

A Godly View Of Sin

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Introduction

What do we think of when we hear the word, “sin?” The answer we give is probably determined largely by our background. Some may think of a shouting revivalist admonishing the congregation to turn from some of the more popular and visible sins in order to gain eternal life. Some may be reminded of the pain they suffered when someone sinned against them. The “world” in general, scorns, depreciates, or even ignores the word altogether. The reason for this attitude is likely because it reminds them that there might be accountability for what they want to do. It is easier to deny truth and glibly state, “There are no absolutes.” than it is to face sin in one’s own life and to judge it as God commands.

Whatever specific thought that comes to mind, it is natural to think of sin in terms of someone else’s actions or responsibilities. The wise course of action when considering this question would be to pursue the authority, God’s Word, and to see what *He* says about sin in regard to Himself, to the unbeliever, and to the believer.

I. The Holy God and Sin

God’s Word is not silent concerning what we should know about sin in regards to Himself. Sin is totally contrary to Him and His nature. God is holy, just, and righteous (Ps. 99:9; Isa. 45:22; Ps. 7:9). We are told in Hab. 1:13, concerning God, “*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.*” God hates sin, but He loves the sinner (John 3:16). That is a difficult but desirable balance for us as sinful humans to achieve in our dealings with others. In order for us to enter God’s perfect Heaven we must have His righteousness (Rev. 21:27; II Cor. 5:21). This cannot be earned; only received by belief in Jesus (John:3:16; Eph.2:8, 9).

A. The Meaning of the Word “Sin”

He says in Romans 3:23 that we “...*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*” The very meaning of the word “sin” in the Greek means, “to miss the mark.” Even though we would like to think differently, this definition dictates that being close to the mark is not good enough. As we are reminded in James 2:10, that the keeping of the whole law, and yet offending in one point still makes us a lawbreaker. “Close” does not count except in horseshoes and hand-grenades.

B. Bible Definitions of Sin

The following are several Bible definitions or specific descriptions of sin:

Sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4).

All unrighteousness is sin (I John 5:17).

Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin (James 4:17).

The thought of foolishness is sin (Proverbs 24:9).

Whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23).

And according to I Samuel 12:23, in some cases, even not praying for someone is sometimes sin.

When we observe God’s holiness and His assessment of sin, we should be motivated to invoke a major reevaluation of what we tolerate in our own lives. We tend to compromise the truth or to rationalize it away until we can justify almost anything we want (Jer. 17:9).

C. The Universality of Sin

Sin entered the human race through Adam (Rom. 5:12). Therefore, all of Adam’s descendants were born with a sinful nature. No matter how much we polish up our outside, we are all still sinners (Romans 3:23; Romans 3:10-12). That is why God made a sacrifice payment “*for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2; John 3:16). Did you ever wonder why you have to teach an infant to do right, not to do wrong?

D. The History and Development of Sin

In spite of the tremendous displeasure sin has brought upon a Holy God, He has so generously made available His limitless grace to the undeserving and unregenerate man. The following summary taken from Dr. C. I. Scofield's notes on sin in the Scofield Reference Bible illustrates the history of sin, beginning at its inception and climaxing with God's ultimate answer, the grace of God poured out upon mankind (Titus 2:11).

Sin originated with Satan (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-19).

Sin entered the world by Adam (Romans 5:12).

Sin is universal (Romans 3:23; Romans 3:10-12; James 2:10; 1st John 1:8).

The Penalty of Sin is death (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23).

The only remedy for Sin is the sacrificial death of Christ (Hebrews 9:26; Acts 13:39).

The payment was sufficient for everyone and for every sin (I John 2:2; John 3:16; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 10:10-14).

E. The Result of Sin

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). The ultimate result of sin is death, but usually many other undesirable consequences precede the final result.

Adam and Eve lived in a Utopia that cannot be fully comprehended by any of us today. God gave Adam tremendous blessing and freedom but told him, *"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. 3:17). Through a series of events Adam disobeyed God. He physically lived for about 930 years and died (Gen. 5:5). He died spiritually when he sinned. That sin separated him from the Holy God.

The point of this discussion is that not only did Adam die spiritually at that time and die physically some years later, but there were other tragic consequences to his disobedience. Eve and subsequent women would have great sorrow in childbirth, Adam's workday was to become more tedious and sorrowful, and they were both cast out of the garden. The earth and mankind has suffered immeasurably since and as a result of this event (Gen. 3:16-19).

Sin is deceitful (Heb. 3:13). One of these areas of deceit may be the means by which one seemingly-small sin seems to launch us into series of more and greater sins. King David is a vivid example of this phenomenon (II Sam. 11:1-12:23). A series of "little" sins enveloped King David, the great warrior and victor, until he sunk to total despair and finally to repentance through the prophet's conviction. I doubt that he woke up one morning and said, "What a beautiful day to commit adultery, shatter an innocent family, murder a faithful servant and warrior, bring havoc, bloodshed, incest, untimely death to those in my family, bring disgrace to the God of Israel Whom I serve, and lose multiple material blessings in addition to all that." He did not plan that but that is exactly what happened as a result of his disobedience. David sought and received forgiveness (II Sam. 12:13; Psalm 51), but that did not remove the consequences of his sin. Gal. 6:7 tells us, *"Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."* You can pull a nail out of beautiful piece of furniture, but you cannot pull out the hole.

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23; James 1:15; Rom. 5:12; Prov. 14:12), but there are also many other tragic consequences of sin, both for the unbeliever and for the believer. If we have trusted in the name of Jesus, we can know that we have eternal life (I John 5:13). Positionally speaking, we have his righteousness, now let us, practically speaking, live holy lives to glorify God (Eph. 4:1).

II. The Unbeliever and Sin

A. Condemned without Christ

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). What does a person have to do to end up in Hell? Nothing! He is *already* condemned. Hell was not created for man (Matt. 25:41) but the man who does not receive Jesus’ payment for his sin will spend eternity there paying for his own sin. There is nothing that an unsaved man can do to please God until he trusts in Him (Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6). Man’s righteousness is nothing but “filthy rags” in God’s sight (Isa. 64:6). The reality of Hell should be a motivator for us to do our best to share the Good News of Salvation with as many as we can. People do not go to Hell because they sin, but because they do not receive the payment that has been made for their sins.

“He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (I John 5:12). There are only two major distinctions of mankind in God’s sight. They are not the religious or nonreligious, Baptist or Catholic, nice or not-so-nice. They are the ones who have Jesus and have life, and the ones without Jesus who are lost. There are only two kinds of Baptists or Charismatics, etc., those who have trusted in Jesus and have eternal life and those who have not trusted Him and are lost. The name we stick on them has nothing to do with salvation.

II. The Unbeliever and Sin, B. Redeemed by Christ

God’s Word is very clear about sin and the unbeliever. He cannot overlook sin but He redeems sinners, based upon the blood of Christ (I Peter 1:18, 19). He tells the unsaved man that His marvelous grace is available to him (Titus 2:11). Man is saved by grace through faith or belief in Jesus (Eph. 2:8, 9)

The well-known but little-understood verse, John 3:16, tells us, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* I heard this verse as a child but did not understand it. I knew that Jesus was necessary for salvation but I did not realize that He was also *sufficient* for my salvation.

Ephesians 2:8, 9 are two more of the many clear salvation verses in the Bible, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, Not of works lest any man should boast.”* This verse is clear in its statement that salvation is a gift (Rom. 6:23) and it is not of what we do. It is receiving what God has already done.

1. Not Saved by Turning from Sin

Most of us have heard well-meaning “evangelists” telling unsaved people to “repent of their sins” in order to be saved. The truth is far from the world’s commonly held view of salvation. God’s Word states that He loves us while we are yet sinners (Romans 5:8), but without believing in Jesus the unbeliever is condemned already and has no hope (John 3:16-18, 36; I Thessalonians 4:13-14). Without Christ, we are hopeless sinners. It does not do any good to turn over a new leaf when both sides of the leaf are rotten.

The unsaved man is nowhere told in the Bible to give up sin, to do good works, or even to be willing to do something to be saved. We are unable to do anything of ourselves to merit eternal life. God loves us and will save us just the way we are. Cleaning up our lives or promising something to God has nothing to do with our salvation. If we do some good works and trust in these works as part of our merit before God, we did not trust in Jesus and, therefore are still lost (Romans 5:6,8; Romans 4:5; Ephesians 2:8,9). Even though an unbeliever may make beneficial changes in his life, it will not save him (Titus 3:5; Romans 3:28, 14:23; Hebrews 11:6; Galatians 2:16). The only hope is to trust in Jesus as our Savior (John 14:6; John 3:16-18; Acts 16:31).

Probably two good reasons that God does not tell us to turn from sin in order to be saved are; 1. We cannot accomplish this impossible feat. Even the believer needs the indwelling Holy Spirit for victory in this area. 2. It would not save us if we could turn from sin. We are all born with a sinful nature and have continued to sin up until the point of potentially turning from sin. The payment for that sin has been made (I John 2:2) but needs to “be put to our account” or we will pay for it for eternity.

The term, “repent of sin”¹ should be addressed here. The misunderstanding of this phrase has been the occasion for the unsaved to be confused about the Gospel and to reject what is often presented as the way of salvation. It has also hindered many believers from proclaiming a clear Gospel message to a lost world blinded by Satan (II Cor. 4:3, 4).

The word “repentance” in the Bible simply means “a change of mind.” This “change of mind” could be about anything and the results may differ in various applications. The results of the action do not change the meaning of the word. The New Testament does not even use the term “repent of sin” when speaking to the unbeliever.

An unsaved person can repent of sin or change his mind about his sin all day long and never be saved. He can even engage in supreme efforts to stop some of his sins and never have eternal life. He may have a better life but will still die lost unless he believes in Jesus (John 3:18).

The purpose statement of the Gospel of John is found in 20:31: “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” Since the book states its purpose so clearly and does *not even mention* the words, “repent” or “repentance,” but *does* mention variations of “belief” or “believe” 101 times, I conclude that John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, did not think repentance to be a necessary part of our eternal salvation message. I can show you many verses which declare that faith in Jesus is *the* requirement to be saved, but I have yet to find a verse that conclusively states that we have to repent in order to have eternal life.

Some grace teachers, realizing that our sorrow for sin or change in lifestyle will not save us, teach that repentance is *included* in faith: that if we believe in Jesus that we have already repented or “changed our mind” and thus, were saved by faith alone, in Jesus alone. This interpretation does not seem to conflict with the grace message. I have previously taught similar to this, but at this point in my studies I do not think that this interpretation is consistent with some Scripture.

Of course, what many people mean when they tell an unsaved person to “repent of their sin” to be saved is that they need to turn from some or all of their sin, or at least be sorry for their sin and makes some promises about it before they can be acceptable to God for salvation. This is not the Gospel message that the Bible teaches. It is frequently taught but certainly is not the Good News that we are to tell the world (See Galatians 1:6-10 for God’s assessment of teachers who pollute the grace of Christ).

¹ An interesting fact worth noting is that the terms “repent of sin” or repentance of sin” are nowhere to be found in Scripture. I have stated this to people who would not even believe it to be true because they had heard the phrases so often. This statement can easily be verified with any computer Bible concordance software. This fact should make us very wary of using these extra-biblical terms in our evangelistic presentation. Although the terms are not used, the *concept* is to be found in Scripture. Occasionally this is focused upon unbelievers, but not for eternal life. (See Rev. 9:20, 21; 16:9, 11, where unbelievers experience temporal suffering for not repenting of named sins during the Great Tribulation). More frequently *believers* are told to repent of some sinful pattern (e.g. Acts 8:22, where Simon the Sorcerer is exhorted to repent for *forgiveness* (not for justification as he was already justified by believing, 8:13); and five of the seven churches of Rev. 2 and 3 are told to repent of some specific sins to avoid temporal judgment). The Greek word “repentance” (μετάνοια) simply means “a change of mind.” Some try to include in the definition a resulting change of life or turning from sin also. That is not found in the word. The context determines the expected result and the *object* of the repentance. Frequently in Scripture the *context* indicates a change of mind resulting in judging and refraining from the particular sin or sins mentioned. The best book that I know that covers this subject in what I believe to be a Biblical manner is “Harmony With God: A Fresh Look at Repentance” by Zane Hodges. It is available for loan from this writer or to purchase from <http://www.faithalone.org/bookstore/books.html> or can be read online at:

Part 1 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v8n3/v8n3_1.pdf

Part 2 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v8n4/v8n4_3.pdf

Part 3 http://www.chafer.edu/images/images/stories/docs/journal/v9n1/v9n1_2.pdf

I find it contradictory, paradoxical, deceitful, and diabolical when I hear well-known and highly-acclaimed “evangelists” give a “salvation” message that requires a list of do’s and don’ts of human merit. Sometimes they throw in “believe in Christ” also. This is frequently climaxed with a salvation invitation of about a dozen verses of “Just As I Am.” How can they not see the contradiction?

This is not meant to be contentious or a splitting of theological hairs. I plead for clarity in the salvation message for two main reasons: 1. It is so very clear in God’s word and is truth. 2. I was blinded for years by a Christ-plus-do-good message for salvation. The vast majority of the people that I have helped lead to belief in Christ have been blinded by the same good-sounding but untrue salvation message of faith-plus-works for eternal life (Rom. 11:6). Paul says, “*Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech*” (II Cor. 3:12).

2. Not Saved By Doing Good Works

One of counterfeits that Satan uses is to confuse the unbeliever into thinking he has to do good works to get to heaven. Many times preachers will misuse Bible verses that are meant to show a believer how to live and try to and use them to show an unsaved person how to get to heaven (II Cor. 4:3-4; 11:3,13-15).

It seems ironic that sometimes Satan seems to encourage good works for the unbeliever when it helps his cause by deceiving people (II Corinthians 11:3, 13-15; I Corinthians 2:4; Proverbs 14:12). After a person receives Christ, Satan is quite aware that a threat to him has stepped onto the spiritual battlefield. We then need to put on the spiritual armor in order to stand against the wiles of the devil and to keep our lives pure and usable for God. (Eph. 6:10-18). This passage is speaking about service to those who are already saved, not about the way of salvation for unbelievers.

None of these verses that tell a person how to have eternal life include any requirements for him to turn from sin, ask Jesus into his heart, give his heart to Jesus, go to church, do good works, walk down an aisle, commit his life to Jesus, give up something or promise something, or to be dipped in water, etc. This salvation depends *entirely* upon what Jesus has already done, not on what man tries to do. Man can and will fail but his salvation is already settled. He is not kept by his faith, but by the power of God (I Pet. 1:3-5). That is why he can know *right now* that he has eternal life (I John 5:13; Hebrews 10:17). That is also the *only* way that a man can know that he has eternal life. If it depended in any way upon man’s faithfulness we can be assured that he will at some time fail.

The Bible teaches much about good works. It also teaches God’s balanced view concerning man’s works. Eph. 2:8, 9 clearly presents that salvation is not of our works, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*” The next verse tells us how we are to apply good works. “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*” Here we see that there is a divine purpose for the believer’s life. We are created in Christ Jesus unto (lit. toward, in view to, for the purpose of) good works, which God has before ordained (Lit. pre-prepared, *not* pre-decreed) that we should walk in them.

We are saved for a purpose. Part of that purpose is living forever with God in Heaven, but the purpose also includes being obedient and faithful to Him for the short time that we have the opportunity to serve Him on this earth. As we live a life of good works, we can bring honor to God who did so much for us (Matt. 5:16). This will give us a better opportunity to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15), and to glorify Christ by leading others to Him (John 15:8).

III. The Believer and Sin

A. Sin will *not* result in loss of salvation

Sin in a believer’s life will *not* and *cannot* result in the loss of salvation. Eternal life is eternal (John 6:37, 39; 10:28; I John 5:10-13). There are many undesirable consequences of sin in a Christian’s life but losing the gift of eternal life is *not* one of them. A person who has been born again into God’s family cannot become “unborn.” If eternal life is could be lost, then it was misnamed.

The Bible is extremely clear on the issue of eternal life. It is not a matter of interpretation, but a matter of belief. Jesus was speaking of His “sheep” in John 10:28 when He said, “*And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*” It would be difficult to be any clearer than that. God has already given us “eternal” life; that means forever. Furthermore, He says that we shall *never* perish. The word “never” is translated from two Greek words and is a double negative, which is added for emphasis.

I John 5:13 tells us that we may *know* that we have eternal life. “*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, ...*” We can know right now that we have eternal life because it does not depend upon what we are trying to do. It depends upon what God has already done.

What about the sin question for a Christian? Does God just overlook our sin after we are saved? Absolutely not! A just God requires the payment for sin (Rom. 6:23; I John 2:2). A loving God paid the payment Himself and offers it freely to mankind (I John 4:9; Rom. 3:24). Heb. 10:10-14 compares the complete offering for sin that Jesus made (v10) with the ineffective offering made by the Jewish priests (v11). The subject is then summed up in verse 14, “*For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*” Verse 17, quoting Jer. 31:34, tells us, “*And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*” Titus 2:14, relays to us the good news that believers are redeemed “*from all iniquity.*”

One of the blessings of knowing that we have eternal life is that we do not have to stumble around trying to be good enough to go to Heaven. That has been settled by Christ’s righteousness (II Cor 5:21). We can now concentrate our efforts on serving and glorifying Him, the One Who did so much for us (I Cor. 6:19,20).

We know from God’s Word that we should be serving Him. Neutrality is sin (Matt. 12:30). James 4:17; “*Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*” May we get our priorities in order.

B. Sin in a Believer’s life *will* result in:

1. Chastening (Correction or Instruction)

Can a person trust in Jesus as his Savior, then live as he pleases and still go to Heaven when he dies? Though this question is sometimes posed from a very selfish and shortsighted viewpoint, it is an important and common question that deserves a Biblical answer.

In order to prevent a misunderstanding of this issue, explanation is necessary along with the answer. First, is it possible to live as we please? No one truly does. As a child, I always wanted to be able to fly or to go back in time. This has never worked. Our humanity, society, financial position, physical status, all place limits on things we wish to do.

The believer has additional limits placed upon his free will. He has the Holy Spirit indwelling him (I Cor. 6:19-20) and God’s restraining force is with him everywhere he goes. The sense in which this question is presented has to do with a believer choosing to obey or to disobey God. If the believer could not choose to disobey God, then why is the New Testament replete with commands to obey and sad examples of those who did not. While raising my children, they each had a free will and chose to disobey at times, but they did not truly live as they pleased in my home. When they disobeyed, I did not kick them out. As a loving father, I asked them to come on in for some serious communication.

An important parenthetical note needs to be introduced here. I would like to share part of the personal testimony of the man who first presented the Gospel in a clear and accurate enough manner for me to understand. God has used him to be a significant part of probably several hundred thousand people being saved, not including the repeated generations of the many whom he disciplined. While lost, he was persuaded to attend a home bible study. The speaker clearly explained from Ephesians 2:8 and 9, that salvation was only by grace through faith and did not rely in any way upon our works. With everyone sitting around a

dinner table, this man then interrupted the meeting with a poignant question, “Do you mean that if I believe in Jesus for eternal life, that no matter what I did afterward, that I would still go to Heaven?”

That is kind of a “loaded” question. How would you answer it? Most pastors or Christian leaders would tend to “fudge” on the answer and maybe say that you need to be *willing* to change or something like that. Many do not want to take the flak for being true to God’s word when it might incur some persecution from the “Christian” world.

This Bible teacher gave a loving and accurate reply to the question, “That’s a crude way to put it, but God loves you that much.” At that, my friend, slammed his hand on the table and exclaimed, “That’s for me.” He then believed in Jesus and was assured of his eternal life. What he did not realize then was the implication of the Holy Spirit indwelling him, God’s loving discipline of the believer, and many other wonderful truths of the Christian life which came with study and maturity. He has stated to me that if that kind Bible teacher had compromised one bit on the truth of the Gospel, that he would have rejected it and walked out. What a potential tragedy that could have occurred had the Bible teacher not been clear on the issue of grace and works for salvation. I believe that this tragedy *is* presently occurring in many “Bible-believing” circles today.

We have previously seen that Jesus has paid for all of our sins; past, present, and future (when He died, they were all future). Our salvation is kept by God’s power, not by our faithfulness (I Pet. 1:3-5). The answer to the question is that, even though that *is* crude way to put it, no matter what we do after we are saved, God loves us enough to stand by His word and save us. This leads us to the subject of the chastening of the believer.

A passage that details God’s loving correction in our lives is Hebrews 12:5-11;

5. *And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:*
6. *For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*
7. *If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*
8. *But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*
9. *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?*
10. *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.*
11. *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*

The following are some highlights that we see from the above passage. It explains God’s chastening of the believer. God’s Chastening is:

1. For God’s children (v5)
2. Not to be despised, but endured (v5)
3. An act of Divine love (v6)
4. For every believer (v6)
5. Of varying intensity (v6)
6. Evidence of relationship (v7, 8)
7. Not for those who are not in the family (v8)
8. Compared to, but superior to parental discipline (v9, 10)
9. Intended to keep us in subjection to the Father (v9)
10. For our profit (v10)
11. Not initially pleasant, but ultimately fruitful (v11)

I Cor. 11:30, 31, gives us some good news. This passage presents to us a simple and practical way to escape God’s chastening in specific areas: *We should judge ourselves before God needs to.*

According to Unger's Bible Dictionary, there are at least 4 reasons for chastening:

1. **Preventive**, as in the case of the Apostle Paul, who was given the thorn in the flesh to keep him humble (II Cor 12:7-9).
2. **Corrective**, which is the disciplinary moving of the Father toward His wayward son for the good of the son.
3. **Enlarging**, the object being "unto holiness" to bring forth the "fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:6; John 15:2).
4. **Vindicative**, as in the case of Job who vindicated God against the challenge and accusations of Satan that the patriarch did not really love God apart from his family, his possessions and himself.

The word "chasten" (Heb. 12:6, 7, 12) is translated from a word that has to do with "child-training." It is from the same word that is used in Titus 2:11, 12, "The grace of God... **teaching** us..." and in II Tim. 3:16, "*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, throughly furnished unto all good works.*"

Chastening is not exercised in order to pay for sin. That has already been accomplished, once, completely and forever (Heb. 10:10, 14; Rom. 8:1; Titus 2:13, 14; I John 2:2). It is "for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:10). Therefore, we can understand why we should "despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him" (Heb. 12:6). God's chastisement of the believer may not even be as a result of our sin. Maybe God needs to prepare us and to mold us into something even better for ourselves, others, and for His glory.

B. Sin in a Believer's life will result in: 2. Grieving God's Holy Spirit

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

God's Holy Spirit is not an "it" or just a force as some of the cults would have us to believe. He is fully God and has personality. One cannot "grieve" a force. Act 5:1-11 tells of two believers who lied to Holy Spirit. One cannot lie to a force. Verses 3 and 4 equate the Holy Spirit with God.

The Holy Spirit plays a major role both in our salvation and in our Spiritual growth. As we shall soon see, we, as believers, also have a great obligation to be guided by God's Holy Spirit in our lives.

In John 3:3-6 Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must experience a *spiritual* birth in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Being born once is not sufficient, "*Ye must be born again*" (v7). The word "again" here literally means "from above." Jesus then explains how one could receive this new spirit birth, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

Jesus later proclaimed that His Holy Spirit would be received by those who believe in Him (John 7:37-39). He leaves His wavering disciples with the promise that He would not leave them comfortless but would send "*...another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever*" (John 14: 16-19).

Speaking of this Comforter in John 16:7-15, He tells part of the Spirit's functions concerning the world. Jesus says that He is to "*...reprove the world of sin ...because they believe not on me*" (vs 6, 7). This tells me several things. One, that is not my job to convict or even to reform the world. It is my job to lovingly and faithfully proclaim the Gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). And two, that the Holy Spirit's job in the world is not to convict of *sins*, but to convict the world of *the* sin of unbelief. This fact should help to clarify my missionary focus. It is important to lovingly provide some physical, mental, and emotional needs in order to win people to Christ, but let us not make that the primary goal. Jesus told us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, not to go into all the world and install sanitary sewers. It does little eternal good to educate people, feed and clothe them, reform them, then let them go to a Christless eternity. If trying to get the world to live like Christians should live was what the world needed, He would have given us that commission instead.

Later in the same chapter He tells us part of the Spirit's function with believers. He is to guide us into all truth (v13) and He is to glorify Jesus (v14). Jesus said that God's word is truth (John 17:17). God's inspired word (II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 2:21) tells us to be diligent in the study of His word (II Tim. 2:15). This will help us to mature and to be "...no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love..." (Eph. 4:14, 15). Many Christian's doctrine is as strong as the last good speaker that they heard. If someone claims that they received something from the Holy Spirit, and it contradicts God's word or is unglorifying to Jesus, we can rest assured that the spirit from whom it was received was not God's Spirit.

After his resurrection, Jesus told his disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait. There they would soon both receive and be baptized in or with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 5). This was fulfilled several days later at Pentecost as we read in the second chapter of Acts. This was the birthday of Christ's Church, which is His body. Since shortly after that time all believers are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13). We are repeatedly told to be being filled or controlled with the Spirit. The Bible *never* tells us to be baptized by the Spirit *because we already are*.

This brings us to the issue of "grieving" the Spirit. Paul exhorts the carnal Corinthian believers in I Cor. 6:19-20, "*What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's.*" God has redeemed us (bought and paid for us). We belong to Him and He lives within us. Now we are commanded to live a life in obedience to Him.

When we choose to be disobedient to God, this grieves Him. There are a number of specific sins mentioned in the immediate context of this command mentioned in Eph. 4:30: being given over to lasciviousness (unbridled lust), working uncleanness with greediness (v19), the old manner of life which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts (v22), lying (v25), sinning in the mishandling of anger (v26), giving place to the devil (v27), stealing (v28), corrupt speech (v29), bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor (screaming), evil speaking (v31), unkindness, lack of compassion, and unforgiveness (v32).

All these terrible deeds could not be referring to believers, could they? Yes, they certainly are. This is written to the Church. These are ones who are saved but are exhorted to start living like Christians should (Eph. 4:1). This immediate context is referring to those who have already been forgiven by God (5:32). Believers are sinners who have received the payment for their sins. They are still sinners, but saved by grace.

A similar verse is found in I Thess. 5:19; "*Quench not the Spirit.*" This verse is found in the midst of a number of short, positive, and practical exhortations for believers. What is the distinction between these two verses? Some have suggested that Ephesians is speaking more of sin in action and I Thessalonians is speaking more of sin in rejection of true doctrine. Others have proposed that quenching the Spirit is resistance to the Spirit's influence which leads to the sins involved with grieving Him. Whatever the precise distinction, it is clear that God is seeking for us to be yielded and obedient to His Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:16).

There are at least five passages in the New Testament that contains commands for us concerning the Holy Spirit; the above two verses which contain negative commands and three positive ones:

Gal. 5:16, *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

Gal. 5:25, *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

Eph. 5:18, *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit:*

Gal. 5:16, *Walk in the Spirit*. This simply means that our daily walk; how we live our lives, should be by means of or in accordance with the Holy Spirit. This yieldedness to God is the key to us not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. We tend to reverse this and think that if we can somehow work up enough power to not fulfill the lusts of the flesh that we will be spiritual. We need God's power to overcome sin in our lives.

Gal. 5:25, *Let us also walk in the Spirit.* This word “walk” is a different word than is used in verse 16. This word means “to advance in line with.” The same word is translated in Gal. 6:16 as “walk according to.” It was also used of an army marching in rank.

Eph. 5:18, *“Be filled with the Spirit.”* Being filled with the Spirit is often likened to being baptized with the Spirit. This is an error that has caused confusion to many. They are *not* the same. “Filling,” when referring to the Holy Spirit means “to be influenced by or controlled by.” (There are several other words that are translated “filled” in the New Testament but they have different meanings, such as being “filled,” with food, meaning “satisfied,” or a basket being “filled,” meaning “overflowing.” cf. Matt. 4:20).

What do these verses have in common? They are all saying much the same as many other commands for believers; God wants us to obey Him. When we do not, it brings displeasure to Him, along with other undesirable consequences.

This is the thrust of *“Grieve not the holy Spirit of God;”* Any kind of disobedience, rebellion, or unyieldedness to God is hurtful to Him and to us. Just as a loving parent is grieved when he sees his offspring rebelling and hurting himself, our loving Father is grieved when we choose to disobey Him. The positive side of obeying God’s Holy Spirit is found shortly after the admonition in Gal. 5:16 to Walk in the Spirit. As we are yielded to Him, He will produce the fruit of His Spirit in our lives; Love, joy, peace, etc. This is what the world is seeking but will not find until they look in the right place. Let us reevaluate our dedication to the One Who loved us and paid for our sins. Then may we rearrange our selfish and shortsighted priorities and set our affections on eternal things above (Col. 3:2).

**B. Sin in a Believer’s life will result in:
3. Loss of opportunities**

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21).

Our life is made up of a certain amount of time. According to this verse, Paul’s priorities in life; how he spent his time, was for Christ. If he were to die it would be gain.

He expands on this thought in the following verses. He tells the Philippian believers that he was in a dilemma between his desire to be with God and his desire to stay and minister to those whom he loved on earth. With this divinely balanced attitude, it is no wonder that he was such an effective servant for God. He had his priorities properly set with eternity’s values in view. The time to serve God is now.

Our life is composed of time. James 4:14 graphically depicts the temporal nature of our lives, *“...For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”* Though each of us has different abilities and responsibilities, we all have the same amount of time in each day. We are accountable to God for how we use it. When it is used up, we do not receive a second opportunity to reuse that time. It is gone forever. A vivid example of this is given in Hebrews 12:17 concerning Esau who at one point in time sold his birthright. Afterward, *“...he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”* It was too late. God’s Word gives us wise instruction concerning the use of our time.

II Cor. 6:2 tells us that, *“...now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.”* This is a quote from Isaiah 49:8 where God is speaking to Israel 700 years before. It would also apply to us today. We have no guarantee of another chance of salvation past this moment. (This author believes that the context of this verse is referring primarily to a temporal salvation of the believer, not an unbeliever being saved, though logically, the principle might apply.)

“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time” (Col. 4:5). There are several words translated “redeem” in the New Testament. This one means “to buy out of the market or slave market, never again to be exposed to sale.” According to this verse, one way to redeem the time is to walk in wisdom toward them who are outside of Christ. It sounds a little bit like God is interested in the lost for whom He died. That should also be a major goal of ours.

Ephesians 5:14-18

Eph. 5:16 states, “*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*” This verse gives us a similar admonition but with more practical exhortation surrounding it. Let us look at the immediate context.

14. *Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.*
God is telling us to wake up. We have a job to do. A similar command is given in I Cor. 15:34, “*Awake to righteousness and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame.*” The truth of this verse should be compelling without any need for further comment.

What is meant by “*arise from the dead and Christ shall give thee light*”? Is it not true that the unsaved are the spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1, 5), and Christ is the light of the world for their salvation? (John 1:7). Yes, but this verse is speaking to believers who are lacking in their obedience to God. God pronounces a similar appraisal on the church in Sardis who also lacked in their obedience to God. “*...I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and are dead*” Rev. 3:1b). Apparently, a believer that is not obeying Christ as his master not only needs to wake up, but in a sense, needs to be resuscitated because he is dead while he is walking around. He needs to be walking in the light of fellowship with Jesus (I John 1:3-7).

15. *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,*

16. *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

Our daily walk should be accurate, precise, and diligent, displaying wisdom instead of the lack of wisdom shown by those who do not walk circumspectly. We are to redeem the time (buy it back, use it to best advantage). One reason is because the days are evil.

17. *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

18. *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be ye filled with the Spirit.*

Do not be senseless or foolish (a different word than is used in verse 15), but understanding what the will or desire of the Lord is. If we do not know what the will of the Lord is, we need to find out. If we do not, we are foolish. God’s will is found in God’s Word.

We are *not* to be drunk or influenced by wine. In contrast, we *are* to be filled or controlled by the Spirit. The rest of the epistle then expands on the areas in which we are to be Spirit controlled. By inference, all this is involved in “redeeming the time.”

The message of Romans 13:11,12 also attempts to arouse us from our apathetic slumber, “*And knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for our salvation is nearer that when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.*” There are a number of practical exhortations given in the context stating how we can specifically attain that goal. Wake up, Christian! The time is short and getting shorter. We may be wasting time sewing new curtains for the Titanic while the ship is sinking with all the people on board. We need to be manning the lifeboats.

When today is gone, its opportunities are also gone. Several factors to consider as we decide how we should spend our time are:

1. Will the time, effort, money, etc. spent on any endeavor have any worth a hundred years from now?
2. If I do not take advantage of the opportunities I have today, they will be wasted and forever gone.
3. I will die someday unless Jesus comes soon. I will then have no more time to sow for eternal values.
4. People with whom I come in contact will die someday, perhaps today. This may be their last opportunity to hear the Good News of Salvation. Will I redeem the time? *You* are the best Christian that somebody knows.

Luke 18:29, 30 promises a time to come when the rewards for those who relinquish perishable benefits for Christ will far outweigh the temporal sacrifices that were forfeited. As the songwriter puts it, “It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.” That time is coming soon. It may be sooner than we realize.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

B. Sin in a Believer’s life will result in:

4. Loss of reward

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his works shall be” (Rev. 22:12).

Eternal life is free, rewards are earned. It is important how we live our lives.

“Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and in the world to come everlasting” (Luke 18:28-30).

Is working for rewards selfish?

Is not *love* supposed to be the supreme motive for service? (II Cor. 5:14; I Cor. 13:1-8). Yes, it is, but God also tells us that the pursuit of heavenly rewards is not only just “OK,” but that it is not even optional. *“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (Matt. 6:19,21).*

In I Cor. 9:24-27, Paul likens the Christian life to a competitive race and presents a good case concerning his attitude about running for the “prize.” *“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we and incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body and bring it unto subjection: lest by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (disqualified or disapproved).”* Paul was motivated to run the race and win the prize.

Is this motivation selfish? If this motivation is encouraged by God, it is not selfish. It is not wrong to look out for ourselves. It is wrong to look out for ourselves in *our own way*. A similar concept is found in our attitude about material blessings. Material blessings are not wrong to have though our attitude about them may be wrong (I Tim. 6:10). An example of the Godly attitude about wealth is found in I Tim. 6:17,18; *“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.”* It appears that some churches today like to apply just the first part of the verse, *“Charge them that are rich.”* They have the wrong attitude about wealth.

Gal. 5:16 tells us to *“...Walk in the Spirit, And ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”* The very same context implies that as a result of our yielding to God’s Holy Spirit, that the fruit of the Spirit will be manifested in us. What a blessing to look forward to. Eternal life is a gift of God (Rom. 6:23) but love, joy, peace, etc. can be ours if we are obedient. This must be part of what Jesus meant when He said, *“I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10b).* Not only do we receive rewards both in this life and in the future for our service to God, but we are encouraged to seek rewards. Our loving Father desires to bless us but he cannot bless disobedience (II Sam. 12:8).

How are the believer’s eternal rewards determined? The Bible tells of a future judgment of a believer’s works, not *sins* as they are already judged. This is called the Judgment Seat of Christ and is where the quality of our works is determined and rewards are dispensed.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:” (Hebrews 9:27).

There is common tendency among theologians and mankind in general to suppose that sometime after death that there is some kind of universal judgment in which we will all be judged according to our sins and our good deeds. This judgment is supposed to determine our final destination, the good into Heaven and the bad into Hell.

The Bible states that though there is judgment awaiting everyone, there are a number of judgments at different times with different criteria for judgment. The believer of this age awaits the Judgment Seat of Christ occurring probably shortly after the Rapture of the Church. There the quality of his works will be judged to determine his future rewards (I Corinthians 3:11-15). His destination is already determined as his sins were judged at the Cross.

The unbeliever of this age awaits the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11:15) which will occur at the end of the Millennial reign of Christ upon the earth. They will also be judged according to their works (v12) and their destination has already been determined (v15) because of their rejecting or neglecting trusting in Jesus, the only way of salvation.

Passages Considered

II Corinthians 5:

9 *Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.*

10 *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

11 *Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*

Observations:

V.9, Speaking about believers. Paul includes himself in the “we.” We also see that the criteria for judgment have to do with our “labor.” The word “accepted” means “well-pleasing.”

V.10, This judgment includes “all” the believers of this age. It will occur and we will not miss our appointment with Him, either for rewards or to “be ashamed at His coming” (I John 2:28). “Good or bad” in this context refers not to morality but to quality, worthwhile or worthless.

v.11, “Terror” is usually translated “fear” and can also refer to reverence to God. It is likely that “terror” in this context is not referring to judgment upon the unbeliever but of the believer’s lack of obedience to Christ.

I Corinthians 3:

9 *For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.*

10 *According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.*

11 *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

12 *Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;*

13 *Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.*

14 *If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

15 *If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

Observations:

The context before this passage describes the “natural” man, or the unsaved (2:14) and the “spiritual” man who is Spirit-controlled (2:15, 16). Chapter 3 portrays the “carnal” believer, the person who has been born again but who has not grown as he should (v1) due to his sinful attitudes and actions (vs3, 4). Paul

encourages us to obey Christ with the motivation that “*every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor*” (v8) (This is one good reason for us not to judge another person’s works. cf. Rom 14:10). In a comparison of the believer to a building being built, he depicts us as having the foundation of Christ and exhorts us:

V10, “*But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon*” We have the opportunity and command to build upon the foundation that we have. We are to be careful how we build.

V11, There is no other foundation than Jesus Christ (Jn 14:6).

V12, There are two classes of works, those which are worthwhile and those which are worthless, those which are purified by fire and those which are burned up.

V13, The fire will reveal and judge what sort of works were built on the foundation. Our sins are not judged here. They have already been judged (Hebrews 10:14, 17). Even though the sin question has been settled, it is logical to assume that our sin in this life will drastically reduce our worthwhile service for Christ for which we would have received rewards.

V14, The remaining works are worthy of reward. Salvation is not a reward, it is a gift (Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 6:23). The obedient Christian will receive rewards in addition to the gift of eternal life.

V15. The believer with worthless works will suffer loss, but still be saved.

I Corinthians 4:2 tells of God’s requirement for service. “*Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*”

We are not required to be talented, always busy, to meet someone else’s standards, or to jump through hoops for God, etc. We are told to be faithful. All of us can do that if we choose (Ephesians 5:18; 6:6:10; Galatians 5:17).

Other verses to consider:

Romans 14:10 *But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*

Crowns are reserved for:

The diligent servant, I Corinthians 9:

24 *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

25 *And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.*

26 *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:*

The soul-winner, I Thessalonians 2:

19 *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? 20 For ye are our glory and joy.*

Those who love His appearing, I Timothy 4:

8 *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

The ones enduring trials, James 1:

12 *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

The faithful Elders, I Peter 5:

4 *And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

The faithful believer under trials, Revelation 3:

10 *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

3:11 *Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*

4:4,10,11 *And round about the throne were... four and twenty elders sitting, ... and they had on their heads crowns of gold... and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

**B. Sin in a Believer's life will result in:
5. Loss of the fruit of the Spirit**

Gal. 5:22,23; *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance:...”*

The world is seeking for these but usually settles for temporary and poor imitations of the real thing. The reason they do not find the genuine article is because they are seeking in the wrong place and in the wrong way. Peace *with* God comes from being justified by faith (Rom. 5:1). The peace *of* God which passes all understanding comes from obedience to Him (Phil 4:7 and context). True love as described in God's Word (1 John 4:8-10) is a sought after but unknown concept to much of our world.

What does the believer's sin or obedience have to do with the fruit of the Spirit? How can we obtain these much-desired graces in our lives? Let us read the context surrounding this verse and see what it says.

The Text

Gal 5:16-23

16. *This I say the, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*
17. *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*
18. *But if ye are led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*
19. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,*
20. *Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,*
21. *Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*
22. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*
23. *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Comments on the Text

16. *This I say the, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*
Earlier in the book Paul presents a convincing defense of the doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law (1:6-10; 2:16; 3:1-10). In chapter 5 he launches into a defense of the marvelous liberty that we have in Christ (5:1) and shares how we are to apply this freedom in our Christian lives: *“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another, For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (5:13).* We are not under law nor are we given license to sin. We are given freedom to serve by love.

In this context we are now told to *“Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* Bible teachers tend to reverse this doctrine. We are sometimes told to “not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” and then we will be “spiritual.” Trying to be holy without the power of the Holy Spirit can lead to a multitude of problems, both doctrinal and emotional.

Just what does it mean to “Walk in the Spirit?” The word “walk” is the verb form of a word usually used for our manner of living or deportment. We might use terminology of identical meaning when we talk of someone's “walk with the Lord.” “Spirit” is in the dative case and appears to be what is called the “dative of means.” This means that our daily life or walk should literally be “by means of the Spirit.” *We are to be*

guided by and responsive to Him in everything we do. As this is practiced, the lusts of the flesh will take care of themselves. This is just one of the reasons that it is foolish to try to reform a person so that they can get saved. Reformation will not save, and God's way of reformation works better than the way of man-made religion.

How does this coincide with other verses concerning our obligation to God's Holy Spirit? Later in this chapter a similar statement is made, "*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*" (Gal. 5:25). The word "walk" here means to "be in line with." It was used for soldiers marching in rank.

Eph. 5:18, *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;* The word "filled" here means to be controlled or influenced by.

There are two negative verses:

Eph. 4:30, *And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye were sealed until the day of redemption.*

I Thess. 5:19. *Quench not the Spirit.*

The summation of these verses seems to be that God wants us to be controlled by, influenced by, obedient to, or yielded to, His Holy Spirit. God's commands are found in God's Word. The believer who obeys God's Holy Spirit is a Spirit-filled or Spirit-controlled person.

17. *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

If we have been born once, of physical parents, (that should include all of us), we have a nature that is composed like that of the ones who begat us. This is a sinful nature which is inherited from Adam (Rom. 5:12). This will die because of sin (Rom. 6:23; I Cor. 15:50).

When we are born again from above we receive a nature that is from God. This is likely somehow connected with the fact that God's Holy Spirit now lives within us (John 7:39; I Cor. 6:19,20). This birth is from God and cannot sin (I John 3:9). Obviously, this presents a scenario conducive to constant conflict. Paul makes mention of this conflict between his own two natures in Romans 7:7-25.

The Christian world seems to be only vaguely aware of this ongoing battle within the believer. It also seems to be oblivious to the practical outworking of this conflict or how we can become victorious in this day-to-day struggle.

The following three verses depict essentials for growth in the Christian life. They also parallel necessities for physical growth: nutrition, exercise, and rest.

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2).

"But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. 5:14).

"Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him:..." (Ps. 37:7).

This concept is important to our understanding of our two natures. Simply put, whichever one we feed and strengthen the most will usually be the victor in a conflict. If we fill our minds with worldly trash and do not feed on God's Word, our spiritual senses will be so anemic that they will not have a chance. Is it any wonder that we fail so often in our efforts for Godly living when we allow our habit patterns to become so deeply entrenched in line with the enemy?

The contrary is also true. If we feed and exercise on things God wants for us, we will have more strength to overcome the clever onslaught of Satan. The place of the most difficulty seems to be the believer who wants the best of both worlds. He strengthens both natures. This person is in for a lengthy series of major internal conflict. These are among the most unhappy Christians. They fit into the "lukewarm" status of Rev. 3:16. Man cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24).

18. *But if ye are led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

I Tim. 1:8, tells us that the law is good if a man use it lawfully. The purpose of the Law of Moses never was to save us. Its purpose is to show us that are sinners and to bring us to Christ (Rom. 3:19, 20; Gal. 3:19-26). Believers are not under the law. We are under grace (Rom. 6:14; I Cor. 6:12; 10:23).

19. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,*

20. *Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,*

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

This grim list is a sampling of the natural results of our human sinful natures. A disobedient Christian can become involved in any of these sins because we still have our sinful nature that we inherited from Adam.

Does the last phrase, *“they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God”* mean that if you commit any of these sins that you cannot be saved? If that is the correct interpretation, then we all have struck out. All of us are guilty of some of these things.

I recently heard a TV preacher quote a similar passage, I Cor. 6:9,10, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”*

This was quoted in the context of the importance of the Ten Commandments to us today. He was concentrating on the sin of covetousness. In summation he stated, based on this verse, that those who were covetous could not be saved.

The tragic omission was that he did not read the next verse to the millions of unsaved in his TV audience. *“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God”* (I Cor 6:11). The Corinthian believers were not leading very holy lives but they were saved by the blood of Christ.

A similar concept is found in the verse in Galatians. The theme of the book is clear that we are saved by faith alone (1:6-9; 2:16; 3:3, 8, 11, 13, 22). The contrast presented here is between our sinful nature and that which is produced by the Holy Spirit. All of us have sinned and our sinful nature will never be saved (I Cor. 15:50 and context). That is why we need the new birth from God. These Galatians were sinners who did not deserve to go to Heaven (just as we), but were saved by faith.

22. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,*
23. *Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law*

The fruit of the Spirit is not to be confused with the fruit that the believer produces (Matt. 13:23; John 15:8). This fruit apparently has to do with winning others to Christ. It is related to the fruit of the Spirit in that it has to do with obedience to God’s commands, but it is not identical. The fruit of the Spirit is something that the Holy Spirit produces, not the Christian.

Note that “fruit” is singular. It has been suggested that these qualities constitute a unity, all of which will be found in a believer whose life is controlled by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps it is saying, “If you have divine love, you have the whole package.”

The love it is speaking of is divine love (agape - ἀγάπη). This is the love that sacrifices for the good of the one loved (John 3:16; I John 4:8-10). It is also the same as the love that Christ showed us and that men are to show their wives. This is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I Corinthians 13:1-8 describes this love. It is not a feeling, though feelings may be involved. It is action. All of these descriptions of love are verbs; action words.

Joy should be distinguished from happiness or fun. Happiness is dependent upon happenings. Joy is produced within, regardless of external circumstances.

The theme of the Epistle to the Philippian Church is joy or rejoicing. Paul's environment at the time of writing this letter was lacking in niceties. He was in jail. He did not even have TV like jails of today. His surroundings were horrid but he had the joy of Christ in the midst of his trials. That joy comes only from obedience to God.

Peace is another commodity which the world is desperately seeking. Paul experienced God's peace while writing Philippians and tells us how to enjoy the same blessing in Phil. 4:7. We must obey Him. In other words, walk in the Spirit.

Longsuffering or patience is rare today. It is the quality of forbearance under provocation (II Cor. 6:6). Gentleness or kindness is benevolence in action (Col. 3:12). An example of goodness is being good to others even when they are not deserving, kind of like what God is to us.

Faith is probably referring to fidelity, the quality of being trustworthy or reliable. I Cor. 4:2 makes this a requirement of the faithful steward. Meekness or gentleness marks a person who is submissive to God's Word (James 1:21) and who is considerate of others. Temperance or self control denotes self mastery and probably relates to curbing the fleshly desires listed in previous verses. There is no law prohibiting any of these qualities.

The context implies that these qualities are produced in the Christians' life as he "walks in the Spirit" (v16). "Walking in the Spirit" is no more than being obedient to Him. As the believer sins, he is being disobedient and missing out on so much of the abundant life that God for every obedient Christian (John 10:10).

**B. Sin in a Believer's life will result in:
6. Loss of fellowship with God**

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (I John 1:6).

"Fellowship" here refers to communion, intimacy, or partnership with God. It is an unhindered and joyful relationship with Him. Unconfessed sin creates a barrier between man and God. Walking in darkness and having fellowship with God are mutually exclusive. Let us look at the immediate context of this verse.

The Text

I John 1:3-10

3. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*
4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*
5. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*
6. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:*
7. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.*
8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*
9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

Comments on the Text

3. *That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*
4. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

It appears from this verse that fellowship with other believers is dependent on or related to fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This fellowship with God is a key to having joy that is full.

5. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

Jesus is the "...true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:3-9). "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

6. *If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:*

We cannot lose our salvation (I John 5:8-13) but we can lose our joy and fellowship with God by our disobedience. The next chapter gives one example of the contrast between walking in the light and walking in darkness, "He that loveth this brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (I John 2:10, 11).

7. *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.*

The word "walk," used in verses 6 and 7 is the same word that is used in Galatians 5:16, where we are told, "...Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." Just as our daily walk should be by means of or controlled by the Holy Spirit, our daily walk should be by means of the light (Jesus), and not in or controlled by darkness. This may be two ways of saying the same thing; those of us who are saved by grace should be obeying God in our daily walk.

The "fellowship one with another" in this context is likely referring to our fellowship with God, i.e. mutual fellowship, but it could mean with other believers also.

Some interpret the phrase, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" to refer to salvation. It is a fundamental truth that we are redeemed by the blood of Christ (I Pet. 2:18, 19), but this interpretation does not fit the context. John includes himself in the "us" of this verse and in the "we" of verses 6,7,8,9 and 10. He had been saved about 60 years at that time. The context is speaking of fellowship with God and the Christian walk, not how to be saved.

There is a difference between cleansing; related to our fellowship which is an ongoing process (v6 and v9), and justification; a onetime event in our lives. Hebrews 10:10-14 compares the priestly offering for sins and the eternal and complete offering that Jesus made on the cross. "For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (v14). "...Our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity..." (Titus 2:13,14).

"...Jesus Christ the righteous:...he is the propitiation (sacrifice payment) for our sins: and not for our's only but for the sins of the whole world" (I John 2:1,2).

The grammatical structure of the word "cleanseth" allows the translation, "is cleansing us" from all sin. This has to do with our continuous confession and cleansing (v9) that affects our fellowship. It does not directly refer to our salvation which is already settled.

8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

Those who say they have no sin are not fooling the ones around them. They are deceiving themselves.

9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

10. *If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

To confess our sins means to reckon it the same as God does, it is sin. It does not say to beg, plead, do penance, etc. Just confess our sins to God (not a human mediator). The immediate result of this obedient action is forgiveness, and cleansing. The context implies that this is an essential step toward having fellowship with God and joy in our lives. We must then judge and forsake these sins so that we may walk in the light and enjoy fellowship with Him. We may then function in the mode of glorifying Christ by “bearing much fruit” (John 15:8).

This subject will be studied in more detail in the topic entitled, “*The Need for Confession.*” Confession of our sins to God assures us of forgiveness and cleansing. It opens the way to restoration of fellowship and our fruitfulness for God.

**B. Sin in a Believer’s life will result in:
7. Natural results of sin**

“Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

This verse states a fact that is commonly known as truth but is often rejected in practice. We, as sinful and selfish humans, tend to ignore the principle of accountability for our actions. Ignoring truth does not nullify it. Truth is not subjectively established by our belief in it. Truth is not established by how popular it is or how many people believe it. Jesus said in his intercessory prayer, “...*Thy word is truth*” (John 17:17).

The context seems to include both the chastening aspect of a loving Heavenly Father and the natural results of our actions. There are physical laws in a physical world. For example; if a person decides to jump off of a roof, he would land where gravity takes him. If a person decides to abuse his body for much of his life, it is likely that his body would show the affects of this abuse after a time. It appears that God also uses some of these natural consequences for his glory and our benefit in his loving discipline toward his wayward children. Let us consider the context of this verse.

The Text

Galatians 6:1-10,

1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.*
2. *Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*
3. *For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*
4. *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.*
5. *For every man shall bear his own burden.*
6. *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*
7. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*
8. *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*
9. *And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*
10. *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

Comments on the Text

1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted.*

“Brethren,” indicates that he is speaking to believers. The implication of man being “overtaken in fault” is that he was running from a sin, but it still overtook him. The condemning attitude of the legalist is portrayed in the examples of the women taken in adultery (John 8:3) and a false accusation against Paul with the threat of execution (Acts 21:27-31).

The role of the Spirit-controlled believer is to try to restore, not condemn. (The Greek word for “restore” is used in Mat. 4:21 for “mending” nets, and in secular Greek as “setting” a fractured bone). We are not told to judge people, we are told to love them. This should in no way be construed as condoning or minimizing sin. If we wish to effectively minister to people we must nurture the ability to separate a person from his improper actions. God hates sin but loves the sinner. So should we.

The person who is to perform this task is to be “spiritual.” This probably refers to one having a measure of spiritual maturity, i.e. one who has shown a pattern of being spirit-controlled over a period of time. Two possible reasons are given: he must have a spirit of meekness which is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) and because of the possibility of being tempted himself (I Cor. 10:12).

2. *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

Bearing one another's burdens should be a commonplace and outstanding characteristic of the Church. We cannot compete with the world in many areas in which the world places importance. Love in action is a testimony to the unsaved. When this is seen and experienced there arises awesome opportunities to present the Good News of salvation to the lost.

“Burdens” here means heavy weights, and is likely referring to trials and infirmities, perhaps the oppressive weight of temptation or spiritual failure. It is a different word than is used in verse 5, which means more of a load, such as the cargo of a ship. It is a sad commentary on the Church that we sometimes seem to parallel the world in adopting the philosophy of, “Let's kick a man while he is down.” Perhaps the excuse given could be, “I am letting my light shine by blowing out the other guy's light.” That is sin. Let us reverse the devastating and selfish trend in the Christian army of “shooting our own wounded.”

Divine love is measured by sacrifice for the one who is loved (e.g. I John 4:8-10). Love is not a feeling, though it may involve feelings. Love is action. The description of love as presented in I Cor. 13:4-8 is defined by the use of verbs; i.e. action words.

What is the law of Christ? It is not a legalistic set of regulations which condemn us. It is a principle, the principle of divine love. “*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*” (John 13:34,35). “*Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth hath fulfilled the law....Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law*” (Rom. 13:8,10).

I Tim. 1:5-11 gives us some keen insight about the law and those who misuse it, “*Now the end of the commandment is charity (love) out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. From which some having swerved aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know the law is good, if a man use it lawfully....*” This is a clear statement affirming that there are those who teach about the law, but do not do it lawfully.

What is the “lawful” use of the law? The Mosaic Law was never intended to save us. The intent of the law was to show us our guilt and of our need of Jesus, the Savior. “*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin*” (Rom. 3:19, 20; See Rom. 3:19-28). “*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster*” (Gal. 3:24,25; See Gal 3:19-26). We are “*...not under law, but under grace*” (Rom. 6:14). “*...Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*” (II Cor. 3:17; See II Cor. 3:6-18). We now have liberty to serve God out of love, not by a set of restrictive rules. “*For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*” (Gal:5:13,14).

3. *For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*

We all know and are irritated by someone who, “was born on third base and spends their life acting like they hit a triple.” Rom. 12:3 warns us that a man is “*not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly...*” These type of people are not humble nor do they fare well in ministering to people or in gaining friends (James 4:6; Prov. 18:24).

4. *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.*

The word “prove” could be translated “discern.” It means to test or to approve. We are told to “*approve* (same word) *things that are excellent that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ*” (Phil. 1:10). We should test our own actions. Rather than comparing ourselves with others, we are to objectively look at ourselves and our accomplishments. We can then assess where we are compared to God and His Word. We should be “*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*” (Heb. 12:3).

5. *For every man shall bear his own burden.*

This does not conflict with verse 2. The word “burden” here originally was used in reference to a ship’s cargo. It carries the implication here of a “responsibility.” It is the same word that is used in Matt. 11:28-30, where Jesus tells His followers that His “*...burden is light.*” We are accountable to God for the responsibilities that He has given to us. He is just and all-knowing. He knows what we need and what is best for us (Rom. 8:28).

6. *Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*

The word “communicate” means to “share” or to “have things in common with.” In the Bible it frequently means to share financially. That is the probable emphasis here. Paul’s God-given philosophy on this matter is summed up in I Cor. 9. He had the right to be supported by the Gospel (i.e. the ones he ministered to), but chose not to exercise that authority lest he “*...should hinder the gospel of Christ*” (v13). See also I Cor. 9:7,9,14; I Tim. 4:17,18).

7. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

Do not fool yourself (Lit. be led astray), God is not mocked. “Mocked” comes from a word meaning “to turn up the nose at” or to “sneer.” God is also not manipulated. Because so many of us plow through life manipulating people, we think that we can outsmart God. Efforts in that direction can lead to much frustration and loss of joy. God is smarter than that and He is a loving Father. He will deal with us for our benefit (Heb. 12:10-11).

Perhaps a practical application of this concept could be: “If you sow wild oats all week, don’t go to church on Sunday and pray for a crop failure.” We cannot sow weeds and harvest strawberries. We are so shortsighted that we live our lives not practically believing this principle. We tend to act like this maxim only applies to someone else.

Some general principals of sowing and reaping:

1. You reap **what** you sow. Galatians 6:7, “*...whatsoever a man soweth, that he will also reap.*”
2. You reap **after** you sow. There is a time lapse between sowing and reaping. Ecclesiastes 8:11, “*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*”
3. You reap **more** than you sow. Luke 18:29,30, “*...who will not receive manifold more in this present time and in the world to come life everlasting.*”

8. *For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

Here we see a representative of the negative and the positive; the detrimental and the profitable. This sowing and reaping principle is often taught with only a negative emphasis. If a believer sows (spends time,

money or efforts) to satisfy his carnal nature, he will reap the corresponding harvest that will fade into oblivion. If he sows to please the Holy Spirit, he will reap an eternal harvest. The immediate context gives some examples of sowing to the Spirit: v1, restoring one overtaken in a fault, v2, bearing one another's burdens, v6, sharing with those who are sharing the word with them, v9, continuing in well doing, and v10, doing good to all men, especially the brethren.

Matthew 6:19-34 gives us some profitable insight on sowing in the material realm. "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven*" (v19,20). "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (v33). We are told several times not to "take thought" for material things. This does not mean that we should not possess things or plan for things. It literally means to not be *anxious* for things. God contrasts this sinful anxiety with faith in verse 30. If we are being anxious, we are not trusting God. The cure for anxiety is to trust in our trustworthy heavenly Father. We would do well to heed God's admonition in Col. 3:2, "*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*"

9. *And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

I Cor 15:58 tells us, "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*" The "Therefore" refers back to the content of the chapter; the blessing of the resurrection and the victory over death that Christ has given us. In light of what He has done for us, we should be unceasing in our work for the Lord.

Psalm 126:6 draws a parallel between a farmer sowing seed and a believer sowing God's Word. If we do God's work God's way, there is a guarantee of a harvest of blessing.

Verse 9 carries with it an implication that we may not reap if we "stop swimming midstream." There may be Christians who quit before the finish line and forfeit the prize (I Cor. 9:24-27). We are saved by grace (undeserved mercy) but rewards are labored for. His grace can also sustain us in the battle (Col 2:6,7; Titus 2:11-14).

10. *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

Many times we do not see opportunity when it avails itself. We tend to not see the forest for the trees. Our priorities seem to center on ourselves (an expected phenomenon for inherently selfish mankind). This oversight is prevalent in the realm of soulwinning. Do we wonder why we do not have many opportunities to present the Gospel to others? May I submit that it may be partially because we do not redeem the opportunities that we do have?

In general, we are to do good to all, but the family of God takes special priority. Shortly before His crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples, "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*" (John 13:33, 34).

The concept of reaping what we sow carries with it the Divine guarantee of a sure harvest. We can choose to "...*enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*" (Heb. 11:25), and thereby become "...*hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*" (Heb. 3:13). Or we can echo the conviction of Joshua, "...*But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Joshua 24:15). Paul's final words challenge us, "*I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness...*" (II Tim. 4:7,8).

III. The Believer and Sin

C. The Need for Confession

I John 1:8,9

8. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

The Apostle, John, had been saved about sixty years at the time of this writing. Though he had grown spiritually through obedience to God, he realized that he still possessed a sinful nature and that he still had to deal with sin in his life (See Rom. 7:14-25 concerning the Apostle Paul). We, as born again believers, are afflicted with the same malady. In this passage he gives us “step one” in dealing with sin in our lives; confession of our sin to God.

C. The Need for Confession

1. For forgiveness and cleansing

Verse 9 contains what is called a “conditional” promise. God’s Word contains many promises, some of which are “conditional” and some “unconditional.” Examples of unconditional promises would be I Thess. 4:16, 17 and Rev. 22:12. These have to do with the believers being caught up to meet the Lord in the air and Jesus’ return to the earth. God has decreed these events to happen. They *will* occur no matter what man chooses to do or not to do.

The condition required here is confession of our sins to God. If we fulfill this condition, the guaranteed results are forgiveness of our sins and being cleansed from all unrighteousness. Just what does all this mean? The meaning of the word “confess” is sometimes misunderstood. The Greek word simply means “to speak the same thing,” “to agree with.” It does *not* mean to beg, plead, weep and wail, or gnash our teeth. It means to name your sins as God does; *as sin*. Note that we do not confess our sins to a priest or to another man (Jesus is our mediator, I Tim. 2:5, 6). If we sin against another person, it is appropriate to confess *that* sin to him and to seek their forgiveness (Luke 17:3, 4; Eph. 4:32).

It is *very* important to realize that this verse is not telling a person how to have eternal life. John is speaking to believers and repeatedly includes himself in the context of the chapter. There is nothing here that talks of salvation or receiving eternal life. It is speaking of a believer’s obedience. If we wish to know how to have eternal life, we must use the verses that clearly state how to be saved, e.g. Eph. 2:8, 9; John 3:16; I John 5:10-13. Let us not be guilty of circulating Satan’s counterfeit of salvation by adding works to salvation (II Cor. 11:3, 13-15; Gal. 1:6-10).

“...*He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” He is faithful.” God is the only One we can count on to be 100% faithful. He will do what He says. “He is just.” This literally means that He is righteous in forgiving us. God’s holiness demands perfection. His justice demands the penalty to be paid. His love sent Jesus to pay the penalty in our place (I John 4:10). He paid the complete payment so that He can forgive sin without conflicting with His holy attributes. That settles any question about righteousness. The grounds for this forgiveness is the shed blood of Jesus. “*In Whom [Jesus] we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*” (Col. 1:14; see also I Pet. 1:18, 19).

What about the phrase, “...*forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*” Forgiveness is not minimizing or overlooking the sin. It is not saying that the sin was OK. It is not saying the person deserves forgiveness. It is not just forgetting about sin, although, with God’s forgiveness, that comes with the package (Heb 10:17). The Greek word most often translated “forgive” means “to let go of,” “to send away.” God, by His grace, is releasing us from the debt we owe.

The Greek text does not include the second “our” in this verse. The verse literally reads that He would “forgive us *the* sins” not “our sins.” So what is the difference? The context is obviously speaking of *our* sins anyhow. That is true but there is an inference that if we confess the sins that we know about, He will forgive us of those sins (definite article), and cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness (even the ones we forgot about or do not know about. As we grow closer to the Lord we tend to see things more the way He does. As I mature I realize that some things I used to think were permissible in my life I now see as sin. In seeming contrast to this, the more I read in the Word about His marvelous grace, the more I appreciate the freedom that I have to serve in love and not be bound by legalism or someone else’s arbitrary set of rules.

Let us now pursue some inevitable hypotheticals. What about a sin that I have allowed to become an overpowering habit. How can I, in good conscience, confess this sin to God when I know that I will be back a dozen more times today? Should I still confess it? Yes, God tells me to and it would be more sin if I did not obey him in that area. This verse does not expire after it is applied a certain number of times. It cannot be “used up.” If we come to Him to confess a besetting sin and mention about the thousand other times we besought Him about that sin, He could rightfully say, “What sin?” He has promised that He will not remember my sins (Heb. 10:17).

When I was in a similar situation I found God wisely working with me in several ways. One way was that I got tired of confessing the same sin over and over again to my loving Father. I knew that it was grieving him and it was also detracting from my joy. My repetitious confession kept in the forefront the need to properly judge the sin.

A second fact rapidly became noticeable to me. Confession of sin brought forgiveness but did not necessarily bring the joy of service, take away the natural results of my sins, nor relieve me from God’s sure hand of discipline for His erring child (Heb. 12:6-11). God is gracious and His grace teaches us how we should live (Titus 2:11, 12).

I soon found that the best plan of action was to apply I Cor 11:31, “*For if we should judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*” The sooner I said “Yes” to God the more content we both were. In areas where I learned to judge myself, God had no need to. I could actually circumvent some of the “Hebrews 12” type of chastening. Do we really believe that God wants the best for us? He is not trying to restrict us with a bunch of rigid rules. He wants us to serve Him in liberty, liberty that is directed by divine love (Gal. 5:13). He wants us to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23).

A very helpful hint in the realm of confessing our sins is to keep the list short. That may mean talking to God more often during the day. That just might please our Father who is seeking our worship (John 4:23), our trust (Heb. 11:6), and our consistent prayer (I Thess. 5:17). It may seem to us to be more efficient to wait until we have a long list of sins and then to confess them all in one big batch. I doubt that God is as impressed with efficient assembly lines as He is with obedience (I Sam. 15:22). It is better to confess and judge a sin before it grows into something more. We can experience more fellowship with God and be more fruitful for Him as we do this. A Christian may sin all day, then when he hits the sack, say, “God, forgive me for my sins, amen.” This is known as “sack religion.”

C. The Need for Confession

2. For restoration of fellowship

When a believer sins there is a barrier in his fellowship with God. In order to get back into fellowship with God when he sins, the first step is to confess his sins to God (I John 1:9. This is not a salvation verse. It is telling the believer how to be in fellowship with Him and to remain in a usable condition for God’s glory and for the Christian’s joy (Verse 7).

The first part of this chapter has been covered in a previous study. It emphasizes obedience to Jesus (walking in the light) in order to have fellowship (things in common) with Him. If we confess our sins as we are told, and then do not continue to obey him, that is sin. We then need to confess that sin and get going again. We are in a spiritual battle (Eph. 6:10-20) Do not let Satan keep us down.

C. The Need for Confession

3. For restoration of fruitfulness (I Cor 15:34)

Confession, of itself, does not restore fruitfulness. It merely is a step toward fruitfulness. The same could be said about this as was said about fellowship with God; if you confess your sins then do not further obey God, you need to confess that sin and start doing what He tells us in His word.

A doctrine that was more prevalent in fundamental circles some years ago was called the “Faith-Rest Life.” A basic emphasis of this doctrine was that if we confess our sins, we are then spiritual. In some cases, a working out of this teaching produced Christians that confessed their sins but did not do anything else for God’s glory; commonly called Christian couch-potatoes.

What is produced as a result of a teaching is not near as important as how it stands when compared with God’s truth. The context of I John 1:9 emphasizes obedience to Christ (1:6, 7, walking in the light, not in darkness). The first verse of the next chapter states that these things were written for the purpose of encouraging us not to sin. Gal. 5:16 admonishes believers to “walk in the Spirit” not to “sit in the Spirit.” There is a valid place of rest in the Spirit-controlled life but it cannot Biblically be construed as a lack-of-service life (Matt. 5:16; 9:37; I Cor 15:58). May we confess and judge our sins, and get back into the battle for the short time that is remaining.

III. The Believer and Sin -

D. Liberty to Serve

1. Liberty In Reference To Salvation

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

God’s Word has much to say concerning the area of liberty. The Biblical teaching of liberty in relation to salvation and to the Christian life is an important concept for us to understand and to apply. There has been a lack of teaching and much improper teaching on this Biblical subject. This confusion has, no doubt, been an occasion for some to reject the Gospel of Christ and has been a hindrance to the growth of some believers.

For the purpose of this study, we have divided the topic into two categories: “Liberty In Reference To Salvation,” and “Liberty In Reference To Service.” Salvation must come before service. We cannot be expected to grow before we are born. For our primary text on this subject, let us use Galatians 5:1-9.

Liberty In Reference To Salvation (Gal. 5:1-9)

The Epistle of Paul to the Galatian church was written primarily to combat two major errors: the teaching of obtaining salvation by the works of the law and of maintaining salvation or Christian life by the works of the law (2:16; 3:1).

Galatians presents an authoritative and emphatic statement for salvation by faith alone and is a defense of Christian liberty against any form of legalism. The understanding of the concepts presented in the Epistle should help to remove much of the “burden” of Christian service from many believers; a burden that we have placed there against the wishes of the One Whom we serve. Jesus said that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. See Matthew 11:28-30.

A brief outline of the Letter

- I. A curse pronounced on those who proclaim a false gospel (1:1-6)
- II. A defense of Paul’s apostleship and authority (1:7-2:15)
- III. A proclamation of the doctrine of justification by faith (2:16-3:16)
- IV. The purpose of the law (2:17-3:29)
- V. An illustration of law versus grace (4:1-4:31)
- V. The application of liberty (5:1-5:16)
- VI. A presentation of liberty leading to a Spirit-controlled life (5:16-5:21)
- VII. Examples of the Spirit-filled life working out in our ministry with the fellow-believer and the sowing/reaping concept (5:22-6:18).

Galatians, Chapter 5

Verse 1, “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*”

Stand fast; persevere, be stationary or immovable. This is the same Greek word as: “*Stand fast in the faith.*” (I Cor. 16:13). “*Stand fast in one spirit*” (Phil. 1:27). “*We live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.*” (I Thess. 3:8). In other passages we are urged to maintain unity among the brethren. That means that we have to tolerate some things. There will be differences of personalities, opinions, and doctrines. Peripheral doctrinal differences are acceptable. We are all in different stages of growth. One open-minded Bible student can learn from another if the attitude is right, i.e. divine love.

What is *not* acceptable is the compromise of the fundamental doctrines of the faith (See Jude 3). God tells us to “*stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,...*” If God thinks that this is a major issue, I also should. It seems that Satan gains great victories among both the saved and unsaved by warping this doctrine to unbiblical extremes. (Standing fast in our liberty does not mean to flaunt our freedom in front of a weaker brother to his detriment. It means to stand fast in the Biblical teaching, and apply it in love to our lives. See Gal. 5:13).

“*Therefore.*” If we see a “therefore,” we should look to see what it is there for. Paul had just spent four chapters presenting arguments why we are; “justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law” (2:16), to beware of the false gospel and those who propagate it (1: 6-9), and of false brethren who would spy out our liberty in Christ to bring us into bondage (2:4), to be aware of the purpose of the law, which is to show us that we are sinners and then to be justified by faith in Christ (3:19-24), and finally, to be knowledgeable of the illustration of Sarah and Hagar which illustrates to us that the two systems, of law and grace, cannot coexist (4:22-31; also Rom. 11:6).

“*Liberty.*” freedom. John 8:32, 36 tells us that when we know Jesus and continue in His word, we “*shall be free indeed.*” II Cor. 3:17 states “*...Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*” When I visit a Church, Bible College, Bible study, etc. where a spirit of legalism or bondage prevails, I have to seriously question whether God’s Holy Spirit is in control, regardless of how entertaining the speaker is, or how many Bible verses that they quote.

A major ingredient in the effective Christian life is the understanding and proper application of the principle of liberty. James 1:25 urges us to continue in the “*perfect law (principle) of liberty*” and to “*be a doer of the work*” in order to be blessed. James 2: 12 exhorts us to pattern our actions as “*they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.*”

Both of these verses make a clear statement not only that we are to pursue Biblical liberty, but that the end result is for believers to effectively serve God, i.e. obey God. Galatians 5:13 sums up two important factors in understanding the Spirit controlled life. It emphasizes both our liberty in Christ and that we do not have a license to sin. We have freedom to serve by love. (αγαπη, agape, the divine kind of love).

This is the liberty in which we are to be immovable. Conversely, if we do not stand for this liberty, we will become entangled in “*the yoke of bondage.*” Hardly a less healthy and less productive atmosphere could be imagined for those of us wanting to become effective servants of Christ (Bondslaves, Greek, doulos, a servant set free but serving his master out of love. Rom. 1:1; I Cor 5:14).

Acts 15:6 mentions false teachers who were requiring the keeping of the Mosaic law. In verse 10 it is presented that teaching that doctrine would be tempting God, and would be putting “*a yoke upon the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.*” Why do some Bible teachers place unscriptural requirements for salvation on others which they themselves have been unable to obey, such as “turn from sin to be saved?” Acts 15; 11 (The Apostolic council at Jerusalem) concludes that “*...through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, ...*”

A yoke was a bar of wood which served to couple two draft animals together in order to pull an agricultural implement or a cart. It allows two animals to share the load and it implies union. It is used metaphorically

here as in other places in the Bible. Another improper yoke mentioned in the New Testament is the unequal yoke of a believer and an unbeliever (II Cor. 7:14).

A yoke that is commanded for us as believers to take is Christ's yoke (Matt. 11:28-30). Jesus says that His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. If Jesus is our partner in this yoke, guess Who is pulling most of the load (Phil. 4:13). This is not a yoke of bondage. It is a yoke of joyful service.

V2. *"Behold I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.*

What does it mean, *"if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing?"* Does it mean that a Jewish male cannot be saved? Of course not. There are many Biblical examples of those who were. Paul is not speaking specifically of the physical act of circumcision but of what it represents. I Cor. 7:19 tells us that *"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing but the keeping of the commandments of God."*

Physical circumcision was given as a sign of the covenant given through Abraham from God to the nation of Israel (Gen. 17:9-27), and apparently, carried with it the obligation of obedience to the God of Israel. It signified subjection to the Jewish "yoke" — the economy of the law. (See Rom. 2:17-29, concerning "circumcision of the heart")

Paul is saying that if you are trying to keep the law to be saved, Christ's payment is of no profit to you. We are *"justified by faith without the deeds of the law"* (Rom. 3:28). Any of our "good" works added to Christ's perfection would just pollute the whole thing (Isa. 64:6).

V3. *For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*

If a person is trying to keep the law to obtain the righteousness necessary for entrance into heaven, not only is Christ's payment of none effect, but the requirement would be to keep the law completely and perfectly (See James 2:10). Jesus is the only one to have done that so far.

Some people state that they are trusting in their keeping of the Ten Commandments in order to gain eternal life. It is ironic and tragic that most of these cannot even *name* the Ten Commandments and *none* of them are able to keep them. This is tragic because the payment has been made and the free gift of eternal life is offered to all (Rom. 6:23).

V4. *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."*

Is it possible to "fall from grace?" This is the verse that shows that it *is* possible. Is it possible to fall from *salvation*? Absolutely not! This verse does not say that. I John 5:13 is written to us who believe on the name of the Son of God that we may *know* that we have eternal life. If our salvation depended in any way upon our faithfulness, rest assured that we would eventually mess up and lose it. The reason that we can know that we have eternal life is because it depends upon God's faithfulness, not upon ours.

I Peter 1:3-5 says that God has *"begotten us again... to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."* My place in heaven cannot be corrupted, it is holy, and it endures forever. If God is not being truthful about our place being reserved in heaven, there will be a lot of "vacancy" signs hanging in front of the mansions that he has prepared for us (John 14:1-3). Peter then goes on to say that we *"are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation..."* Please note that we are *not* being kept by our power, effort, continued faithfulness, etc. but by *His* power. That is all the assurance that I need.

Just what *does* it mean to fall from grace? The context reinforces the meaning: In verses 2, 3, and 4 Paul repeats the folly of trying to keep the law in order to be saved. You must choose between your works which will not save and Jesus' finished work which is the *only* way of salvation. If you choose the way of the law, you have "fallen from grace." You have not lost your salvation. You have not even been saved. By rejecting the "grace" system and choosing the "Mosaic Law" system, you have chosen a way of salvation

that is unworkable and have chosen to accept “*the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt*” (Rom. 4:4; See vs 1-6). Unfortunately, we do not want what we are owed (Rom. 6:23). God’s grace is the answer for our need (Eph. 2:8,9).

In Gal. 1:6-9 we see God’s curse pronounced upon those who would proclaim “*another gospel*,” one which is perverted. What is the criterion for determining a false gospel? Verse 6 contains the answer, just as the rest of the Epistle confirms. “The grace of Christ” is the criterion. If we try to add man’s effort to Christ’s finished work, we have spurned His gospel and have “fallen from grace.”

v5. *For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*

Some commentators have indicated that the term “by faith” does not modify “the hope of righteousness” but modifies “we waiting by faith.” It is not necessary to seek dogmatism as it seems that both interpretations agree with other Scripture. The meaning of the word “hope” is slightly different than in English. We tend to think of “hope” of indicating desire but with some doubt as to the outcome. The Greek indicates a joyful and assured expectation. I will stand before God with His righteousness (II Cor. 5:21). This is truly a “grace” operation.

V6. *For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

It makes no difference in the sight of God whether a believer is a circumcised Jew or an uncircumcised Gentile. They are both on the same footing with God in regards to justification. The purpose of the Law was to show us that we were sinners and to bring us to Christ by faith (Rom. 3:19-28; Gal. 3:19-29). Keeping the law is not the issue. “...*For ye are no longer under the law, but under grace.*” (Rom. 6:14). Faith which works by love is what is important. Faith should work itself out in a manifestation of love in the believer’s life. This concept is described so aptly in verses 13 and 14.

v7. *Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?*

v8. *This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.*

Paul warned the Galatian Church about those who taught a false gospel (1:6-9), of false brethren who came in privately to spy out their liberty in Christ (2:4), and that they were in danger of straying away from God’s grace and toward false doctrine (3:1-3 and much of the epistle).

When Paul mentions that they had “run well,” perhaps he was referring to the metaphor of a race that the Christian is running in order to win a prize as mentioned in I Cor. 9:14-27. (This is referring to Christian service and rewards, not to salvation.) They had started off well but were being wrongly influenced by the legalist teachers. This persuasion was not from God.

V9 *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*

This was likely a proverbial saying which was universally understood. The leaven represented evil, either in action (I Cor. 5:6) or in doctrine (Matt. 16:6, 12). The pervasiveness of leaven is also emphasized in Scripture (Matt. 13:33). We are being told that a little bit of evil doctrine can cause much damage.

Leaven in dough does the following to bread and does much the same to the Gospel:

1. Puffs it up
2. Sours it
3. Makes it full of holes
4. Raises the dough

When we add just a little bit of man’s righteousness (Isaiah 64:6) to God’s righteousness, this “leaven” of bad doctrine produces similar results. We cannot improve on God’s finished work of the Gospel by adding to it. We can only pollute it and damage its effectiveness (Gal. 1:7).

There are well-meaning Bible teachers who are legitimately distraught over our churches which are full of long-term spiritual babies. These teachers are sometimes tempted to change their salvation message to that of requiring some sort of good works, turning from sin, or making Jesus Lord of their life in order for them to gain eternal life. The result is not better-living Christians but confused Christians who do not reproduce as well. These teachers are included in the curse of Gal. 1:6-9.

The answer to this dilemma is not found in teaching more error, but in teaching and applying God's truth. Two of the doctrines that would help in this area are the teaching of God's chastening of every believer (Heb. 12:5-11), and the teaching of the Judgment Seat of Christ for eternal rewards (I Cor. 3:11-15; II Cor. 5:10-11).

II Cor. 11:3 warns us of one way we may be seduced by Satan, "*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*" We should become specialists in presenting the Plan of Salvation in a simple and understandable manner (II Cor. 3:12). The world is blinded to the Gospel by Satan (II Cor. 4:3,4). Let us not fall for his treachery.

One of the Devil's tricks is having his ministers posing as Christ's ministers and then teaching a false gospel, one of man's righteousness. "*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works*" (II Cor. 13-15).

The following are some practical consequences that result from perverting the Gospel message by adulterating the grace aspect as mentioned in Galatians 1:6-9:

1. It calls God a liar.
2. It makes man's righteousness part of salvation.
3. It causes the lost to be blinded by something that cannot save.
4. It causes the saved to be confused.
5. It causes compromise and keeps Christians from a clear testimony.
6. It causes the world to think that works is the Bible way of salvation.
7. It brings persecution to the saved who are clear on the Gospel.
8. It robs the Church of power in its goal of carrying out the Great Commission.

If we are to be effectively fishing for men as we are told to do (Matt. 4:19, 20; Luke 5:10), and if we are to be glorifying God by bearing much fruit (John 15:8), we will need to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). This includes standing for the liberty that we have in Christ (Gal. 5:1). The truth will have been understandable (I Cor 14:8). "*Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech*" (II Cor. 3:11).

The context in Galatians which claims the importance of the clarity of the Gospel and liberty in reference to salvation, also launches us into the study of liberty in reference to service: Gal. 5:13, 14.

III. The Believer and Sin -

D. Liberty to Serve

2. Liberty In Reference To Service

"For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Gal. 5:13,14)

We are not saved *by* serving God (Eph. 2:8, 9), but we are saved *to* serve God. Eph. 2:10 (speaking of the believers of verses 8 and 9) states, "*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained [pre-prepared] that we should walk in them.*" Too many believers are

missing out on this responsibility and blessing. Eternal life was costly to God but a free gift to us (Rom. 6:23). Service is costly to us, but richly rewarding (Luke 18:29, 30).

Does this mean that if we do not obey God and produce some kind of good works that we are not saved? Should there not be a change in a person's life after he trusts Christ as his Savior? To answer the second question first; yes, there should be a change in a person's life when he is saved, but there *may* not be changes that we can see. God guarantees some changes that He makes such as the believer being indwelt by, sealed by, and baptized in the Holy Spirit. He is justified, born again and placed in God's family along with a number of other gracious blessings.

The changes in a Christian's life for which we usually look are outward changes that man can see such as good works (I Sam. 16:7b; Matt. 5:16). It is of utmost importance to remember that *our salvation is not dependent upon works that we do or do not do* (Eph. 2:8, 9; Titus 3:5; John 3:16). We are saved by *His* grace, not by our works. Another factor to consider is that growth takes time. We are not born mature.

In answer to the first question; "If one claims belief in Jesus and we do not see good works in his life does this mean he is not saved? It makes no difference what is claimed. It is essential what actually has occurred. Assuming actual trust in Jesus, apparently it *is* possible for a person to be saved and to show no outward sign of good works. Rom. 4:5 says, "*But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*" The disobedient believer may appear content from the outside but God is faithful with His erring children, "*For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*" (Heb. 12:6). Yes, we *should* see this type of change in a believer but this obedience does not automatically occur as believers are exhorted throughout the Bible to become obedient. Some obviously have chosen to rebel against God.

Some "Bible teachers" apparently feel that teaching God's grace may be detrimental to believers living a Godly life. They fear that some may simply trust in Christ for eternal life and then live as they please. The result of this logic often leads to proclaiming a message that "makes it hard to be saved" in an attempt to separate the serious seeker from the casual. When we detract from God's grace, we do not have a "hard Gospel," we have a *false* gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

It is a tragedy that some believers abuse the grace of God. It is also a tragedy that well meaning teachers pervert the gospel. The cure for error is not more error. Grace is *not* a dangerous doctrine. According to God's Word, it is the means of salvation and a key to our productive Christian life (Eph. 2:8, 9; Rom. 6:14).

Grace does not lead to careless and unprofitable living. The *lack* of grace does. Note what is said in chapter two of the book of Titus. In the context of exhortations for sound doctrine (1:5, 9, 11, 13, 2:1, 3:9, 10) and for sound living (1:5-9,16, 2:2-3:2, 3:8,14), we are shown at least two tasks that God's grace performs:

11. *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,*
12. *Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*
13. *Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*
14. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

Please observe that God's grace not only brings salvation, but it *teaches* us something. It teaches us how we should live. We are not bound by the Law of Moses. The purpose of the Law is to show us that we are sinners and in need of the Savior (Rom. 3:19-28; Gal. 3:19-25). We are under grace (Rom. 6:14). "... *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*" (II Cor. 3:17b). This concept gives us great freedom in Christ. We do not have a license to sin. We have liberty — liberty to serve by love.

Paul said in I Cor. 6:12, "*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.*" He was neither under the Law of Moses nor a binding set of rules. There were previously mentioned practices in which the Corinthian believers

were participating that were clearly labeled as sin (e.g. I Cor 5:1). Paul is not referring to actions that were inherently sinful. He meant that he had freedom in areas that many would call “doubtful” or “interpretive.” In our culture today we might include certain types of dress, hair styles, entertainment, habits, etc.

Even though he was not bound by the Law he did not deem all things profitable. He also was determined not to be brought under the power of even a good thing. He was determined to maintain self control under the direction of God’s Holy Spirit. Part of the fruit of the Spirit is self- control (Gal. 5:22, temperance). Sometimes we spend our time, efforts, and resources on “nice” things that have no lasting value. We should not let these things control us.

In I Cor. 10:23 he relates a similar statement, *“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.”* The last phrase adds another dimension to his philosophy concerning liberty; *“All things edify not.”*

The word “edify” means “to build up.” The building up of the Body of Christ is one of the major purposes of the local Church. That should also be one of the goals of every believer, to help build up the other believers. Paul said in Phil. 1:21, *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* He did not let temporal values get in the way of lasting values. If he could not be doing what God thought was important such as winning souls for Christ or edifying believers, he did not wish to waste his time and efforts on that pursuit.

In I Cor. 8, Paul recounts a similar motive in relation to the issue of a Christian eating meat that was offered to idols. Although we know that there is only one true God (v4) and there is no inherent sin in eating the meat (v8), he exhorts us in v9, *“But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak”* When we overstep our liberty and wound the weaker brother, we actually sin in that action (v10-12. He sums up his pattern of action in v13, *“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”* This is love in action. He was willing to give up his liberty or “rights” so that he would not hinder someone else.

In chapter nine he reiterates some of his rights as an apostle and as a minister of the Word. He had the right to be financially supported of those whom he taught (vs 7-11). Though he had that liberty, he chose, in love, to forgo that right, lest he *“should hinder the Gospel of Christ”* (v12).

In II Cor., the ninth chapter, Paul writes of financial giving and sums up the thought with verses 6 through 8:

6. *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*
7. *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*
8. *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:*

Please notice the absence of the law of the tithe that was required of the Old Testament Jew. The principle of liberty abounds. You give as you love. God blesses accordingly. James 2:12 tells us, *“So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law [principle] of liberty.”* James 1:25 declares a blessing on those who, by their works, continue in the *“perfect law of liberty.”*

This liberty is dictated by love. I have great freedom of service within the parameters of divine love for God and my fellow man. Rom. 13:8-14 gives us some keen insight on this issue. *“...Love is the fulfilling of the law”* (v10). This passage then proceeds to exhort us to wake up and to *“cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly... Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof”* (12-14).

“For brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Gal. 5:13,14). May we discipline ourselves to get our priorities in balance and let this become our

pattern of life. By obedience to God's Holy Spirit we may enjoy the results of this obedience mentioned later in the same chapter: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such their is no law"* (Gal. 5:22,23).

III. The Believer and Sin -

E. The Need to Set Proper Priorities

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take no thought [do not be anxious] for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"(Matt. 6:33,34).

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things of the earth" (Col. 3:1, 2).

CONCLUSION

"Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (I Cor. 15:34)

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Eph. 4:1).

"Only let your conversation [manner of life] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ..." (Phil. 1:27).

" I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove [discover] what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1,2).

We must establish our priorities. While we are playing Sunday school games, people are dying without trusting Jesus and heading for eternal Hell. We must make it top priority in our lives to be obedient to God's commands. We should share the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone to those with whom we come in contact and build up believers (I Thess. 2:4; I Cor. 15:58).

God hates sin and so should we. God loves the sinners of the world and so should we (John 3:16; 13:34, 35). Sin should not have dominion over the believer (Romans 6:14). We have the potential for victory (I Cor. 15:57). Let us redeem the short time that we have left (Eph. 5:16).