <sup>2</sup> “*Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: ...*” <sup>3</sup> *And every man that hath this hope in him [of seeing Jesus someday] purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*” Verse 6 then says, “*Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.*” Being “in” Jesus, living “in the spirit” makes us stop sinning. The net result will be: “*He that is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*” (I John. 5:18)

In other words, Christ will have defeated Satan in *our* life! That is what he came to earth to do: “*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*” (1 John 3:8) We are still fair game for the works of the devil, but we are no longer his slave unless we want to be!

It was actually frightening to me when I first read John’s epistle thoughtfully instead of just breezing through. I kept studying, hoping he did *not* mean what he seemed to say! Does he *really* mean that if I am sinning after I have accepted Him I have not been born again and am not saved from sin and death? I now think I have been born again as much as anyone I know, because I am stopping my sins with his help and have made a commitment to myself and to God to keep doing that.

The KJV translation of John's epistles implies – no it really seems to say – that sinless perfection should occur instantaneously by “abiding” in Christ. I can testify to the fact that all sinful urges do stop when I am “living in the spirit” like Paul says. The problem is that when I get angry and “blow my top” I have gotten out of the spirit and into the flesh of my old man. So what I need to do is remain in the spirit all the time, or as much as I can, and develop the attitudes and emotions that are Christ's. That will override the old man of the flesh and replace it with the mind and spirit of Christ. That is what will save me for eternity.

God requires that we work toward perfection in our lives but he knows it will take growth in our spiritual development to attain it. Paul makes it plain that we are not sinless when we are babes in Christ. It will take whatever amount of time we have left, whether it be five minutes or eighty more years! But believe me, whatever we accomplish will be worth more than gold because it will show God that we are obeying his commandments, which is the “perfection” that he wants. He will see in our hearts that we plan to continue obeying him so if we die he will give us incorruptible bodies and eternal life because of his grace and our faith.

We still have the ability and many temptations to sin before we die. If we stop resisting we can go down to eternal damnation no matter how many times we have told God that we love and worship Him. I “am persuaded,” like Paul, that I will not fall that way and God will honor my commitment to him.

In Romans Chapter 6 The Apostle Paul tells us how to become saints. This is essentially the same thing that Peter said he and his fellow believers were doing. (2 Peter 1) Paraphrasing some of Paul's explanation, he says the sinful “old man” in us was crucified with Christ if we were “baptized into Jesus Christ” (Rom.6:3); and when we were raised (like Jesus was raised from the dead) “*we also should walk in newness of life.*” (Rom.6:4) We can do that by “*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*” (Rom.6:6) In verse 11: “*Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” It is a matter of having a new spirit, with a new attitude toward our life and our destiny.

That is what we could call the “technique” we need to use to think about life from a spiritual perspective instead of the fleshly, worldly one. Change our mind and follow Christ's teachings instead of doing our same worldly things. Believe that our bodily lusts can be “mortified” or put to death as we do this, and they will gradually disappear. As Peter wrote, he and his fellow believers became “partakers of the divine nature” of Christ who was in them, “having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:4)

But this cannot be done once and for all. Christ died once for all; but we have to die daily. We have to resist temptation every day in this modern culture of evil. The common sins we must avoid are the “lust of the eyes,” the “lust of the flesh” and the “pride of life.” (1 John 2:16) Many examples of those sins are listed in Galatians 5:19, which Paul said will keep us out of heaven even if we have been “saved.” All those sins are conceived and born in our thoughts; and much that we see and hear every day tries to place those thoughts into our minds.

Our human weaknesses are being exploited by entertainment and marketing industries. The wise Christian – one who fears God – will monitor all inputs and flee temptations as soon as they arise. Use the eye-bounce principle – let your eyes bounce away; and the ear-protection principle – use whatever means is available to not hear what is going on. Do not see how long you enjoy watching or listening before sin is conceived in your mind. When that happens you are no longer “in the Spirit” or

*in* Christ – you are backsliding. Pleasure has become your Lord again, instead of Christ. You have *not* departed from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19) – you have departed from Christ. You had better get back in His favor quickly, and keep working to stay with Him.

Do not believe anyone who tells you that it doesn't matter if you have some sinful entertainment because it is only a tiny sin; or that your sins are all forgiven so you do not need to worry about them anymore! That is the Devil talking, even perhaps through a pastor who does not understand. Most of them have been brainwashed by their seminaries to think that Christ's forgiveness has taken care of it for you. That is false teaching. If that were true the whole Bible was written in vain and God was a liar about what people need to do to become righteous and heaven-bound.

### SIN IS IMPERFECTION THAT GOD HATES

God wants us to grow toward righteousness and never stop growing until we are like Christ in many important respects while we are in our mortal bodies. *Revelation* makes it very clear that only a select group of people, the righteous ones who keep God's commandments while they are on earth, will live forever in Paradise, and all the rest of mankind will end up in everlasting misery – a fate much worse than death.

Revelation 22:14,15:

- <sup>14</sup> *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*  
<sup>15</sup> *For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

Sinners will live – yes, *live* – in a place that Jesus describes as, “*Where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.*” (Mark 9:43-48) The Word of God talks about the word *hell* 55 times and there are a multitude of other references to the punishment it represents. Many preachers avoid telling you much about it, and many people think that this is not “fair” and a God who loves everybody surely would not hurt people that way.

A person might keep the “letter of the law” in the Ten Commandments and still lose Paradise. The list of sinners who will spend eternity in hell by being excluded from heaven includes “*whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*” This is really a frightening thing to think about.

Sin is the one and only pathway to perdition; but it is a broad thoroughfare because sin includes a wide spectrum of wrongs that the Bible mentions. It also includes the rejection of Jesus who is our only hope of getting rid of sin. As the result, most of the people in the world will never go to heaven.

It is vital that you *abide in Christ* and ask Him to help you rid yourself of both big and little sins, because in God's sight there is no small sin. “*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*” (Jas. 2:10)

Every sin misses the bulls' eye that God wants us to hit. God does not want us to miss that mark. Coming close does not satisfy him. Missing God's mark is as bad as not shooting at his target – it receives the same punishment. *God is a perfectionist in regard to morality* and he sent Jesus to earth to make it possible for us to be like him. As Christ tells us, “*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*” (Matt. 5:48)

Christ will help us work toward his absolute standard and he does not expect us all to reach it here on earth. I am sure we will be perfect in heaven, if we *try* to reach perfection here, but I think we won't if we don't.

He does not expect you to knock down every sin at the same time. They usually rear their ugly heads at different times. You need to clench your teeth and your fist and knock them down as soon as they pop up. Be aware every time one pops up and hit it! If you have to keep clobbering it, demand the devil to leave you alone, in the name of Jesus, and pray to Jesus to help you keep him away.

It should not take very long to see some results. After a sin gets hit a few times, both you and your sin will get tired of fighting each other. You will stop inviting sin into your life and the sin will usually retreat. Of course it is always still available. You cannot kill a sin, but you can make it retreat and stop imposing itself on you. So, in effect, you are freed from it. The sin will still exist, but you will not be indulging it, so you will not be a sinner in regard to it.

Do not be afraid when you do not succeed, but be scared if you are just letting it happen. God only expects you to try the best you can, and he will do the rest. He will complete the job when you go to be with him. But whenever you do have even a small success, you will be overjoyed and thankful to the Lord. That is how it works for me.

### LOVE AND FEAR GOD

I believe that one of the false doctrines of some modern churches is the reason the divorce rate in the church is now the same as in the secular world; and fornication, pornography and homosexuality are even surfacing among priests and ministers. It is the message that says "*God is Love*" – period!

People are being taught only half of the gospel, which makes it a half-truth. Like any half-truth it is a deception. But it is even more dangerous than a lie because it cannot be refuted unless you read the rest of the book and find out that God is also *justice* and *vengeance* against all wickedness. To emphasize that God is love and "*We love him, because he first loved us*" (1 John 4:19) is fine, but it is *fatally* inadequate if it does not tell the other side of God's character.

I usually enjoy Charles Stanley's radio sermons, but I was disappointed the way he talked about the magnificence of God's love one day. He began by saying "God is love," which is certainly true, but then he went on to say some dangerous things: "There is nothing one could ever do to make him love you more – or love you less. If you were a Christian and you went out tomorrow and committed a most heinous sin, this would not make him love you less!" Those were his words. They certainly would not encourage people to stop committing crimes or sins of any kind.

He continued by saying he was aware that *hell* seemed inconsistent with those statements; but to try to make it consistent he said, "God still loves the sinners when he sends them to hell." Can you believe that?

I believe the Bible clearly shows that God does *not* love infidels and incorrigible sinners and lawbreakers. Consider how the armies of the Lord were repeatedly told to try to exterminate whole cities in the Old Testament. You would not exterminate men, women and children if you loved them – or would you?

Isn't God still "the same yesterday, today, and forever?" He will still judge individuals and nations in a similar manner – nations in real time, and individuals in the hereafter. And when he judges nations many innocent people get hurt. Many will lose their lives on earth, but those who are his children will go to be with him – which will be much better than to remain on *terra firma*.

God is to be both loved and feared. He is personal and loving and, at the same time, fearful and impersonal. He loved the world and the people he had created, and "***God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.***" (Rom. 5:8) But he certainly does not keep loving sinners forever who think they were forgiven at the cross and then keep committing the same sins they were forgiven for, making no effort to stop doing the things that he hates. If they do that, they do not love God and he will someday stop striving with them. They are only fooling themselves that Jesus is in their heart – he only reached their mind. They had better start fearing him and start living the way he wants them to. They will be very sorry if they don't!

If God keeps loving everybody he would never allow sinners to go to the hell that he planned for the devil and his fallen angels. He would just snuff out their spirits – because spirits he created cannot die or commit suicide. They stay alive either in His kingdom or the devil's. If a person murders his wife and then dumps her body into a garbage pit, did he love her at the time he did that? Love is not merely a sentimental feeling; it is a commitment to the health and welfare of the loved one.

The day after Charles Stanley's message, R.C. Sproul on the same station coincidentally discussed the subject from my viewpoint. He said, "Some say God hates the *sin* but loves the *sinner* – but God casts *sinners* into hell, not just their *sins*!"

He then confessed that sometimes he has been guilty of "***not*** preaching the whole counsel of God" because he finds himself wanting to emphasize only the love of God and other inspiring things in the Word. He said that preaching about God's wrath is not popular. He was gently chastising himself.

We seldom hear about God's wrath, hell, or sin. When Jack Hayford gave a message about it, I bought his videotape. I also taped one from a television broadcast by Adrian Rogers because I love to hear preachers discuss it.

I do ***not*** do that to revel in punishment or worry about torture; nor because I am a negative thinker! I like to hear how preachers explain what Christ came to save us from. God sent Christ to rescue people from his wrath – ***not*** simply from "separation from God." Certainly a Christian does not want to be separated from him; but a nonbeliever before he is saved cares nothing for God, so how would mere "separation from God" motivate him to love him? But knowing that Christ is saving you from hell makes him almost irresistible.

You love God for sending Christ to make it possible for you to stay out of hell, but, at the same time, you should be afraid that you might still go there if you keep ignoring his commandments, because those who keep his commandments are the only ones who will be there. (Rev. 22:14, 15) If you are not trying to obey him, he is no longer your LORD! He did not leave you, but you left him, and you will suffer the consequences. You might get by with leaving him for awhile, but I certainly would not count on it! The word of caution is: ABIDE IN CHRIST and never leave him. He will never leave you unless you desert him.

## AVOID FALSE TEACHING AND SAVE YOUR SOUL

Many of our churches are now teaching false doctrines that are, or border on, “cheap grace.” They are gospels of comfort that deemphasize or even eliminate any discussion of sin and the wrath and judgment of God that destroys men and nations who sin against him. They tell you that you are on your way to heaven without having to do anything. That *cheap grace* could cost you your soul.

God is love – but he hates the devil and all who obstinately continue to do what the devil wants them to do. “***The Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.***” (1 John 3:8) The devil’s main work is to capture Christians for his kingdom by getting them to sin; he already owns all the nonbelievers. If a church does not exhort its members to be sure to stop sinning, the devil can have his way with the congregation because only a few will be motivated to resist the temptations that surround them.

The ones who do stay out of the devil’s clutches listen to the Holy Spirit and stop sinning. They know that they are still responsible for sins committed after they are “saved;” and Jesus has come to reside with them to remind them not to sin any more or they will fall back into their former lost condition. Christ’s death on the cross only paid for their past sins. He expects them to grow in Him to become sinless in order to be accepted into heaven. (2 Peter, Chapter 1)

Another false doctrine that is only half of the truth is in many messages today. It comes from using Romans 10:9-10 as the sole proof of salvation. It can be fatally misinterpreted if the deep meaning of some of the words are read superficially. Can you find the problem in these famous verses? “***If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***”

That is marvelous news, but it must be coupled with: “***He that sayeth, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.***” (1 John 2:4) In other words, if you think you have *really* done what the Romans quotation says, you may be lying to yourself. You may have done it with your *mind*, but not really deeply *in your heart*, so it will have little impact on your life. You will continue to ignore the laws of God and suffer the penalty infidels will receive. You will not remain faithful to God until you die. Being faithful to God means to not sin against him any more; that is why he saved you and sent Christ to live in your heart and mind.

Another popular false doctrine of comfort is built on Philippians 4:8: “***Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.***”

That is a wonderful suggestion to bring solace in the storms of life. It makes you feel good when you think of good things, and that is what Paul hopes you will do. But he did not mean for that to be a commandment or an article of faith.

Paul’s terms “*whatsoever things*” and “*if there be any*,” obviously imply that we need to hunt for things to rejoice about in a field of problems and negative happenings. But many people now use Paul’s *recommendation* as though it were an *exhortation* to avoid discussing problems and negative happenings. It has become the major pillar in the temples of positive thinking. They may sometimes mention the name of Jesus, as the Master teacher, but never talk about sin and other “negative” things that Christ came to help us avoid.

“Positive thinking” preachers try to avoid thinking about such things as **hell** – the most horrible pitfall in our life – or about other awful things such as the sins of our government which we should try to stop or at least be prepared to cope with. They proselytize many people to want to stick their head in the sand or cover their ears to avoid thinking or fighting against the problems of the world. That makes people accomplices to the evils they fail to oppose, which is why there are so many negative things happening in American society! Nobody is **thinking** about them, they just enjoy looking at them on television and saying “isn’t that a shame!” They do not consider watching TV as “negative thinking;” they are probably right because it does not involve any thoughtfulness on their part, it is mostly entertainment or even sinful excitement that eventually produces jaded emotions that are willing to accept all the bad things they see rather than fight against them.

I believe that “positive thinkers” who never think about **hell**, but only use it as a cuss word, will be the ones most likely to go there. Jesus considers **hell** as a place one should work hard to avoid. Mark 9:43-48:

- <sup>43</sup> *And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:*
- <sup>44</sup> *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*
- <sup>45</sup> *And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:*
- <sup>46</sup> *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*
- <sup>47</sup> *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:*
- <sup>48</sup> *Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

Jesus knew that removing one of your members would not prevent you from sinning, so he was speaking figuratively about that. But what he was saying about going to hell because of sin was frighteningly literal. He wanted to frighten us. He was not kidding.

Jonathan Edwards’ sermon about “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” was a major impetus of the Great Awakening. That sermon did not say that God loves you so much that you can continue sinning against him and still go to heaven. It said you had better **repent** of your sins and stop making God angry, or you will be very sorry!

Preaching about the fear of God and **hell** was one of the most beneficial things that ever happened to our country. Sermons on that made our pulpits “aflame with righteousness” before the Revolutionary War. Alexis de Tocqueville said it is what made America **good** and was the reason for her **greatness**. And sermons like that could cause another revival and make her good again. She is now morally degenerate, if not completely reprobate.

Revival will never come without repentance; and repentance will never come if people do not know they are sinning. To not preach against sin and hell omits half of the gospel message. Where did preachers learn to omit that? Certainly not from the Bible!

## FOLLOW JESUS – DON'T JUST TALK ABOUT IT

A purpose John mentioned for his First Epistle was: ***“That your joy may be full.”*** (1 John 1:4) To accomplish that purpose he assures them of the salvation they could expect. But his second stated purpose was: ***“These things I write unto you, that ye sin not.”*** (1 John 2:1) Throughout the letter he exhorted the reader to gain the victory over Satan by keeping himself pure and unspotted. As John writes, ***“We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”*** (1 John 5:18) Those are the words of the Bible!

To “keep oneself” means to avoid temptation by avoiding things that cause it. That is what a born again believer will do. Are many “born again” believers keeping themselves away from Satan’s temptations so they do not sin? Or do you see them still watching sinful acts on Television and ***enjoying*** it – mentally wallowing in the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life while they raise their eyebrows at each other in pretended innocence? The question to ask is, “Are they ***really*** ‘begotten of God’ or ‘born again’?” Shouldn’t a Christian know that such things are sin?

H.A. Ironside, in ***The Eternal Security of the Believer***, makes several statements in relation to such questions. Here is one on his page 18: “Be careful. Do not profess to be one of His sheep if you do not follow Him. ***It is the test of reality . . . when you receive a new life, you have to follow Jesus, and if you do not, you are not a Christian.*** Take that home.”

I believe we should all “take that home” and evaluate our “walk” to see if we are following Jesus. Following him means to do what he and his father tell us to do in the Bible and in our conscience. If we are ***not*** seriously ***trying to do that***, we should not expect eternal life with Him. We will ***not*** lose our salvation; we simply never had it!

I said ***“trying to do that”*** instead of “doing it” because some of the things the Bible tells us to do are difficult, such as: ***“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”*** (Matt. 5:44)

That is a great challenge – a difficult test of holiness to pass, is it not? Perhaps I may not be totally successful with it, but I am seriously trying. I am not ignoring the Lord’s command just because it is difficult. Since ***love*** is a choice, instead of merely a feeling, it means things like “bless,” “do good,” and “pray,” rather than feeling good all the time about someone; so it is possible to do what Jesus commands us.

However, I think I must develop a forgiving attitude to accompany those actions – otherwise Christ said God will not forgive me! ***“If ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.”*** (Mark 11:26) This is a serious problem that we should work on. Jesus told his twelve disciples to do it, so no believer is exempt from it. But praise the Lord, forgiving a person is also a choice, and the feeling will follow if you ask the Lord to make it happen. You probably remember Corry Ten Boom’s story about her jailor in the concentration camp that Jesus helped her forgive.

Here are some more statements by Ironside: “We, in our unsaved days, were servants to sin; now, as Christians, we are servants of God and we are to walk before God in holiness and righteousness.” (pg.31) Are we doing it?

Quoting Hebrews 12:14 he says, “***Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man will see God.***” Those are the words of the Apostle Paul, who elsewhere says he has a hard time doing it. Here is Ironside’s insightful comment: “A man who says, ‘I am a Christian,’ and does not follow after holiness, is either self-deceived or a hypocrite.” He then explains that the word ***follow*** is the key, which does not require immediate sinless perfection. It means growing toward perfection and hopefully coming surprisingly close to achieving it with the Lord’s help.

Throughout the text he repeatedly uses the phrase “***really*** being born again,” and mentions the above “reality check.” Many Christians leave the faith. Did they therefore lose their salvation? According to Ironside they did not lose their salvation – they never had it. They were not real Christians. As John said, “***They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us.***” (1 John 2:19) Ironside and John both imply that people who are truly born again remain faithful to Christ. They do not wait around for the Second Coming to find themselves growing toward the image of Christ.

The purpose of Ironside’s pamphlet is to prove “The Eternal Security of the Believer.” The only way he can explain why so many people left the faith in his time is by saying that those who left were not ***really*** believers. I think some truly born-again believers do sometimes leave the faith for the simple reason that staying faithful is also a choice, and God is not going to force them to develop their character. He is only going to send them to hell if they fail and fall. They are responsible for what they do; he does not do anything for them that he has delegated to them.

The Bible predicts a massive “falling away” in the end times. “***Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.***” (2 Thes. 2:3) ***Falling away*** means no longer standing up for what people say they believe. Will those people have lost their faith? Ironside would say they never had it. I would say they simply will leave God to save their life on earth a little longer. They will simply give their salvation away.

We may be seeing that right now. I think the exodus will be people who are not in the habit of putting their faith in action. They are the lukewarm professing Christians who do nothing about what they believe, and God says he will “spew” them out. I think it will be partly due to the weak emphasis by the church on the extreme importance of righteousness in the life of the believer.

The doctrine of “eternal security” that many new converts receive, which does not tell them that good behavior on their part is essential for the maintenance of their salvation, can actually be the thing that prevents “eternal security” from happening.

I see my security in Jesus a little differently. I believe my salvation depends upon receiving Christ’s forgiveness and ***also*** receiving His power to become righteous; and then putting it into action for as long as I live. Like Paul, “***I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day***” (2 Tim. 1:12) So I am safe ***unless*** I get foolish and break ***my commitment***, which I do ***not*** intend to do. I know that Jesus will never leave me; and I do not think I would be foolish enough to leave him – knowing what I will be losing if I did! I also believe that God will keep reminding me of my commitment to him.

I do not think this is the kind of security that most readers hope for, which promises heaven whether or not they continue committing sins that God hates! I believe their security is an illusion.

No way of explaining the “the eternal security of the believer” assures converts that they will get to heaven despite their behavior after they are “saved.” I believe many people have their heart set on the **free** grace of God, which will **cost them nothing!** In other words: cheap grace! In their minds becoming righteous has nothing to do with it – or, at best, is only an incidental serendipity. That belief denies God’s whole purpose in the creation of man. He did not create mankind to be sinners, whose sins He would have to ignore to give them the keys to his kingdom.

**AN IMPORTANT CAUTION:** Sheep usually follow their shepherd. If you do not find yourself really following your shepherd, you had better doubt your allegiance to him, repent, get born again, and start following him. It is not possible to follow him without a rebirth, as Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3:1-8); but **real** rebirth gives you the motivation and the power to follow Jesus and you will actually do it. If you aren’t, you are in a death cell, awaiting the executioner, and only repentance can free you. Here is what you can do:

AN INVITATION TO LIFE: Here is a sample of a prayer you can say:

Dear Father in Heaven, and Lord Jesus: I am so **sorry** I have **not** been following you like I should! Please forgive me! I want to obey you, and follow you and learn to be good like you are. I want to do everything you tell me in the Bible to do, to the best of my ability. Please help me Lord. I love you, and worship you, and thank you for all that you do for me every day! Thank you Lord. In Jesus’ name I pray.

The date I prayed this prayer: \_\_\_\_\_

If you pray that prayer, and believe what you say instead of just mouthing it, you will be born anew; and it will be a great example of the kind of revival that America needs if she is going to survive another hundred years as a land of the free!

A prayer like that will make a **real Christian** out of **anyone who wants to be one!** – even if you have never accepted Jesus as your savior and if you have never even talked to a pastor or priest. Then you can soon know that you are really saved when you go to work praying for His help and doing what your conscience and what Jesus and his disciples tell you to do. You will be following Jesus!

## **YOU WERE MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE – DON’T SPOIL IT!**

Why do you suppose man was created in God’s image?  
Was it so man could go ahead and do whatever he wants to do?

I was amazed to hear the following line in a sermon in the new Christian movie, **Time Changer:** “Jesus will not save anyone he cannot command.” That is a very interesting statement I had never heard before. Maybe it was because I never went to a seminary. It is the theme of my whole book of little sermonettes!

That underlined sentence merges God’s selection process and the free will of a select group of people who will be able to have beautiful homes in the New Jerusalem. (Rev. 21:16) They are the people who will trust God and try hard to follow his orders.

The concept that God saves only those who will follow His commands reconciles two conflicting ideas that have seemed diametrically opposed and have created major schisms in the church:

1. Jesus said: “**Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice,**

*and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”*  
(Rev. 3:20) Also: *And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”* (Rev. 22:17)

2. But the Apostle Paul said: *“He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”*  
(Eph. 1:4)

Please read John 6:37-40, the Bread of Life section, where both ideas appear clearly. The Father gives the believers to Jesus, and he keeps, or does not lose, them. So everyone who “is called” and “believes” in Christ may be saved.

What is the problem? Christ himself says that “*whosoever will*,” by exercising their freedom of choice, can come to him and will be accepted – yet God chose only the ones He would give to Christ before time began! How can that be? Do men choose, or does God choose? The answer is *both*. I will try to explain why this makes sense to me.

### A Layman’s Version of the Creation Story.

In the beginning God created all things and saw that they were *good*. He wants everything and everyone to be good! Then he said to Jesus, “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*” (Gen. 1:26, 27) They were created to be very good, *holy*, like He is!

Then He told them: “*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” (Gen. 2:17) He told Adam and Eve to enjoy the other pleasures in the garden, but leave the fruit of that tree alone – or they would die.

He created us to be *good*, righteous, holy, like he was, but by giving us free will God chose to limit his own sovereignty by never controlling our behavior. Otherwise we would be like animals or puppets and there would be no meaning to *good* or *evil* because everything designed and controlled by God would simply do what it was created to do. It would all be “good” in God’s sight, but it would not be holy, because its goodness would not be voluntary and man would not be “in the image of God.”

He created the beautiful Garden of Eden to be a paradise on this earth for us. We were to tend, control, and develop it into a globally expanded community of human beings who lived in peace and prosperity and loved one another with holy love.

He gave us hungers that would make us able to survive and multiply. The hungers were very motivational because their satisfaction is always pleasurable, but he wanted us to use them as he intended, which are *good* ways that do not hurt anyone. And since God chose *not* to control our behavior he could only tell us what to do and hope that we could love him, believe that he knew what he was talking about, and obey him. We must control ourselves to keep from using our urges in disobedient ways.

He knew that *love for one another* and *moral* behavior by everyone are absolutely required if we are to live forever in such a paradise. But, by giving us free choice, he knew that we might choose to do things that would be wrong, *evil*, to satisfy our hungers – and that would make such a paradise

impossible. We would not understand the moral absolutes for *good* behavior, so he would have to tell us what they were and try to persuade us to follow those rules.

If we had obeyed him perfectly in regard to right conduct we would all be doing only good, righteous things. Then we could have *all* lived forever as God's children on earth. But this could only have happened *if* every one of us would have made a habit of doing what our Creator wants us to do. By doing that we would never even know what it is like to do *evil* things! And life would be so pleasant that *evil* would never be an option that we would want to choose.

He told his new human beings that they could not eat of a tree in the garden that he named the "tree of the knowledge of *good* and *evil*." If they disobeyed him by eating its fruit, they would find out that there was an *evil* option that they could choose and they could enjoy the pleasure of the fruit of their disobedience, which tastes very good at first. This would actually ruin everything God had planned for them; so to let them live forever on the earth if they ate that fruit was out of the question. So God told Adam and Eve they would die. He would not kill them; he simply could not let them live eternally.

The tree symbolizes the necessity of obedience to God if anyone wants to live forever. That principle is still in effect today. God's law has never been revoked! The only people who will live forever in heaven will be those who keep his commandments. (Rev. 22:14)

Adam ate the forbidden fruit. He chose to disobey God and by doing so he and his descendants never learned how to become good and enjoy all its blessings, which would have even included eternal life in flesh and blood on the earth if "man" had obeyed.

Adam blamed Eve, and she blamed Satan, but Adam and Eve were both personally responsible for their disobedience. Satan did not force them to follow his deceitful suggestion to distrust God, disobey Him, and believe that man could do anything he wants to do. Adam would probably have obeyed God if the serpent had not tempted Eve. The temptation was that they could be like God, which is the same goal their tempter has. The irony is that God actually created them to be like Him except for his omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence, which only God can have or we would really have turmoil!

After Adam's breach of conduct, it was impossible for all mankind to keep living on earth, so God put man out of reach of the "tree of life" that was in the Garden. God later etched his moral directives (commandments) into stone tablets so at least *some* human beings would want to obey him and could someday be with him in a heavenly Paradise instead of on earth.

Men and women would all die on earth, but spirits can never die, so the obedient ones would live eternally with God, and those who refused to obey him would have to live eternally in places like the Lake of Fire with Satan and his evil spirits.

But Satan, with the help of all his deceiving principalities and powers, kept winning the battle against God for the souls of men. Satan is still the "Prince of this World" and the "Power of the air" (and now of the air waves!). And most people are in his kingdom instead of God's.

Since God had created man in his own image, with free will – freedom of choice – Adam and all his descendants have chosen to disobey one or more of God's rules of behavior. "***All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.***" (Rom. 3:23) People are all subject to the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil. Adam disbelieved God and would not do what God told him, so his

descendants never had a chance to find out that Adam, and they, would have been extremely happy if they had believed God! Most people still do not understand that situation, and they subconsciously believe that a little immorality is inevitable in their lives and God will excuse it – just for them! But he won't.

God sent Christ to die an excruciating death on the cross to salvage (save) from sin's death penalty anyone and everyone who would **believe** Jesus and **obey** him. Believers would receive the Holy Spirit to teach and enable them to grow to be more righteous, and they would worship the holy God and his Son who had such great love for them. Jesus defeated Satan by empowering believers to become **good** like God created them to be.

There are some people – no matter how sinful they have been in their life – who still feel **a hunger** to be moral, as God's commandments demand. However, they have trouble doing it, which the Apostle Paul described in Romans Seven. The appetites of human flesh and the devil's enticements constantly drag them down. The conscience God gave them made everyone want to be **good**, but the devil has led most of them to simply ignore their conscience and do what he wants them to do.

Christ had to come to dwell in believers along with his Holy Spirit who will remind them of the sayings and commandments of Jesus. The Holy Spirit becomes their new conscience. And since they acquire a new spirit that can commune with Christ's spirit they live in Christ, and he lives in them, answering all their prayers. So they partake of his divine power to accomplish everything he tells them to do.

*All* have sinned and **none** deserves special treatment, but Christ calls **some** bless-ed: "**Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.**" (Matt. 5:6) They want to be **good** people. They want to do the right things, instead of the wrong things. They **want** to be moral instead of immoral, which is what God's commandments are about. They may be the worst criminals, but they really desire to be transformed and cannot seem to do it. They do not realize that they need Christ and his Holy Spirit to help them overpower Satan and keep God's commandments. But, as Christ says, his "**burden is light**" because he helps believers to bear it since we are yoked to him. (Matt. 11:30) And John says, "**his commandments are not grievous.**" (1 John 5:3)

Saint John, author of *The Revelation, the Gospel of John*, and three *Epistles*, writes: "**He that sayeth, I know Him, and keepeth NOT his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.**" (1 John 2:4) Those who obey God are the **only** people that the Angel of the Lord says will go to heaven when they die: "**Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.**" (Revelation 22:14-15) Those are the ones God is calling out for his name from around the world. They are the ones who choose to **believe** that Christ is the Son of God, **and** they also want to **turn from their wicked ways** (2 Chronicles. 7:14) and do what God and Jesus tell them to do.

So (Eureka!): **those** are the people whom God, in his foreknowledge, "has chosen" and "has given" to Jesus (John 6:31-40) "before the foundation of the world." (Eph. 1:4) In other words, God **has chosen** every person who **chooses** to be righteous like He is! That is simply another way of saying that "**Jesus will not save anyone he cannot command**" – or **Jesus will save only the people he can command**. They will make him Lord of their lives instead of just paying him lip service and thinking of him as only their savior.

To repeat: God chooses only the people who will obediently try to do what He wants them to do. Many others go through the motions of accepting Christ, but do not *really* put his righteousness, right conduct, into their *hearts* – and they are *not* saved. They only think they are. Judas was an example. Christ says: “***And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.***”(Matt. 7:23)

As a free gift, Christ imparts his righteousness to the *chosen ones* his Father gave him. By sending them the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives them his power to resist Satan, to control their bodies, and to learn to please their heavenly father by obeying “every jot and tittle” of his law. “***For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.***” (Matt. 5:18) The saved ones will make an energetic effort to accomplish what they were created for! And God, who adopts only people who really want to be righteous, will someday have all the people he wants. Marvel of all marvels!

The chosen ones will grow *toward* holiness, to do what God commanded: “***Be ye holy; for I am holy.***” (1 Peter 1:16; Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7) Their number is not huge, “***Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.***” (Matt. 7:14). Jesus is the *gate*, but the believers still have to walk in the *Way* making their own decisions. Jesus does not do this for them, or free will would be a sham.

God will know what is in the hearts of people who are trying to obey his commandments to become conformed to the image of Christ – even if a convert has only five minutes more to live – and God will complete the process for them by giving them incorruptible bodies. They will be *perfect* in every way (including physically) and will enjoy untold blessings and happiness forever after! They will have matured to the image of God for which purpose Adam was created! And they will have done it because they *willed* to do it, but can succeed only by the grace of God with the help of Christ’s death on the cross to pay the penalty for their past disobedience, and his Holy Spirit to help them obey as they grow *toward* maturity in whatever time is left in their earthly frames.

The most awe-inspiring thing about this is that one of those people can be you – if you *want* to be a *good* person in God’s eyes. Here is a way to do it: (1) Prayerfully ask Jesus to come into your heart to stay, as he says he wants to do. (Rev. 3:20) (2) Ask him sincerely to forgive you for all the times you have done what the Bible says should not be done. (3) Say that you want to do the best you can with His help to become the kind of good person Jesus wants you to be so you can be with him forever like he promises. (John 3:16) Thank you Lord! Thank you!

If you are sincere, what father could refuse a request like that? God will accept you. You may not live long enough to become perfect before you die, but you will really be started on your new life of obedience (or a revived life if you have done something like this before), and Christ will see that you get to your destination in heaven. You will be there if you sincerely desire to obey his commandments and will do it as long as you live – even if it is a very short time.

Wow! Would you like that? Then just do it! Praise the Lord!

### HOLINESS REQUIRES WORK

Jerry Bridges’ book, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, is replete with support for the thesis of all the little messages in my book, namely: you must deliberately *work* to become righteous and holy, and you cannot do it without keeping Christ close to you.

Becoming holy is not an automatic result of inviting Christ into your life. When you are reborn, that actually starts your life over again, cleansed from sin, as a *new* person. However, it does not cancel the fleshly habits of the *old* person that you still are. Therefore God does not expect you to become immediately sinless. But he wants you to be in that process of growth. That is what the Holy Spirit tells you subconsciously if you are *really* saved, because that is God's whole purpose in saving you. He wants you to be holy so he can enjoy your company. No unrighteous person will ever live in his proximity. Moses was a good guy, but he could only see a burning bush. You will not get close to Him, because he is on holy ground that only perfectly sinless people can enter.

So you must keep working to make sure you do not fall back and remain in your same old lifestyle – or worse! Being human, living in a corruptible framework, you can still fall for the devil's lies, like Adam did. You are the one who has to keep Satan in his place. Do not even argue with Satan, because he easily wins arguments. ***“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.***

***And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.” (1 John 2:24, 25)***

A major change of lifestyle *seldom* if ever happens instantaneously; a *perfect* walk with Jesus seldom happens in our lifetime; but you will certainly *never* be morally pure unless you make a continuing effort to purify yourself and remain in God's will for your life. If you fail to make the effort you are in big trouble. That means you have not been reborn, and you had better get on your knees and ask Jesus into your life again. It is not too late, but you need to start your new life over.

In his chapter “Putting Sin to Death,” Jerry Bridges repeatedly emphasizes your personal responsibility for righteousness of character. For example, “But though mortification must be done by the strength and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, it is nevertheless a work which we must do.” (pg. 80) We must put our Old Man to death; lose our old life for Christ. Jesus cannot force that to happen, because God made us responsible for it.

That does not all happen at the rebirth. It is a lifelong process. I urge my readers to be sure they are somewhere in that process. They may not have started it at the time of God's call into the rebirth, but if they want to become good people they can start today.

I suggest that they compose a prayer in their own words and say it prayerfully to Him. See samples in other sermonettes.

But here is another sample: Dear Father in Heaven, I believe with all my heart that you sent your Son, Lord Jesus, to teach me how to resist my desires and make me a moral person instead of an immoral one. I believe that Christ died to forgive me for failing to do this; and he came to live in me to strengthen me to resist the devil and **to do the things you tell me to do**. Please God, I want to do this in the name of Jesus Christ who is Lord. Thank you Lord, I love you and always will. Amen!

There are a thousand different ways of saying these ideas. You can simply use the words I have written if you can pray them sincerely as though you had made them up yourself. But any prayer that you say that lets God know that you want to follow him and will ***try to do what he tells you*** will save you, because God will know what is in your heart. You do not need a pastor or priest to help you, but that would be a very fine thing that might give you more confidence.

If you make such a sincere commitment to God you will become a new creature, reborn into new life and will have Christ's Holy Spirit in you! The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and holiness that gives you the power to be holy like he is.

That commitment to truth and righteousness in the name of Christ is like a marriage to him, and it immediately makes you a member of the "bride of Christ" (His church). God has not prescribed a formal marriage ceremony, because he knows the spirit that he gave you, and he knew you even before your mother conceived you.

Please consider it seriously, even if you think you are already saved. It will revive you if you need reviving and it will give you confidence toward God which we all need.

### HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST AND PURSUE HOLINESS

**Holiness** and **righteousness** are almost synonyms. The Apostle Peter gives a startling command to his readers: "***It is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.***" (1 Peter 1:16) We need to have the attitude and mind of Christ toward sin and righteousness. He hated sin so much that he was willing to die to get rid of it for us. As a corollary, he desired more than anything else in the world for people to be righteous in God's sight. In Noah's time only four or five people showed any prospects of becoming righteous, and God killed all the rest of them. If we have Christ's attitude toward things, we will stop breaking God's commandments, and pursue after holiness daily.

It is impossible from a human standpoint to hate the pleasure of sin; but you need to hate the fact that sin is disobedience to God. Being disobedient to God is what you should ***hate*** so much that you stop doing it, which then shows your ***love*** to Him. Love is the desire to please someone, not the desire to receive pleasure from someone.

Jerry Bridges and H.A. Ironside (works mentioned elsewhere) both cite Heb.12:14: "***Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.***" Both authors say we must be convinced that the words I have underlined are to be taken literally! We will not go to heaven if we do not do this. When I first thought about that I was frightened! But I was glad to find that to "follow holiness" means to pursue holiness, or to follow Christ's words and example, which is difficult because of Satan's power over us, but it is possible and does not demand instant perfection.

Bridges says that studying The Word brings the necessary conviction. This is the chief means of discovering the mind of Christ. Another way is by prayer for help and guidance, to discover and get rid of our sins. In those two ways we get to know Him and find out what he wants from us. Then to get rid of all our sins we need to learn to "live in the spirit" which Paul frequently begs us to do.

Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount, "***Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.***" (Matt. 5:6) In Matthew 6:33 his words are, "***But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.***" It is the search after righteousness in our life that will lead us to the life everlasting that Christ promises to those who "overcome." (Rev. 3:5; 3:21; 31:7)

We need to pursue righteousness or holiness with Paul's attitude as expressed in Philippians 3: 12-15. Verse 12 says, "***Not that I have already attained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.***" (This is the NIV translation because the KJV uses the word ***apprehended*** for ***laid hold of***, which is not so

understandable today.) Paul's goal was to "lay hold" of *righteousness* which he says is why Jesus "laid hold" of him.

To *overcome* something takes *work*, which is a necessary part of your "experiential sanctification" which prepares you for heaven. You have to "overcome" the flesh and principalities and powers in high places, both spiritually and physically. "***He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.***" (Rev. 31:7) "***To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.***" (Rev. 3:21) I will leave that for you to interpret; it is too marvelous for me to fathom.

### KEEP GOD'S COMMANDMENTS AND DO NOT LIE

***"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie."*** (Revelation 22:14,15)

Before we discuss Revelation 22:14 please notice that *sorcerers* are not ancient historical creatures or fictional characters. They really exist and their numbers are increasing like wild fire today in the United States in the religion of Wicca, which is witchcraft. There are two powers and kingdoms in the universe: the power of light and the power of darkness. And these "powers" are spiritual beings that are the reality behind what we see happening all the time in our lives and in our nation.

In case you might think the King James Bible is out of touch with modern life or reality, here is the New International Version of the *Revelation* passage: "***Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.***" The KJV is much clearer about what we should do.

It is interesting that those are the final two sentences in the teaching message of the entire Bible! Immediately following that passage, "Jesus and the Spirit and the bride" who inspired Saint John, invite "whosoever will" to come and drink of the water of life. Then they tell people (and *nations*) who read or hear the book of *Revelation* to not add anything to it or subtract anything from it. The penalty for adding will be plagues (they will happen to nations, as they are beginning to do right now); and for a person who subtracts words and concepts, "***God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.***" (Rev. 22:19)

What does the NIV mean by "***Blessed are those who wash their robes***"? In this case the KJV translates it as "***do His commandments.***" Christ gives you your *white robe of righteousness* when you become a believer and commit your life to him, and he forgives you for all your sin. But you have to wear that robe, live in it, let others see it, and keep it clean – in other words, don't dirty it by sin. He will not keep washing your robe for you, because that would simply tell him that you are still a dirty person. He and his father do not want any dirty people in heaven. He came to clean people up and will later come back and throw the dirty people into the furnace of darkness prepared for the devil and his demons.

Here is the fabric of the white robes that the bride of Christ and all the saints wear as described in Revelation 19:7-8):

<sup>7</sup> *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife* (the church, the bride of Christ) *hath made herself ready.*

<sup>8</sup> *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.* The NIV translates this underlined phrase in a parenthetical statement: “(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)” This time I prefer the NIV explanation.

Righteousness signifies nothing unless action is part of it. Saints are saints because of their actions, not simply their belief. Faith without works is dead.

Who is the wife of Christ? We are, if we really have been born again. How has she made herself ready for the marriage supper? By wearing clean and white robes that she has “washed” by “doing his commandments” while waiting and watching. She is a perfectly virtuous woman because “she feareth the Lord.” (Proverbs 31:30) Otherwise Christ will not marry her. The church that is his church comprises every person who wants to be good by obeying God’s commandments. It is made up of members of various denominations and also believers who perhaps never belonged to any church organization.

Who are the saints? We are, if we can persevere to the end, working to obey his commandments and keeping the faith, even if it means refusing the mark, name or number of the beast in our right hand or forehead. (See Rev. 13:16-17) “*Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.*” (Rev. 14:12) They are the “over comers.”

Now, to discuss the last phrase in Revelation 22:15: Isn’t it strange that the last named sinner, in the most conspicuous and memorable position in that final verse, is “*whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*”? The same people are also named last in Revelation 21:8: “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*” (Rev. 21:8)

What do you think of that? Today lying is almost a way of life, rather than even a small sin. We think God does not notice and we think we are smart. Jacob lied for a sinful reason; Rahab lied for a righteous reason – and they were both rewarded. It seems that, for them, the end justifies the means. I am personally confused. Are you?

Since the devil is the father of lies, that is probably the reason. God considers *falsehood*, which the devil instigates, almost worse than any other kind of sin, because it is the opposite of *truth*. In John 14:6 “*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*” You can only come to the Father by truth, not by lies.

Truth is what the whole Bible is asking us to believe, to worship and to speak. John 4:23 tells us “*the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.*” A person who “loveth and maketh a lie” is not that kind of person. He does not love and worship the truth so he really is not loving God. His father is the devil, the father of lies.

There is one lie that is guaranteed to keep a person out of heaven. It is being told by many people without them even being aware of it because they are lying to themselves. It is one of the devil’s trump cards and he is winning many souls with it. Saint John, author of *The Revelation, the Gospel of John*, and his three *Epistles*, describes it in these words: “*He that sayeth, I know Him, and*

***keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.***” (1 John 2:4) God is not in him, and he is not in God, as First John 3 explains. He has not been born again, he only thinks he has!

If you claim the name of Christ but do not try to keep God’s commandments, you are the liar John describes, and you will never live to see Christ in person unless you can get your spiritual heart transplanted before you die. But if you let the Truth, Jesus, live ***in*** you and follow Him throughout your life you will obey all the commandments that he expects you to obey in your lifetime. Then you will be one of the relatively few fortunate folks who enter into the magnificent splendors of the City of God.

Unfortunately, many of your friends may be left behind because they have “bought” the devil’s half-truths and lies. But your good fortune of having eternal life in God’s Kingdom will not be luck. It will be because you ***believed Christ and obeyed him.***

### FINAL CONCLUSION – BE YE THEREFORE PERFECT

The summary statement in the ***final*** page of the Bible about those who will be blessed with eternal life is: ***“Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”*** (Rev. 22:14)

The next verse makes sure we know that no one else will be allowed in.

***“To have right to the tree of life”*** is the reward or the prize for keeping His commandments. The reward will be to live forever in heaven or wherever He wants you to work for him. Other parts of the reward are very exciting. For example, to be ***“kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth”*** (Rev. 5:10); and ***“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”*** (Rev. 3:21) Wow! Isn’t that remarkable!

I notice it is only for those who believe there is something they have to ***overcome***; it is not for those who think that Christ has done it all for them and the only action they need to take is to simply accept his free gift and praise him for it.

I am ***not*** saying that people can ***deserve*** eternal life or heaven! Being in heaven is entirely the result of God’s love and grace for the individuals he has chosen. What I am saying is that ***if you do not try*** to keep his commandments, you will never get into his kingdom, because then you could never be the kind of person he created you to be. He made you with free will so you will never become good in his eyes unless you ***will*** to be good.

No one can begin to ***deserve*** even a glimpse of heaven. Nor can a person thank his lucky stars if he arrives there. God selects you and gives you to Christ, and Christ does the rest. But that does not mean that you can ease up on yourself and keep committing the same sins that he has been willing to forgive. He forgave you so you can then move ahead and stop sinning and the Lamb’s Book of Life will show you to be sinless in Christ’s eyes. Christ has been in you keeping very close tabs on you. God is a just but also very gracious judge who considers your motives, the desires of your heart, in his final evaluation of your work.

Here is what Jesus told his disciples about how they would be assured of their salvation as they waited for his second coming and their reward. (John 14:20, 21, 26)

<sup>20</sup>***At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.***

***21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.***

***26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.***

So then the disciples will be sure to obey all the “commandments” he has taught them. We must do likewise.

God created *everyone* so they could be with him in Paradise, whether on earth or in heaven. He knew that men *must* exhibit love and good behavior so there could be a paradise on earth. If they would love him and obey what he told them, they could all live forever as God’s children on earth. But this could only happen if every person would obey him perfectly. Because Adam flunked his test of obedience, he and his descendants had to die unless they could come to know God, and believe in him, and follow his commandments. Then God could give the obedient ones eternal life and open heaven’s gate to them.

Most men and many women, including many who name the name of Christ, choose to have momentary pleasure the same as Adam and Eve did instead of keeping God’s commandments. They allow Satan to blind them to the need to trust and obey God and his Son. They think Christ will be their advocate with the Father if they just keep saying they *know* and *love* him. But he will *not*, unless he knows they are trying to keep his commandments. ***“He that sayeth, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.”*** (1 John 2:4) Also: ***“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.”*** (1 John 5:3) And Christ said several times, ***“If you love me you will keep my commandments.”*** Three times with slightly different wording were in John 14.

If you are one of God’s “elect” here is what He has done for you: Christ left his home in heaven, came to earth, was crucified, died, and was buried and resurrected. That gave you righteousness in God’s eyes by redeeming you from your sins. Then Christ ascended to heaven and God sent the Holy Spirit into your new spirit that he gave you when you became “born of God” instead of your mother. The marvelous result is that now you can achieve Christ’s own stated goal for you, namely, ***“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”*** (Matt. 5:48) You do it by living in the new spirit of your new life in Christ. And as you just read, Christ’s spirit is actually in you somehow along with, or possibly as, the Holy Spirit.

So you must aim for moral perfection in your life and pray to Christ to help you acquire it. That is the best way you can fulfill God’s purpose for your life, which was also his purpose for creating mankind. He wanted to have righteous human beings live in heaven with him and serve him in reigning over the universe! And glory of glories! Now you can experience the eternal life that Adam lost for mankind. And you will certainly be in a small minority of all the people who ever lived on the earth.

Do you want to be one of his elect and become perfect? Then tell Jesus about it and ask him to come into your heart and help you grow to be like him. “Whosoever will may come and drink of the waters of life freely.” Then someday you will be perfect and will be one of the happiest people in the universe!

If you mistakenly believe that God's grace has revoked his moral commandments so that you no longer need to obey them, here are the *final* two verses of Ecclesiastes, "The Preacher's book." "***Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.***" (Eccles. 12:13, 14) This is the same thing that Saint John, the beloved disciple of Christ, said in the *final* chapter of the entire Bible, which we saw in the first paragraph. (Rev. 22:14) And the whole Bible tells the story of man's continual disobedience, beginning with Adam.

Fear of God is the dawn of wisdom because it makes you want to obey him; love of God is the zenith of wisdom, because it gives you Christ's power to obey him and acquire everlasting life; then there is no sunset because you are with God in his everlasting light. And you will see Christ as he is, because you will be like him and will even reign with him.

I hope that you will be like King David, and "hide" some of the scriptures in your heart to remind you to not sin against God. (Psalm 119:11) Then, even if I have never seen you here on earth, you will be where I hope to see you later! God bless you!

Yours in Christ,

Richard H. Strand, Ed.D.

Self-published by Richard H. Strand, 8924 Camino Real, San Gabriel, CA 91775

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