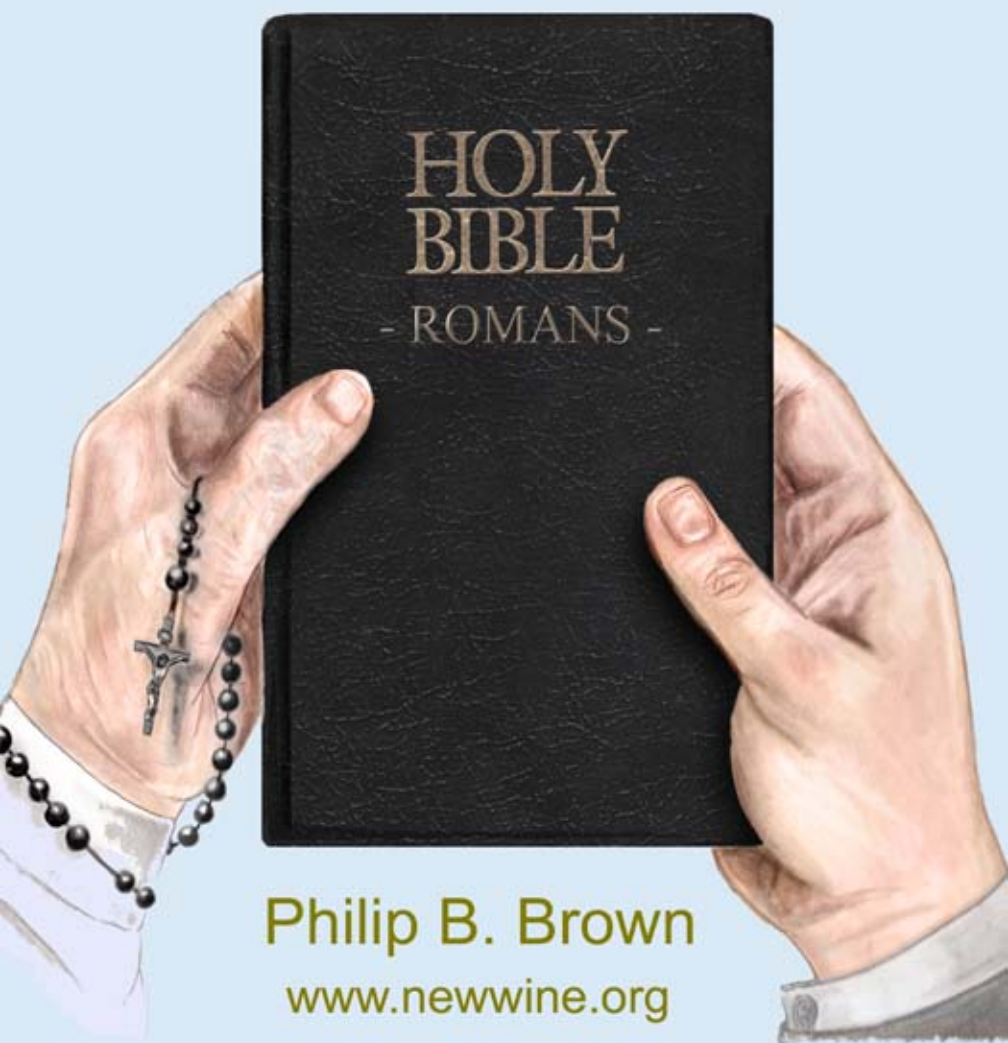


Romans Under New Light

Bridging the Doctrines of
Catholics and Protestants

"...that they may be one even as we are one..."
John 17:21-23



Philip B. Brown
www.newwine.org

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Romans Under New Light

For my parents, Brevard and Doris Brown,
who have been so supportive of
me in the writing of this book.

Introduction

Recently (Feb. 27, 2014) on the Glenn Beck show of that date, I was delighted to see an interview between Glenn Beck and Ruth Graham, daughter of Billy Graham. They had become friends for about two years. Their friendship began when Glenn went and visited Billy Graham. Both Glenn and Ruth talked about the gentleness of Billy Graham, especially in his later years. Ruth said that each of his children knows they are unconditionally loved. Everyone who personally knows Billy Graham talks about his gentleness.

Ruth Graham was divorced three times. She was the first one to get a divorce in her family. Her first husband's parents were a friend of the Graham family. The divorce without a doubt caused problems in this conservative Christian family. The divorce came about as a result of infidelity on his part. But Ruth had not talked about it before the divorce. Even after learning about the infidelity, the Graham family was against the divorce. Glenn assumed they would be saying, "Why didn't you get out?" But Ruth responded, "No, they were like, why can't you stay? Why can't you deal with this? Why can't you forgive him? You see, Glenn, in our church, adultery is forgivable; divorce is not. At least it was not back then."

After the divorce, Ruth moved from the rural area to a downtown city in the south. She said she was like a fish out of water and wanted someone to take care of her. She was introduced to a widower and fell in love. They made plans to get married immediately. Her mother called from Seattle and said don't marry this man. Her father (Billy Graham) called from Tokyo and said why don't you wait.

She reasoned that her parents had not been single parents and didn't know what it was like. Within 24 hours after this second marriage, she realized she had made a mistake. He was threatening violence. After five weeks she left him and started to go home. During the two-day drive home, "fears multiplied with every mile." She worried about what her family would say this time around. When she got home, her father met her at the car, put his arms around her, and said, "Welcome home."

She said, "There was never any condemnation. And Glenn, that changed my life. That grace changed my life and it informs what I do today because I want other people to experience the grace of God like my father gave to me."

My personal family can very much relate to Ruth Graham's experience. My grandfather, like Billy Graham, was a Baptist preacher living in the mountains of North Carolina. My grandfather also lived into his nineties. But he was a bit older and has gone on to be with the Lord. Both are very conservative, even fundamentalists.

My aunt, who is my grandfather's daughter, married a divorced man. This was just as bad as getting a divorce. It was "unforgivable." My grandfather basically disowned his daughter. My grandmother attended the wedding, and my mother attended. I was actually a part of the wedding, and walked the aisle, as a young child. But most of the family didn't attend. All this led to my grandfather having a major nervous breakdown.

Eventually, he reconciled with his daughter and her husband. In becoming non-judgmental, my grandfather became the peaceful and loving person that we see in Billy Graham. Could it be that both found a true peace with God by learning to unconditionally love their daughters?

Later in the interview, Glenn Beck recalled a time five years back when he met Billy Graham in his home. Glenn said, “Your father asked me some very pointed questions.” (As you would expect Billy Graham to do.)

Then, “Somebody in the room said, ‘Just as a reminder, he’s Mormon.’ And your father turned to the individual and said, ‘I know.’”

They were talking about a certain subject. Billy Graham looked back at Glenn and said, “Tell me how you know that came from Christ.” Glenn told him. Then Billy Graham looked back at the other individual and said, “He sure sounds Christian to me.”

Recalling this event, Glenn was brought very close to tears. It took him a minute to regain his composure. He asked Ruth, “How do we get people to play nice to each other?”

“Oh Glenn, I don’t know,” Ruth responded. “We have such division. We have such rancor. Not only in our political world, but in our Christian world, our religious world. And I know that it breaks Jesus’ heart.”

Ruth continues, “I think for me, to try and live as best as I can, following Jesus, and loving people. Now I’ll be honest, I have an advantage. I have the temperament that is not a warrior. I’m not a warrior. I’m much more of a lover. And I love people. I don’t want to draw lines. I want to include people. And if in that inclusion I gather in some black sheep, well and good. I would rather error on the side of grace than I would on judgment. I just am not going to stand in judgment on other people.”

Glenn responds, “I spent one afternoon with your dad. ... Just like when your dad was waiting for you with open arms, there are moments in everyone’s lives that

fundamentally change them. And I've had a couple of them. And one of them was with your dad. And it came in two pieces."

"One was when he looked me in the eye and said, 'I've been where you are now, where the Lord is telling me to do things that I don't quite know what he means or how to do it. But I did it, and I did my best.' And I'll never forget the clarity in his eyes. He said, 'and because of that, I do not fear death.'" Glenn said, "Not a lot of people, when it comes down to it, can say that."

Glenn continued, "You say you are not a warrior. But the second thing that I got from him was... When he told that to me, we were setting closer than you and I, and he was holding my hand. And he straightened up. And I saw the warrior in him. It was a peaceful warrior. But it was a warrior that would turn over the tables. How do you turn tables over and still not be divisive? How do you speak the truth and not be divisive?"

Ruth responds, "As you ask that, it's how we speak the truth. Do we speak it in arrogance? Do we speak it in judgment? Do we speak it in gentleness and love? How did Jesus speak the truth? Now with the Pharisees, he was ruthless. He did not like those religious fanatics that were so judgmental and so self-righteous. And we look at a lot of sins of the world and we rank them. And I don't know which we rank worse. But I think God would rank self-righteousness and pride as worse. And we are full of it. And we condemn each other from our own arrogance."

Ruth continues, "That's not the way we do it. We've got to speak the truth, as Jesus says, in love. And Jesus could be hard. But there was something winsome about him. There was not the hard edge to him. He didn't have... Look

at his encounters. I did a book a number of years ago, '*Fear not tomorrow, God is already there.*' I looked over Jesus' shoulder in the gospels. How did he treat people? It really was remarkable for me to see how he treated the woman at the well. How did he treat the woman taken in adultery? How did he treat the boatload of scared disciples? Not with criticism. Not with harshness. Not with judgment. He met them where they were, and he loved them to the next step. I think we have to accept people where they are and love them to the next step."

Romans Under New Light is very much about speaking the truth but not being divisive. Doctrine divides us, as Mormons are divided from Baptists. Catholics are divided from Protestants. Billy Graham was able to see a Christian speaking who happened to be a Mormon. But should we just eliminate doctrine so that we are not divided? Our differences with most doctrines can be ignored until Christ returns. But we all need to come together on our doctrine of salvation in order to really be considered as one, "that they may be one even as we are one" (John 17:21-23).

Over the centuries, our divisions with regard to salvation have all been, to one degree or other, about the issue of sin. Jesus said if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off (Matthew 5:30). He goes on to say we should be "perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). And yet the words of Jesus are gentle and kind.

Billy Graham had a very consistent message of salvation that always included the repentance of sin. Today, most pastors won't touch the topic of sin with a ten foot pole. If today's pastors even mention sin, it's to say nobody is perfect and that you can't stop sinning.

People don't always think through what it would mean for someone to overcome sin. In contemporary English, "perfect" is almost a bad word when applied to people -- impossible by definition, and if possible, then something really awful. "Perfect" people don't have any flaws, so they put everybody else to shame. They don't have compassion, because everything comes easy to them. They're always judging other people. People who can appear perfect and who can even convince themselves they're perfect are what people think of when they think of "perfect" people.

But if you're really without sin, you won't judge, and you'll know how to not put other people to shame without compromising who you are, and you'll have compassion, and of course, you'll still make mistakes and you won't be defensive or evasive about them. You'll allow yourself to appear flawed, without being sinful.

From the Biblical perspective, a perfect person is someone who has overcome all their sinful habits. These include habits of the mind, such as lust and anger. In heaven, nothing is hidden. I believe angels can read minds. Before we can inherit the kingdom, we need to overcome all our sinful habits to the point where we would not be embarrassed if everyone could read our minds. This is what it means to be in the light. You have nothing to hide. And it's what Jesus meant by having your cup clean on the inside. If you are clean on the inside, then you will be clean on the outside as well.

Nobody goes to hell because they don't overcome sin in this age. But they won't inherit the kingdom either. The doctrine of salvation presented in this book is such that continued sin really does have eternal consequences. I ask you to read this book with prayer. How does it fit Scripture? What would Jesus say?

Chapter 1

Back to the Reformation

Traditionally, Protestants have described salvation in three steps: Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification. Those who have a strong belief in election would argue that once you are justified you will always be justified. The journey of sanctification is often seen as a part of salvation but is not really considered as necessary for going to heaven.

Protestants who believe in salvation election are generally understood to be Calvinists. This is also known as the Reformed view. The Reformed view might or might not view salvation as a journey. Those who view salvation strictly as a decision might say “once saved, always saved.” Others, who put more emphasis on the journey prefer terminology like “perseverance of the saints.” This means that once someone professes Christ, that God will renew their faith if they ever lose their faith. Calvinists tend to say that you can’t completely overcome sin.

Reformed Protestants believe that sanctification is completed after you die or at the rapture. In other words, the completion of sanctification is wrapped up into glorification. This is reasoned based on the Reformed view that you can’t completely overcome sin while in the flesh.

Does God take the first steps towards us? Or do we take the first steps towards God? Does God choose us? Or do we choose God? The Reformed view of salvation election (Luther and Calvin) is that God chooses those he will draw to Himself. The Calvinist believes that God’s draw is irresistible. (The “I” of TULIP is Irresistible grace.)

1.1) The Wesleyan View

The Wesleyan view is a bit different. It's considered the opposite of the Reformed view in Protestant circles. (John Wesley founded the Methodist Church.) Wesley believed in what he called the "second blessing." It's by faith and through grace. One prays for Christian perfection. When received, it's believed that you no longer have a tendency to sin. You can completely overcome all your sinful habits.

If God chooses us before the foundation of the world, it means God decides who will be saved. It also means that God decides who will not be saved. Souls would be created by God knowing that they will have no chance for anything but an eternity burning in hell. Is this really the character or even the justice of God? An atheist once told me that if God did exist, that God would be his worse enemy. Calvinists do not paint a very loving picture of God.

Wesleyans, on the other hand, do not believe in salvation election. And Wesleyans believe in Christian perfection, which is very much based on 1 John. "Whoever remains in him doesn't sin. Whoever sins hasn't seen him, neither knows him" (1 John 3:6). This leads Wesleyans to believe you can lose your salvation if you fall back into sin. But you can get it back again.

Wesleyans believe in a "second blessing." They believe in losing and gaining salvation back again without the "perseverance of the saints." But what happens if you lose your salvation and then die before getting it back again? And what about those who die having never heard about Christ?

Is it possible to have a system where salvation is a journey to Christian perfection and entire sanctification without believing you could lose your salvation if you fall back into sin? Is it possible to believe that God draws us to

himself, but that God's draw can be resisted, making it our choice? Is it possible to believe that God will at some point draw everyone of all generations to himself, but that God's draw is not irresistible, and thus God does not choose who will be saved? Is it possible to believe that salvation is a journey which must be completed here on the earth, but that we can have an assurance of completing that journey?

A young man is in love with a young woman. He asks her for her hand in marriage. She refuses to return his love. But the young man is a powerful wizard. He can conjure up a love potion and force the woman to fall in love with him. His draw on her would become irresistible. But does he do so? In wisdom, he desires a love that comes out of choice. True love comes only by the free will to choose.

Adam was given a free-will choice to eat the fruit in disobedience. This broke the covenant (relationship) between God and Adam (Hosea 6:7). But Christ Jesus died for us to give us the choice to come back to the Bridegroom. Jesus said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). Nobody will be left out. Everyone will be drawn to Christ. Some are drawn sooner. Some are later. The first will teach the last. And everyone will have the choice to respond to God's love. Death is not a limitation for God's plan of redemption.

Each of us can choose to respond to Christ's draw and begin to follow Christ in faith. But we still have a tendency to be unfaithful to God. We must completely overcome all our sinful habits before entering the kingdom and the wedding banquet. Death does not remove our sinful habits. In following Christ we learn to truly love our Bridegroom. We learn to love the Father and our neighbors. As our love grows our sinful habits are overcome. Is this the truth that hides in the middle?

1.2) Catholic and Protestant Differences

Roman Catholics approach salvation a bit differently. Catholics believe the original sin of Adam is removed at the time of baptism. After that, salvation is a journey of both justification and sanctification. Justification and sanctification are seen as basically equivalent. Jesus forgives sins during Mass. In addition, merits involving works help bring about a purification. Catholic saints complete their journey of sanctification through an abundance of merits and are able to go straight to heaven when they die. Everyone else must spend time in the fire of purgatory in order to be cleansed and purified.

Catholics are often accused by Protestants of having a doctrine of salvation that is entirely works based. That's not really true. Catholics believe that sins are forgiven by Christ in an on-going basis. In Catholic Mass, the bread and the wine become the body of Christ, and therefore become a sacrifice. This new sacrifice is made for the forgiveness of newly committed sins. Thus, sins are forgiven by grace. Therefore, grace is part of the journey. Both justification (the sacrifice) and sanctification (becoming holy) continually occur as part of the journey.

Many Protestants, on the other hand, do not focus on the journey. Salvation becomes a decision. They believe all past, present, and future sins are forgiven when one becomes a believer. So unlike the Catholics, the journey does not involve the forgiveness of sins. Grace happens all at the same time. This makes the Protestant tend to ignore any aspect of a journey in salvation. Works and sanctification are thought of as being entirely after grace. Grace tends to be about the forgiveness of sins and is usually not associated with our journey of sanctification.

This difference in the journey, and in how one views grace, can be a key factors in how one views works in relation to salvation. Remember that many Protestants do not consider salvation to include a journey. One is “saved” on a specific date that is written in one’s Bible. But if you ask a Catholic if he is saved, he might say, “No, but I will be saved.” Or he might say, “Yes, I’ve been saved and I will be saved again tomorrow.” The Catholics believe that works of merit are a necessary part of salvation. And these works of merit are needed to satisfy Divine justice.

This is where purgatory and indulgences come into the picture. Catholics do not believe that baptism, the sacrifice in Mass, and penance will typically eradicate all sins. Works of merit and/or temporal punishment are required to satisfy God’s Divine justice. Indulgences can be given that are based on a treasury of merits, which is an excess of merits from the saints. These indulgences reduce one’s time in purgatory. Be it works of merits on behalf of the individual, or be it works of merit performed by a saint, work is being done to satisfy Divine justice.

This is by far the biggest objection the Protestant has concerning the Catholic doctrine of salvation. Paul seems to make it clear that we are saved by grace and through faith alone, and not by works. Yet good works are arguably involved in the journey. From the Protestant perspective, works are a part of sanctification, which is the journey to overcome one’s sinful habits. They are not an atonement.

Protestants need to understand that salvation includes a journey. We don’t need to adopt purgatory. But we need to understand why this journey must be completed before we can enter the kingdom of heaven.

1.3) The Motivations of Luther

The purpose of this book is to find the truth that hides between the doctrines of Catholics and Protestants. It's also a truth that hides between the Wesleyan view and the Reformed view. The purpose is to set aside our presuppositions and take a fresh look at Romans to see if there is a truth that hides in the middle. To this end, we will first take a look back to the Reformation, when the Catholics and the Protestants parted ways.

What motivated Martin Luther? What were his limitations? Originally, Luther didn't want to leave the Catholic Church. But he publicly debated them initially about the issue of indulgences. He started to write about salvation by grace alone and the fact that the pope is not infallible. They excommunicated Luther. Under Catholic law, this meant that Luther and his followers would go to hell. Luther advocated a doctrine of salvation that did not involve being a part of the Catholic Church.

Indulgences were the main problem that Luther had with the Catholic Church. After many years in the fire of purgatory, you can go to heaven. Most people wind up in purgatory because only Catholic saints can go straight to heaven. Indulgences were donations to the Catholic Church which reduced one's time in purgatory. The thought of purgatory can be very terrifying. The poor, who had no hope of becoming a Catholic saint, were enticed into sacrificing all their money for indulgences. Also, the Germans hated the fact that all that money was leaving Germany to build cathedrals in Rome.

The teaching of purgatory, indulgences, and works of merit tend to make people terrified of God. Luther was terrified of God. There is a healthy fear of God that is

accompanied by our love of the Father and love of our neighbors. This leads us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. But to constantly be in fear of a God that intends to throw you into the fire of purgatory can make you always feel guilty and never good enough to be even liked, must less loved, by God.

The other emotional response to this fear is to push it into the back of your mind along with God. The sacraments of Mass and penance can be performed out of a sense of duty. There can be a tendency to not experience the love of the Father, and therefore to not fall in love with God. This makes the overcoming of sin be almost impossible, and it turns Christianity into something like living under the Law.

Luther began to understand grace when he read this verse. The thing that jumped out at him was the phrase, “righteousness from God.” Righteousness is not active in the sense that it comes from our works of merit. Righteousness is passive in that it comes from God.

Romans 1:16-17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (17) For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Paul's quote of Habakkuk 2:4 has become famous in Protestant circles. "The righteous shall live by faith." Luther's original German translation, when translated back to English, reads, "The just shall live by faith." Some translations, however, are quite different. In the New American (Catholic) Bible, we read: "The one who is

righteous by faith will live." The RSV renders it as "He who through faith is righteous shall live." Young's Literal translates it as, "And the righteous one by faith shall live."

The question at hand is whether the prepositional phrase "by faith" modifies the verb "to live", or whether it modifies "the one who is righteous." Both meanings are similar. But the Catholic translation seems to bring out the journey aspect of faith a bit better. Our journey by faith towards righteousness leads to eternal life.

Luther was very quick to preach salvation by grace through faith alone. But he was slow to give up purgatory. At first, his fight was against indulgences and not purgatory. His original 95 theses against indulgences, published in 1517, assumed the existence of purgatory. He believed we could not affect what God needs to do in order to cleanse us and make us righteous. But after some time, he realized that purgatory itself goes against salvation by grace alone.

In his 1521 treatise, *An Argument in Defense of All the Articles of Dr. Martin Luther Wrongly Condemned in the Roman Bull*, Luther writes:

THE THIRTY-SEVENTH ARTICLE

That there is a purgatory cannot be proved by those Scriptures which are authentic and trustworthy.

The existence of purgatory I have never denied. I still hold that it exists, as I have written and admitted many times, though I have found no way of proving it incontrovertibly from Scripture or reason. ... I myself have come to the conclusion that there is a purgatory, but I cannot force anybody else to come to the same result.

Luther goes on to dispute the traditional arguments of Scripture that are used to support purgatory. He does not, at this point in time, deny the existence of purgatory. But by 1535, Luther is convinced that there is no purgatory saying it's a "lie of the devil." He wrote, "Purgatory is the greatest falsehood because it is based on ungodliness and unbelief; for they deny that faith saves, and they maintain that satisfaction for sins is the cause of salvation."

Thus, between 1521 and 1535, Luther's opinion about purgatory matured in his realization that it goes against salvation by grace alone. Luther had no alternative to offer in replacement of purgatory. Thus, over time, many Protestants began to think of salvation as a decision and not a journey. If one is still sinning when they die, it is reasoned, they will stop sinning when they get to heaven. But this is not taught by Scripture any more than purgatory. Is there a free-grace alternative to purgatory that can be reasoned from Scripture?

Luther admitted he had no Scriptural evidence for purgatory. But he continued to believe in purgatory. This goes against *Sola Scriptura*. From the time of the 95 theses, it took as much as 14 years for him to change his mind. Could it be that down deep Luther still understood that salvation is a journey which must be completed before we can enter the kingdom of heaven? We must overcome all our sinful habits before entering the kingdom of heaven. Protestants need a free-grace alternative to purgatory that is supported by Scripture.

As we continue to read Romans, see if it can be read from a view of salvation by free-grace alone, but at the same time, salvation as a journey which must be completed.

1.4) The Motivations of Wesley

John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist Church. He is well-known for his belief in a “second blessing” which brings Christian perfection or “entire sanctification.” In other words, Wesley believed in holiness. He took seriously the words of Jesus such as “be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Much of what Wesley believed comes from 1 John. John writes about sin in terms of being in the light or being in darkness. There is no middle ground. The light that we are expected to walk is the same as the light in which Christ walked. So it’s very much like being perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect. There doesn’t seem to be much room for a middle ground.

1 John 1:6-10 If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and don't tell the truth. (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses 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 righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say that we haven't sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Many Protestants of the Reformed view often use 1 John 1:8 as a proof-text for the claim that you can’t stop sinning. But is this verse saying we can’t stop sinning, or is it saying we are all guilty of sin? The New American (Catholic) Bible translates the verse as, “If we say, ‘we are without sin,’ we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” This translation

is much more easily understood as saying we all hold the guilt of sin. It doesn't necessarily mean we all continue to sin.

When it's translated as "we have no sin," in the English, the word "no" is modifying the noun "sin." But in the Greek, the word for "no" is an adverb. Adverbs must modify verbs. The verb here means "to have" or "to hold." So in the Greek it would mean we "do not hold sin." A much better translation would be, "If we say, 'we do not hold sin,' we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." We all hold the guilt of sin. But we don't have to continually sin. This translation fits nicely in the context of walking in the light, just as Jesus was in the light. It also fits the rest of the letter, which is about overcoming all our sinful habits. In the very next verses we read:

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, I write these things to you so that you may not sin. If anyone sins, we have a Counselor with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. (2) And he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

John writes this letter so that we may not sin. Some Reformed theologians say there are two types of sins. Some sins you can overcome. Other sins you can't overcome. There is no indication here of two types of sins. That's just reading into the text to make it say what you want it to say.

1 John 3:4-6 Everyone who sins also commits lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. (5) You know that he was revealed to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. (6) Whoever remains in him doesn't sin. Whoever sins hasn't seen him, neither knows him.

1 John 5:18 We know that whoever is born of God doesn't sin, but he who was born of God keeps himself, and the evil one doesn't touch him.

John teaches us to overcome sin by loving the Father and loving one another. Wesley took these words, as well as similar words of Jesus, Peter, and Paul very seriously. Don't attempt to find a work-around such as claiming there are two types of sins. John's words are clear. We can and must overcome all our sinful habits. And it's done through love.

Wesley believed in entire sanctification, also known as Christian perfection. But it would have to be by the grace of God. Therefore, Wesley believed in what he called a "second blessing." He believed God, if asked, will completely take away one's tendency to sin. Many people became filled with the Holy Spirit and believed they had received this second blessing. But people tend to fall back into sinful habits when tested and tempted. It's very much like being an alcoholic. People can fall off the bandwagon. All sins are habitual and must be overcome in very much the same way as an alcoholic overcomes the desire to drink alcohol. From this perspective, overcoming sin is much more like a journey. But it's a journey of free grace. The Holy Spirit fills us and helps us overcome our sinful habits.

Viewing the overcoming of sin as a "second blessing," as in another date we can write in our Bibles, can make people start viewing some sins as not sinful. What about sins of the mind such as lust, unrighteous anger, jealousy, bitterness, greed, and covetousness? Jesus taught that lust is the same as adultery and hatred is the same as murder. These types of sinful habits typically require some time with the Lord to mature and overcome. Maturity typically requires more of a journey than a one-time "second blessing."

But what about believers who die before they overcome all their sinful habits? From Wesley's perspective, what about people who die having received the first blessing but not the second? Wesley did not address the issue directly. He was more concerned with preaching holiness. But we can take an educated guess as to what Wesley was thinking.

Wesley believed in an intermediate state between death and the final judgment. He believed this place is paradise. Believers could even continue to grow in holiness in paradise. Ted A. Campbell, a professor at Perkins School of Theology, in his book titled *Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials*, writes the following (pages 91-92):

The Methodist Articles of Religion, following the teachings of the Reformation, rejected the medieval Catholic idea of purgatory as a place where the souls of those who have died in Christ could be aided or helped by the prayers of the living. John Wesley himself believed in an intermediate state between death and the final judgment, where those who rejected Christ would be aware of their coming doom (not yet pronounced), and believers would share in the "bosom of Abraham" or "paradise," even continuing to grow in holiness there. This belief, however, is not formally affirmed in Methodist doctrinal standards, which reject the idea of purgatory but beyond that maintain silence on what lies between death and the last judgment.

To get a better idea of Wesley's belief about the intermediate state, let's take a look at some of his writings. In his sermon on "Of Hell" (II.4; Sermons Vol. II pg. 384), Wesley writes:

But as happy as the souls in paradise are, they are preparing for far greater happiness. For paradise is

only the porch of heaven; and it is there the spirits of just men are made perfect. It is in heaven only that there is the fulness of joy; the pleasures that are at God's right hand for evermore. The loss of this, by those unhappy spirits, will be the completion of their misery. They will then know and feel, that God alone is the centre of all created spirits; and, consequently, that a spirit made for God can have no rest out of him.

Wesley often spoke of being carried by angels to the bosom of Abraham after death. He used the parable of Lazarus and equated the bosom of Abraham with paradise. In his sermon on "The Rich Man and Lazarus" (I.3; Sermons Vol. III pg. 246), Wesley refers to paradise as an antechamber of heaven. This word means a smaller room that serves as an entryway into a larger room.

But see the change! "The beggar died:" Here ended poverty and pain: -- "And was carried by angels;" nobler servants than any that attended the rich man; -- "into Abraham's bosom:" -- So the Jews commonly termed what our blessed Lord styles paradise; the place "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest;" the receptacle of holy souls, from death to the resurrection. It is, indeed, very generally supposed, that the souls of good men, as soon as they are discharged from the body, go directly to heaven; but this opinion has not the least foundation in the oracles of God: On the contrary, our Lord says to Mary, after the resurrection, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father" in heaven. But he had been in paradise, according to his promise to the penitent thief: "This day shalt thou be with me

in paradise." Hence, it is plain, that paradise is not heaven. It is indeed (if we may be allowed the expression) the antechamber of heaven, where the souls of the righteous remain till, after the general judgment, they are received into glory.

In his sermon on "Human Life a Dream" (section 12; Sermons Vol. III pg. 322-323), Wesley pictures the earth as "below" paradise. Paradise would be in the "third heaven." And yet paradise is "only a porch of heaven."

But how do you relish the company that surrounds you? Your old companions are gone; a great part of them probably separated from you never to return. Are your present companions angels of light? -- ministering spirits, that but now whispered, "Sister spirit, come away! We are sent to conduct thee over that gulf into Abraham's bosom." And what are those? Some of the souls of the righteous, whom thou didst formerly relieve with "the mammon of unrighteousness;" and who are now commissioned by your common Lord to receive, to welcome you "into the everlasting habitations." Then the angels of darkness will quickly discern they have no part in you. So they must either hover at a distance, or flee away in despair. Are some of these happy spirits that take acquaintance with you, the same that travelled with you below, and bore a part in your temptations; that, together with you, fought the good fight of faith, and laid hold on eternal life? As you then wept together, you may rejoice together, you and your guardian angels perhaps, in order to increase your thankfulness for being "delivered from so great a death."

Wesley originated the doctrine of Christian perfection. He considered both justification and sanctification to be by faith. One could become filled with God's love to the point that there was no longer room for sin. He recognized that for some, this could take a while. But he believed that by faith one could become entirely sanctified in a matter of moments. Those who are entirely sanctified no longer have a tendency to sin. This was also known as a second blessing.

Wesley tended to have the same view about faith as most Protestants, in that one is changed in a moment when they first have faith. He looked at the faith for justification as being very similar to the faith for sanctification. But the faith for sanctification would generally come at some later date after that of justification.

Wesley tended to avoid salvation as a journey. But he did quote Paul in 1 Timothy 6:12. In the quote above, Wesley sees those in paradise as having "fought the good fight of faith, and laid hold on eternal life."

1 Timothy 6:12 ESV Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

So I think that both Paul and Wesley viewed sanctification as a journey to Christian perfection that must be completed before one can "take hold of eternal life." Wesley, it would seem, believed this journey continues after death while one is in the bosom of Abraham.

1.5) A Free-Grace Alternative to Purgatory

Do we mature in Christ while in an intermediate state such as Abraham's bosom? Or does it happen by a miracle of God when we go to heaven? Or do we mature in Christ while being cleansed by the fire of purgatory? None of these has any support of Scripture. The best and only way to mature in Christ is to live for Christ. We mature in Christ by living for others. This can't be done in purgatory. And it can't be done in Abraham's bosom. We can only live for Christ while living here on the earth.

Purgatory is not really supported by Scripture. But we do have the Old Testament concept of the Messianic earthly reign of Israel over the nations. In Revelation, this would be the millennial reign of Christ. This can easily be a free-grace alternative to purgatory that has lots of backing in Scripture. Scripture teaches us about a resurrection of both the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15). As a matter of fact, there is a lot of Scriptural evidence for two types of resurrections when Christ returns to set up his kingdom.

Salvation can be described as four steps. (1) Everyone in the world was reconciled by the blood of Christ. This removes the penalty of death given in the original sin, making Christ be the second Adam. When Adam sinned, the penalty was death. But since Christ became the second Adam, everyone can be resurrected. (2) But we must become believers for the forgiveness of sins and (3) then individually overcome all our sinful habits in order to (4) go to heaven and be given eternal life. If we do not complete our journey back to the Father, we can continue to do so after the resurrection.

The millennial reign of Christ was never under consideration when Luther and Calvin formulated the Reformation doctrines. Amillennialism continued to be predominate with both Catholics and Protestants until dispensationalism came along in the nineteenth century. Millennialism was considered superstition at best, and a reason for murder at worst. Anabaptists were murdered for their belief in water baptism and millennialism.

Calvin's first published booklet was *Psychopannychia* (1544). It was against Anabaptists and soul-sleep. Anabaptists did not generally believe in soul-sleep. But Calvin must have known some who did. Soul-sleep must be strongly considered for those who must continue their journey of salvation after the resurrection. For the unjust and the not-yet-fully-sanctified believers of whom God has not yet given up, there could not be heaven or hell in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection. So they must be asleep. But Luther would have had a strong presupposition against soul-sleep.

A pastor I know says he does not know the date he was "saved." It happened gradually over a period of time. Thus as a child, there was also some unknown date in which he became accountable for his sins. Then he says, there is some unknown date in which he was saved. If he had died before that age of accountability, he would have gone to heaven. If he had died after that date, he would have gone to hell.

Later there was some other unknown date when it was reversed. If he had died before that second date, he would have gone to hell. If he had died after that second date, he would have gone to heaven. Is this really God's plan of salvation? Or is the age of accountability a "patch" that was added to cover a problem with the Reformed system? An age of accountability is very difficult to find in Scripture.

Salvation has four parts or steps: Reconciliation, Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification.

- 1) Reconciliation is the restoration of the relationship between God and man which was lost by Adam. This was accomplished by Christ, the second Adam, when he died on the cross. Christ's death was atonement for everyone's sins. Reconciliation removes the penalty of death for sins. Christ has paid for everyone's sins, regardless of whether they believe or even know about Christ's sacrifice. But this is not Universalism. Enemies of God can lose their reconciliation. And you can't receive eternal life without justification and entire sanctification.
- 2) Justification occurs at the start of a believer's journey of repentance and the overcoming sinful habits. Justification is by faith. To be justified means all your sins are forgiven and you are credited with righteousness. But we must make good on that credit during our journey. After Pentecost, justification allowed for the filling of the Holy Spirit.
- 3) Sanctification is the journey of the believer to overcome sinful habits through the help of the Holy Spirit as we do the works of the Father. Even sanctification is a free gift because the Holy Spirit changes us on the inside. The journey must be completed before one can be given eternal life.
- 4) Glorification is to receive a spiritual body and eternal life.

If salvation is a journey that must be completed, the gospel of Paul and the gospel of Jesus are easily seen as being in perfect harmony. As we go through Romans, read it to see if Paul's presentation of the gospel fits this outline.

1.6) The Original Sin Removed for Everyone

Catholics believe that Adam's sin is removed when an infant is baptized. John 3:5 says, "Unless one is born of water and spirit, he can't enter into the Kingdom of God." Augustine believed this water is infant baptism.

Perhaps Augustine was somehow equating John 3:5 with Romans 5, where Paul teaches about Christ being the second Adam. In chapter 4 of this book we will study reconciliation in more detail. But let's look a few verses now.

Romans 5:8-10 But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we will be saved from God's wrath through him. (10) For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we will be saved by his life.

Paul says it clearly. "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God." Everyone has sinned and was enemy of God. Since we are reconciled, we can by faith be justified. This seems to indicate the death of Christ brought reconciliation with God for everyone. Before we became believers we were reconciled. And now that we have become believers, we can be saved by living for Christ.

Romans 5:18-19 So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned; even so through one act of righteousness, all men were justified to life. (19) For as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one, many will be made righteous.

What does Paul mean when he says, “All men were justified to life” (verse 18)? Interpret this in the context of Christ being the second Adam. Adam was told if he eats of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, that he would die. Everyone dies. But because of Christ’s sacrifice, everyone will be made alive. The “hope in God” is for the “resurrection of both the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15). Everyone will be resurrected even if they have not yet been justified by faith and/or fully sanctified through faith. That is our “hope in God.” Paul says that everyone was “justified to life.” The penalty given to Adam, and thus to everyone, has been reversed for everyone. It’s not just those baptized. In the context of Paul’s chapter on the resurrection, we read:

1 Corinthians 15:22 ESV For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Titus 2:11 ESV For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people.

1 Timothy 4:10 ESV For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

1 John 2:2 ESV He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

John 12:32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Romans 11:32 For God has shut up all to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all.

The first verse (above) is in the context of Paul's chapter on the resurrection. Paul says, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (ESV 1 Corinthians 15:22). Paul talks about two types of bodies in this chapter. There are celestial (spiritual) bodies and there are terrestrial (mortal) bodies. We must mature in a terrestrial body before we can receive a celestial body. Try reading this chapter from the perspective of a free-grace alternative to purgatory.

Try reading Paul's letters from the more Old Testament Jewish perspective that the dead are asleep and the only hope for an afterlife is the resurrection. If true, then we don't have to assume that everyone's eternal destiny is determined at the time of death. Try reading it from the perspective that the body we receive at the resurrection depends on how we are planted. Is the seed still sinning when it dies?

1 Corinthians 15:35-42a But someone will say, "How are the dead raised?" and, "With what kind of body do they come?" (36) You foolish one, that which you yourself sow is not made alive unless it dies. (37) That which you sow, you don't sow the body that will be, but a bare grain, maybe of wheat, or of some other kind. (38) But God gives it a body even as it pleased him, and to each seed a body of its own. (39) All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. (40) There are also celestial bodies, and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial differs from that of the terrestrial. (41) There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. (42) So also is the resurrection of the dead.

Allow me to use what I believe is the terminology of Jesus. He spoke of the wise, the foolish and the wicked, as he talked about the kingdom of God.

The wise are those who are completely sanctified (1 Thessalonians 5:23) by the Holy Spirit changing us on the inside as we do the Father's works. The wise (saints) will have overcome all their sinful habits before they die or Christ appears. The wise will have celestial (spiritual) bodies and will live in the New Jerusalem, which is Paradise, which is the Father's house with many rooms.

The foolish are those who still have sinful habits. Some are believers. Others are not. They will have terrestrial (mortal) bodies and will live here on the earth. Those with celestial bodies will rule over those with mortal terrestrial bodies. In other words, the Bride of Christ will reign with Christ over the nations of the earth (Revelation 2:26).

The wicked are those who deliberately become an enemy of God and/or Christ. They will not be resurrected. They are blotted from the Book of Life. They will "come to life" (be awakened) at the end of the 1000 years to be judged and thrown into the lake of fire.

Again, the terms wise, foolish, and wicked are consistently used by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as well as in many of his parables. The five foolish virgins do not have enough oil to get into the wedding banquet.

The wise (teachers) will have heavenly bodies and will reign over the foolish with earthly bodies. Those with heavenly bodies will live in the New Jerusalem, which is the Father's house with many rooms. But they will be able to go back and forth between the New Jerusalem and the earth. The New Jerusalem will appear when Christ appears. This is just before the seven-year period of the great tribulation.

The few who are ready will get their spiritual bodies at the start of the tribulation. But the majority of the true believers in the Church are not ready for Christ to return. They must mature in the persecution of great tribulation. The resurrection and rapture is at the end of the tribulation.

Let's back up a few verses in Paul's resurrection chapter:

1 Corinthians 15:20-26 ESV But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (21) For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (23) But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (24) Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. (25) For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (26) The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Christ is the firstfruits. This is a feast during the Passover week. Christ's resurrection was on the day of firstfruits. The firstfruits of the harvest is given as an offering. Then the rest are harvested. After the resurrection of Christ, the 144,000 are firstfruits to God and the Lamb (Revelation 14:4). Then the countless number, which is the Bride of Christ, are firstfruits (2 Thessalonians 2:13, James 1:18) to people in the nations. The final harvest is that of the nations who are led to righteousness. Israel has always been the holy nation, the Bride of the Messiah, who will reign over the nations with the Messiah in order to bring righteousness to the Gentiles, which means nations. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel and share in that promise.

So the resurrections are “each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.” Everyone “belongs to Christ” because of Christ’s sacrifice. Even Christ’s lost sheep hear his voice. They don’t know Christ because they are lost. But they are still his sheep. The exceptions are the wicked who reject Christ’s salvation. The wicked know Christ but choose to reject him.

Verse 23 says, “In Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.” Are there exceptions to those who die because of Adam? Likewise, all are made alive because of Christ. Of course “all” does not have to mean a hundred percent. The wicked will not be resurrected. But “all” must mean the vast majority. It cannot mean the narrow gate that only few will find. The wise go through that narrow gate.

After the resurrection, Christ must reign until the “last enemy” is destroyed. And we will reign with Christ. There will be death during the millennium. In Revelation 22:2 we read, “The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” This verse is talking about the New Jerusalem. But those with spiritual (heavenly) bodies will not get sick. They will not need healing. The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations.

In the age to come, the people of the nations will be healed when they get sick, even though they will have mortal bodies. But some will die the second death because some will reject Christ even while he is reigning. At the end of the 1000 years, Satan is released to tempt those who do not learn righteousness. They will march against Jerusalem. And they will die. After this, there will be no more death. So Christ must reign for a thousand years until the last enemy is destroyed, which is death.

1.7) Unity Begins with Agreement on Salvation

Until Christ actually returns and sets up his kingdom there are going to be doctrinal differences. Paul addresses this in 1 Corinthians 3 and 4.

1 Corinthians 3:4-5 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," aren't you fleshly? (5) Who then is Apollos, and who is Paul, but servants through whom you believed; and each as the Lord gave to him?

1 Corinthians 3:21-22a Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, (22) whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come.

1 Corinthians 4:5-6 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each man will get his praise from God. (6) Now these things, brothers, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to think beyond the things which are written, that none of you be puffed up against one another.

We are going to have our doctrinal differences. But with regard to the gospel itself, we need to find the truth that hides in the middle. Then we can simply agree to disagree with regard to doctrinal differences that do not directly affect the gospel. Will we continue to disagree about the doctrine of salvation itself? We need to know what to preach as we spread the gospel of the kingdom around the world in unity.

The gospel of Jesus Christ must be preached. All Christendom can be united if we can simply agree upon what gospel we are to preach. We must unite in the truth that hides in the middle. Is there a purgatory or a free-grace alternative to purgatory? That's important. It's part of the gospel if it's there. Is salvation by faith alone? It's part of the gospel if it's true. Is salvation a journey that must be completed before we can enter the kingdom? It's part of the gospel if it's true.

Please read carefully Christ's prayer for unity in the Church. Let this prayer become your prayer. Then ask yourself, does the Father answer Christ's prayers? Is this something we can believe will happen? Is this something we can by faith act upon?

John 17:15-26 I pray not that you would take them from the world, but that you would keep them from the evil one. (16) They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. (17) Sanctify them in your truth. Your word is truth. (18) As you sent me into the world, even so I have sent them into the world. (19) For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. (20) Not for these only do I pray, but for those also who believe in me through their word, (21) that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you sent me. (22) The glory which you have given me, I have given to them; that they may be one, even as we are one; (23) I in them, and you in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that you sent me, and loved them, even as you loved me. (24) Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me be

with me where I am, that they may see my glory, which you have given me, for you loved me before the foundation of the world. (25) Righteous Father, the world hasn't known you, but I knew you; and these knew that you sent me. (26) I made known to them your name, and will make it known; that the love with which you loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Today, doctrinal differences don't seem to divide Protestant denominations the way we used to be divided. This is good. We can focus on loving one another. I also believe there is a growing respect between Catholics and Protestants. But can we truly be united without agreement on something as fundamental as the Good News about salvation?

If God really answers the prayers of Jesus, then we must consider this prayer to be a prophecy. Will the Church be caught up in the rapture before the Church is united, even as Christ and the Father are one? Most Christians don't see how this could possibly happen. So this prophecy is naturally neglected and ignored.

Also, if this prayer really is a prophecy that must be fulfilled before the Church is caught up in the rapture, then what does that have to say about the doctrine of imminence?

What if the seven-year tribulation is not just persecution of the Church? During the first half, the two witnesses will be preaching. The 144,000 will be preaching. I believe they will have spiritual bodies and will be doing great miracles for all the world to see. What doctrine of salvation will they preach? Will the Protestants have to admit that they are wrong and the Catholics are right? Will the Catholics have to admit that they are wrong and the Protestants are right? Or will it be a truth that hides in the middle?

Chapter 2

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Over the centuries, in Protestant circles, there has been constant debate as to the nature of salvation. Did God really inspire the authors of the New Testament to write inconsistently and with apparent contradictions with regard to salvation? Or are we simply afraid to read the Bible literally and let those authors say what they are saying without fear of letting go of our presuppositions?

Does God choose those who will be saved and those who will be condemned to hell? Is salvation simply a matter of professing a (free grace) faith in Jesus Christ? Or is Lordship salvation and regeneration required? (In other words, is some level of evidence of life changes required?) What does James mean by, "Faith without works is dead"? Why did Martin Luther have difficulties with James saying that it "contradicts Paul by teaching justification by works" and that it is "really an epistle of straw"?

Are Protestants correct in viewing salvation as a one-time event of justification? Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians believe that salvation and even justification is a journey. They do not distinguish justification and sanctification. But they tend to strongly reject the millennial reign of Christ. Would all these problems become solved if salvation is viewed as a journey that can continue even past the grave into the millennial reign of Christ? Since the Bible really does characterize salvation as a journey and not a one-time event, perhaps we really should think about letting God outside the boxes in which we have placed Him.

The emphasis of New Testament salvation is the resurrection and walking without sin. We are taught from childhood that when you die, you go straight to either heaven or hell. Does Scripture ever say we go straight to heaven when we die? There are arguments for such. But it's never explicitly stated. The resurrection, however, is explicitly taught quite a bit. If unbelievers go straight to hell when they die, then why is the Great White Throne of Judgment needed after the millennium? If we go straight to heaven when we die, then why do we need a resurrection? The resurrection becomes anti-climactic at best. Try interpreting what the Bible says about salvation in terms of a journey with a focus on the resurrection.

2.1) The Gospel of the Kingdom

The disciples asked Jesus, "Tell us, when will these things be? What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age" (Matthew 24:3)? Jesus responds by saying:

Matthew 24:11-15 ESV And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. (12) And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. (13) But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (14) And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (15) "So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

Is the gospel (good news) of the kingdom the same as Paul's gospel (good news) about salvation? Jesus says the one who endures to the end will be saved. Does this match what is

generally understood from Paul about salvation? How would the audience of Jesus have interpreted the words, “good news about the kingdom?” From their perspective, is the kingdom of God a kingdom that is in heaven and not of this world? Jesus said that to Pontius Pilate before the crucifixion. Jesus was not saying that Rome would be attacked in defense of the King of Kings. The kingdom of heaven is not currently of this world. But the Jews would have understood the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, to be a future earthly reign of Israel over the world when the Messiah comes. Jesus was not correcting the Jews about the nature of the kingdom. He was speaking to Pilate and not the Jews. Jesus even told the Jews that the meek would inherit the earth (not heaven).

In light of this, what is the gospel (good news) of the kingdom? How does the earthly reign of Israel and the Messiah over the world relate to salvation? To the ancient Jews, salvation is being saved from sin and death. At funerals, preachers of today seem to focus on our departed loved ones being in a better place, meaning heaven. But to the Jews, as well as the major emphasis of New Testament Scripture, salvation is all about the resurrection. Could it be that gospel (good news) of the kingdom is very much related to the resurrection and the earthly reign of the Messiah? If so, has the real gospel (good news) of the kingdom really been preached to all the nations? I believe the two witnesses and the 144,000 will preach the gospel of the kingdom to all the nations during the first half of the seven-years. Then the end will come starting with the abomination of desolation. But how does the gospel of the kingdom relate to the gospel (good news) of salvation?

The exact nature of the gospel has been debated by Protestants ever since Luther and Calvin. Is salvation a

decision or a journey? How much “fruit of the Spirit” must one show before he or she will go to heaven? These debates rage on in Protestant circles today in the form of radical-grace or hyper-grace movements. Could the very existence of these divisions indicate that Luther may have gone too far? Radical-grace advocates would say that Luther didn’t go far enough. They want a new Reformation of Grace.

The Catholics believe that purgatory is necessary for those who still have sin in their lives. Was Luther correct to eliminate purgatory without providing a scripturally based alternative? Could it be that the truth about the gospel hides in the middle between the Catholics and the Protestants? What is the true gospel of salvation? And is the gospel of salvation the same as the gospel of the kingdom?

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31). But what does that mean? Is it the Greek-like concept of intellectual knowledge? Or is belief a continual action? Is salvation a one-time event? Do we say we are saved and that’s it? Or do we continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12-13)? Do we need to “endure to the end” in order to be saved (Matthew 10:22, 24:13 Mark 12:13)? One thing is for sure: We must continue to look upon the cross for salvation.

Believe in Jesus and you will inherit eternal life. But look at the context of John 3:16 for a true understanding of the gospel. The verse right before, at John 3:14-15, says: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." The people of Old Testament Israel were told to look upon the serpent to be healed of sickness and disease. But Christ was lifted up so that we can be healed from sin as well as sickness and disease. Sin is at the very heart of sickness, disease, and death. “By his stripes

we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). We must be saved from sin. All sins are habitual. If we still sin, we must continue to look to the cross in order to stop sinning – in order to be healed from our sinful habits, so that we no longer sin. We must daily take up our cross and follow Christ. Only then can we inherit eternal life.

We must realize that continued sin is like a disease. Jesus can heal us from that disease. If you want to inherit the kingdom, you must be completely healed from all sinful habits. We must believe that Jesus can heal us. If we say that Jesus can't or won't do this, then we do not fully believe in Jesus for eternal life. We must continually look upon the cross for healing just as the people of Israel looked upon the serpent for healing. We must have faith and not doubt. We must turn our lives completely over to Christ in order to inherit the kingdom. If any sinful habits remain, then we have not yet finished our journey back to the Father. When no sinful habits remain, then we are completely sanctified. This is necessary in order to inherit the kingdom.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 ESV Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (24) He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

If you die before overcoming sin, before becoming completely sanctified, that doesn't mean you will go to hell. But those who continue to sin will not inherit the kingdom.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 ESV Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of

God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21 ESV Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, (20) idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, (21) envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Many, if not most, Protestants have trouble with these verses. How can one completely stop sinning? And if one does not inherit the kingdom, does that mean he or she would go to hell? The exact nature of the gospel of the kingdom has been debated by Protestants ever since Luther and Calvin.

Catholics view justification and sanctification as basically the same thing. Both are viewed as a journey of salvation. Those who do not complete this journey before death must spend time in purgatory. Only the saints go to heaven without first going to purgatory. Protestants argue that purgatory is not supported by Scripture and that purgatory is an additional requirement for salvation other than God's grace.

From the Catholic perspective, entire sanctification is necessary before going to heaven. If one does not become a saint in this lifetime, sanctification is completed in purgatory. From the Protestant perspective, all believers go

straight to heaven without time in purgatory. However, the Protestants have differing views as to how much sanctification is needed before one can inherit the kingdom. Or, one might argue that one needs to maintain a certain level of discipleship, or devotion to Christ, in order to inherit the kingdom. This view is called Lordship salvation.

Lordship salvation states that some level of the fruit of the spirit is required before one can be assured of salvation. Free-grace advocates oppose this view. They point out that a requirement of any level of fruit, or any level of discipleship, puts one in the position of not knowing if they have enough to be saved. There is no assurance of salvation. But if one were to take the more Catholic view that sanctification must be completed before one can inherit the kingdom, then this debate is put to rest.

Free-grace advocates would say all believers go straight to heaven regardless the state of their sinful habits. Lordship salvation advocates, to one degree or other, will require a relatively sin-free life but that still contains some sin. The more one leans to the free-grace side of this debate, the more one tends to view salvation as a one-time decision instead of a journey. If salvation is a one-time decision, then what's the point of the journey? And if salvation is a journey, then the more Catholic-like view of entire sanctification seems to be the only way to avoid the question of what degree of discipleship and sanctification is required for salvation.

In other words, it's going to be either an all-out requirement of entire sanctification, or it's going to be no requirement of sanctification, in order to be saved. If entire sanctification is required to inherit the kingdom, as Catholics would claim, then very few Protestants Christians will make it. What is needed is a free-grace alternative to purgatory that is strongly supported by Scripture.

Ephesians 2:8-10 ESV For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, (9) not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

If salvation is viewed as a decision, then grace and faith become one-time events. This tends to be true even if salvation is viewed as a journey that doesn't require completion. The start of the journey tends to become the main requirement for salvation. When this is the case, grace becomes "unmerited favor," meaning that God forgives us of our sins even though we do not deserve this favor.

On the other hand, if salvation is viewed as a journey to the Father that must be completed, then grace must be defined as a continuous work of God. The Holy Spirit changes us on the inside so that over time, we no longer have the sinful habits that we used to have. Thus, grace is God changing us instead of God forgiving us. From this perspective, the work that Christ did on the cross is certainly a finished work of God. But it's not the primary meaning of grace. The Greek word for 'grace' means favor. God's favor is given to a specific group of people. But Christ's work on the cross was for everyone.

Christ's work on the cross is extremely important. Without it there could be no grace. All our sins were paid for at the cross. Christ's sacrifice was a ransom for everyone. But the work of the Holy Spirit, to transform us on the inside, is a work of grace. It's done only for believers. Only believers receive the Holy Spirit.

Hosea 13:14a I will ransom them from the power of Sheol. I will redeem them from death! Death, where are your plagues? Sheol, where is your destruction?

1 Timothy 2:6 who gave himself as a ransom for all; the testimony in its own times;

Grace is being continually changed by the Holy Spirit. This definition of grace has Old Testament support. After Pentecost, all believers are filled with the Holy Spirit. But in the Old Testament, only a few of the covenant people were selected to receive the Holy Spirit. They were considered as favored by God. Thus, the Old Testament concept of grace is to be chosen by God to be filled by the Holy Spirit. Under the New Covenant, all believers are chosen to receive God's grace in that they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

We are saved by grace and through faith. Continual grace is being filled with the Holy Spirit to change us on the inside. But what about continual faith? Faith becomes a continual belief, hope, and deep prayerful desire that God will change us so that we are no longer sinning. We have continual faith that God will continually change us. We become spiritual beggars for righteousness. These changes could take a lifetime. For others it could be much faster.

If salvation is a one-time decision, then faith is a matter of believing in Christ to save us. If salvation is a journey to completion, faith is becoming a spiritual beggar. We must desperately desire the Holy Spirit to change us. We desperately desire to overcome all our sinful habits because of our love for Christ.

Depending on our definition of grace and faith, salvation by grace and through faith can take on entirely

different meanings. Is it a decision, or is it a journey to completion? All of Paul's words about grace and faith are dramatically affected. If salvation is a journey to completion, we remain faithful that God will complete the work that he began in us. That work is God's grace.

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:6 ESV And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Notice the subtle difference between these two translations. Do we hope that this work is completed before Christ returns? Or do we limit our faith such that God's work can only be completed upon receiving new spiritual bodies? Those who believe salvation is a journey to completion would say the former. If we truly have faith in God to transform us on the inside, should we limit that faith to say God's work of removing our sinful habits cannot be completed before Christ returns and we get spiritual bodies?

If salvation is a journey without the need of completion, then the need for the journey becomes diminished. If we do not believe that God can truly transform us so that we no longer sin, Satan will have a big hole in our theology that he can use while tempting us. In our weakness we will believe that we can't stop sinning. So we will give into temptations. But if salvation is a journey to completion in this lifetime, then there is no room for debate. This definition of grace, however, requires either purgatory, or a free-grace alternative to purgatory.

If salvation is assumed to be a journey without the need for completion in this lifetime, it results in big differences between the gospels of Jesus and Paul. Jesus requires holiness in order to enter the kingdom. Paul can be interpreted as only requiring faith for salvation by defining grace as what Christ did on the cross. This past-tense oriented view of salvation produces huge perceived differences between Jesus and Paul, because Jesus didn't use the term "grace" very often. (Jesus didn't speak of grace very often because Pentecost had not yet come.)

Hyper-grace teachers say Jesus was teaching under the old covenant of law, and that Paul taught grace. Even some of what Paul said seems to be in conflict with past-tense grace. For example, Paul says to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Those who continue to sin will not inherit the kingdom. But when salvation and grace is viewed as a journey to completion, all the apparent conflicts between Jesus and Paul completely disappear. Paul becomes consistent with himself. But unless we say that a small minority of Christians will be saved, some form of free-grace alternative to purgatory is required for those who don't complete their journey. In today's generation, only a few of the believers tend to find that narrow gate of righteousness.

Many will argue that they don't know any perfect people. But Christian perfection doesn't mean we don't make mistakes. It's not a sin to have an error in judgment. We learn from our mistakes. If we have hurt someone, we ask for their forgiveness even if we never intended to hurt them. The need to ask forgiveness of others does not necessarily mean that we have sinned.

We try and avoid honest mistakes. But honest mistakes are not habitual. Sins are tempting. All sins are habitual. They draw us in and enslave us. They are hard to overcome.

Honest mistakes are not sins. Honest mistakes do not tempt us and draw us in. People often see honest mistakes in others and interpret it as sinning. Among Christians, most sins are hidden in our hearts. Lust is addictive and sinful. Sins hide in darkness. Even sinful anger can be hidden. But honest mistakes are not hidden. You can be in the light and still make honest mistakes.

Others will look you in the eye and say, “So how is this holiness thing going for you? Have you stopped sinning?” The problem with this question is that we don’t change ourselves on the inside. Perhaps there is an area of our lives in which the Holy Spirit still intends to work. We might say that we feel at peace with God and are not aware of more sinful habits. But we never judge ourselves as having completed our journey because we must still allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. I think that’s why Paul always associates the completion of the journey (in his case the race) with either being near death or with the return of Christ.

It’s always possible for those who have overcome all their sinful habits to fall back into sin. So we can never know for sure that we will never sin again. But we must believe in God to save us from all our sinful habits. This means we must believe in God that all our sinful habits will be conquered. We have faith that he will complete this work in us, even if the work may have already been completed. We won’t know for sure before we receive our spiritual bodies.

So what about this free-grace alternative to purgatory? Catholics believe the original sin of Adam is removed at infant baptism. This is based on Paul’s teaching in Romans 5 that Jesus is the second Adam. Infant baptism is used by the Catholics to distinguish those who will go to purgatory from those who go to hell with no opportunity for salvation. But is Christ the second Adam only for those who are baptized?

Romans 5:10-12 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we will be saved by his life. (11) Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. (12) Therefore, as sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, because all sinned.

Everyone was once an enemy of God. While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son. Thus, everyone was reconciled to God through the blood of Christ. This is not grace because grace is favor. Favor must be for a select number of people. But as we will see, a select number do receive grace. Grace is change by the Holy Spirit. Over time, we are “saved by his life.” We are saved by living a life for Christ.

Romans 5:17-19 For if by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; so much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ. (18) So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned; even so through one act of righteousness, all men were justified to life. (19) For as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one, many will be made righteous.

All men were “justified to life.” But only “many” will be made righteous. Just because you are “justified to life” does not mean you will be made righteous. Justification to life was a work that was done by Christ on the cross. He did

this for everyone. But not everyone will be made righteous. In this age of grace, believers are made righteous through continuous grace and by continuous faith in Jesus Christ. This grace is the process of the Holy Spirit changing us so that we no longer sin. Everyone has been ransomed. But we can't continue to sin if we want to inherit the kingdom.

I agree with Catholics that salvation is a journey to completion. But under the Catholic system, only those who are declared saints by the Catholic Church can avoid purgatory. Only a few are made righteous in this lifetime. For the average Catholic, the possibility of becoming a saint seems distant and unobtainable. This can be discouraging for Catholics, feeling like no matter what they do, they will still be punished in purgatory. Paul says that "many will be made righteous." Entire sanctification must be preached as something that is obtainable by anyone because it's not we ourselves who do the work. The Holy Spirit changes us on the inside. We must be taught faith to believe that we can become pure and holy by God's continual grace.

1 Timothy 2:6 who gave himself as a ransom for all; the testimony in its own times;

Think about salvation as two-way reconciliation. Jesus is the second Adam. Because of this, God reconciled himself to everyone. God loves the world and has a plan that includes everyone. But everyone must completely reconcile themselves back to God, with the help of the Holy Spirit, before they can receive eternal life. If we die before being completely sanctified, there is always the resurrection. Salvation is all about the resurrection. It's not about going to heaven when you die.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 For since death came by man, the resurrection of the dead also came by man. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

This verse is in the context of Paul's chapter on the resurrection. Jesus is the second Adam. Everyone has been reconciled. Adam brought sin and death into the world for everyone. Death was the result of the original sin. But Christ is the second Adam for everyone. Thus, everyone has had the consequence of the original sin removed. This means that everyone can be resurrected. But it does not mean that everyone will receive eternal life.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 For the love of Christ constrains us; because we judge thus, that one died for all, therefore all died. (15) He died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who for their sakes died and rose again.

Jesus died and rose again for everyone. Because of Christ's death for everyone, "all died." In other words, Christ took away the penalty of eternal death for everyone. The ransom has been paid for everyone (1 Timothy 2:6, quoted above). Everyone has effectively died because Christ died in our place. Therefore, all "will be made alive" in the resurrection.

That is why Christ is the second Adam. Adam brought death for everyone. Christ reversed the consequence of the original sin for everyone. In so doing, Christ has reconciled God to everyone.

1 Timothy 4:10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we have set our trust in the

living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

Just because God has reconciled himself to us does not mean that we have been reconciled (made right) to God. It is only through the journey of sanctification that believers are reconciled back to God. And only those who complete this journey will receive eternal life. Those who do not complete the journey in this life can continue their journey in the age to come after the resurrection.

John 14:4-6 "Where I go, you know, and you know the [road]." (5) Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the [road]?" (6) Jesus said to him, "I am the [road], the truth, and the life. No one [journeys] to the Father, except through me.

The Greek word for 'way' in this verse literally means 'road.' As we live for Christ we journey back to the Father. You can't reach the end of the road without traveling over the road. Death is not a short-cut back to the Father. You can't eliminate the road or the journey. But it doesn't mean that one goes to hell if he or she doesn't reach the end of the road during this lifetime. Death is not the end of the journey. Christ has conquered death for everyone. Christ has reconciled everyone back to God. The penalty of death, as given to Adam, has been revoked (ransomed) for everyone. Everyone can be resurrected so that they can complete their journey. But not everyone will desire and choose to return to the Father. The lake of fire (hell) is for the enemies of God.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 For since death came by man, the resurrection of the dead also came by man. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

This verse should be interpreted in the context of Paul's more elaborate teaching, in Romans 5, about Christ being the second Adam. The point here is that 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 is in the context of Paul's chapter on the resurrection. Once we understand that the resurrection is for everyone, then the question arises about the difference between the just and the unjust in the resurrection.

Acts 24:15 having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Paul's chapter on the resurrection is usually interpreted with the presupposition that only the righteous (just) are resurrected. But once we understand that 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 says everyone will be resurrected, the verses that follow take on a whole new meaning.

1 Corinthians 15:35-39 ESV But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" (36) You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. (37) And what you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. (38) But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. (39) For not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.

Paul asks the question, “With what kind of body do they come?” Paul says there are different kinds of bodies. He first illustrates with the fact that animals have different kinds of bodies. Then he draws the distinction between heavenly (celestial) bodies and earthly (terrestrial) bodies.

1 Corinthians 15:40-42 ESV There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. (41) There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. (42) So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable.

There are two kinds of bodies with two types of glory. Then Paul says, “So it is with the resurrection of the dead.” There are both heavenly and earthly bodies. The heavenly bodies have a greater glory than the earthly bodies. And even some heavenly bodies have greater glory than other heavenly bodies. After this point, Paul goes onto describe the glory of the heavenly body in much more detail. So it’s easy to read this text under the presupposition of just one type of body in the resurrection.

But it’s also easy to read Paul as saying the resurrection will have two types of bodies once we realize that Christ is the second Adam for everyone. The body we get depends upon the seed that is planted. If we have been completely sanctified, then we will be resurrected with a heavenly (spiritual) body and have eternal life. If not, we will be resurrected with a natural body and can continue our journey of salvation in the age to come. Terrestrial (earthly) bodies can die a second death. Those who receive their eternal-life bodies will reign with Christ over the nations.

John 12:32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Christ was lifted up from the earth. Therefore, at some time or other, all people will be drawn to Christ. It goes without saying that some people die having never heard about Christ. Are they drawn to Christ? One would think not. But since Christ's death allows for the resurrection of all people, of all generations, everyone can eventually be drawn to Christ. Thus, the knowledge of Christ will be given to everyone and everyone will have the opportunity to journey back to the Father. This is why Christ is Lord of both the dead and the living. Every knee will bow, even those who have died.

Romans 14:9-11 For to this end Christ died, rose, and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. (10) But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. (11) For it is written, "'As I live,' says the Lord, 'to me every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess to God.' "

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God also highly exalted him, and gave to him the name which is above every name; (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, those on earth, and those under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Isaiah 45:22-25 ESV "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. (23) By myself I have sworn; from my mouth

has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance." (24) "Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; to him shall come and be ashamed all who were incensed against him. (25) In the LORD all the offspring of Israel shall be justified and shall glory."

Notice that salvation is given to the ends of the earth. Every knee will bow. So every knee will be resurrected, which is salvation from death. But there is a special glory for Israel and Gentiles who are grafted into Israel. As Paul has stated, some will receive spiritual bodies of glory. Israel is the chosen holy nation.

1 Peter 2:6-10 Because it is contained in Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, chosen, and precious: He who believes in him will not be disappointed." (7) For you who believe therefore is the honor, but for those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected, has become the chief cornerstone," (8) and, "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense." For they stumble at the word, being disobedient, to which also they were appointed. (9) But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: (10) who in time past were no people, but now are God's people, who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Christ, in due time, will draw everyone to himself. However, Christ's draw is not irresistible. Just as Adam had the free

will to disobey God, everyone has the free will to reject Christ and his salvation.

The only way to eternal life is to be saved from continued sin. Yes, Jesus paid the price for all our sins. He paid the ransom for everyone. But if that becomes an excuse for continued sin, it makes a mockery of Christ's sacrifice:

Hebrews 6:4-6 ESV For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, (5) and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

Hebrews was written to Christian Jews who were considering turning back to Judaism, forsaking Christ. If they did, they would lose their salvation. It's not taking about a weak moment of sin. If the blood of Jesus becomes an excuse for continued sin, then it makes a mockery of Christ's blood. Or if someone deliberately becomes an enemy (adversary) of Christ after receiving the knowledge and powers of the age to come, they become an enemy of God. They will lose their reconciliation with God. They will be thrown into the lake of fire after the great white throne of judgment, at the end of the millennial reign.

Hebrews 10:26-27 ESV For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

We are to look on the cross and believe in Christ to be healed from all our sinful habits. Yes, Christ paid the price for all our sins. But the cross is also about overcoming all our sinful habits. It's about being completely healed, both spiritually and physically. That's the only true salvation from sin. Would you say to an alcoholic that your sins are forgiven, so even if you continue to get drunk, God considers you to no longer be an alcoholic? Talk like that only makes it worse for the alcoholic.

It's true that God credits new believers with righteousness. But we must make good on that credit. God is simply giving us time to overcome sin. And God does the greater work in us, by grace, as we repent of our sins and have faith in Christ to overcome all our sinful habits. If we say we will never overcome sin, then we don't really have true faith in Christ to heal us from sin.

The alcoholic must believe that he can stop drinking. The alcoholic must repent of his or her drinking. We must believe on Jesus Christ, by looking to the cross, so that our sinful habits can be overcome. If you don't believe that through God's grace you can overcome all your sinful habits, then do you really believe in Christ? If you don't believe you can overcome sin, do you really know Christ?

1 John 3:3-6 ESV And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. (4) Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. (5) You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. (6) No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.

You must have faith in Christ to overcome sin. Paul said:

Philippians 2:12-13 ESV Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, (13) for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

We must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. As we do the works of the Father, the Holy Spirit fills us, and does the greater work in us to overcome all our sinful habits. But if you don't believe that God will finish the good work he has started in you, then you set yourself up in Satan's trap. You set yourself up for continued sin. And the Holy Spirit can't complete the good work that he is doing in you. It's like believing in Christ, but not fully. We look to the cross to overcome sin. But we must believe that the cross has this power.

2 Timothy 3:1-5 ESV But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. (2) For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, (4) treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (5) having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

This baby-boom generation, since World War II, is the generation of the last days. More than any past generation world-wide, most people who attend church regularly are

easily characterized by the things said in verse 2 above. They go to church and believe they are right with God. But they continue to sin because they believe it's impossible to stop sinning. They don't have the true belief in Jesus to stop. So they have an appearance of godliness, but they deny the power of the cross to change us and completely stop sinning.

People quote John 3:16, taking it out of context. There are other verses that are memorized and then quoted out of context. How about Ephesians 2:8-9, which we looked at earlier. We previously discussed the definition of grace and faith while discussing this verse this verse. But what about its context?

Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) not of works, that no one would boast.

This verse is taken out of the context of the previous verses. Certainly the verse is true. Salvation is a free gift. But that doesn't mean we can continue to sin, saying that it would be work to overcome sin!

Ephesians 2:1-6 You were made alive when you were dead in transgressions and sins, (2) in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the children of disobedience; (3) among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (4) But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love with which he loved us, (5) even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you

have been saved), (6) and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

Paul is not painting a middle ground of sinning just a little. We were dead in our sins. Now we are alive because we don't sin. We were by nature children of wrath. We no longer have that nature. In other words, we used to have a sinful nature. But we are healed from that sinful nature by Jesus as we believe in Jesus on the cross. We become new creatures that do not have sinful natures.

Ephesians 2:8-9 for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) not of works, that no one would boast.

Yes, it's by grace that we are saved. But it's a continual grace by which the Holy Spirit works in us to change us. And it's a continual faith that we believe in Christ to make us new creatures. Over time, we are made into new creatures by the Holy Spirit because over time we no longer have habits of sin. We no longer sin. It is a gift from God. Grace is not a short-cut ticket to heaven as we remain in our sinful nature. The very next verse reads:

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them.

We are not saved by works of self-righteousness. But because of our faith in Christ, we do works. And if we are not doing these works, then the Holy Spirit does not bring about these changes in our lives. If we are not doing the works, we still have our sinful nature. As we do the works,

the Holy Spirit fills us. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we cannot sin because God is in us and God does not sin. Of course we can give into temptation. And the Holy Spirit backs off if we do. But in doing the works, the Holy Spirit will fill us again. So in doing works we overcome all our sinful habits. In other words, the best way to overcome sin is to do the works that the Father has prepared beforehand.

Most Christians will say that if you have to be perfect in order to get to heaven, then very few people will make it. I would respond with, "True, very few people find the narrow gate." But the wide gate that leads to destruction does not mean they all go to hell when they die. They simply don't inherit the kingdom. The wide gate leads to destruction of treasures and wealth accumulated in this age. In the age to come, the meek, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, will inherit the earth. Inheriting the earth means the wealth of land ownership. The meek store there treasures in heaven in order to inherit the earth.

For everyone else, it's a wide gate of destruction. It's a destruction of property and wealth. The foolish, who build their houses on the sand will lose their houses. They lose their wealth. So we must store our treasures in heaven. That means doing the works that the Father has for us. The wide gate does not immediately lead to hell. But if the foolish stay on the wide path in the age to come, they will eventually die the second death and be thrown into the lake of fire.

Those who inherit the kingdom will reign with Christ, during the millennium, over those who don't overcome sin. The point being, we need to go back to the basics of salvation and faith in Christ to completely overcome sin. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

2.2) A Word Study of God's Grace as God's Work

There are 121 verses in the New Testament that have the word 'grace.' All of them are quoted in this section.

We are saved by grace. Knowing that, most Protestants, when asked, will tend to define grace in terms of how they already view salvation. But most of the New Testament verses which use grace are not talking explicitly about salvation. In order to really confirm one's understanding about salvation, one should do a word-study of all the verses that contain the word 'grace.'

Many define grace is God's mercy, as in unmerited favor. God forgives our sins and thus it's often assumed that's grace. The word 'grace' is the same word as 'favor.' Literally translated, Ephesians 2:7-9 would be: "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his **[favor]** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus; for by **[favor]** you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, that no one would boast." Does this really capture Paul's meaning?

Is grace talking about election? If so, then how does this square with Acts 10:34-35? "Peter opened his mouth and said, "Truly I perceive that God doesn't show favoritism; but in every nation he who fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." And how about Romans 2:10-11 NIV? "But glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism."

Many interpret grace to be 'unmerited favor.' The problem is that it can be perceived as a passive one-time event, when our sins are forgiven. But as we will see in our word study, grace is a continual on-going gift from God.

In the Old Testament, believers didn't all receive the Holy Spirit. Those who did were considered to be avored by God. After Pentecost, all believers are filled with the Holy Spirit. All believers are avored by God and receive the Holy Spirit. This starts to get to the meaning of grace. But as we will see, grace is more about the power of the Holy Spirit working inside us to transform us into new creatures. We are saved by that transformation. But in a broader sense, grace is any work of God and is done by the Holy Spirit.

To illustrate this, I listed all the verses in the New Testament with the word 'grace.' I've substituted "God's work" or "God's presence" for all occurrences of grace. Read through all these verses and see if God's work or presence is a good definition for grace.

This helps us understand the distinction between being under the law and being under grace. Under the law we do works for our own justification. Under grace, God does the work. We are saved by "God's work," not our own works.

This is only being done to illustrate a point and to help us understand the true meaning of grace. Grace is not the forgiveness of sins. Christ did a work on the cross, which is God's grace. And yes, because of Christ's work God can forgive our sins. But verses with 'grace' are not directly addressing the forgiveness of sins. Continual grace is all about being transformed into new creatures, no longer being creatures of sinful habits.

Under the Old Covenant, God stated the law and men struggled to stop sinning. Under the New Covenant, God writes his law on our hearts. This means our very nature is being changed, over time, such that we no longer have the desire to sin. We are being transformed into new creatures by the work of God. This transformation is God's grace.

Luke 2:40 The child was growing, and was becoming strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom, and the **[work]** of God was upon him.

John 1:14 The Word became flesh, and lived among us. We saw his glory, such glory as of the one and only Son of the Father, full of **[God's presence]** and truth.

John 1:16-17 From his fullness we all received **[God's work]** upon **[God's presence]**. (17) For the law was given through Moses. **[God's work]** and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Acts 4:33 With great power, the apostles gave their testimony of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Great **[works of God were]** on them all.

Acts 11:23 who, when he had come, and had seen the **[work]** of God, was glad. He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they should remain near to the Lord.

Acts 13:43 Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the **[work]** of God.

Acts 14:3 Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who testified to the word of **[God's presence]**, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Acts 14:26 From there they sailed to Antioch, from where they had been committed to the **[work]** of God for the work which they had fulfilled.

Acts 15:11 But we believe that we are saved through the **[work]** of the Lord Jesus, just as they are.

Acts 15:40 but Paul chose Silas, and went out, being commended by the brothers to the **[work]** of God.

Acts 18:27 When he had determined to pass over into Achaia, the brothers encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive

him. When he had come, he greatly helped those who had believed through **[God's work]**;

Acts 20:24 But these things don't count; nor do I hold my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to fully testify to the Good News of the **[work]** of God.

Acts 20:32 Now, brothers, I entrust you to God, and to the word of **[God's work]**, which is able to build up, and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Romans 1:5 through whom we received **[God's work]** and apostleship, for obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake;

Romans 1:7 to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: **[God's presence]** to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:23-24 for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; (24) being justified freely by **[God's work]** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;

Romans 4:2-4 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not toward God. (3) For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." (4) Now to him who works, the reward is not counted as **[God's work]**, but as debt.

Romans 4:16 For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to **[God's work]**, to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

Romans 5:2 through whom we also have our access by faith into this **[work of God]** in which we stand. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:14-21 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those whose sins weren't like Adam's

disobedience, who is a foreshadowing of him who was to come. (15) But the free gift isn't like the trespass. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the **[work]** of God, and the gift by the **[work]** of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. (16) The gift is not as through one who sinned: for the judgment came by one to condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses to justification. (17) For if by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; so much more will those who receive the abundance of **[God's work]** and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ. (18) So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned; even so through one act of righteousness, all men were justified to life. (19) For as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one, many will be made righteous. (20) The law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, **[God's work]** abounded more exceedingly; (21) that as sin reigned in death, even so **[God's presence]** might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that **[God's work]** may abound? (2) May it never be! We who died to sin, how could we live in it any longer?

Romans 6:14-15 For sin will not have dominion over you. For you are not under law, but under **[God's work]**. (15) What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under **[God's work]**? May it never be!

Romans 11:5-6 Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of **[God's work]**. (6) And if by **[God's work]**, then it is no longer of [our] works; otherwise **[God's work]** is no longer **[God's work]**. But if it is of [our] works, it is no longer **[God's work]**; otherwise work is no longer work.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through **[God's presence]** that was given me, to every man who is among you, not to think of himself

more highly than he ought to think; but to think reasonably, as God has apportioned to each person a measure of faith.

Romans 12:6 Having gifts differing according to the **[work of God]** that was given to us, if prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith;

Romans 15:15 But I write the more boldly to you in part, as reminding you, because of the **[work of God]** that was given to me by God,

Romans 16:20 And the God of peace will quickly crush Satan under your feet. The **[work]** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Romans 16:24 The **[presence]** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all! Amen.

1 Corinthians 1:3 **[God's presence]** to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:3-4 **[God's presence]** to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (4) I always thank my God concerning you, for the **[work]** of God which was given you in Christ Jesus;

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the **[work]** of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another builds on it. But let each man be careful how he builds on it.

1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the **[work]** of God I am what I am. His **[work]** which was bestowed on me was not futile, but I worked more than all of them; yet not I, but the **[work]** of God which was with me.

1 Corinthians 16:23 The **[presence]** of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

2 Corinthians 1:2 **[God's presence]** to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:12 For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and sincerity of God, not in fleshly wisdom but in the **[work]** of God we behaved ourselves in the world, and more abundantly toward you.

2 Corinthians 4:15 For all things are for your sakes, that the **[presence of God]**, being multiplied through the many, may cause the thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.

2 Corinthians 6:1 Working together, we entreat also that you not receive the **[work]** of God in vain,

2 Corinthians 8:1 Moreover, brothers, we make known to you the **[presence]** of God which has been given in the assemblies of Macedonia;

2 Corinthians 8:4 begging us with much entreaty to receive this **[work of God]** and the fellowship in the service to the saints.

2 Corinthians 8:6-9 So we urged Titus, that as he made a beginning before, so he would also complete in you this **[work of God]**. (7) But as you abound in everything, in faith, utterance, knowledge, all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that you also abound in this **[work of God]**. (8) I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love. (9) For you know the **[work]** of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8:19 Not only so, but who was also appointed by the assemblies to travel with us in this **[work of God]**, which is served by us to the glory of the Lord himself, and to show our readiness.

2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all **[works of God]** abound to you, that you, always having all sufficiency in everything, may abound to every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:14 while they themselves also, with supplication on your behalf, yearn for you by reason of the exceeding **[work]** of God in you.

2 Corinthians 12:9 He has said to me, "My **[work]** is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Most gladly therefore I will rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest on me.

2 Corinthians 13:14 The **[presence]** of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

Galatians 1:3 **[God's presence]** to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ,

Galatians 1:6 I marvel that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the **[work]** of Christ to a different "good news";

Galatians 1:15 But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me through **[God's work]**,

Galatians 2:9 and when they perceived the **[presence of God]** that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcision.

Galatians 2:21 I don't make void the **[work]** of God. For if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nothing!"

Galatians 5:4 You are alienated from Christ, you who desire to be justified by the law. You have fallen away from **[God's work]**.

Galatians 6:18 The **[presence]** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

Ephesians 1:2 **[God's presence]** to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:4-7 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and without blemish before him in love; (5) having predestined us for adoption as children through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his desire, (6) to the praise of the glory of his **[presence]**, by which he freely bestowed favor on us in the Beloved, (7) in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his **[works]**,

Ephesians 2:5-9 even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by **[God's works]** you have been saved), (6) and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (7) that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his **[presence]** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus; (8) for by **[God's works]** you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) not of **[our]** works, that no one would boast.

Ephesians 3:2 if it is so that you have heard of the administration of that **[work]** of God which was given me toward you;

Ephesians 3:7-8 of which I was made a servant, according to the gift of that **[work]** of God which was given me according to the working of his power. (8) To me, the very least of all saints, was this **[work of God]** given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

Ephesians 4:7 But to each one of us was the **[work of God]** given according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Ephesians 4:29 Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for building up as the need may be, that it may give **[works of God]** to those who hear.

Ephesians 6:24 **[God's presence]** be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love. Amen.

Philippians 1:2 [**God's presence**] to you, and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:7 It is even right for me to think this way on behalf of all of you, because I have you in my heart, because, both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the Good News, you all are partakers with me of [**God's work**].

Philippians 4:23 The [**presence**] of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Colossians 1:2 to the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: [**God's presence**] to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:6 which has come to you; even as it is in all the world and is bearing fruit and growing, as it does in you also, since the day you heard and knew the [**presence**] of God in truth;

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with [**God's presence**] in your heart to the Lord.

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be with [**God's presence**], seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Colossians 4:18 The salutation of me, Paul, with my own hand: remember my bonds. [**God's presence**] be with you. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 1:1 Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the assembly of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: [**God's presence**] to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:28 The [**presence**] of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

2 Thessalonians 1:2 [**God's presence**] to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 1:12 that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the **[presence]** of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:16 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through **[presence]**,

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through **[God's presence]**, (17) comfort your hearts and establish you in every good work and word.

2 Thessalonians 3:18 The **[presence]** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:2 to Timothy, my true child in faith: **[God's presence]**, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Timothy 1:14 The **[presence]** of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 6:21 which some professing have erred concerning the faith. **[God's presence]** be with you. Amen.

2 Timothy 1:2 to Timothy, my beloved child: **[God's presence]**, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Timothy 1:9 who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and **[works]**, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before times eternal,

2 Timothy 2:1 You therefore, my child, be strengthened in **[God's presence]** that is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 4:22 The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. **[God's presence]** be with you. Amen.

Titus 1:4 to Titus, my true child according to a common faith: **[God's presence]**, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

Titus 2:11 For the **[presence]** of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,

Titus 3:7 that, being justified by his **[works]**, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Titus 3:15 All who are with me greet you. Greet those who love us in faith. **[God's presence]** be with you all. Amen.

Philemon 1:3 **[God's presence]** to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philemon 1:25 The **[presence]** of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Hebrews 2:9 But we see him who has been made a little lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the **[works]** of God he should taste of death for everyone.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of **[God's presence]**, that we may receive mercy, and may find **[God's works]** for help in time of need.

Hebrews 10:29 How much worse punishment, do you think, will he be judged worthy of, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant with which he was sanctified an unholy thing, and has insulted the Spirit of **[God's presence]**?

Hebrews 12:15 looking carefully lest there be any man who falls short of the **[works]** of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and many be defiled by it;

Hebrews 12:28 Therefore, receiving a Kingdom that can't be shaken, let us have **[God's presence]**, through which we serve God acceptably, with reverence and awe,

Hebrews 13:9 Don't be carried away by various and strange teachings, for it is good that the heart be established by **[God's works]**, not by food, through which those who were so occupied were not benefited.

Hebrews 13:25 **[God's presence]** be with you all. Amen.

James 4:5-6 Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who lives in us yearns jealously"? (6) But he gives more **[of His presence]**. Therefore it says, "God resists the proud, but gives **[His presence]** to the humble."

1 Peter 1:2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with his blood: **[God's presence]** to you and peace be multiplied.

1 Peter 1:10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the **[God's presence]** that would come to you,

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, prepare your minds for action, be sober and set your hope fully on the **[presence of God]** that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ--

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands, in like manner, live with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor to the woman, as to the weaker vessel, as being also joint heirs of the **[presence of God in]** life; that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Peter 4:10 As each has received a gift, employ it in serving one another, as good managers of the **[works]** of God in its various forms.

1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, you younger ones, be subject to the elder. Yes, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to subject yourselves to one another; for "God resists the proud, but gives **[His presence]** to the humble."

1 Peter 5:10 But may the God of all **[works]**, who called you to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a little while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

1 Peter 5:12 Through Silvanus, our faithful brother, as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true **[presence]** of God in which you stand.

2 Peter 1:2 **[God's presence]** to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord,

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in the **[works of God]** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

2 John 1:3 **[God's presence]**, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

Jude 1:4 For there are certain men who crept in secretly, even those who were long ago written about for this condemnation: ungodly men, turning the **[works]** of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master, God, and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:4 John, to the seven assemblies that are in Asia: **[God's presence]** to you and peace, from God, who is and who was and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits who are before his throne;

Revelation 22:21 The **[presence]** of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints. Amen.

For the remainder of this book, I will be quoting verses with this substitution of [God's works] or [God's presence] for 'grace.' This is to remind us that the Old Testament context of 'favor' is talking about being filled with the Holy Spirit. These substitutions will be made in this book to help us understand what Romans and Paul's other letters are really saying. Grace and faith are a journey.

2.3) Those Who Receive God's Election

The elect receive God's favor (grace), which is the filling of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean that God elects those who will be saved. We are favored by God to receive salvation first. Peter speaks of Gentile believers as being a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." This comes directly from Exodus 19:5-6. It's talking about Israel. We don't replace Israel. But we are grafted into Israel. We are that chosen nation.

Exodus 19:5-6 ESV Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; (6) and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel."

This is election. Those who are grafted into the chosen nation of Israel are the elect. Those who were broken off the vine of Israel are no longer a part of that elected nation. This is not "replacement theology." God will not forsake the natural branches. Many Messianic Jews today have already been grafted back into Israel, which is Christ. And during the great tribulation, the remnant of the Jews in Jerusalem will be grafted back into the vine of Israel.

The important point here is that those who are in Christ are in Israel and thus are the elect. We are heirs of the promise given to Abraham. That promise was not only the One elect heir of Christ, it was also a promise to be a holy nation that will bless all the other nations.

This blessing for all the nations will come during the millennial reign of Israel over the nations when the Messiah returns. Thus, salvation will be brought to all the nations.

Galatians 3:29 ESV And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Genesis 22:17-18 ESV I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, (18) and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

John 6:44-45 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up in the last day. (45) It is written in the prophets, 'They will all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who hears from the Father, and has learned, comes to me.

John 12:31-32 Now is the judgment of this world. Now the prince of this world will be cast out. (32) And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Those who are in Christ are the elect. We not only hear his voice, we obey his voice. We are Israel, the chosen nation. Gentiles are grafted into Israel. Notice that in Genesis 22:17 and Exodus 19:5 (quoted above), the elect are only those who "obey my voice." The elect are the chosen who are drawn to the Father during this age (John 6:44-45, quoted above). But everyone will eventually be drawn to Christ in the age to come.

The elect are the true believers. We are excited because of our faith. Our faith is the only thing that really matters in our lives. We love to obey the desires that the Father has planted in our hearts, which is to serve Christ and our neighbors. The elect will naturally stop sinning over time because the Holy Spirit transforms us on the inside. But how can you have faith to overcome sin if you believe it's impossible? That can become a huge obstacle to the natural work of the Holy Spirit. The elect can grieve the Holy Spirit. Even the elect can wind up in great shame and become one of the foolish virgins who will not inherit the kingdom.

Abraham was promised that his offspring would be a great nation that would bless all the other nations. This nation will also possess the gates of all God's enemies. Paul says that if we are in Christ, then we are Abraham's offspring, and heirs to that same promise that was given to Abraham.

Is God saying the non-elect of Old Testament times all go to hell? Israel is a nation of people chosen by God who would bring forth the Messiah and be a blessing to all nations. The elect are simply the firstfruits of the harvest (Jeremiah 2:2-3, Romans 8:23, 2 Thess. 2:13, James 1:18). We are chosen to receive eternal life first. The rest of the harvest is after the resurrection. Everyone else will have the opportunity to mature in Christ in the age to come.

Notice the journey of sanctification, election, and the fact that we are firstfruits of the harvest in this verse:

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 ESV But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. (14) To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eternal life is given to those who overcome sin before the resurrection. Those who still sin will also be resurrected. They will still have the opportunity to overcome sin and receive eternal life. This is the blessing of Abraham, through his offspring, to all the nations of the earth. But those who reject Christ's reign over their lives will eventually die the second death.

Since the sin of Adam has been removed for everyone, we all are no longer under the penalty of death. All will be resurrected. The exceptions are those who forfeit their reconciliation by blaspheming or rejecting Christ. They knowingly keep on sinning, refusing to be reconciled.

Adam walked with God before disobeying God. He had no excuse. Since God has reconciled himself to everyone, no one will receive God's wrath without a sin that is comparable with Adam's sin. "For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries" (Hebrews 10:26-27 ESV).

2.4) Those Who Receive God's Wrath

Everyone has been reconciled to God. But you can lose your reconciliation if you willfully turn away from God and keep on sinning. The following verse is talking about those who have seen the miracles of Christ. They know that he must be the Messiah. But they deliberately turn against Christ and become one of his enemies.

The Holy Spirit does the miracles. Those who deny what they see with their eyes are denying the Holy Spirit. They hardened their hearts to the point where even the Holy Spirit cannot draw them back. This sin is not forgiven in this age, nor in the age to come. Thus, there will be sinners during Christ's millennial reign who will deny the authority of Christ and lose their reconciliation.

Matthew 12:30-32 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who doesn't gather with me, scatters. (31) Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. (32) Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, neither in this age, nor in that which is to come.

Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians. They were considering turning back to Judaism. The author warns they would no longer have the blood of Christ. So their sins would no longer be forgiven. And it would be impossible to be brought back into repentance because it would require the crucifixion of Christ all over again.

Hebrews 6:1-9 Therefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on to perfection--not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, of faith toward God, (2) of the teaching of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. (3) This will we do, if God permits. (4) For concerning those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, (5) and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, (6) and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify the Son of God for themselves again, and put him to open shame. (7) For the land which has drunk the rain that comes often on it, and brings forth a crop suitable for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receives blessing from God; (8) but if it bears thorns and thistles, it is rejected and near being cursed, whose end is to be burned. (9) But, beloved, we are persuaded of better things for you, and things that accompany salvation, even though we speak like this.

The writer feels compelled to skip foundational background teachings and get onto his important point. Those who have seen the miracles of Christ can lose their reconciliation. Likewise, those who really know the powers of the Holy Spirit, if they turn away from Christ, can also lose their reconciliation. This is not talking about a weak moment and falling to the temptations of sin. It's talking about the deliberate decision to reject Christ. They would lose their reconciliation. We know this because the writer says it

would require Christ to die again on the cross in order to get it back again.

Some point to verse 9 saying this is only theoretical and would not actually happen. "Once saved, always saved," they say. But Scripture never says, "Once saved, always saved." The author of Hebrews would not be giving this warning if it doesn't actually happen. He simply has hopes that they will heed his warning. Later, the author says the same thing with slightly different words:

Hebrews 10:26-27 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which will devour the adversaries.

A study of 1 John reveals that brothers who at one time were in fellowship with John really did become enemies of Christ and lost their salvation.

1 John 2:18-19 Little children, these are the end times, and as you heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen. By this we know that it is the final hour. (19) They went out from us, but they didn't belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have continued with us. But they left, that they might be revealed that none of them belong to us.

John is probably talking about the early formation of the Gnostics. They denied that Christ had died on the cross. They claimed the Spirit of Christ came upon the man named Jesus at the time of his baptism. Then Christ as a Spirit left before Jesus was crucified. John condemns this belief and

associates it with the spirit of antichrist, which means against Christ. When you come against Christ, becoming his enemy, you are committing a sin that cannot be forgiven. It causes you to lose your reconciliation because it's the same as Adam's sin of disobedience against God after really knowing God.

John distinguishes this sin as the sin that leads to death, just as Adam's sin led to death. John says we do not need to pray for brothers who have committed this sin. Again, this is the sin of the Gnostics, which is from the spirit of antichrist. On the other hand, sins not leading to death would be sins of disobedience in a weak moment. These sins do not lead to death because Jesus has paid the price for our sins. They don't lead to death because these sins do not involve becoming enemies of Christ, who died for our sins. John says that if we see a brother committing these sins, not leading to death, that we should pray for our brother and God will give him life.

1 John 5:16-20 If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for those who sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death. I don't say that he should make a request concerning this. (17) All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death. (18) We know that whoever is born of God doesn't sin, but he who was born of God keeps himself, and the evil one doesn't touch him. (19) We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (20) We know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding, that we know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

Most people commit ongoing sins that do not lead to death. A few are guilty of unpardonable sin that leads to death. There is a third type of person being described here. "All sin is unrighteousness" (verse 17). And "whoever is born of God doesn't sin" (verse 18). People have a hard time with this. But that's exactly what John teaches. We can mature in Christ until we no longer have sinful habits. Those who no longer have sinful habits are "born of God." This means they will be resurrected with a spiritual body.

The great tribulation is coming soon. The Antichrist is coming soon. The spirit of antichrist in John's day was the Gnostics. The only religion of today which teaches that Christ didn't die on the cross is Islam. It's the end-times global religion of the coming Antichrist.

Those who have overcome all their sinful habits are ready for the coming great tribulation and the return of Christ. Those who are still struggling will find it very difficult to overcome during the great tribulation. But at the same time, tribulation and persecution brings holiness. But there is danger of denying Christ in the face of great tribulation. Doing so is taking the mark of the beast. How many are willing to face beheading when forced to convert to Islam? Even today, converts from Islam are put to death by their own families.

Matthew 10:21-22 "Brother will deliver up brother to death, and the father his child. Children will rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. (22) You will be hated by all men for my name's sake, but he who endures to the end will be saved.

2.5) Watch and be Ready

Matthew 24:42-44 NIV "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. (43) But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. (44) So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Jesus is equating the need to watch with the need to be ready. Both are equated to not knowing the day he will return. The Greek word for “watch” means to stay awake. It’s associated with the night watchman who watches for signs of the coming of an enemy. Christ is not our enemy. But when he comes, the world will experience sudden destruction (see verses 36-39), as it was in the days of Noah.

Why is the need to watch associated with the need to be ready? If we are (past-tense) saved, doesn’t that mean we are ready? And if we are (past-tense) saved, why do we need to watch the signs? Most pastors today seem to believe that the study of the end times is unimportant, and sometimes even something to be avoided. But Jesus told the foolish virgins, who didn’t get into the wedding banquet, to watch because they don’t know the hour of his return.

Matthew 25:11-13 Afterward the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' (12) But he answered, 'Most certainly I tell you, I don't know you.' (13) **Watch therefore, for you don't know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming**.

Think about this. The foolish virgins are very surprised that they do not get into the wedding banquet. What is the difference between the wise and the foolish virgins? Both are asleep when the Bridegroom arrives. Both believe that Christ was raised from the dead because both await his return. Both call Jesus their “Lord.” The only difference between the two groups is that the foolish virgins do not have enough oil. They have to go to the market and buy more oil. They believe in Christ as their Savior. But they are not ready for Christ to return. What do they lack? Jesus tells them, “I never knew you.” “Watch Therefore,” says Jesus. They need to watch the signs because they don’t know the day nor the hour. What does watching the signs have to do with getting into the wedding banquet?

Why does Jesus advise the foolish virgins to watch the signs, when pastors today seem to believe that the study of the end times is unimportant? Why do pastors today say that no man will know the day or hour when that seems to be the very problem that Jesus addresses with the foolish virgins? The virgins say “Lord, Lord” because they believe they know Christ when they don’t. We also find the same language in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus tells preachers who prophecy in his name that he never knew them.

Matthew 7:21-23 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) Many will tell me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many mighty works?' (23) Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity.'

Foolish virgins who say “Lord, Lord” do not enter the wedding banquet. Preachers who say “Lord, Lord” do not enter the kingdom of heaven. In the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, the foolish build their houses on the sand. Both the foolish virgins and the foolish preachers are told, “I never knew you.” They are not the wicked who will not be resurrected. They are, however, the foolish who remain in their sins and thus do not really know Christ.

1 John 2:3-6 This is how we know that we know him: if we keep his commandments. (4) One who says, “I know him,” and doesn't keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth isn't in him. (5) But whoever keeps his word, God's love has most certainly been perfected in him. This is how we know that we are in him: (6) he who says he remains in him ought himself also to walk just like he walked.

1 John 3:6 Whoever remains in him doesn't sin. Whoever sins hasn't seen him, neither knows him.

John is saying those who continue to sin do not know Christ. Jesus will say, “I never knew you.” They will not be able to enter the wedding banquet. They will not be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. They have insufficient oil of the Holy Spirit in that they have not overcome all their sinful habits. But they will be able to live in the nations and be taught righteousness by the wise, under the reign of Christ and his true Bride.

The foolish virgins and the foolish preachers do not know Christ because they continue in their sins. They do not do the will (commandments) of the Father. They continue to sin, even claiming that it's impossible to stop.

But what does all this have to do with watching the signs? Jesus tells the foolish virgins that they don't know the hour of his return. Why is it important to know the day and the hour of Christ's return when pastors today seems to be saying that no man will know? To really understand Matthew 24, we need to interpret it in the context of Daniel.

Matthew 24:15 NIV "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel, let the reader understand.

Here we have a major clue that Jesus is thinking about the prophet Daniel. As we will see, the phrase, "let the reader understand" is actually a strong clue that Jesus is making specific reference to Daniel 12. But before we get into that, we need to see that much of what Jesus said is better understood in the context of Daniel as a whole. That's not to say that the rest of the Old Testament is unimportant. But the concept of the "kingdom of heaven" comes from Daniel. And much of what Jesus said is about the kingdom. When we really understand Jesus in the context of Daniel we will see why Jesus told the foolish virgins to watch the signs.

Daniel 2:34-35 You saw until a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet that were of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. (35) Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that no place was found for them: and the stone that struck the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

In the dream of Nebuchadnezzar, The Rock (Christ) that struck the feet became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. Mountains are symbolic of kingdoms. The previous kingdoms, as represented by the head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron represent historic earthly kingdoms. Likewise, the mountain that fills the earth is an earthly kingdom. It's the kingdom of heaven because it's God's kingdom here on the earth. This is what the people of Israel would have understood when Jesus talked about the "kingdom of heaven." When the Messiah comes, he will set up an earthly kingdom and Israel will reign over the earth with Christ.

At the time of Daniel, Jerusalem was desolate and the Jews were in captivity in Babylon. Daniel understood from the prophet Jeremiah that the captivity would last 70 years (Daniel 9:2). This was one year for every year that Israel had neglected to give the land a Sabbath's rest (1 Chronicles 36:20-23). They had sinned for 490 years, which is 10 jubilees. Understanding this, Daniel prays for the forgiveness of Israel's sins and for the desolation of Jerusalem to come to an end. In response to Daniel's prayer, God said there would be 70 more weeks of years in which Jerusalem would not be desolate. After this time, the Messiah would come. When Israel rules the world with the Messiah, they will teach righteousness to the nations. But Israel must first become righteous before they can teach righteousness. Israel was given 490 years to stop sinning.

Daniel 9:24 NIV "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

The culture and teaching of Daniel is not that no one would know the day of the Messiah's coming. It was that 490 years are given for Israel to stop sinning before the Messiah comes. This gives a whole new meaning to "repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It starts to explain why Jesus told the foolish virgins that they don't know the day of his return. The wise will know and be ready by overcoming all the sinful habits in their lives.

The rest of this vision, however, is a bit confusing. The 70 weeks are split into two groups, one being 62 weeks and the other being 7 weeks. Also, that adds up to 69 years and not 70. I believe the vision is intentionally designed so that it can be fulfilled in one of three ways. Would Israel really be ready for the Messiah to come by overcoming sin?

The Pharisees and teachers of the Law probably believed they were ready. They were "clean" on the outside but not on the inside. Even today, Jews believe that sins are only those acted out on the outside. Lust and anger in the heart is not considered to be sinful. So they were not ready for the Messiah to come. Their sinful hearts prevented them from even recognizing the Messiah.

The vision, however, was designed so that it could be fulfilled in more than one way. The seven weeks, which would be one final jubilee, was split off into the future. But only the Father knew how far into the future the final jubilee was moved.

In Paul's chapter on the resurrection, (1 Corinthians 15) Paul spoke of the resurrection as being at the last trumpet (verse 52). The Hebrew word "jubilee" means "trumpet" or "blowing of the trumpet." I believe Paul was referring to the last jubilee of Daniel's seventy weeks. But would the Church be ready at the end of this last jubilee?

Today, we are finishing the last jubilee. But today, the Bride is not ready for the Messiah to come. Pastors and teachers of grace say you can't stop sinning. Christ will return but the Bride will not be ready for the rapture. Only a few will be ready because only a few will have overcome all their sinful habits. The good news, however, is that the vision can be fulfilled a third way.

Some will argue that we are not Israel. "Your people and your holy city" is not the Church, they would say. Is it impossible for the Bride to stop sinning and yet possible for Israel? They even say the Holy Spirit will be removed from the earth with the pre-tribulation rapture. Will Israel be able to overcome sin without the Holy Spirit while the Church says it's impossible to do so even with the Holy Spirit?

We are grafted into Israel. We will reign with Christ when the Messiah sets up his kingdom. God's purpose for Israel, which is to reign with the Messiah is the same as the purpose for the Gentile Church. We are a part of Israel.

The New Jerusalem will appear but the Bride will not be ready for the rapture. But according to the third way of fulfillment in Daniel's vision, the Messiah can confirm a covenant with many for one more week. This is after the seventy weeks are finished. The Bride will make herself ready by the end of the seven years (Revelation 19:7) and then we will have the wedding banquet.

Christ told the foolish virgins to watch the signs, for they did not know the day of his return. In the context of their culture, knowing the time of the Messiah's coming was to be wise. It meant that they should stop sinning so that they would be ready to reign with the Messiah over the nations. Let's revisit what Jesus said about watching because we didn't know the day the Lord would come.

Matthew 24:42-44 NIV "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. (43) But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. (44) So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Interpret this in the context of Daniel. The wise servant generally knows when his master will return. But in this case, Israel didn't recognize the Messiah so the last jubilee is moved off into the future. Therefore, the wise servant watches the signs so that he will know, and so that he will be ready by overcoming all his sinful habits.

This is the meaning of the thief-in-the-night parable. This parable is the first of four parables given as part of what Jesus taught when the disciples asked when he would return. The thief-in-the-night parable became a symbol that was used later in Scripture by Paul and John. We must interpret this symbol in the context of the parable, which says only the wise servant will know the day when the Messiah will return. This symbol associates not knowing the time of the Messiah's coming with remaining in sin. It's just like the foolish virgins who don't really know Christ. In that culture, based on Daniel, the wise servants overcome sin because they know when their Master is returning.

1 Thessalonians 5:2,4 For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. ... (4) But you, brothers, aren't in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief.

Revelation 3:3 KJV Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Read this verse carefully. It's in a letter from Jesus Christ to a church, and is written well after the crucifixion and Pentecost. The church is being told to repent. If this church does not repent, then Christ will come on them like a thief. And they will not know what time that Jesus will come.

Again, most pastors today say we will not know when Christ will come. But Jesus is characterizing not knowing as a bad thing. It's something that happens to those who will not repent. Most pastors today are unknowingly casting themselves as wicked because they are not interpreting the words of Jesus in the context of Daniel. There is more in Daniel that shines light on these words of Jesus. The following words of Jesus make specific reference to Daniel. And as we will see, Jesus is taking about Daniel 12.

Matthew 24:15 NIV "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel, let the reader understand.

Here we have a major clue that Jesus is thinking about the prophet Daniel. Jesus says, "Let the reader understand." What are we to understand? If we are the readers, then who is the author? When Jesus said this, he could not have been talking about the gospel writer because Matthew would not be written for a number of years later. Some have said that Matthew was adding these words as a commentary. But Mark's account has the exact same words (Mark 13:15).

The author of the words we are to understand is Daniel. The words of Jesus must be interpreted in the context of Daniel. The disciples asked, "Tell us, when will these things be? What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3). Back in Daniel 12, we find the very same question with the very same answer. We are to watch the signs, especially for the abomination of desolation.

When told about an astonishing event such as the resurrection, one would naturally want to know when it will happen. The question was asked by an angel. "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The question was answered but Daniel didn't understand the answer. Jesus is saying that if we watch the signs, the wise will understand the answer to the disciple's question. In Daniel's natural desire to understand, we read:

Daniel 12:6-10 ESV And someone said to the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" (7) And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was above the waters of the stream; he raised his right hand and his left hand toward heaven and swore by him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time, and that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things would be finished. (8) I heard, but I did not understand. Then I said, "O my lord, what shall be the outcome of these things?" (9) He said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end." (10) Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.

The context of this passage is the resurrection in verse 2. It's also the millennial reign in verse 3. During the millennial reign, the wise, who "shall shine like the brightness of the sky above," will bring righteousness to the nations. But the time in which this will occur was not known. There were also many questions about these "wonders" for which Daniel desired the answers. But Daniel was told to seal the words until the time of the end.

The wise, at the time of the end, will understand. But the wicked will continue to be wicked and will not understand the answer to the question. They will not know the answer to the question asked by the angel in Daniel, and also asked by the disciples. But the wise who watch the signs will understand the answer to the question. The wise will know the day of Christ's return before it happens. The wicked will not understand because they will not be watching and will not really care. In other words, the wicked will continue sinning even in the time of the Messiah's return.

Matthew 24:15 NIV "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel, let the reader [of Daniel] understand [the answer to the question.]

Daniel is told, which was not understood, that "it would be for a time, times, and half a time." The specific question was, "How long shall it be till the end of these wonders?" "The end of these wonders" would include the millennial reign from verse 3. The millennial week was understood by both Jews and early Christians as seven thousand years beginning with Adam. So a "time, times, and half a time" would be the second half of the millennial week from the time of Daniel until the end of Christ's millennial reign.

The other thing Daniel is told is “that when the shattering of the power of the holy people comes to an end all these things [will] be finished.” The Hebrew word for “power” is also the word for “hand” in the following verse. It’s the first verse in the Bible that uses this word. The meaning of the Hebrew word is that if you hold out your hand and grasp it like a fist, it’s a show of power.

Genesis 3:22-23 ESV Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever--" (23) therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.

Christ is the second Adam. Adam was told that on the (millennial) day he ate the fruit that he would surely die. Adam was given a death sentence for him and all his children. But Christ paid the ransom and that death sentence has been removed for everyone. But we must now overcome sin and start being completely obedient to the commands of God. Only then can we be given eternal life, which at least figuratively is to eat from the tree of life.

For the nations, this “power” will finally be broken during the course of Christ’s millennial reign. That “power” is the knowledge of good and evil. For most, the overcoming of sin will not happen until Christ’s millennial reign. This truth has been a mystery of God. The words were “sealed” until the time of the end. During the course of this baby-boom generation, since World War II, the seals of Revelation 6 are being broken by Christ. The wise followers of Christ in this generation have been given an

understanding that not even Daniel was allowed to understand. It has been a mystery of God.

But why can this understanding be given to this end-time generation and not all the previous generations? It's because this is the generation that will face the antichrist and the great tribulation. This is the generation that will see clearly that Christ has returned, and be forced to choose between denying Christ and beheading. Those who take the mark of the beast will lose their reconciliation. They will not have the opportunity to be resurrected and live during the millennial reign of Christ. For this generation, putting God off until after the resurrection is simply not an option.

Matthew 10:21-22 ESV Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, (22) and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Matthew 24:11-14 ESV And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. (12) And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. (13) But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (14) And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Mark 13:13-14 ESV And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (14) "But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Why does Jesus say, “The one who endures to the end will be saved?” During the great tribulation, waiting for the resurrection and the millennial reign before one repents does not seem to be an option. Those who take the mark of the beast will not be resurrected. We must interpret most of what Jesus said about the end times in the context of Daniel.

Daniel 12:1-2 ESV "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. (2) And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

In verse 1 of Daniel 12, we have the great tribulation at the time of the end. Then it says those whose names are in the book of life will be delivered. Does this mean they will be delivered from the great tribulation? No, because there will be many saints who will not be delivered from great tribulation. Yet they would be in the book of life.

The Hebrew word for “delivered” is more generally translated as “escape.” They are not delivered from tribulation. Instead they “escape” the grave (verse 2). Those who are in the book of life will “escape” from the grave.

Verse 2 says that “many” of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake. “Many” does not mean “all.” The wicked will not be resurrected. But of those who are resurrected, there are two groups. Some are resurrected to life. Others to “shame.” The wise will teach the foolish.

Jesus says we must keep watch, because we “do not know on what day hour Lord will come.” Many, if not most people today interpret that as saying that we will not know when Christ will come before it happens. It’s used to argue against the speculation of a specific date based on an interpretation of signs and some calculations.

But when we interpret the words of Jesus in the context of Daniel, it would seem that only the wicked will not know the answer to the question, as asked by the disciples. The wicked will not understand the answer to this question that was given in Daniel. But the wise will understand and will know the day and time of Christ’s return.

Verse 10 of (Daniel 12) says, “Many shall purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined, but the wicked shall act wickedly. And none of the wicked shall understand, but those who are wise shall understand.” Thus, only the wise will understand the answer to the question.

The Greek words for not knowing means that we currently do not know. It doesn’t mean that no man will know in the future. But only the wise will know the day and the time of Christ’s return. The wicked will not understand and will not know the time before it happens and sudden destruction comes. To “watch and be ready” means to “purify themselves and make themselves white.” The wise make themselves holy through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote that we should be “blameless” and “completely sanctified” at the coming of the Lord. This comes from that same cultural context that the wise will know the timing of Christ’s return and thus will stop sinning by the time that the Messiah comes.

1 Thessalonians 3:13 ESV so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 ESV Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(24) He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Watch and be ready. In Revelation, the Bride makes herself ready just prior to Armageddon. It's towards the end of the great tribulation (Revelation 19:7). This does not mean that God is going to pour out his wrath on the Bride. The wrath of God is not until after the post-tribulation resurrection. And it will not be directed against God's people.

Today, the Church is not ready for the rapture. Studies have shown that morality in the evangelical church is statistically no different than that of the world.

It will be through great tribulation that the Bride finally gets serious about overcoming sin and will make herself ready. The wise will "purify themselves and make themselves white and be refined." This will bring a great awakening in the Church. As the Church is allowed by God to be persecuted, the Church will be made herself holy. The Bride will make herself ready.

Revelation 19:7 Let us rejoice and be exceedingly glad, and let us give the glory to him. For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his wife has made herself ready."

2.6) Paul in the Context of Jesus

Context is king. The Old Testament should be the context for understanding the New Testament. The Old Testament has an after-life hope that is solely based on the resurrection. Most people will be resurrected to live on the earth where Israel will rule and bring righteousness to the nations. But this doctrine became known as “Jewish fables.”

The early Church distanced themselves from the Jews, believing that they had replaced the Jews in God’s redemptive plan. Old Testament Jewish beliefs in an earthly-reign kingdom of heaven were replaced with the more Greek-like paradigm of heaven-or-hell when you die. Those in the Church are forgiven for their sins. Purgatory became the solution for those who continue in their sins.

The Old Testament was reinterpreted in allegorical and figurate ways to force it to fit this newer paradigm known as amillennialism. The Church had replaced Israel. This drove on-going antisemitism in the Church and fueled the belief that Millennialism was superstition at best, and a reason for murder at the worst. (Anabaptists were murdered for their belief in water baptism and millennialism.) Later, dispensationalism recognized the literal meaning of the Old Testament with regard to the Jews. They created two purposes of God with two groups of people: Israel and the Church. New Testament interpretation didn’t really change.

But God’s purpose does not change. When the New Testament is really interpreted in the context of the Old Testament, the words of Jesus make better sense and the words of Paul can be seen in harmony with the words of Jesus. Now that we have seen all this background in these first two chapters, it’s time to dive into Romans. We will be covering the first 8 chapters of Romans, verse by verse.

Chapter 3

Laws of Nature, Moses, and Grace

Romans is read by both Catholics and Protestants. Both believe they are reading about their own doctrines of salvation. We need to read Romans under a new light to see if there is a truth that hides in the middle.

We need to go through Romans 1-4 to get a good background for the start of Romans. Then, we will go through Romans 5-7 in more detail. Romans 5 is important because it's about Christ being the second Adam. It's about reconciliation. The original sin, in Romans 5, is a big differentiator between the Catholics and the Protestants.

Paul begins by saying he is not ashamed of the gospel. From this point through Romans chapter 8 is about the gospel. Paul is not referring to a gospel that he himself has made up. He is referring to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Otherwise, why would he say he is not ashamed? Thus, this presentation of the gospel must be interpreted in the context of what Jesus has already taught. When properly understood, Paul's presentation of the gospel is not going to be in conflict with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Romans 1:16-17 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (17) For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Dispensationalists sometimes present the gospel of Jesus Christ as salvation by faith plus works. The argument is that Jesus was preaching under a dispensation of the Law of Moses whereas Paul was preaching under a dispensation of grace. They say the gospel changed at the cross. Jesus placed an emphasis on the need to overcome sin.

Matthew 5:20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, there is no way you will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew 5:29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it away from you. For it is more profitable for you that one of your members should perish, than for your whole body to be cast into Gehenna.

Matthew 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

But Jesus also preached mercy and the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 9:2 Behold, they brought to him a man who was paralyzed, lying on a bed. Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic, "Son, cheer up! Your sins are forgiven you."

Luke 7:48-50 He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." (49) Those who sat at the table with him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" (50) He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

Notice that this woman, who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears, was saved by faith alone. And this happened before the crucifixion. We can agree that salvation is by faith alone.

Jesus placed emphasis on sanctification because he is the King of Israel. With the King of Israel physically in Israel, the literal kingdom of heaven was at hand. But after the ascension, the literal kingdom of heaven was no longer at hand. Therefore, Paul placed more emphasis on the doctrine of the gospel itself and worked as a missionary.

When we first have faith in Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and we are credited with righteousness. We can agree on the perseverance of the saints. This means we will eventually receive an eternal-life body unless we deliberately and knowingly, over a period of time, reverse our decision and reject Christ. Where I disagree with the traditional Protestant view of the gospel is that I believe we must continue our journey until we are completely sanctified before we can be glorified with eternal life. With this minor adjustment, the gospel of Jesus and the gospel of Paul are in complete harmony.

I also believe the only way we can mature in Christ is to live for Christ in faith. "The righteous shall live by faith." This cannot be in Abraham's bosom. We cannot live by faith in purgatory. The only way we can continue our journey of salvation after death is with the resurrection. The hope and focus of Scripture is with the resurrection. Those who do not complete their journey will be raised with mortal bodies and live with the nations. There they can continue to live for Christ in faith, and be taught righteousness by the saints who complete their journey.

3.1) Living Under the Law

Romans 1:18-20 ESV For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (19) For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. (20) For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

People have no excuse if they live in unrighteousness because they have evidence of God in nature. God has turned them over to unrighteousness. Does this mean these Pagans are all bound for hell because the gospel of Jesus Christ has never been preached to them?

Many people use this verse to say those who die, having never made a profession of faith in Christ, will go to hell. I agree that we must profess faith in Christ, and live by faith in Christ, in order to inherit the kingdom. There is no other name under heaven by which a person can be saved (Acts 4:12). But our opportunity for that faith, and our journey in that faith, can extend past the grave into the millennial reign of Christ. One piece of evidence for this claim is right here.

Paul describes the spiral of wickedness which comes after seeing but ignoring the evidence of God in nature. This includes a very clear description of homosexuality. Notice that it's God who gives them over to their passions. Why would God do this if he didn't have a plan of redemption for even these?

Romans 1:22-32 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, (23) and traded the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed animals, and creeping things. (24) Therefore God also gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves, (25) who exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (26) For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For their women changed the natural function into that which is against nature. (27) Likewise also the men, leaving the natural function of the woman, burned in their lust toward one another, men doing what is inappropriate with men, and receiving in themselves the due penalty of their error. (28) Even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; (29) being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil habits, secret slanderers, (30) backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, (31) without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, unforgiving, unmerciful; (32) who, knowing the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also approve of those who practice them.

Notice that these people know that the practice of these things makes one worthy of death. But they not only do these things, they also approve of others who practice them. Does that not describe the world today? Would the generation before the baby-boom generation have in any way approved of and even encouraged the practice of homosexuality? How about the murder of babies in the womb? But we are not to condemn these people to hell because God has a plan for them, even after they die. God has turned them over to disobedience, that he might have mercy on them (Romans 11:32).

Romans 2:1-3 Therefore you are without excuse, O man, whoever you are who judge. For in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself. For you who judge practice the same things. (2) We know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. (3) Do you think this, O man who judges those who practice such things, and do the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?

3.2) Those who sin will not inherit the kingdom.

God sees all sins as sins. It matters not if it's homosexuality or sexual immorality, drunkenness, or outbursts of anger. All these are all listed by Paul as sins.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Or don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexuals, (10) nor thieves, nor covetous,

nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortioners, will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Paul mentions “inherit the kingdom” only three times. Twice is with lists of sins such as these. Those who continue to sin will not inherit the kingdom. It matters not what sin is continually occurring. If there is continued sin in one’s life, one cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Many believe these words of Paul do not fit Paul’s normal message. They would consider words like these to more likely be what Jesus would have said. But when you really understand Paul, the words of Paul and the words of Jesus are in complete harmony.

Mostly Paul talked about salvation because Paul was a missionary. Jesus, on the other hand, was always talking about the kingdom and less-often about salvation. That’s why Paul and Jesus seem to have a different message. Jesus focused on what it takes to inherit the kingdom, which is holiness. Paul focused more on the journey of salvation, which is all about the Law, grace, and faith.

The second place Paul speaks about inheriting the kingdom is in Galatians. Here we see that if you are in the Spirit you don’t sin. This is living under grace [God’s work]. If you are not in the Spirit you continue to sin and you are living under the law. Living under the law has its works. Living under grace has a different set of works.

Galatians 5:16-23 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, that you may not do the things that you desire. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

(19) Now the works of the flesh are obvious, which are: adultery, sexual immorality, uncleanness, lustfulness, (20) idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousies, outbursts of anger, rivalries, divisions, heresies, (21) envyings, murders, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these; of which I forewarn you, even as I also forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, (23) gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

After listing the fruit (or works) of the Spirit, Paul says, “Against such things there is no law.” Of course there’s no law against doing good works! But that’s not what Paul is saying. It’s a play on words. In verse 18 he says, “If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” And in verse 16 he says, “Walk by the Spirit, and you won’t fulfill the lust of the flesh.” But there is no law against the fruit of the Spirit (verse 23). In other words, when you are walking in the Spirit, you are not sinning and you are not under the Law.

There are books written about the differences between the gospel of Paul and the gospel of Jesus. One pastor and friend of mine told me he interprets the words of Jesus through the lenses of Paul. It then gets a bit confusing for them when Paul says things like this. If you continue to sin, according to Paul, you cannot inherit the kingdom.

Another dispensational pastor I know was challenged by Paul’s verses in Galatians. Those who have strife, jealousies, or even outbursts of anger will not inherit the kingdom. He got on the right track by suggesting that inheriting the kingdom is not the same as salvation itself.

Dispensationalists have traditionally stated that the kingdom of heaven is strictly the future millennial reign. However, George E. Ladd is known for challenging this teaching and saying the kingdom is “here and now but not yet.” The kingdom currently exists in the hearts of the believer. But when Christ returns, the kingdom will be literally set up in the world. This dispensational pastor I know, challenged by Paul’s verses in Galatians, suggested that “inheriting the kingdom” is related to the kingdom that is “here and now” in our hearts.

However, there are three places in Paul’s letters in which he refers to “inheriting the kingdom.” The third place is in 1 Corinthians 15. This is the same letter as the first one I quoted, which is in 1 Corinthians 6. This letter is concerning the problem-ridden church in Corinth. In other words, they were still sinning! Chapter 15 is the chapter on the resurrection. “Flesh and blood can’t inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). Thus, there are two things that are required in order to inherit the kingdom. First, one must completely stop sinning. Secondly, one must be glorified with a spiritual body.

Based on Paul saying those who continue to sin won’t inherit the kingdom, even in this same letter (1 Corinthians 6:9-10), I’ve inserted the phrase, “who have overcome sin.”

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 Now I say this, brothers, that flesh and blood can't inherit the Kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. (51) Behold, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead [who have overcome sin] will be raised incorruptible, and we

will be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (54) But when this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then what is written will happen: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

A key point in the understanding of this Scripture about the resurrection is that there are two types of resurrections. The first is for those who are in Christ. Those who live by the Spirit no longer have sinful habits. The first resurrection is for the just and the second is for the unjust. It's not a resurrection of condemnation or damnation. It's a resurrection to live again in the age to come during Christ's millennial reign.

Acts 24:14-15 But this I confess to you, that after the Way, which they call a sect, so I serve the God of our fathers, believing all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets; (15) having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

How can a resurrection of damnation or a resurrection of condemnation be a resurrection of "having hope toward God?" Paul looks forward the resurrection of both the just and the unjust. This is Paul's hope. But the unjust, who continue to sin, will not inherit the kingdom. They will not put on immortality. They will not receive a spiritual body. Only those who overcome sin will reign with Christ during the millennium (Revelation 2:26). Those who don't will be resurrected with a natural body that can die a second death (Revelation 2:11).

Many people will respond to this by saying Paul hopes for the just to go to heaven and the unjust to go to hell. It's a hope because this way bad people get what's coming to them. Or they might say it's a part of God's justice. There are several problems with this view. First of all, a resurrection is to come back from the grave in order to live again. A resurrection of damnation is an oxymoron.

Nothing is being said about being resurrected for judgment after they are already in hell. If this is talking about a resurrection for being judged, then it might be considered a necessity. But it would never be considered our hope. And it would be very strange to talk about this dreadful aspect of God's justice in the same breath as our hope of eternal life. There is much more to be said about this, based on Scripture, in chapter 7 of this book. Chapter 7 is titled the "Resurrection of the Just and the Unjust."

This is why we are not to judge those who are still living in sin, including those practicing homosexuality and the murder of children in the womb. God has a redemptive plan for them. God has not given up on them. In chapter 11 of Romans, Paul talks about the Jews who were broken off from the olive tree.

Romans 11:30-33 For as you in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, (31) even so these also have now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you they may also obtain mercy. (32) For God has shut up all to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all. (33) Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!

In Romans 1, Paul talks about how God turned the world over to disobedience. Here, Paul talks about how God turned the Jews over to disobedience. “God has shut up all to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all.” I believe Paul is talking about more than just the Jews. God has a plan of mercy for everyone. But as we have seen, there are exceptions. This is not Christian Universalism.

In chapter 2 of Romans, Paul compares the Law of Moses with the law as seen in nature. He points out advantages and disadvantages to both. Both laws have a path of righteousness through faith and by being a servant of God. As we do the works, such as Abraham going to the Promised Land, we overcome sin and gain righteousness. This is the path to eternal life, even under grace. Both laws, however, have a fundamental problem. Both laws tend to make us focus on ourselves because we would have to provide our own atonements (sacrifices) for sin. They are laws of salvation by works, both in the Law of Moses and in the law of nature.

Romans 2:6-8 ESV He will render to each one according to his works: (7) to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; (8) but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

At this point, many Protestants scratch their heads. Is Paul talking about salvation by works? It would seem so. This is in the context of verses 2:1-5, where Paul is saying to not judge these Gentiles who have the law of nature and are without excuse. Is Paul saying the Gentiles, with only the law of nature, can be given eternal life without Christ?

Under the hermeneutical system of the Protestants, it would seem so. But that's not what Paul is saying. God has a plan for even the Pagans who die without Christ. But that plan includes a life under Christ's reign after the resurrection. A journey of faith in Christ is required before one can overcome sin and receive eternal life.

Those who live Godly lives will be given eternal life. This is true even for the Gentiles living under the law of nature. Anyone still living under the law, be it the Law of Moses or the law of nature, will still have sinful habits. One must live under grace in order to overcome all sinful habits. We are not to judge these Gentiles because Christ has provided a way for even Pagans to journey back to the Father by faith in Jesus Christ. They can live under the reign of Jesus Christ in the age to come. But until they give their lives to Jesus Christ, they cannot be credited with righteousness and have the hope of inheriting eternal life.

But what about people who say, "I will give my life to Jesus some other time. I can always do that, even after death, if what you are saying is true." So they don't inherit eternal life if they are confident they will be able to do so in the future. This knowledge of the truth, without acting upon it, would be holding the blood of Jesus Christ up to contempt. It's possible to lose out on one's possibility of resurrection with this kind of attitude.

Hebrews 10:26-27 ESV For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, (27) but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

This does not mean that as soon as you hear the gospel and reject it that you lose your opportunity for eternal life. God is very slow in making this judgment. God alone knows when someone has become so hateful against God that he cannot be saved. God knows who has become his enemy.

The point Paul is making is that it matters not whether one grew up under the Law of Moses or the law of nature. There are still two paths. One path leads to righteousness and the other to destruction. God shows no partiality between living under the Law of Moses and the law of nature. God does not give up on us simply because we die. God will resurrect both the just and the unjust.

Romans 2:11-13 ESV For God shows no partiality. (12) For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. (13) For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

God states even under the law seen in nature, that living for God, doing his works, brings righteousness. This is the path to eternal life.

Romans 2:14-16 ESV For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. (15) They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them (16) on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

The law being written on their hearts is very much like the New Covenant of grace, as given in Jeremiah 31:31 and quoted in Hebrews 8:8. They will be judged by their own thoughts. And that judgment is in agreement with Paul's gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both the Law of Moses and the law in nature. Next, Paul talks about the advantage of being under the law as seen by nature instead of having the Law of Moses. This point is important for Paul because he is bringing the gospel to the Gentiles and is making the point that they do not have to first become Jewish or circumcised to receive God's grace.

Romans 2:25-29 ESV For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. (26) So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? (27) Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. (28) For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. (29) But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Next, in chapter 3, Paul gets into the advantages of being under the Law of Moses instead of under the law of nature.

Romans 3:1-3 ESV Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? (2) Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted

with the oracles of God. (3) What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God?

However, neither law will allow one to inherit the kingdom, because both laws bring knowledge of sin.

Romans 3:20-21 ESV For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (21) But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it--

3.3) Living Under Grace

The Law of Moses is not a bad thing. But nobody is going to inherit the kingdom by works. Abraham was saved by faith. And as Paul has shown, even the Gentiles under a law of nature can journey towards righteousness. "The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law" (of Moses.) But not to the point that is needed to inherit the kingdom and eternal life.

Romans 4:1-3 ESV What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? (2) For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. (3) For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

Abraham was saved by faith. Could Gentiles who only knew the law of nature inherit the kingdom by faith in God? We

can expect to see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the wedding banquet (Matthew 8:11, 22:32, Luke 13:28, 20:34-38) because of faith. Can we expect to see Job at the wedding banquet? He knew very little about the Hebrews.

Jesus said, "I am the [road], the truth, and the life. No one [journeys] to the Father, except through me" (John 14:6). (The Greek word for "way" means "road.") "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Abraham was told his seed would be a blessing to all the nations. Abraham had faith in the coming Messiah. And he acted upon that faith. Abraham was credited with righteousness. Remember that in this book we are always substituting [God's work] or [God's presence] for the word 'grace'.

Romans 4:4-8 Now to him who works, the reward is not counted as [God's work], but as debt. (5) But to him who doesn't work, but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. (6) Even as David also pronounces blessing on the man to whom God counts righteousness apart from works, (7) "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are covered. (8) Blessed is the man whom the Lord will by no means charge with sin.

Abraham is credited with righteousness because of faith. Abraham was saved by grace. I believe Abraham was filled by the Holy Spirit. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are living under grace and not the Law. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit we do not sin, because God is in us and God does not sin. But we are still tempted and sometimes we fall back into sin. When this happens, the

Holy Spirit backs off. But because we are “credited with righteousness,” we can ask the Father and be filled again.

In Old Testament times, people were sometimes filled with the Holy Spirit. When they were filled they couldn’t sin. For example, Saul was once filled with the Holy Spirit when he tried to go and kill David. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, he could not sin. But such fillings were rare.

Romans 4:13-18 For the promise to Abraham and to his seed that he should be heir of the world wasn't through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. (14) For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void, and the promise is made of no effect. (15) For the law works wrath, for where there is no law, neither is there disobedience. (16) For this cause it is of faith, that it may be according to [God's work], to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed, not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. (17) As it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations." This is in the presence of him whom he believed: God, who gives life to the dead, and calls the things that are not, as though they were. (18) Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, "So will your seed be."

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob understood this promise. They were credited with righteousness. By faith they could be filled with the Holy Spirit and overcome their sinful habits. In some cases, this understanding of a coming Messiah was given to others besides Abraham. Job was given this revelation of a coming Redeemer.

Job 19:21-27 NIV "Have pity on me, my friends, have pity, for the hand of God has struck me. (22) Why do you pursue me as God does? Will you never get enough of my flesh? (23) "Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, (24) that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! (25) I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. (26) And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; (27) I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Job had faith in the coming Redeemer. I believe the Holy Spirit filled Job because of this faith in a coming Redeemer. I believe Job overcame all his sinful habits. Only God can do that in a man. We cannot overcome sin by works. It must be done by the Holy Spirit.

How about “Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God” (Hebrews 7:1)? Jesus is said to be “a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 5:6, 6:20, 7:10-17). Can people inherit the kingdom through faith in God but without a knowledge of our Savior? The LORD appeared to Abraham. Perhaps the LORD appeared to Melchizedek as well. I believe Melchizedek, like Job, knew about his Redeemer.

Job and Abraham, and possibly Melchizedek, were given revelations from God about the coming Redeemer. They were credited with righteousness because of faith in that coming Redeemer. The Holy Spirit filled them and they overcame their sinful habits. We can expect to see them at the wedding banquet.

After the crucifixion came Pentecost. After Pentecost the Holy Spirit comes at any time for any believer. This changed at the cross. The Holy Spirit comes only after we have knowledge of and faith in our Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus and Paul did not change at the cross. But the cross vastly increased the availability and abundance of God's grace allowing the Holy Spirit to fill us whenever we ask. Because of the Holy Spirit, in this age of grace, we can completely overcome all our sinful habits.

What do we do when we desire to have faith, and really do believe in our Savior, but we still have sinful habits? We must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus Christ and Wesley taught, we must love our neighbors, which brings about our love for the Father. As we do good works because of our love, we are filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the fruit of the Spirit as Paul taught in Galatians (quoted earlier.) In our journey of salvation we do the good works so that we are filled with the Spirit. The Spirit changes us and our sinful habits are overcome.

We are not saved by works. Christ died on the cross. This brought the reconciliation of God to all men. All our past, present, and future sins, were paid (atoned) for at the cross. Christ is the ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6). This happened for everyone, even if they are not a believer or even if they don't know about Christ's sacrifice.

When we first become a believer we are justified. Our sins are forgiven and we are credited with righteousness. This is not by works. As a believer, by faith, we can be filled with the Holy Spirit and overcome sinful habits. Over time, our lives are changed. But even that is not by our own works. It's by the works of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit changes us on the inside.

Those who are entirely sanctified when Christ returns will be in the wedding banquet. They will be glorified. They will be given spiritual bodies and eternal life.

But what about Christians who seem to be unable to stop sinning? They may say they have the faith to love the Father and love their neighbor with all their hearts. But do their actions fit their love? Faith without works is dead. As we do the works of the Father, the Holy Spirit fills us to help in doing the works. That's when God does his work to transform us on the inside and sanctification occurs.

Salvation is by faith alone. That means justification, sanctification, and glorification are all by faith alone. But as we live out that faith, it requires lots of works to inherit the kingdom. Those who are not entirely sanctified in this age will not inherit the kingdom. They must continue their journey of salvation in the age to come, which is Christ's millennial reign.

3.4) God's Plan is both Inclusive and Exclusive.

Today we are seeing a varying degree of inclusiveness and exclusiveness in Christian doctrines. The inclusive doctrines are generally seen as a reaction to the problem of people who die having never heard about Christ. Exclusive doctrines would be the more traditional doctrines that require faith specifically in Jesus Christ for salvation.

Rob Bell's book titled *Love Wins* caused lots of controversy. Bell takes an inclusive view of salvation. Bell believes people can receive Christ's salvation through faith but that faith can be through other religions. Faith can also be in non-religions such as nature and belief in self. Bell,

however, would exclude atheists. Bell has been accused of being a Christian Universalist. But he is not.

Christian Universalism is even more inclusive. Christian Universalists believe everyone will eventually be saved. Those who go to hell will eventually repent and then they can go to heaven. Some even believe that Satan and his demons will eventually be saved.

Protestant inclusive arguments rely heavily on the Protestant view of salvation being a decision and not a journey. The need for sanctification, as part of one's journey of life, has been so completely wiped from the thinking of the average Protestant that it's never used as an argument against inclusive views.

Don Richardson has written a book in response to Rob Bell's book. Richardson's book is titled *Heaven Wins*. Richardson characterizes Bell as being a Christian Universalist. Richardson is a very famous missionary. He considers himself to be an inclusionist who believes that many more people will be in heaven than is generally thought. An exclusivist believes a relative few number of people will be in heaven.

Richardson's inclusionist views are derived from two fronts. First, Richardson believes all children who die before the Protestant age of accountability will go to heaven. Thus, heaven will have many more souls than would otherwise be considered. Secondly, Richardson believes some people will be saved based upon "general revelation." Both of these fronts, it is argued, add up to many more people in heaven, and thus "Heaven Wins."

Richardson includes all children from all generations world-wide in his argument for the age of accountability. Even if the child is born in a part of the world where

Christianity is unheard of, if the child dies, he or she would go to heaven. The problem I have with that view is that it makes child sacrifice a good thing. It makes abortion a good thing. It says that growing up can be a very bad thing for children who are born in generations and places where hearing about Christ is next to impossible.

The most horrible episodes of Israel's history are when the people of Israel turned to other gods and child sacrifice. (Leviticus 18:21, Leviticus 20:1-5, Deuteronomy 12:31, 18:10, 2 Kings 3:27, 17:17-18, 21:2-6, Psalm 106:37-38, Ezekiel 16:20-21, 16:36-38, 20:31, Jeremiah 7:30-34, 22:17) God says in Jeremiah 7:30-34 that child sacrifice was not his command, nor did it come into his mind. But the doctrine of the age of accountability unintentionally makes child sacrifice into a good thing. It assures the child will go to heaven. If the child grows past this age of accountability, it endangers the child to a possible eternity of hell.

The belief that all children, who die young, go to heaven is not held by all Protestants. Accountability is not directly addressed by Scripture. To make the doctrine even more perplexing, some Calvinists apply election to children who die young. Infants, who die having never done anything good or bad, are said to be subject to election. Thus, many or most infants who die are tortured in hell and yet they would have never sinned. They would have simply inherited Adam's original sinful nature. Do people really believe this is God's plan of salvation?

A much better approach is to realize that nobody comes to the Father except through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. There is no other name under heaven by which a person can be saved. This includes children of all ages. Unlike traditional theologians, God does not consider death to be a problem. Children who die young can simply be

resurrected with mortal bodies and live in the millennium. They can then grow up and have the same opportunity as everyone else to mature in Jesus Christ.

Richardson's second front for why "Heaven Wins" is his belief in salvation through general revelation. In other words, Richardson believes people can see God in nature and have a saving faith in God without explicitly knowing about Jesus Christ. Richardson raises some very good points of Scripture. It would be useful to look at some of his points because they support my view as well.

However, I do not believe people can inherit the kingdom through general revelation. Nobody comes to the Father except through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. "There is salvation in none other, for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). To say one can go to heaven without a personal relationship with Jesus Christ comes very close to Rob Bell's view. A Buddhist or a Hindu could go to heaven by seeing God in nature.

But as Richardson points out, Paul seems to be saying that you can be saved solely by seeing God in nature.

Romans 2:6-8,13-16 ESV He will render to each one according to his works: (7) to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; (8) but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ... (13) For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. (14) For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though

they do not have the law. (15) They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them (16) on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Nobody can completely overcome all their sinful habits without the grace of the Holy Spirit working sanctification in their lives. But Pagans, who see God in nature, can seek glory and honor and immortality through what they know about God. Jesus will honor this by raising them to life to live in the millennial kingdom. They can then have a relationship with Jesus Christ whereby they can journey back to the Father through faith in Jesus Christ.

Thus, God's plan of salvation is both inclusive and exclusive. Heaven wins because most people of all generations will be resurrected. But it's exclusive because eternal life is only through faith in Jesus Christ.

The following is a progressive list of views from inclusive to exclusive.

- 1) Christian Universalism – Everyone will be saved because they can repent even after going to hell.
- 2) Rob Bell's view – People must receive God by faith to be saved. This can be through any religion or non-religion. This includes belief in nature or self. Atheists, however, are not saved because they do not have faith in God.
- 3) Don Richardson's view – All children who die before the age of accountability are saved. People can be saved through general revelation about God. But people are not saved through other religions.

- 4) Traditional Evangelism – Faith must be in Jesus Christ. Anyone can chose to be saved by faith.
- 5) Hard-core Calvinism – God chooses who will be saved and consequently, who will be condemned to hell.

The view of this author is both inclusive and exclusive. We are saved from the grave to live again. With respect to who will be resurrected, I would be inclusive between (1) Christian Universalism and (2) Rob Bell’s view. I do not believe everyone will be resurrected.

With respect to who will inherit the kingdom, I would be exclusive between (4) Traditional Evangelism and (5) Hard-core Calvinism. God chooses those who will be drawn to himself to be the firstfruits of those who will complete their journey of salvation. The only way anyone is condemned to the lake of fire is for them to become an enemy of God, which is an antichrist.

3.5) Overcoming Sin with a Body of Flesh

The reason this view is both inclusive and exclusive is that salvation is a journey of faith and [God’s work]. Most people will be resurrected to live again in the age to come. But it’s the wide gate that leads to the destruction of all the wealth they’ve earned in this age. They have not stored their treasure in heaven. Only a few will find the narrow gate that leads to eternal life and to inheriting the kingdom.

The biggest objection people have to this view is the need to overcome sin. People argue that as long as we are in these bodies of flesh, we cannot overcome sin. Could this be why pastors gravitate towards “interpreting the words of Jesus through the lenses of Paul”? Did Paul really say you can’t overcome sin with bodies of flesh?

Romans 7:4-6 ESV Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. (5) For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. (6) But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

We used to live in the flesh and under the law. But now we live by the Spirit, which is under grace. Paul is not saying we are still captive to the flesh. We died to flesh. Many skip these verses in Romans 7 and point to later verses in Romans 7 as saying we cannot overcome sin because of the flesh.

Romans 7:14-19 ESV For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. (15) For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. (16) Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. (17) So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. (18) For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. (19) For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

These verses in Romans 7 are often taken out of context. Paul is talking about what it is like to live under the law, “sold under sin.” Under grace it’s a whole different story.

Romans 8:13-15 ESV For if you live according to the **flesh** you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (14) For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (15) For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Paul says it clearly. "By the Spirit [we] put to death the deeds of the body." How is this in any way compatible with continuing in our sin because of our bodies of flesh?

Some have said that our bodies remain corrupted, along with the creation, and that this prevents us from overcoming sin. The creation does not sin. Yes, it groans because of Man's sin. And yes, we wait eagerly to be adopted as sons. But this does not mean we must continue to sin. Our bodies are corrupt because we are still mortal, not because we sin. We are simply waiting for new bodies at the time of the resurrection.

At this point it might be a good idea to go back and read the introduction to this book again. Billy Graham had a very consistent message about salvation. And it always included the need to repent from our sins. Today, most pastors avoid preaching against sin. Many pastors are saying, "Nobody is perfect. Come as you are." There is some truth to this statement. But if it's not followed up with a message about how Christ can free us from our bondage to sin, so that we no longer sin, our churches become just a social club.

We should not spiritualize this truth. You can't be free from the bondage of sin if you continue to sin. As Paul said, "Sin will not have dominion over you. For you are not under law, but under **[God's works]**" (Romans 6:14).

3.6) Faith Without Works is Dead.

Salvation is by faith alone. That means justification, sanctification, and glorification are all by faith alone. But James said that faith without works is dead. You can also say that love without works is dead. Can you really love your spouse without ever showing your love in what you do? When someone's words and actions are not lining up, go with their actions, every time. Actions say what words won't. Faith and love are the same. Faith and love without actions are dead.

Sometimes selfish desires are mistaken for love. Wives, or even girlfriends, can be thought of as possessions. Jesus can become one's "possession." For example, do we pray only for our self-oriented desires? Or do we really pray for and love our neighbors? And do we really pray to overcome all our sinful habits?

James 2:14-26 What good is it, my brothers, if a man says he has faith, but has no works? Can faith save him? (15) And if a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food, (16) and one of you tells them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled;" and yet you didn't give them the things the body needs, what good is it? (17) Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead in itself. (18) Yes, a man will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith. (19) You believe that God is one. You do well. The demons also believe, and shudder. (20) But do you want to know, vain man, that faith apart from works is dead? (21) Wasn't Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? (22) You see that faith worked with his works,

and by works faith was perfected; (23) and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness;" and he was called the friend of God. (24) You see then that by works, a man is justified, and not only by faith. (25) In like manner wasn't Rahab the prostitute also justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? (26) For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead.

This truth becomes more and more apparent as we realize that salvation is a journey. The journey aspect of salvation is sanctification. The Holy Spirit does the work to change us on the inside. But it's a process that takes time. We are saved by a journey of faith.

Justification can be a moment of faith. But sanctification is not a moment of faith. We can be justified and then later grieve the Holy Spirit by not living the Christian life that we know we should live.

This does not cause us to go to hell. But if we grieve the Holy Spirit, our journey of sanctification will not be completed. Believers who grieve the Holy Spirit will wind up being resurrected with natural mortal bodies and will have to continue their journey during the millennium.

Therefore, a believer's faith can save him. He can be justified and temporarily receive the Holy Spirit. But if he thinks that's all there is to it, the carnal Christian will not inherit the kingdom. He will not be part of the elect. Only those who complete their sanctification will inherit the kingdom. Salvation is a free gift. But to inherit the kingdom requires lots of work.

3.7) Really Understanding Law, Grace and Faith

What is the Law? What is grace? The Law is God's specific directions as to what we should and should not do. The Old Covenant also has instructions for making atonement for our sins. The Law is from God. Therefore it's good. But from a practical viewpoint, it can become legalistic. In other words, it's a set of rules that Satan can turn into legalism and self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is at the very core of the fruit Adam was told not to eat. Self-righteousness is the self-determination of what is good and what is evil. Those living under the Law tend to become very judgmental of others and blind to their own sinfulness.

What is grace? The Greek word that is translated 'grace' is also the Greek word that is translated 'favor.' It's the same Greek word. Translators decide when to use 'grace' and when to use 'favor.' They should have very similar meanings. But in most people's minds, 'grace' and 'favor' have very different meanings.

In Old Covenant times, people were sometimes filled with the Holy Spirit. But it was rare. And it tended to be temporary. People who were filled with the Holy Spirit were thought of as favored by God. This would have included Abraham. In the New Covenant, any believer can be filled with the Holy Spirit at any time. So all believers are considered as 'favored' by God. All believers receive God's grace. Grace means we are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by [God's work] you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) not of [our] works, that no one would boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them.

This verse (above) is another verse that is often taken out of context. Verses 8 and 9 are quoted without verse 10. Everyone has been given the gift of reconciliation. No amount of works or sacrifice can forgive sins. But we are sanctified only by faith that results in works.

When grace is related to works, we can see that grace is an ongoing process. Salvation is not a one-time decision. It's a journey. And that journey involves doing the works of our Father in heaven. No, we are not earning our salvation. The Holy Spirit transforms us on the inside. That change is our salvation. But this happens as we live the life that the Father would have us live. Salvation is a journey of change.

Back in chapter one, we learned that Luther went a bit too far when he eliminated purgatory without providing a free-grace alternative to purgatory. Catholics naturally view salvation as being a journey because they understand that there are consequences to not completing that journey. Under the Catholic system, only the saints will have completed their journey and go straight to heaven without having to spend some time in purgatory. When Luther eliminated purgatory, it had the perhaps unintended consequence of turning salvation into a one-time decision.

We are saved by grace and through faith. If salvation is a one-time decision, then grace becomes a one-time event. Grace becomes simply God forgiving us of all our sins. Salvation becomes past tense. That one-time past-tense event becomes all that matters. The need to ask God to forgive our sins becomes debatable. Many Protestant preachers today say Luther didn't go far enough. It's a hyper-grace movement that says we don't need to worry about sin; and God doesn't see our sins. Hyper-grace advocates say we shouldn't even ask the Father to "forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

As an untended result of Luther's elimination of purgatory, many people interpret grace as simply being forgiven of one's sins. They don't relate it to the works of the Holy Spirit. The more Wesleyan view is that we must completely overcome sin. It's often considered legalistic and is equated to living under the Old Covenant and the Law. To say we must interpret the New Testament in the context of the Old Testament is often mistakenly equated with going back to Old Testament practices such as dietary laws. When you say "Old Testament" it's viewed with suspicion.

If you say we must overcome sin people might respond by saying if you do that you must keep the whole Law. This comes from a clear misunderstanding about grace. When we interpret the New Testament in the context of the Old Testament, we understand that grace is God's favor. Jesus told the disciples that he must leave so that the Helper would come (John 14:16, 14:26, 15:26, 16:7). The Helper is the Holy Spirit. Grace is being filled with the Holy Spirit to help us do the things the Father wants us to do, including the overcoming of all our sinful habits.

We are saved by grace and through faith. This must be viewed as a journey. Grace is the continuous act of the Holy Spirit changing us on the inside as we continually do the works of the Father. Faith is continually trusting God and believing that God will in fact change us on the inside to become perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (Matthew 5:48). If we are not believing in God to make us pure and holy, we are not believing and having faith in God for salvation from sin and death. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

We are given spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit in order to do the works the Father would have us to do. This is how the Holy Spirit is our Helper. People who have a ministry and carry out that ministry in the Spirit realize that God is doing the greater work in their ministry. Likewise, God does the greater work in helping us to overcome sin. But the Helper is just that, a Helper. The Helper does not help if we are not involved in doing the Father's works, including that of overcoming our own sinful habits. Those who believe that grace is simply the forgiveness of sin, and don't believe grace is being filled with the Holy Spirit to overcome sin, may not really be living in God's grace.

Isaiah 45:23-25 By myself have I sworn, the word has gone forth from my mouth in righteousness, and will not return, that to me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. (24) They will say of me, 'There is righteousness and strength only in Yahweh.' "Even to him shall men come; and all those who were incensed against him shall be disappointed. (25) In Yahweh shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.

Romans 14:11 For it is written, " 'As I live,' says the Lord, 'to me every knee will bow. Every tongue will confess to God.' "

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God also highly exalted him, and gave to him the name which is above every name; (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, those on earth, and those under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Notice that Paul is quoting Isaiah 45:23-25. We need to read these verses like an ancient Jew. In Philippians 2:10, those in heaven are the angels. Those on the earth are those who are alive when the Messiah comes. Those under the earth are those who have died. They will be resurrected and will thus confess to Jesus as a result of their resurrection. But this confession only brings justification. There is still the road of sanctification for all those who are not resurrected with glorified bodies and eternal life.

In the next verse, Paul talks about the need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Think about this verse from the perspective of every knee bowing and also from the perspective of the Holy Spirit being our Helper.

Philippians 2:12-16 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (13) For it is God who works in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure. (14) Do all things without murmurings and disputes, (15) that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you are seen as lights in the world, (16) holding up the word of life; that I may have something to boast in the day of Christ, that I didn't run in vain nor labor in vain.

Those who believe grace is nothing more than being forgiven of our sins have a difficult time with this verse. How can we work out our own salvation if all has been forgiven? But for those who realize that grace is being filled with the Holy Spirit in order to do the Father's works and to overcome all our sinful habits, this verse makes lots of sense.

We are filled with the Holy Spirit (grace) in order to “become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish” (verse 15). We must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. But don’t miss verse 13. God does the greater work. That’s the Holy Spirit doing the greater work. This is living under grace and not the Law because with grace (God’s favor), the Holy Spirit changes us on the inside.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-24 Don't quench the Spirit. (20) Don't despise prophecies. (21) Test all things, and hold firmly that which is good. (22) Abstain from every form of evil. (23) May the God of peace himself sanctify you **completely**. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (24) He who calls you is faithful, who will also do it.

When we understand that the meaning of grace is living by faith in order to bring about complete sanctification, the whole perceived meaning of Romans will change. When grace, faith, and salvation are all understood to be a journey to Christian perfection, then the gospel of Paul comes into complete harmony with the gospel of Jesus.

Protestants debate Lordship salvation on the one side and free grace on the other side. Free-grace doctrines have led to hyper-grace doctrines that say none of the words of Jesus before the cross apply to the believer. Even the great commission, given after the cross, could come into question because it includes a command to teach the nations everything that Jesus commanded. But once grace is understood as on-going transformation by the Holy Spirit, and not simply the forgiveness of sins, this debate is put to rest.

Chapter 4

Reconciliation and Justification

We were reconciled by the blood of Christ. When did this happen? Jesus said, “I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” (John 12:32). Paul said Jesus Christ is the “Savior of all people, especially of those who believe” (1 Tim. 4:10). Reconciliation has nothing to do with what we might do, say, or believe. We were all reconciled. This is not Christian Universalism. Those who reject Christ lose their reconciliation with God. We can understand this better by reading Paul’s words in Romans.

Romans 5:1-9 Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; (2) through whom we also have our access by faith into this grace in which we stand. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (3) Not only this, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering works perseverance; (4) and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope: (5) and hope doesn't disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. (6) For while we were yet weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For one will hardly die for a righteous man. Yet perhaps for a righteous person someone would even dare to die.

Note that we are justified by faith. We have faith only when we become a believer. Christ died for us before we became

a believer. As we will see, God reconciled himself to us before we were justified as a believer.

The following verses seem to indicate something changed for everyone because of Christ's death. We are justified by faith. But Christ died before we had faith. Paul is saying that Christ died for us before we were justified. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. This is known as reconciliation. Now that this has happened, we can be justified by faith, and by his blood.

Romans 5:8-10 But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we will be saved from God's wrath through him. (10) For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we will be saved by his life.

In verse 10, Paul says it clearly. "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God." Since we are reconciled, we can by faith become justified. This seems to indicate the death of Christ brought reconciliation with God for everyone. Before we became believers we were reconciled. And now that we have become believers, we can be saved by living the life of Christ. Living the life of Christ is the journey of salvation. Justification is the start of that journey.

Romans 5:11 Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Unbelievers are not aware that they have been reconciled. Believers rejoice because we experience that reconciliation.

Romans 5:12-15 Therefore, as sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, because all sinned. (13) For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not charged when there is no law. (14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those whose sins weren't like Adam's disobedience, who is a foreshadowing of him who was to come. (15) But the free gift isn't like the trespass. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the **[work]** of God, and the gift by the **[work]** of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

Notice the clear parallelism. Adam brought sin and death into the world. Men were separated from God by sin. Likewise, Christ brought the free gift of reconciliation into the world through his work (grace) on the cross. Again back in verse 10 Paul said, "While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God." That reconciliation must be for everyone. Now Paul is building the case of Christ being the second Adam. Adam brought sin and death into the world for everybody. Likewise, Christ brought reconciliation into the world for everybody by dying on the cross.

Romans 5:16 The gift is not as through one who sinned: for the judgment came by one [sin] to condemnation, but the free gift came of many trespasses to justification.

Romans 5:16 NIV Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

At this point Paul draws a distinction in his parallelism. It only took one sin to bring condemnation. But we are given justification after many trespasses. This justification is a free gift because Christ died for everyone. But Paul has already said that justification is by faith. In Paul's case, his reconciliation came while he was still an enemy of God. In our case, our reconciliation came before we were even born. Just as Adam's sin brought sin into the world for everyone, before we were born, Christ's sacrifice brought reconciliation into the world for everyone, and the opportunity for justification, for everyone, before we were born. Everyone has been reconciled so that they can be resurrected and live again. But not everyone has been justified. But not everyone has received God's grace (favor).

Romans 5:17 For if by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; so much more will those who receive the abundance of [Christ's work] and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ.

Paul continues his parallelism by comparing the reign of sin and death as a result of Adam's sin with the reign of righteousness and life as a result of Jesus Christ's sacrifice. Paul repeats the fact that the righteousness we gain through faith is also a free gift. This free gift of righteousness through faith is only possible because of the free gift of reconciliation.

Paul's detailed parallelism of Adam's sin with Christ's sacrifice makes it clear that everyone is reconciled just as everyone has sinned. But we must have faith and belief in Christ in order to overcome sin and to lay hold of this righteousness. God does not simply pretend that everyone is righteous. We must still overcome all our sinful habits.

Romans 5:18-19 So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned; even so through one act of righteousness, all men were justified to life. (19) For as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one, many will be made righteous.

We have two parallelisms here that directly relate to Paul's major thesis of Christ being the second Adam. All men were condemned because of Adam. All men were justified to life because of Christ. Then Paul switches from "all" to "many." Many were made sinners. Many will be made righteous.

Of course we know that all men were made sinners. Paul switches to "many" because not everyone will be made righteous. Some will reject Christ's salvation. Not everyone will be made righteous. But everyone was made to be a sinner. And everyone was justified to life. Paul, however, forces his parallelism for the sake of parallelism and says "many" were made sinners. You could argue that if all are made sinners then many are also made sinners.

What does Paul mean when he says, "All men were justified to life" (verse 18)? Interpret this in the context of Christ being the second Adam. Adam was told that if he eats of the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, that he would die. Everyone dies. But because of Christ's sacrifice, everyone will be made alive. The resurrection is for both the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15). Everyone will be resurrected even if they have not yet been justified by faith and/or fully sanctified through faith. Everyone has been "justified to life" in the resurrection. The penalty given to Adam, and thus to everyone, has been reversed for everyone.

“Justified to life” is not the same as “justified by faith.” “Justified to life” is related to “reconciliation” because it’s solely related to the justice of Christ’s blood. Reconciliation means both the opportunity for being made right in the eyes of God (the usual meaning of “justified”) and to be resurrected to live in the millennium.

All men were condemned because of Adam. Likewise, all men were justified to life because of Christ. Justified to life means you can be resurrected, which is to live again. Christ’s death for everyone pays for everyone’s resurrection. But for those who are still sinning, that resurrection cannot be a resurrection of eternal life.

Justification for eternal life, on the other hand, is by faith. For that, we must overcome all our sinful habits. And it’s only because of the blood of Christ that anyone is justified, even by faith. The reconciliation of God to man is what Christ did on the cross. Justification is the start of our journey of sanctification, which is by faith.

Romans 5:20-21 The law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, **[God’ work]** abounded more exceedingly; (21) that as sin reigned in death, even so **[God’s work]** might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul continues with his parallelism. Paul’s comparison of law and grace goes back to verses 13 and 14 above. Sin came through Adam. Moses brought the Law. Paul argues that without the Law we would not be charged with the guilt of sin. But sin is the basic rejection of God which brought a separation between God and Man. Because of this, death came into the world. Christ brought a reconciliation of that

separation. And because of our reconciliation, everyone can be resurrected, which is to be brought back from death. But we must still overcome all our sinful habits before we can be given eternal life. And this occurs through a faith relationship with Christ to do the good works of the Father.

The Law of Moses points to sin. This only makes sin abound even more. But now we can have abundant grace since we have been reconciled to God. The Holy Spirit can come into us as we have faith and believe in Christ to overcome sin. As we live for Christ we become righteous. Grace “reigns through righteousness” (verse 21). To reign is a process. And the reign of righteousness leads to eternal life (verse 21). Everyone can be resurrected. But we must live under Christ’s reign of righteousness before we can have eternal life. Those who don’t live for Christ in this life must do so during the age to come, after the “resurrection of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15).

4.1) Reconciliation Elsewhere in Scripture

Paul brings up his parallelism between Adam and Christ in his resurrection chapter of 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 For since death came by man, the resurrection of the dead also came by man. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.

Some argue that there is a condition in this verse. Those who are in Christ, it is said, will be made alive. But it’s almost never translated that way. Also, that would weaken the parallelism. Everyone dies because of Adam. Therefore everyone will be made alive because of Christ.

Of course the word “all” does not have to mean a hundred percent. There can be exceptions. But “all” cannot mean the narrow gate that the few find.

This verse is about Christ being the second Adam. And that is covered in detail in Romans 5. We should therefore interpret this verse in the context of Romans 5.

But this verse is also in the context of 1 Corinthians 15, which is about the resurrection. So the fact that Christ is the second Adam must also be about the resurrection. When Paul said, “All men were justified to life,” he was talking about the resurrection. All men were justified so they can be raised to life at the resurrection. The reconciliation of the dead is not limited to those who have faith in Christ in this present age.

John 12:31-32 Now is the judgment of this world. Now the prince of this world will be cast out. (32) And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

Jesus is talking about the judgment of the world and Satan being cast out. The judgment “now” was because of the crucifixion. But the sentence on Satan does not happen until after the great tribulation. Satan will be locked up for a thousand years so that he may not deceive the nations until the thousand years are finished (Revelation 20:3). Jesus will draw all people to himself during his millennial reign. This will include all who are made alive at the resurrection. Thus, all people from every generation will be drawn to Christ after the prince of this world is cast out.

The drawing of all people happens during the age to come. During this age, only the (elect) Church is drawn to Christ. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. And Israel

is an elect and chosen nation. We are the elect who are drawn to Christ during this age. But that doesn't mean God has no redemptive plan for the non-elect. The elect are simply the firstfruits of the harvest (Jeremiah 2:2-3, Romans 8:23, 2 Thess. 2:13, James 1:8). But even the elect can later decide to deliberately and knowingly reject Christ. We all have free will.

Two points need to be made here. First, the word "all" doesn't necessarily mean one hundred percent. There can be exceptions. Some have and will deliberately and knowingly reject Christ and his salvation. This is not Christian Universalism. Secondly, the "draw" of Christ is not irresistible. Just as Adam had the free choice to reject God, we all have the free choice to reject Christ. Rejecting Christ is not a sin in a weak moment. It's the long-term deliberate and knowledgeable rejection of Christ.

1 Timothy 4:7-10 But refuse profane and old wives' fables. Exercise yourself toward godliness. (8) For bodily exercise has some value, but godliness has value in all things, having the promise of the life which is now, and of that which is to come. (9) This saying is faithful and worthy of all acceptance. (10) For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we have set our trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

Here Paul stresses the importance of exercising godliness. It's a journey. "To this end we both labor (work) and suffer reproach (persecution)." To what end? It's the salvation of all people, especially of those who believe. It's the promise of life for both now and for "that which is to come." That which is to come is the salvation of all people. And it starts

with those who believe in this age. We are the firstfruits of the harvest. We are the elect. The rest of the harvest is in the age to come.

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, I write these things to you so that you may not sin. If anyone sins, we have a Counselor with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. (2) And he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

John tells us that Christ's death on the cross was for our sins. But Christ's sacrifice was not just for our sins; not just for the sins of the elect. Christ's sacrifice was also for the sins of the whole world. Every man, woman, and child of all generations has been reconciled to Christ. This is why Christ is the second Adam. We are all Christ's sheep. But most of Christ's sheep are still lost. The blood of Christ was a ransom for everyone's sins.

1 Timothy 2:3-6 For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; (4) who desires all people to be saved and come to full knowledge of the truth. (5) For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, (6) who gave himself as a ransom for all; the testimony in its own times;

Notice that God desires for all people to be saved. Does that mean only the elect will be saved? Just remember that we must reconcile ourselves to God before we can inherit eternal life. We must go back to being like Adam before Adam sinned. We must become like Christ, the second Adam, who lived without sinning.

If God desires that all people be saved, and God is very smart, then doesn't it follow that God's plan would be a smart plan that includes all people? Of course we all have the same free will that Adam had. Even the elect can reject Christ's salvation. But would God's plan be such that the vast majority of all people in all generations would never have the opportunity to learn about Christ's death on the cross? Would God tell his Son that his blood is enough for all people, but unfortunately the vast majority of the people will never have the opportunity to "come to the full knowledge of the truth?"

There is only "one mediator between God and men." Other religions cannot bring people into salvation from sin and death. But God was smart enough to come up with a plan that would allow everyone to "come to the full knowledge of the truth" while living as mortals here on the earth. And God has told us about His plan in Scripture.

Paul agonized over the Jewish nation that didn't recognize Jesus as the Messiah. In this context Paul writes:

Romans 11:29-33 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (30) For as you in time past were disobedient to God, but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, (31) even so these also have now been disobedient, that by the mercy shown to you they may also obtain mercy. (32) For God has shut up all to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all. (33) Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!

“God has turned all over to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all.” The Gentile believers were once disobedient. Now they have been drawn to Christ. This was done so that one day even these disobedient Jews, who lived in that day, will someday be drawn back into obedience. The same is true for everyone in the world.

During this age, the vast majority of all people have been turned over to disobedience. Even believers in the churches are mostly disobedient and continue in their sins. This was done so that some might be brought into obedience during this age, and will reign with Christ during the age to come. Even the disobedient all over the world have been reconciled with Christ. Therefore, they can be resurrected and be brought back into obedience in the age to come. Thus, “God has turned all over to disobedience, that he might have mercy on all.”

Hebrews 2:8-11 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that he subjected all things to him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we don't see all things subjected to him, yet. (9) But we see him who has been made a little lower than the angels, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the [work] of God he should taste of death for everyone. (10) For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many children to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (11) For both he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brothers,

All things have been put under Christ's feet. But we don't see it literally fulfilled as yet. When Christ returns, all the nations will be under Christ's feet. This was done because of Christ's suffering and death. Hebrews 2:9 (quoted above) says, "By the grace of God he should taste death for everyone." Christ's death for everyone is not just some theoretical statement that if somehow they could have learned the knowledge of the truth they could have been saved. Christ really did taste death for everyone in a practical sense. They will be resurrected in the age to come. "But now we don't see all things subjected to him, yet" (verse 8). We don't as yet see these people given the grace of salvation, yet. But since they have been reconciled to Christ, they can be sanctified in the age to come after the resurrection of all the nations of all generations.

John 6:32-33 Jesus therefore said to them, "Most certainly, I tell you, it wasn't Moses who gave you the bread out of heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread out of heaven. (33) For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

With Moses, the bread that came out of heaven gave life for everyone. Everyone could eat it. Jesus is the bread of life. This bread comes out of heaven for everyone to eat. And this bread "gives life to the world." The world will be resurrected and given life.

Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, (12) instructing us to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we would live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present [age]; (13) looking for the blessed

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

Salvation was given to all men. God has been reconciled with all men. But this needs to be followed up by living a godly life during this present age. We do this in the hope of Christ's appearing, which will usher in the age to come.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21 For the love of Christ constrains us; because we judge thus, that one died for all, therefore all died. (15) He died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who for their sakes died and rose again. (16) Therefore we know no one after the flesh from now on. Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. (17) Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new. (18) But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their trespasses, and having committed to us the word of reconciliation. (20) We are therefore ambassadors on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (21) For him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Christ died for all. Therefore, all people have died in Christ's death. This does not say that it's limited to those who believe. Christ died for all. "Therefore all died."

Everyone has been reconciled to God because everyone has died in payment of their sins. Christ died for everyone's sins. Everyone's sins have been paid in full by Christ "who for their sakes died and rose again" (verse 15). Therefore, because of Christ's resurrection, everyone will be raised from death at the resurrection when Christ returns.

Verse 15 goes on to say because of Christ's death, and because he was resurrected, we should live for Christ. This does not say that everyone lives for Christ. Believers who live for Christ do so because Christ died for us.

If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation (verse 17). Literally speaking, it means that eventually we will receive a new body at the resurrection. God "gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were" (Romans 4:17 NIV). Literally speaking, we will be new creatures at the resurrection. But until that time, we are being reconciled to God and are being transformed into a new creation in our souls because we have died on the cross with Christ.

When two friends become enemies, reconciliation requires both parties to put aside their differences. The same is true between God and man. God has reconciled himself to us. God no longer requires us to die. Likewise, we are reconciling ourselves back to God. We must overcome sin and become like Adam before he sinned.

Paul said, "We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (verse 20). God has "[reconciled] the world to himself, not reckoning to them their trespasses" (verse 19). In other words, God has resolved all penalty for sin for all people. But people are still sinning, and therefore they have not resolved themselves back to God. Those who do so by faith have been given a ministry of reconciliation that involves telling others about Christ.

Understanding these two sides of reconciliation can be helpful in understanding the difference between the Law of Moses and grace. Under the Law of Moses, the world did not as yet have the blood of Christ. Under the Law, men offered sacrifices of their cattle and crops in order to pay for sins. Thus, by works, we attempted to reconcile God to ourselves. But God's true desire has always been for us to reconcile ourselves back to God.

Jesus meant this when he quoted Hosea 6:6, saying, "for I desire mercy and not sacrifice." (Matthew 9:13, 12:7)

Hosea 6:4-7 "Ephraim, what shall I do to you? Judah, what shall I do to you? For your love is like a morning cloud, and like the dew that disappears early. (5) Therefore I have cut them to pieces with the prophets; I killed them with the words of my mouth. Your judgments are like a flash of lightning. (6) For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. (7) But they, like Adam, have broken the covenant. They were unfaithful to me, there.

Many of those in Ephraim (northern tribes) and Judah (southern tribes) broke God's covenant of the Law with Moses. But the New Covenant can also be broken. If the New Covenant is broken, there is no longer a sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 6:4-6, 10:26-27).

We must fall in love with God and obey his commandments. This is all about reconciling ourselves to God. We must be servants of God, which means work. We do this because of our love for the Father. We get to know the Father. And since we love the Father, we do works for our neighbors because the Father loves them as well.

4.2) Being Credited with Righteousness

When we first become believers, we are justified and credited with righteousness. The Greek word for “credited” is commonly used. It’s where we get our English word “logic” and “logical.” Strong’s definition is:

G3049 – *logizomai* – to take an inventory; that is estimate (literally or figuratively); conclude, (ac-) count (of); + despise, esteem, impute, lay, number, reason, suppose, think (on).

God begins to consider us as righteous even if we are still sinning. This is why the journey aspect of salvation is important in understanding what Paul (and James) are saying. Of course it is only because we have been reconciled by the blood of Christ that he is able to credit us with righteousness. We are credited with righteousness because God is faithful to bring us to the completion of our journey once that journey has begun. God "gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were" (Romans 4:17 NIV, in the same context as 4:3-5).

Romans 4:3-5 NIV What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." (4) Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. (5) However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

James 2:23 NIV And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.

Sacrifices are all about doing work for the forgiveness of sins. Christ did that on the cross. That ultimate sacrifice that Christ gave to us on the cross is God's grace. He did all the work of reconciliation that involved reconciling God to man. But we still need to reconcile ourselves back to God.

We are justified when we first become a believer and begin to put our faith in Christ. With justification, our sins are forgiven and we are credited with righteousness. This means we can be filled with the Holy Spirit whenever we ask.

We are sanctified as we live for Christ. The Just shall live by faith. This means doing the will (works) of the Father. We work (as a servant) for the Father out of love. These works do not save us. Our works involve the gifts of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit fills us as we do the works. The Holy Spirit changes us on the inside. So the Holy Spirit continues to save us. We overcome all our sinful habits. That is the journey of salvation by grace. Thus, sanctification is also by grace and not by works.

The promise of the Holy Spirit, which began at Pentecost, was only possible after God reconciled Himself to us. Now, through the Holy Spirit, we are being reconciled back to God, which is called sanctification. After we are entirely sanctified, we can be glorified with a new-birth spiritual body. Thus, you have to be "born again" in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Chapter 5

Sanctification and Glorification

Jesus said, “I am the [road], the truth, and the life. No one [journeys] to the Father, except through me” (John 14:6). The Greek word used for “way” means “road.” Sanctification means to be set apart, or to be made holy. Paul said, “May the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).

Romans 6:1-7 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that **[God’s work]** may abound? (2) May it never be! We who died to sin, how could we live in it any longer? (3) Or don't you know that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? (4) We were buried therefore with him through baptism to death, that just like Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will also be part of his resurrection; (6) knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be in bondage to sin. (7) For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Many Reformed believers say it’s impossible to completely stop sinning. They always seem to attribute this belief to Paul. But is this what Paul is saying? If you are continuing to sin, and you can’t stop sinning, then you are a slave to sin.

Paul says we should no longer be slaves (in bondage) to sin. But then Reformed theologians start inventing things like more than one type of sin. There are always ways to circumvent clear meanings of Scripture. But Scripture never says there are two types of sin, one of which you can't stop doing. Is it easy? There are usually strongholds of sin that must be overcome. But after that, we can completely stop sinning. As Paul says, we can be "freed from sin" (verse 7).

Romans 6:8-14 But if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him; (9) knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no more has dominion over him! (10) For the death that he died, he died to sin one time; but the life that he lives, he lives to God. (11) Thus consider yourselves also to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (12) Therefore don't let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. (13) Neither present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (14) For sin will not have dominion over you. For you are not under law, but under [God's work].

Under the Law, we tried to reconcile God to us through sacrifice. Under grace, God has reconciled himself to everyone. Therefore, we are no longer under slavery to sin. We can be completely free of sin. Sin no longer has dominion (control) over us. Paul is not saying that there will still be just a little sin. Paul is saying that we should live a life that is dead to sin. Dead is dead. We have died in Christ's blood. We should be "dead to sin" (verse 11).

Romans 6:15-18 What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under [God's work]? May it never be! (16) Don't you know that to whom you present yourselves as servants to obedience, his servants you are whom you obey; whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? (17) But thanks be to God, that, whereas you were bondservants of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto you were delivered. (18) Being made free from sin, you became bondservants of righteousness.

Because of Christ's blood, we are free from sin. That means we don't sin. But in order for this to come about, we must become "slaves (bondservants) of righteousness." What does this mean? It means we must work. You can't reconcile yourself back to God without works of righteousness. Works of righteousness leads to sanctification, which means to be made holy. In other words, as we do the Father's works we overcome all our sinful habits and become holy, which is to live without sin.

But don't misunderstand the nature of works. As we do the works, we are filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit changes us on the inside. We are not saved by works. But we must still take the attitude that we must "work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). The Holy Spirit does the work inside us. But if we take the attitude that we do not need to struggle with sin, then we are not really living in the faith it takes to follow Jesus and become like him. This will grieve the Holy Spirit and we will not be filled and sanctified.

Romans 6:19-22 I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh, for as you presented

your members as servants to uncleanness and to wickedness upon wickedness, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness for sanctification. (20) For when you were servants of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. (21) What fruit then did you have at that time in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. (22) But now, being made free from sin, and having become servants of God, you have your fruit of sanctification, and the result of eternal life.

To be a “servant to righteousness” is to do the works of a servant. Without works there is no sanctification and thus no eternal life. Paul said, “But now, being made free from sin, and having become servants of God, you have your fruit of sanctification, and the result of eternal life” (verse 22). Again, Paul says the fruit of good works is sanctification and the result of sanctification is eternal life. So without works there is no sanctification and thus no eternal life. Therefore, we must complete our journey of sanctification in order to journey to the Father and to the glorification of our bodies.

When we were slaves to sin, we did things that led to death. Living without sin, leads to eternal life. It’s a journey of works. Paul says we present our members as servants to righteousness (verse 19). What is presenting members other than using our hands and feet? What is being a servant other than doing work? We do works of righteousness, which is works the Father asks of us. The “fruit” of sins leads to death. Likewise, the “fruit” of working as a servant of God leads to sanctification (verse 22). And that sanctification, over time, results in eternal life (verse 22). Without works of righteousness, there is no sanctification and no eternal life.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This verse is often taken out of context. The “wages” or “fruit” of sin leads to death. Likewise, the wages or fruit of the works of righteousness leads to eternal life. In both cases, it’s a journey. It’s a process. We are on one road or the other. The journey back to the Father is only through Jesus Christ. It’s a free gift of God in the fact that God has reconciled himself to us through the blood of Jesus Christ.

But Paul makes it clear that we must also become slaves to righteousness in order to reconcile ourselves back to God. But it’s still God who changes us as we do the works. The Holy Spirit fills us as we do the works, and it’s the Holy Spirit who changes us. Thus, there are two types of grace involved. Our sins are forgiven. And we are changed inside. Both are the free gifts of God. But faith without works is dead. Faith without works doesn’t bring us back to the Father. Faith without works doesn’t bring us into eternal life.

Ephesians 2:8-10 For by [God’s work] you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) not of [our] works, that no one would boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before that we would walk in them.

This verse (above) is another verse that is often taken out of context. Verses 8 and 9 are quoted without verse 10. Everyone has been given the gift of reconciliation. No amount of works or sacrifice can forgive sins. But we are sanctified only in faith that includes works.

5.1) We have been discharged from the Law.

Romans 7:1-4 Or don't you know, brothers (for I speak to men who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man for as long as he lives? (2) For the woman that has a husband is bound by law to the husband while he lives, but if the husband dies, she is discharged from the law of the husband. (3) So then if, while the husband lives, she is joined to another man, she would be called an adulteress. But if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she is joined to another man. (4) Therefore, my brothers, you also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you would be joined to another, to him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit to God.

In chapter 7, Paul continues his discussion about us having died in Christ's death. We don't have to worry about reconciling God to us through sacrifice. Under the New Covenant, we work to "bring forth fruit to God" (verse 4).

Romans 7:5-7 For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were through the law, worked in our members to bring forth fruit to death. (6) But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that in which we were held; so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter. (7) What shall we say then? Is the law sin? May it never be! However, I wouldn't have known sin, except through the law. For I wouldn't have known coveting, unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."

Under the Law we focused on sacrifices for sin. This required following specific rules and regulations that were all about making those sacrifices. But we have now been freed from those rules and regulations. However, the Law also helped us understand the nature of sin itself. We must not use the fact that we are free from the Law as an excuse to sin. But our works are no longer involved in sacrifice for sin. Thus, we are free from following those regulations and can focus on doing works of love to help others.

Romans 7:8-13 But sin, finding occasion through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of coveting. For apart from the law, sin is dead. (9) I was alive apart from the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. (10) The commandment, which was for life, this I found to be for death; (11) for sin, finding occasion through the commandment, deceived me, and through it killed me. (12) Therefore the law indeed is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good. (13) Did then that which is good become death to me? May it never be! But sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death to me through that which is good; that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful.

Paul is being careful to not characterize God's Law as being anything except holy. The Law tells us that we sin. Knowing that we sin, under the Law, we try to overcome sin without God changing us on the inside. Under the Law we had to work in order to make the sacrifices. But it was never enough. Sin would return because we are not changed. The Law itself is not evil. But it's not enough to just keep sacrificing for sins. God's grace (the Holy Spirit's help) is

required in order to overcome sin. Next, Paul goes through all the agony of what it's like to live under the Law, and what it's like to want to obey the Law but being unable to do so because under the Law, without the grace of being filled with the Holy Spirit, we are not changed on the inside.

Romans 7:14-25 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am fleshly, sold under sin. (15) For I don't know what I am doing. For I don't practice what I desire to do; but what I hate, that I do. (16) But if what I don't desire, that I do, I consent to the law that it is good. (17) So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me. (18) For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing. For desire is present with me, but I don't find it doing that which is good. (19) For the good which I desire, I don't do; but the evil which I don't desire, that I practice. (20) But if what I don't desire, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me. (21) I find then the law, that, to me, while I desire to do good, evil is present. (22) For I delight in God's law after the inward man, (23) but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. (24) What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me out of the body of this death? (25) I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord! So then with the mind, I myself serve God's law, but with the flesh, the sin's law.

These verses are often quoted out of context in order to make the case that sin cannot be overcome. But that's not what Paul is saying. Sin cannot be overcome under the Law. In context, Paul is talking about what it's like to live under

the Law. But sin can be overcome under grace (God's work). When we live under grace, we live for Christ. The Holy Spirit of Christ lives inside us as we do the works of the Father. That was not possible before Christ's sacrifice.

But did Paul overcome sin before writing all his letters? For Paul, the answer would probably be no. For John, the answer would probably be yes. In verse 25 (above), Paul said, "So then with the mind, I myself serve God's law, but with the flesh, the sin's law." Is Paul saying that he continues to sin? Yes, that's what he is saying. The ESV is a bit clearer.

Romans 7:25 ESV Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Paul states that he still has problems with living in the Spirit all the time. During our journey of sanctification, people go back and forth between living under the law and living in the Spirit. By the end of his life, Paul completed his race and was entirely sanctified. The details of this are out of scope of this booklet. For more information, refer to chapter 3 of my booklet titled, *Christian Perfection by Grace and Works*. This booklet covers the Christian Perfection of Jesus, John, Paul, and James. It can be read online, at www.newwine.org. It can also be purchased from Amazon.

Paul was describing what it's like to live under the Law. Yes, Paul admits that he would fall into temptation and shift back into sin, living under the Law. For the most part, Paul would have been living under grace. By the end of his life he was entirely sanctified. To confirm this context, simply keep on reading into chapter 8 of Romans. Remember that in the original Greek, there were no chapter divisions.

5.2) Those who walk by the Sprit will be Glorified.

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who don't walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.

Many people read these words, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,” as being completely disconnected from the last verses of chapter 7. Paul supposedly tells us all about how impossible it is to overcome sin because of the flesh. Then, here in chapter 8, Paul tells us there is no condemnation to those who don’t live according to the flesh. Did Paul just say it is impossible to avoid living according to the flesh, and then turn right around and say, in the very next verse, that we who are in Christ Jesus don’t walk according to the flesh?

Again, the verses at the end of chapter 7 tell us what it’s like living under the Law. Now, Paul is telling us what it’s like living under grace.

Romans 8:3-4 For what the law couldn't do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh; (4) that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Did Paul really say in chapter 7 that it’s impossible to avoid living according to the flesh, and then right here say we “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit?” In chapter 7 Paul was not talking about living under grace, with one’s sins

forgiven. If you identify with the words of Paul in chapter 7, you should ask yourself if you are really living by the Spirit.

But on the other hand, almost every single one of us can identify with Paul's words in chapter 7 to some degree. That's because all of us, after becoming believers, tend to switch back and forth between living under the law and living under grace. That doesn't mean we start religiously obeying the dietary laws and doing animal sacrifices. But we can easily fall into the judgment of others. And we can easily struggle with our own sins without really learning how to focus on helping others, and doing the works of the Father.

Romans 8:5-7 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (6) For the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace; (7) because the mind of the flesh is hostile towards God; for it is not subject to God's law, neither indeed can it be.

Those who live by the flesh set their minds on the things of flesh, which is self. Those who live by the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit, which is in helping others. And during our journey of sanctification we switch back and forth between living by the law and living by the Spirit. But Paul is not saying it's impossible to complete one's journey of sanctification. As we mature in Christ, we learn to live by the Spirit all the time.

Romans 8:8-11 Those who are in the flesh can't please God. (9) But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if it is so that the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. (10) If Christ is in you, the body is

dead because of sin, but the spirit is alive because of righteousness. (11) But if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised up Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

What does Paul mean in verse 10? If Christ is in us, the body is dead because of sin. That means we will still die even though we are living in the Spirit. We will die because of our past sins. But our “spirit is alive because of righteousness.” That means because Christ is in us, we will be resurrected with an eternal life because we are no longer sinning and thus we have righteousness. Verse 11 goes on to say that we are dead because of sin, but even our mortal bodies are given new life because the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ is in us.

Romans 8:12-14 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) For if you live after the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God.

By this point it should be abundantly clear that anyone who says that we all continue to sin because of the flesh is not connecting Romans 7 with Romans 8. “If you live after the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body [flesh], you will live.” Here we see that we cannot, by ourselves, put to death the deeds of the flesh. It must be done by the Spirit. We are changed by the Holy Spirit on the inside.

Paul goes on to say that those who are led by the Spirit are the children of God. Figuratively speaking, those led by

the Spirit are children of God. Literally speaking, when we literally get new bodies, we will literally be children of God.

This figurative now and literal later aspect of being children of God can be seen clearly in these verses. Verse 14, quoted above, says "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are children of God." This is a clear statement of how God sees those of us who are led by the Spirit right now. Verse 23, quoted below, says "Not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for adoption, the redemption of our body." This is a clear statement that shows we are not yet literally God's children because we have not yet been adopted.

The late George E. Ladd is well-known for his teaching that the kingdom of heaven is here and now but not yet. Because of Ladd's influence on the late John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard churches, these churches today consider this to be an important core teaching. The idea is that the kingdom is spiritually in our hearts today, but will literally be in the world when Christ returns.

The same thing is true for salvation, being "born again," and being a child of God. We will literally become a child of God when we have a body that was not born from the womb of our mothers. We will literally be "born again" when we have that new body. But we are figuratively "born again" in our hearts today. We will literally be saved from sin and death when we are resurrected with an eternal life body that can no longer die. But we are figuratively "saved" when we begin our journey of salvation by faith and grace.

Romans 8:15-19 For you didn't receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (16)

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God; (17) and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him. (18) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which will be revealed toward us. (19) For the creation waits with eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed.

If we are children of God, then we will inherit the kingdom. Only those who overcome all their sinful habits will inherit the kingdom. The creation waits for the children of God to be revealed.

Romans 8:20-23 For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but because of him who subjected it, in hope (21) that the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of decay into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. (23) Not only so, but ourselves also, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for adoption, the redemption of our body.

Some people use the groaning of the creation, and the bondage of decay in the creation, as an argument that says we cannot stop sinning before Christ returns. It's true that the creation is in a bondage of decay. Paul's words here in verse 21 is a strong allusion to Genesis 3:17-19 where God said to Adam, "Cursed is the ground for your sake. In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life." But just because the curse on the creation will remain until Christ returns

does not mean that those who walk by the Spirit will continue to sin. Remember that Christ is the Second Adam.

There is another strong Old Testament allusion in what Paul says about the creation. In verse 21 Paul says, “For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.” The travailing of the creation, like a pregnant woman, brings us back to Isaiah 26:17-19. Verse 19 says, “The earth [creation] will give birth to the dead.” It’s talking about the resurrection. And it’s where Jesus gets the Old Testament teaching about being “born again.”

Isaiah 26:17-18 ESV Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O LORD; (18) we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen. (19) Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

Romans 8:24-27 For we were saved in hope, but hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for that which he sees? (25) But if we hope for that which we don't see, we wait for it with patience. (26) In the same way, the Spirit also helps our weaknesses, for we don't know how to pray as we ought. But the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which can't be uttered. (27) He who searches the hearts knows what is on the Spirit's mind, because he makes intercession for the saints according to God.

Romans 8:28-30 We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. (29) For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (30) Whom he predestined, those he also called. Whom he called, those he also justified. Whom he justified, those he also glorified.

We were foreknown by God and predestined (elected) to be conformed to the image of his Son. The Holy Spirit conforms us to the image of his Son as we do the works that Christ would do, because Christ lives in us. This election is the same as the election of Israel. We are grafted into Israel, the chosen nation, who will reign with Christ over the nations. Righteousness will go out to the nations as a result of the reign of the elect, which are firstfruits of the harvest.

Romans 8:31-33 What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (32) He who didn't spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how would he not also with him freely give us all things? (33) Who could bring a charge against God's chosen ones? It is God who justifies.

Romans 8:34-39 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, yes rather, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Could oppression, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (36) Even as it is written, "For your

sake we are killed all day long. We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter." (37) No, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (38) For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Under the Law we cannot stop sinning. That's because under the Law we work for ourselves and make sacrifices for our own sins. Or perhaps we are trying to stop sinning through our own efforts.

Under grace we can stop sinning because we no longer live for ourselves. We live for Christ because Christ died. Christ reconciled himself to us and lives in us. We have died to ourselves. It's no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us. We work for Christ which is to work for the Father and for others.

If we fall back into sin, we do so because we fall back into living for ourselves. Temptation is all about self. All sins are for the gratification of self. But we have Christ who forgives us our sins, and we can be filled again with the Holy Spirit of Christ. Then we return to living for Christ and living (working) for others.

5.3) Belief and faith are a journey.

We are saved by faith and through grace. But faith without works is dead (James 2:17, 2:26). Our belief and faith are not one-time events. Salvation by faith is a journey. By faith and belief we are sanctified as we do the works of the Father. “He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). God’s grace is more powerful even than death. “Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

John 3:16, 18 For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. ... He who believes in him is not judged. He who doesn't believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.

Belief and faith are a journey. Those who willfully refuse Christ’s journey are judged already, which means they’ve lost their reconciliation. But those who complete their journey to overcome sin will be given eternal life. The following verses indicate that salvation is a journey that leads to eternal life. The journey is required in order to receive eternal life.

Matthew 10:22 ESV and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Matthew 24:13 ESV But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

Luke 13:23-24 ESV And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, (24) "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

Acts 15:11 ESV But we believe that we will be saved through the [work] of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

Romans 5:9-10 ESV Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. (10) For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

Romans 13:11 ESV Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

1 Thessalonians 5:8-9 ESV But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. (9) For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

2 Thessalonians 2:13 ESV But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

1 Timothy 1:15-16 ESV The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. (16) But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

1 Timothy 2:15 ESV Yet she will be saved through childbearing--if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.

1 Timothy 4:16 ESV Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 ESV But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it (15) and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 1:5 ESV who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:8-9 ESV Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, (9) obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 2:1-2 ESV So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. (2) Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation--

Hebrews 9:28 ESV so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

James 1:19-22 ESV Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; (20) for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. (21) Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. (22) But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

James 5:19-20 ESV My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, (20) let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Jude 1:20-21 ESV But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, (21) keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

James 2:14 ESV What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

Philippians 2:12-13 ESV Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, (13) for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

John 14:4-6 ESV And you know the [road] to where I am going." (5) Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the [road]?" (6) Jesus said to him, "I am the [road], and the truth, and the life. No one [journeys] to the Father except through me.

I substituted the word “way” with “road”, and “comes” with “journeys.” Strong’s definition for this word, normally translated as “way” in these verses, is as follows.

G3598 – hodos – Apparently a primary word; a road; by implication a progress (the route, act, or distance); figuratively a mode or means; - journey, (high-) way.

Chapter 6

Common Objections and Christ's Voice

Any system of interpretation that is significantly different from that which one adheres to will naturally bring objections. It's often automatically assumed that anything different is some kind of cult. People have assumed the New Wine System is cult-like. For example, they sometimes assume this is Christian Universalism because I make use of certain verses. People are so used to difficult verses in Scripture that any possible use of those verses is automatically viewed with suspicion.

Others have objected to the claim that anyone could have a system of interpretation that solves all of these difficulties. One pastor told me the word "solves" is too strong a word. He even found that word objectionable. A lack of harmony in Scripture itself has become so comfortable and expected among theologians that any suggestion of a solution to all the problems using one system of interpretation itself becomes objectionable. But if Scripture really is the inspired word of God, one would expect there to be a very clear harmony in Scripture.

People tend to learn complex arguments for every difficult verse of Scripture within their system of interpretation. They tend to believe that since they have complex explanations for every verse, their system of interpretation is the closest to being the truth. They often forget that there are many systems of interpretation out there, and every single one has complex arguments for every single difficult verse. It's very easy to see problems with

another system of interpretation and forget about all the problems with one's own system.

In my opinion, the New Wine System really does harmonize Scripture. Under this system there are no difficult verses requiring complex explanations. But even that claim becomes objectionable. This chapter addresses many of the common objections to the New Wine System.

6.1) Objection: God would not let us be wrong.

Some object by saying God would not have allowed the Church to be wrong. Of course this opinion comes from the notion that one's own denomination or system of interpretation is correct and everyone else's is wrong. The Protestants must be correct and the Catholics must be wrong because God would not let the Protestants be wrong. But shouldn't God likewise not allow the Catholics to have been wrong before the Protestant Reformation? Of course this line of thinking is usually not reasoned out to even this extent. It's usually an emotional reaction to hearing something different.

Martin Luther faced a very similar problem. The Catholic Church, at that time, believed that salvation is not possible outside the Catholic Church. Those who grew up in the Catholic Church might have had difficulties in believing that Martin Luther was correct and the entire Catholic Church was incorrect.

The teachings of the Catholic Church were based on tradition as well as Scripture. The Catholic Church has had many centuries of tradition which for them determines doctrine on the same level as Scripture itself. One of the mottos of the Reformation was *Sola Scriptura*, meaning that we should use Scripture alone in our determination of

doctrine. The Protestant of today would have to say God allowed Catholics to be doctrinally mistaken.

The New Wine System is a plan of salvation that relies heavily on the millennial reign of Christ. But at the time of Luther and Calvin, the Church was predominately amillennial or postmillennial. Millennialism was considered to be a superstition at best. Protestants persecuted and killed Anabaptists primarily for their belief in water baptism and millennialism. One could argue that the Anabaptists were much more *Sola Scriptura* than the mainstream Protestants. And yet they were persecuted and killed for their beliefs.

Calvin's first publication was a paper arguing against the supposed Anabaptist belief in soul-sleep. (It's unclear if Anabaptists actually held this belief.) Thus, during the time of Luther and Calvin, the belief in the earthly reign of Christ, and the idea that the dead have only the resurrection for any hope of an afterlife, were considered to be very cult-like. Yet these beliefs are clearly taught in the Old Testament.

The Reformation began when Luther started to preach against the practice of indulgences. These are tied closely to purgatory. At first Luther kept his belief in purgatory. The emphasis of the Reformation is salvation by grace, which allows for salvation outside the Catholic Church. But eventually Luther stopped believing in purgatory.

But to do so, salvation had to lean towards a one-time decision with strong ties to an election of those who will be saved. That's because if salvation is a journey one has to consider what happens to those who don't complete their journey. For the Catholics, those who are not entirely sanctified spend time in purgatory. The Catholic saints go straight to heaven without spending time in purgatory. Thus, most people wind up in purgatory.

With millennialism and soul-sleep far removed from consideration, Luther would have never considered the millennium as a free-grace alternative to purgatory. So Luther was simply not able to consider what I call the New Wine System. It was only after dispensationalism emerged around 1830 that millennialism became more mainstream in Christian theology.

The other obstacle to the New Wine System is soul-sleep. The idea that the dead are asleep and await the resurrection is clearly taught in the Old Testament. But even today, soul-sleep is often associated with cults. Jehovah's Witnesses teach a thing called soul-annihilation, which is to say the soul is destroyed at death and might never be re-created. This belief says there is no literal punishment in hell, even after the thousand-year reign of Christ. Soul-sleep is often confused with a denial of punishment for the wicked.

Is Christ going to return and tell us which system is correct? Is he going to say this group is right and everyone else is wrong? Is he going to say Protestants are right and Catholics are wrong? Or is it more likely that Christ will return and say everyone is wrong? But everyone has many truths. After all, we are all reading the same Bible. Could it be that the truth hides in the middle?

6.2) Objection: There is no second chance.

Some have objected to the New Wine System saying that God would not allow people a second chance to be saved after the resurrection. But what about those who die have never even heard about Christ? Shouldn't they get a first chance? Or what about people who have heard the gospel but they didn't really understand? There are often

cultural barriers that prevent one from really wanting to learn about Christ. Does the Father give up on them?

But it is fair to point out that if people knew they could wait until after the resurrection they might choose to remain in their sins. Perhaps God has withheld the true understanding of his plan of salvation, until this end-time generation, for this very reason.

Paul refers to the "mystery of God." For example, it was a mystery of God that Gentile believers would be grafted into Israel (Romans 11:33). This is not to say that all Gentiles were thought to be condemned to hell. There was a Jewish teaching of the righteous Gentile. But it was not believed that Gentiles would become a part of Israel.

Ephesians 2:11-12 Therefore remember that once you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "uncircumcision" by that which is called "circumcision," (in the flesh, made by hands); (12) that you were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 3:1-7 For this cause I, Paul, am the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles, (2) if it is so that you have heard of the administration of that grace of God which was given me toward you; (3) how that by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I wrote before in few words, (4) by which, when you read, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; (5) which in other generations was not made known to the children of men, as it has now been revealed

to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; (6) that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus through the Good News, (7) of which I was made a servant, according to the gift of that **[work]** of God which was given me according to the working of his power.

I believe aspects of God's mystery have been with us all along. But God has withheld the full understanding of this mystery until the end-times generation.

Most generations, both Old Testament and New Testament, have had to wait on the Messiah for their entire lives. If those generations had truly understood this mystery, many would have been tempted to continue sinning throughout their lives, figuring they could change after the resurrection. So God withheld much of this revelation until the time of the end.

If I am right, that this mystery was withheld until this time, then I think that for the most part it's even being withheld right up to the appearance of Christ and the start of the seven-year time of tribulation. During the second half of those seven years, many people will be forced to either take the mark of the beast or lose their lives.

At this point in time, for the generation that lives through the seven-year tribulation, the idea of repenting after the resurrection would not work. If they take the mark of the beast, they would be publicly denying Christ. They would become enemies of Christ and would not be resurrected. Those who take the mark of the beast will be blotted from the Book of Life. They will "come to life" at the end of the thousand years to be judged and thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:5a, 20:7-15).

6.3) Objection: You can't completely overcome sin.

Many Christians, especially people with Baptist or Reformed backgrounds, are very adamant in their belief that you can't completely overcome sin. Some will say you can't go for an hour, or even ten minutes, without sinning. You can point to Scripture, but it rarely changes their view.

1 John 3:4-6 Everyone who sins also commits lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. (5) You know that he was revealed to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. (6) Whoever remains in him doesn't sin. Whoever sins hasn't seen him, neither knows him.

1 John 5:17a-18 All unrighteousness is sin, ... (18) We know that whoever is born of God doesn't sin, but he who was born of God keeps himself, and the evil one doesn't touch him.

Some will argue there are two types of sins. Some sins can be overcome and other sins cannot be completely overcome. But John doesn't seem to be making this distinction when he says, "All unrighteousness is sin. ... We know that whoever is born of God doesn't sin."

Of course this does not mean that all believers never sin. John tells us why he is writing this letter.

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, I write these things to you so that you may not sin. If anyone sins, we have a Counselor with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous. (2) And he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

Notice that John says Christ is the “atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the whole world.” In other words, all sins have been atoned for in the entire world. This includes believers and unbelievers alike.

When sins are expressed as habits, then most Christians tend to agree that you can overcome sinful habits. But since they have a presupposition that you can’t stop sinning, they tend to believe that mistakes, or even one’s very existence, is sinful. We have bodies of flesh and flesh is sinful. Perhaps this goes back to old Gnostic thinking. Bottom line is that sin is often defined in terms that make it impossible to overcome. The truth, however, is that all sins are habitual. And all sinful habits can be overcome by living for Christ.

Sinful habits include habits of the mind, such as lust, uncontrolled anger, hatred, and covetousness. Love can overcome all these habits of the mind. Sinful habits that are acted out usually come about as a result of sinful habits of the mind. That’s why Paul says the greatest of all the spiritual gifts is love, and that without love none of the other spiritual gifts are of any value.

There are two metaphors that were used by Jesus about the overcoming of sin. We are to be in the light, and we are to be clean. You are either in the light or you are in darkness. There is no gray area. You are either clean or you are unclean. There is no partial cleanliness. So you have either overcome all your sinful habits and Christ is in control of your life. Or, you still have sinful habits that are in control of your life. There is no middle ground. You cannot serve two masters.

Let’s look at it another way. Suppose everyone could read your mind. And you could read every thought of everyone else. Would you welcome this power? Or do you

have thoughts you prefer would remain secret? If you have a habit of lust, you might not want your spouse or family to know about it. If you have uncontrolled anger, you might want to hide your anger. If you have thoughts of covetousness, you might want to hide that as well. Sinful habits are things that you wish to remain hidden.

What is heaven like? Do the angels have secrets to hide? Or do they know each other's thoughts? Jesus knew the thoughts and secrets of the Samaritan woman at the well. We must overcome all our sinful habits to the point where it would be a joy to live in a community where our family, friends, and acquaintances can all hear our every thought. This is living in the light. This is living in pure love. If you have thoughts which must be hidden then you are living in darkness and you are not ready for the community of heaven. There is no middle ground.

1 John 1:5-10 This is the message which we have heard from him and announce to 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 the darkness, we lie, and don't tell the truth. (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses 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 righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say that we haven't sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Verse 8 of this chapter is often taken out of context and used to say that you can't overcome sin. As a matter of fact, this verse seems to be the poster-child of those who say you can't overcome sin. The context of these verses says that God is in the light and we are expected to be in the light just as God is in the light. John's expectation of our lack of sinful habits is being compared with God's lack of sinful habits. It's very much like Matthew 5:48 where Jesus tells us to be perfect just as the Father is perfect. There is no gray area.

The context of this verse is also about those who would say they haven't sinned. Verse 8 is saying the same thing. If we have never sinned, then we have no sin, and deceive ourselves. Let's drill down a bit more on verse 8.

1 John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

In English, the adjective "no" modifies the noun "sin." We read the phrase "no sin" as saying sin doesn't exist. But in the Greek, the word for "no" is an adverb. Adverbs modify verbs and not nouns. It modifies the Greek verb meaning "to have" or "to hold" and not the noun for "sin." The phrase should be we "don't have sin" or "don't hold sin." A better translation of this verse would be:

1 John 1:8 If we say that we [don't hold sin], we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we have sinned in the past, we hold that sin until it's forgiven and removed. If we say we don't hold sin, and thus we don't need to be forgiven, then we deceive ourselves. Translated this way, it winds up fitting right in with the context of verse 10 and the rest of the letter. John is not saying that we can't overcome sin.

But even knowing all this, there can be strongholds of sin that always seem to creep back into one's life. What does Scripture teach about how to completely overcome all our sinful habits?

We become perfect by doing the works the Father has given us to do. As we do the good works the Father has prepared for us, we are filled with the Holy Spirit to help us do the works. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we cannot sin, because God is in us and God cannot sin. But if we give into temptation, the Holy Spirit backs off.

But because of Christ's blood, after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit became available to all who would repent and ask. We can continually become filled with the Holy Spirit again and again, so that when we are filled, we can't sin. Over time, we learn to be filled with the Holy Spirit all the time. We become perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect.

The gospel of the kingdom is that sin can be overcome through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But if we believe that we don't have to overcome sin in order to reconcile ourselves back to God, then sin will continue to win. We must become desperate for God.

In the final sections of this chapter, we will break this down more. What does it mean to take up our cross and follow Christ? What did Jesus mean when he asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?" How do we become desperate to love Christ? How does this love bring us into Christian perfection? How do we know we are doing the works of the Father? What does it mean to hear Christ's voice?

6.4) What does it mean to be sold out for Christ?

Some people object to Christian perfection saying that even Peter sinned after being a disciple of Christ. But Jesus even said to Peter that he and the other disciples (except for one) are clean. Let's take another look at that story.

During the Lord's Supper on the evening before the crucifixion, Jesus went around the room and washed the disciples' feet. This made Peter very reluctant to have his Lord wash his feet.

John 13:6-9 Then he came to Simon Peter. He said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" (7) Jesus answered him, "You don't know what I am doing now, but you will understand later." (8) Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with me." (9) Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

Here we see that Jesus tells Peter that he is clean. As we will see, this means Peter is no longer sinning. His sinful habits have been broken thanks to being a disciple of Christ. But when put to the test for his own life, we find out that Peter still has something that he lacks.

John 13:10-11 Jesus said to him, "Someone who has bathed only needs to have his feet washed, but is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you." (11) For he knew him who would betray him, therefore he said, "You are not all clean."

In washing of the disciple's feet, Jesus was teaching Peter and the other disciples a lesson that they would not understand until after the resurrection. Why was this lesson so important that Peter could not be a true disciple of Jesus unless he learned it? How many people today have also not learned this lesson or taken it to heart, yet consider themselves to be disciples of Jesus?

Salvation is a free gift, received by grace alone. But discipleship requires lots of work. We can be saved from death, which is to be resurrected, as a free gift. But then there is the possibility of a second death (Revelation 20:6, 20:14, 21:8). Those who inherit the kingdom, however, also inherit eternal life. They have worked to overcome sin, and are excluded from the possibility of a second death (Revelation 2:11). Jesus told his disciples, who already believed in him, to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matthew 6:33, Luke 12:31). Those who inherit the kingdom also inherit eternal life. How do we seek the kingdom? We must be a servant and do the works the Father has given for us.

John 13:12-17 So when he had washed their feet, put his outer garment back on, and sat down again, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? (13) You call me, 'Teacher' and 'Lord.' You say so correctly, for so I am. (14) If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. (16) Most certainly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his lord, neither one who is sent greater than he who sent him. (17) If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

The difference between simply being saved at the resurrection and inheriting the kingdom and eternal life is all about one's maturity in Christ. We must walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6). In the kingdom of heaven, the last shall be first, and the first shall be last (Matthew 19:29-30, 20:16).

Mark 9:35 He sat down, and called the twelve; and he said to them, "If any man wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all."

The wise are servants. Those who will reign as kings and priests in the age to come must first develop a servant's heart in this age. Being a minister for Christ is not about building big churches. It's about loving others and reflecting that love in one's actions. You could say that both faith and love without works are dead. Jesus continues teaching at the Last Supper:

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, just like I have loved you; that you also love one another. (35) By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Notice the condition given in order to become Christ's disciple. We must love one another. Christians can easily become caught up in the things of this world, and their love grows cold. They are still saved in spite of this. But without the supernatural love from Christ being carried out in their life, they won't be resurrected as one of Christ's disciples.

Did Peter possess the love for Christ that is necessary to be one of Christ's disciples at this time?

John 13:37-38 Peter said to him, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." (38) Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for me? Most certainly I tell you, the rooster won't crow until you have denied me three times."

Peter believed that he loved Christ enough to die for him. But as we find out later, Peter had not yet developed the maturity in Christ necessary to become a disciple and a leader. Everyone who is to be a priest and king in the millennium must possess the maturity and love of Christ in order to be one of Christ's leaders. To be resurrected with a spiritual body, we must be willing and ready to die for Christ. Peter was not ready for Christ to return.

Likewise, we are not ready for Christ to return until we love Christ enough to die for him instead of denying him. This is the mark of the beast test that is coming soon.

Matthew 10:37-39 He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me isn't worthy of me. (38) He who doesn't take his cross and follow after me, isn't worthy of me. (39) He who seeks his life will lose it; and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

Peter believed he was ready to die for Christ, but Jesus knew that Peter was not yet ready to sacrifice his life. Of course later we find that Peter, when put to the test, denied that he even knew Jesus. This failure really tore at Peter's heart. The next time he was in Jesus' presence was after the resurrection. At their next meeting Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?"

Read this way, as given in most English translations, Jesus comes across as being a real jerk. When Peter is at his lowest, Jesus keeps asking Peter if he loves him more than the other disciples. Peter keeps saying yes, but Jesus keeps asking until Peter is grieved because Jesus asked a third time. Some people try to apologize for Jesus by pointing out that Peter had denied Jesus three times, so Jesus was asking three times. Yet this still makes Jesus out to be a jerk. But in the Greek something entirely different is happening.

In Greek, there are three different words for 'love.' Agape love is unconditional love. Philos love is brotherly love. When Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me," these two types of love were being used in the conversation. In this translation, "affection" is used for philos love and "love" for agape love. With this distinction being made in this translation, you can get the idea of what was really being said.

John 21:14-17 This is now the third time that Jesus was revealed to his disciples, after he had risen from the dead. (15) So when they had eaten their breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." (16) He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I have affection for you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." (17) He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you have affection for me?" Peter was grieved because he asked him the third time, "Do you have affection for me?" He said to him, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I have affection for you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

Peter knew that he had failed the test. He had denied Christ because he was afraid for his life. To Peter's credit, he displayed honesty in this conversation with Christ. His love for Jesus was not unconditional, and this realization pained him greatly. Peter's grief over Jesus' repetition of this question is a completely different type of emotion than it would appear to be when read in a translation without the two different types of love. (Most translations do not make this distinction.) Peter was honest in his statement, "Lord, you know everything," and about his lack of love.

Was Jesus chastising Peter for his lack of love? No, Jesus was gently redeeming Peter, and gently revealing the way to bring his love from *philos* "affection" to *agape* love.

The way to increase our love for God is to increase our love for our neighbor. When Christ said, "feed my sheep," he was not talking about Peter becoming the pastor of his church. He wanted Peter to adopt a servant's heart toward anyone in need. "Feed my sheep" was a command to exercise the Spiritual gifts that God has given us in love for one another. As our love for Christ increases, our love for our neighbor increases. Consequently, as our love for our neighbor increases, our love for Christ increases.

In the very next verse, Jesus tells Peter that in the future he will love Christ unconditionally, and was going to die for Him in his old age. Normally this is not something that would brighten one's day. But in Peter's case, it was exactly what he needed to hear.

John 21:18-19 Most certainly I tell you, when you were young, you dressed yourself, and walked where you wanted to. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you, and carry you where you don't want to go." (19) Now he said

this, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. When he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

This is an example of a servant's heart, and shows the way to be a true disciple of Christ. No man is greater than his master. Because Christ had only a servant's heart, His true disciples must only have a servant's heart. This love requires total devotion to Christ no matter the cost, even if it requires sacrificing one's life.

6.5) What does it mean to hear Christ's voice?

John 1:1-2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God.

Some theologians believe John is making use of the Greek doctrine of Logos (which means Word). The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said the word is a universal force of reason which controls the universe. He said "all things happen according to this Logos" (Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies*, IX, 9, 1). At the start of the first century, Philo was a Jew who tried to interpret the Old Testament in light of Greek thinking. He compared God's creation to the building of a great city and made use of the Greek "Logos of God" (*On the Creation*, 24).

Of course John is saying that the Logos is Jesus Christ. The other gospels tell us about Christ's sheep. But the gospel of John is the only gospel with accounts of sheep who hear Christ's voice (John 10). The sheep hear the Word, or Logos of Jesus Christ. Interwoven into this parable, about

the sheep hearing Christ's voice, is the fact that the shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

As we will learn about in the next chapter of this book, John tells us what Jesus said about the resurrection, where the dead hear Christ's voice and come out of their tombs (John 5:28-29). It would seem that John is purposefully connecting the dots for us and helping us to understand about the Logos of God, which is Christ's voice.

A major point of this book has been that Christ laid down his life for everyone and not just for believers. This parable of the sheep (below) caused a division among the Jews (John 10:19). The ones who were against Christ said he had a demon (verse 21). This is very much like Matthew 12 where the miracles of the Holy Spirit were said to be the work of Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24). This sin will not be forgiven (Matthew 12:31-32). Back in John 10, Jesus tells those who were against Christ they are not his sheep. Everyone will eventually mature in Christ to receive eternal life or they will become his enemy and no longer be his sheep. They will no longer hear his voice.

John 10:25-30 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you don't believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, these testify about me. (26) But you don't believe, because you are not of my sheep, as I told you. (27) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (28) I give eternal life to them. They will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. (29) My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. (30) I and the Father are one."

6.6) What does it mean to obey Christ's voice?

Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth."

Every day we should take some time to be still before the Lord. Allow God to speak. Learn God's will for your life. And obey God's commands. Learn to walk with God.

Genesis 5:22-24 ESV Enoch walked with God after he fathered Methuselah 300 years and had other sons and daughters. (23) Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. (24) Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

Genesis 6:9 ESV These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.

1 John 1:7 ESV But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 2:6 ESV whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Enoch walked with God and became righteous. He was taken (like the rapture) and never died. Noah walked with God and became righteous. He became blameless in his generation. To walk with God is more than just hearing God's voice. It's also doing God's work. Noah built the ark, nowhere near water, because God told him to do so.

Spend the time each day to hear Christ's voice. When you pray, don't just spend the time talking to God. Spend much of the time in silence. Generally speaking, this does not mean you will hear actual words. God places thoughts in your mind that you often realize are not your own. Ask to know God's will. Seek his wisdom and understanding. Be open to knowing what God would have you do.

And most importantly, your walk with God must be in righteousness. Ask God to help you in overcoming any sinful habits. Turn your life over to working for Christ.

Matthew 7:21-23 Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. (22) Many will tell me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many mighty works?' (23) Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity.'

These people will include pastors and teachers who really believed they were doing the works of the Father. Christ will say to them "I never knew you. Depart from me." Does this mean they go to hell? No, it simply means they will live with the nations and not in the coming New Jerusalem. They will not live in the Father's house where there are many rooms.

Is your work for the Lord bringing holiness into your own life? Have you overcome all your sinful habits? Does your work for the Lord bring holiness to others? Do you preach against sin? Do you lead others to righteousness? If not, you may unknowingly be a wolf in sheep clothing. In the verses just prior to the "Lord, Lord" verses, we read:

Matthew 7:15-20 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. (16) By their fruits you will know them. Do you gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? (17) Even so, every good tree produces good fruit; but the corrupt tree produces evil fruit. (18) A good tree can't produce evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. (19) Every tree that doesn't grow good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire. (20) Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.

Good fruit in this context must be holiness. If a pastor or teacher's work for the Father is not bringing holiness in those they pastor and teach, then they may unknowingly be false prophets. The pastor or teacher must themselves overcome all the sinful habits in their own lives before they can be effective in teaching righteousness to others. Before these verses about wolves in sheep clothing we read:

Matthew 7:12-14 Therefore whatever you desire for men to do to you, you shall also do to them; for this is the law and the prophets. (13) "Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it. (14) How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it.

The narrow gate is the gate of righteousness. It's the gate of overcoming all the sinful habits in one's life. Few find this gate.

The wide gate leads to destruction. But we are not talking about going to hell. The context of the Sermon on the Mount is that of righteousness. It's about storing your treasures in heaven by doing the works of the Father. It's about being hungry for righteousness. It's about "being perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect."

It's about building your house on the rock. The foolish build their houses on the sand. The destruction of the houses does not mean you go to hell. It means you have spent your time and energy in building up possessions in this age instead of trusting that God will provide for your needs as God provides for the lilies of the field. The foolish don't go to hell. They will live in the nations instead of in the New Jerusalem.

The wide gate leads to destruction of the property and possessions that are gained in this age because you are not finding the narrow gate of holiness that leads to eternal life. The foolish go through the wide gate. The wise go through the narrow gate of righteousness.

There is a parable about the wise and the foolish, where Jesus also said "I never knew you."

6.7) Ten Virgins; Five are Wise and Five are Foolish

Matthew 25:1-12 "Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went out to meet the bridegroom. (2) Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. (3) Those who were foolish, when they took their lamps, took no oil with them, (4) but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. (5) Now while the bridegroom delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

(6) But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold! The bridegroom is coming! Come out to meet him!' (7) Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. (8) The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' (9) But the wise answered, saying, 'What if there isn't enough for us and you? You go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' (10) While they went away to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was shut. (11) Afterward the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us.' (12) But he answered, 'Most certainly I tell you, I don't know you.'

After the parable of the wise or wicked servant, Jesus tells us the parable of the ten virgins. The five virgins are wise and five are foolish. Notice that the foolish are not wicked. They are simply foolish. All ten wait for the bridegroom. All ten are asleep when the bridegroom arrives. But only the wise are "ready" to enter the wedding banquet. From the overall context of Matthew 24-25, to be "ready" means you are mature in Christ. The wise walk as Jesus walked (1 John 2:9), and are able to enter the wedding banquet with their glorified bodies. The wise have an [agape] love for Christ. Only the wise are gathered into the clouds, at the rapture after the tribulation.

Traditionally, this parable has been associated with going to heaven or hell when you die. Many believe that only the wise virgins are saved. But in order to make this case, one would have to show why salvation is determined by the amount of oil that one has. The amount of oil is the only difference mentioned between the wise and the foolish. It's not a matter of being asleep when Christ returns. Both

groups are asleep when the bridegroom comes. The foolish have some oil, because their lamps are burning. But they do not have enough oil. The question then is, what does the oil represent? How much is needed?

If one believes the parable is about going to heaven or hell when you die, and if the oil represents faith in Christ, then one would have to ask how much faith is required for salvation. Again, the foolish have oil, but not enough. If the oil represents works, then those who believe the parable is about salvation would have to say that salvation is by works. The parable simply does not fit our doctrine of salvation by grace and through faith.

Or, one might believe the oil is holiness. Again, how much holiness is required for salvation? How much oil is needed for salvation? No matter how you interpret the oil, it must be something that comes in various quantities or amounts. If salvation is a free gift, the amount of oil that one possesses cannot be a measure of whether or not one will go to heaven or hell when they die.

The better approach is to realize that the parable is not about whether or not we will be resurrected (saved from death). The parable is only about getting into the wedding banquet. The oil is the Holy Spirit. We are the light of the world. The oil of the Holy Spirit lights our lamps. As we do the works our Father gives us, we are filled more and more with the oil of the Holy Spirit, so that our light can shine. We need the Holy Spirit in order to do the Father's works. Otherwise, we are simply doing our own works. Doing the Father's works brings us a deeper filling of the Holy Spirit, which brings about holiness.

Those who make a continual practice of doing the Father's works are the elect. They are the saints. Those who are caught up in our day-to-day activities, required of us by the world we live in, are the foolish virgins. They will be saved because they believe in Christ to save them. And they do some works, and receive some of the oil of the Holy Spirit. But when Christ returns, they will not have enough. This oil is something the foolish will not be able to ask the wise to give them. It's not that their works are payment for getting into the wedding banquet. It's that the works produce holiness in us because we get filled with the Holy Spirit. We must be "completely sanctified" (1 Thess. 3:13, 5:23) when Christ returns in order to get into the wedding banquet.

Salvation is a free gift. But to inherit the kingdom requires a lot of work. A lot of oil is required to inherit the kingdom. That's why in the parable, the wise say the foolish must go to the market to buy more oil. No, we can't literally buy the Holy Spirit with money. We can't buy holiness with money. And we certainly can't buy salvation.

But we can do works of holiness. Just as we work for money, we work to get close to the Father. These must be works that we do out of joy, because we love the Father and we love our neighbors.

Jesus tells the foolish, "I don't know you. Watch therefore, for you don't know the day nor the [time]" (Matthew 25:12-13 ESV). This is not to say they go to hell. That's simply an assumption that has been made out of the belief that death is the end of the journey, sealing his or her fate for all of eternity. For Christ to say, "I never knew you," is simply to say you have not developed a discipleship relationship with Christ, to become like Christ. He knows us as we get to know Him.

6.8) The Wise, the Foolish, and the Wicked

Jesus taught initially with the Sermon on the Mount. Later, he taught in parables. He was consistent in his use of the terms: the wise, the foolish, and the wicked. Paul and the other disciples didn't continue with the use of these three terms. But during the preaching of Jesus, the kingdom of heaven was at hand. If Israel had accepted the Messiah, the earthly kingdom would have been established at that time. Jesus placed emphasis on holiness and what it takes to enter the kingdom of heaven. The Messiah (King) of Israel needs a holy firstfruits nation to reign with him in order to bring righteousness to the rest of the nations.

Later, after the ascension, the kingdom of heaven was no longer at hand. He had to wait until the gospel spread throughout the nations so that some of the Gentiles could be grafted into Israel. When the Messiah returns, Israel will rule the nations and righteousness will be taught to the nations as a result of that rule. Thus, the emphasis of Paul's message was more on missions and building the Church, which is Israel. (We don't replace Israel. We are grafted into Israel, whose purpose has not changed.)

In preaching holiness, Jesus consistently spoke of the wise as being those who overcome sin through a Lordship and discipleship relationship with Christ. The foolish are those who believe, but the worries of the world take their focus off of Christ. They build their houses on the sands of this world. Christ tells them, "I never knew you." However, they will still be saved, as in resurrected, to live in the nations. The wicked are those who become enemies of Christ and lose their reconciliation. They will not be resurrected. But at the end of the millennial reign, their souls will "come to life" and be cast into the lake of fire for the torment and the destruction of their souls.

This is understood once we realize that salvation is a journey, which must be completed, but that can extend through death and the resurrection into the age to come. When Protestants view salvation as a decision, the gospel of Jesus and the gospel of Paul seem to be out sync. When salvation is viewed as a journey which must be completed, the gospels of Jesus and Paul are in complete harmony.

Protestants who view salvation as more of a decision have had a strong debate about whether the visible fruit of the Spirit is required for salvation. Lordship salvation advocates have said that some fruit of the Spirit is required. Free-grace advocates have said that there will be some fruit, but that it may not be noticeable. Compare this debate with what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, there is no way you will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus goes on to say anger is murder and lust is adultery. Jesus concludes in verse 48 saying, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

The scribes and Pharisees seemed to be completely holy on the outside, but had thought-lives that were not holy on the inside. Their cups were clean on the outside but not on the inside. How does this compare with the position of Lordship salvation advocates who say you need have a least some evidence of holiness on the outside? The problem is that Jesus was not talking about salvation. He was talking about entering the kingdom. To understand Jesus, you have to understand the difference between the wise, the foolish, and the wicked. He was consistent in the use of these terms.

Chapter 7

Resurrection of the Just and the Unjust

7.1) The Resurrection in Isaiah 26

The first verse in the Bible that speaks of the resurrection is in Isaiah 26. Isaiah yearns for the coming of the Lord. This happens at the time of the resurrection. When the Lord comes and judges (rules over) the world, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. So Isaiah is talking about the Messianic reign of Christ. But in the meantime, evil rulers have ruled over Israel. There are several more important points to learn from this passage.

Isaiah 26:9-14 ESV My soul yearns for you in the night; my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. (10) If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the LORD. (11) O LORD, your hand is lifted up, but they do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries consume them. (12) O LORD, you will ordain peace for us, for you have indeed done for us all our works. (13) O LORD our God, other lords besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance. (14) They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise; to that end you have visited them with destruction and wiped out all remembrance of them.

According to these verses in Isaiah, not everyone is resurrected. Evil people are not resurrected. But who exactly are the evil? The evil are those who know about God but ignore God. God's hand is lifted up, but they choose to not see it. They are God's adversaries, which means they are specifically enemies of God. Some of them have ruled over Israel and were against the God of Israel. These evil men will not be resurrected. "They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise" (verse 14.) God has "wiped out all remembrance of them." The evil are not to be resurrected. But the strong implication here is that most people will be resurrected.

Isaiah 26:15-16 ESV But you have increased the nation, O LORD, you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged all the borders of the land. (16) O LORD, in distress they sought you; they poured out a whispered prayer when your discipline was upon them.

God has taken care of Israel even during the hard times when ruled over by evil rulers. God has expanded their borders. But God disciplines those he loves.

Isaiah 26:17-18 ESV Like a pregnant woman who writhes and cries out in her pangs when she is near to giving birth, so were we because of you, O LORD; (18) we were pregnant, we writhed, but we have given birth to wind. We have accomplished no deliverance in the earth, and the inhabitants of the world have not fallen.

Take careful note about the symbolism of the woman in labor. The actual birth is the resurrection. This symbol is used throughout Scripture in reference to the resurrection (Isaiah 26:17, 66:6-16, Hosea 13:12-14, Matthew 24:8, Mark 13:8, John 3:3-10, 1 Thessalonians 5:3, Revelation 12:1-5). But if one is not familiar with these first verses about the resurrection, this important symbol can be misinterpreted. For example, in John 3, to be "born again" refers to the resurrection. Israel is the woman in labor. In Old Testament times, Israel tried to bring righteousness to the world. But the dead remained dead. Israel only gave birth to wind. (This is Isaiah's poetry.) And Israel has not brought righteousness into the world.

Isaiah 26:19 ESV Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead.

But God will provide a way. The dead will rise and the Messiah will reign over the nations. The world will learn righteousness under the reign of the Messiah. But the Bride of the Messiah, which is Israel, must first become righteous. Gentile believers are grafted into Israel, which is the Bride of the Messiah.

Isaiah 26:20-21 ESV Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by. (21) For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain.

After the resurrection is the wrath of God, poured out on the world. When God returns, the dead are raised. Then the wrath of God is poured out on the world after the resurrection. Obviously God will not pour out his wrath on those he has raised from the dead.

7.2) The Resurrection in Daniel 12

There are several other references to the resurrection in the Old Testament. But the next major verse about the resurrection is in Daniel 12. The climax of this long vision in Daniel 10-12 is the resurrection. The entire vision is an historic roadmap to the resurrection and the events of the age to come after the resurrection.

Daniel 12:1-3 ESV "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. (2) And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (3) And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

The resurrection verse of Isaiah 26:19-21 refers to the dead, about to be resurrected, as "you who dwell in the dust." Likewise, this verse in Daniel 12:1-3 refers to the dead, about to be resurrected, as "those who sleep in the dust of the earth."

Both of these two major verses in the Old Testament about the resurrection say the dead are raised from the dust of the earth. Yet somehow Christians believe this changed in New Testament times. Most Christians today believe the dead are either in heaven or hell. Most Christians today believe that everyone, whether in heaven or hell, will be resurrected. Of course for those in hell, they get a new resurrected body in order to be judged. For some reason, those in hell are already judged from the standpoint that they go to hell, and not heaven. But apparently they must be resurrected for the very short amount of time that it takes to get judged again, even though they have already been judged because they are already in hell.

Of course it's just as confusing as to why those in heaven need to be resurrected. Apparently they are rejoicing in heaven but do not as yet have a body. Why doesn't God just go ahead and give them a body? Of course none of this confusion existed back in the Old Testament. People were simply dead in the dust of the earth. Their only hope of life after death was the resurrection itself.

Martha believed that she would see Lazarus "in the resurrection on the last day" (John 11:24). Martha had hope in the resurrection because that's what the Old Testament teaches. She didn't expect to see Lazarus in heaven before the resurrection. And apparently Christ taught the same. Christ told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-16). Isn't it rather anticlimactic for Christ to be the "resurrection and the life" if the righteous are already in heaven before the resurrection?

The Old Testament clearly teaches the dead will be raised from the dust of the earth. But did the Old Testament prophets get it wrong? Will they really be raised from heaven and hell? If the traditional Christian view of heaven-or-hell when you die is correct, then the dead are not raised from the dust of the earth. They are raised from heaven and hell. But of course if these Old Testament prophets were really God's prophets, then they must have been correct. The dead really are still asleep in the dust of the earth. They will sleep until the time of the resurrection.

At this point, many will think of several points in the New Testament that are used to argue the dead are not asleep and all of them are either in heaven or hell. What about the thief on the cross? What about the souls under the altar? What about the souls coming out of hades in Christ's train? What about the parable of Lazarus? There are a number of other arguments as well. These issues are outside the scope of this small book. But these issues are addressed in chapter 2 of my book titled, *New Wine for the End Times*. This is a much larger book and has a lot more details about the New Wine System of hermeneutics.

Then there is the point that Isaiah seemed to say not everyone will be resurrected. Remember Isaiah 26:14 spoke of evil rulers and said, "They are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise." The verse in Daniel seems to agree. Daniel 12:2 says, "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." Notice it does not say everyone will be resurrected. Many, but not all, are resurrected. The new point being revealed to Daniel is that within the many who are resurrected there are two different groups. Some are resurrected to everlasting life. Others to shame and everlasting contempt. And of course some are not resurrected.

There is another interesting point that should not be overlooked. The verse says, "But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book." In other words, not everyone is resurrected. But those who are resurrected are those whose names are in the Book of Life. And of those in the Book of Life, there are two groups.

Of course some will say this sentence is referring to those who are delivered from the "time of trouble." But does being in the Book of Life really keep us from this "time of trouble?" Dispensationalists might argue it's talking about the pre-tribulation rapture. But that doesn't work either. We know there will be believers during the great tribulation. Dispensationalists call them the "tribulation saints." If their names are written in the Book of Life, then why aren't they delivered along with the rest of the Church? The only explanation that works is to say that those in the Book of Life are resurrected. Those not in the Book of Life are not resurrected. And those resurrected are in two groups. Both groups are in the Book of Life.

All this may sound a bit confusing because there is a strong tendency to force one's New Testament beliefs back onto the Old Testament. This is called "reinterpreting the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament." But it's very doubtful that Old Testament authors would have agreed with these interpretations. In the Old Testament, both the righteous and the wicked went to "Sheol." This is translated as "hell" in the King James Version. But it simply means "grave." It was the place for all the dead, for both righteous and unrighteous. In the Old Testament, the only hope of life after death is the resurrection.

7.3) The Resurrection in Acts 24:15 and John 5

A better approach is to interpret the New Testament in the context of the Old Testament. In other words, if one has grown up with the Old Testament as being one's Bible, then how would one interpret the New Testament? This method of interpretation is called "progressive revelation." When reading any passage of Scripture, we must purposefully forget what was written later. Later comes new revelation. But it will not alter what was believed by the older prophets. And those prophets wrote in a way that explained what they understood to the audience of their day. So we must interpret older Scripture strictly in the way that the audience of that time would have understood. Then later Scripture should only add more details to what was previously written. That's why it's called "progressive revelation."

But, one will argue, what about what the New Testament teaches? Doesn't it say those who don't know Christ will be raised to a resurrection of damnation (KJV)? Actually, in the Greek, John 5:28-29 says they are raised to a resurrection of judgment. This has been traditionally translated as a resurrection of condemnation or as a resurrection of damnation. Let's go back and take a closer look at John 5. But this time let's interpret it more along the lines of progressive revelation. In other words, let's interpret it from the framework of Isaiah 26 and Daniel 12:1-3, where most but not all are resurrected. And those who are resurrected are in two groups.

Acts 24:15 ESV having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

In the above verse, those who complete their journey of sanctification would be the just. Those who do not, would be the unjust. There are two types of resurrections.

In the following passage, remember that Jesus is speaking to those who do not hear his voice. He is speaking to the wicked Pharisees and teachers of the law. They do not hear his voice. Christ's sheep hear his voice. Even Christ's lost sheep hear his voice. But most of the Pharisees and teachers of the law did not hear Christ's voice. This is important to remember.

John 5:21-23 ESV For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. (22) The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, (23) that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

The wicked are those to whom Jesus is speaking. They do not honor the Son. They do not hear his voice. So they will not be raised from the dead. This is clear to see when interpreted in the Old Testament context of Isaiah 26.

John 5:24 ESV Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Those who hear and believe will not be under judgment after the resurrection. They will have eternal life. The point here is that they hear and believe. The foolish lost sheep hear, but do not believe. Or they believe intellectually. But they do not really believe to do Christ's commands, which leads

to the overcoming of sin. Since the foolish lost sheep hear Christ's voice, they will be resurrected. But they still have sinful habits. So they will still be under judgment.

John 5:25 ESV "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and **those who hear will live.**

Notice that not everyone will live. Only those who hear will live. Only those who hear Christ's voice will be resurrected. The Pharisees do not hear Christ's voice. They did not hear the Logos or Word (John 1:1-2), when the Word became flesh. But even the lost sheep hear Christ's voice. Those who are still his are his sheep. They are in his book. They have not been blotted from the Book of Life. These sheep belong to Christ even if they are still lost.

John 5:26-27 ESV For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. (27) And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.

The Son was also resurrected. It is only because the Son was resurrected that we can be resurrected. We belong to Christ if we hear his voice. His sheep hear his voice.

John 5:28-29 ESV Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice (29) and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Both of these resurrections happen in the same “hour”. It’s not two different hours. And it’s not an hour that has been stretched into a thousand years. Both of these resurrections are at the start of the age to come, which is Christ’s millennial reign. The “hour” can mean “time”, which can be over the course of several years. Or it can mean the start of a time when resurrections happen. But it can’t mean two resurrections separated by a thousand years, which is more like an age.

We have already seen that only those who hear his voice will be resurrected. Verse 25 speaks of this same “hour” and says, “Those who hear will live.” Only those who hear his voice will be resurrected. But verse 28 says that, “all who are in the tombs will hear his voice.” The word “tombs” cannot be literal. Only the rich could afford tombs. Jesus is not saying that only the rich will be resurrected. I believe “tombs” is a metaphor for those who await the resurrection. They are buried in tombs because of the belief in the resurrection. But as Jesus said, the “meek will inherit the earth.” The “tombs” must be a metaphor for those who await the resurrection because they hear Christ’s voice.

There are two types of resurrections here. “Those who have done good” are those who have completed their journey of sanctification. They no longer have sinful habits. They hear and believe to overcome sin. For them it’s a resurrection of life. They are no longer under judgment (verse 25).

Those who hear Christ’s voice but continue to sin are also resurrected. They have not as yet overcome all their sinful habits. So, it’s a resurrection of judgment. After the resurrection, the wise will no longer be under judgment. The foolish, however, will still be under judgment. That means they will not as yet have eternal life. They could die the

second death during the age to come. Or, they could mature and later inherit eternal life. So they are still under judgment. It's a resurrection of judgment, not a resurrection of damnation. (The Greek word used here is the word for "judgment.")

Is this how the Jewish audience of that time would have interpreted these words of Jesus? Their presupposition, based on Isaiah 26, was that most, but not all, will be resurrected. If most, but not all, are resurrected, then we have three types of people. The wise are resurrected to a resurrection of life and are no longer under judgment. The foolish are resurrected to a resurrection that is still under judgment. The wicked will not be resurrected. But they will "come to life" at the end of the thousand years for judgment and to be thrown into the lake of fire. Remember that Jesus was addressing the Pharisees and teachers of the law. These are the wicked to whom Jesus was warning. They did not hear Christ's voice. They were in danger of being blotted from the Book of Life, so that they will not be resurrected.

What does it mean to be resurrected? It means you are being brought back to life. It means you are given the opportunity to live again. The grave is defeated. Condemnation or damnation is death. It's not resurrection. The idea of a resurrection of damnation is an oxymoron.

Acts 24:15 ESV having a hope in God, which these men themselves accept, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust.

At this point, amillennialists will object by disagreeing with the clear and literal interpretation of the Old Testament. They generally reinterpret the Old Testament to make it fit their presuppositions of what the New Testament says. In

the second century, much of the Church began to distance themselves from the Old Testament. There was even a movement to exclude the Old Testament from the canon. It was considered too “Jewish” and too barbaric.

The Old Testament was not excluded from the canon. But over the centuries, amillennialism was predominate for all Christians, both Catholics and Protestants. Amillennialism says that when Christ returns, the final judgment for all people takes place at that time. There is no millennial reign. So everyone's destiny is determined at the time of death.

When dispensationalism came along, the amillennial way of reading the New Testament remained firmly in place. The Church still went to heaven in the rapture when Christ returns. For the Church, there is no earthly reign. The more literal interpretation of Revelation 20 was allowed for by saying it is in fulfillment of God's promise to the Jews. The Old Testament could be interpreted literally because future Bible prophecy was assumed to be talking only about Israel. And the Church was excluded from Israel. With regard to the Church, dispensationalism is really the same as amillennialism. But Paul seems to say we are grafted into Israel.

The amillennialists will object to this interpretation of John 5 by reinterpreting the Old Testament. And yet they will admit that the Jews, the very audience of Christ, would not have interpreted the Old Testament like they interpreted it. The dispensationalist will object by saying the hour is a thousand years, and pointing to Revelation 20. But did the audience of Jesus have Revelation 20? Would they have understood this hour to be a thousand years? The only thing they had as a frame of reference was the Old Testament passages about the resurrection.

Isaiah 26 and Daniel 12:1-3 is about all the Jews had at the time of Christ. We must interpret these words of Jesus in the context of those Old Testament passages, and not in the context of Revelation 20. This is what is required if we are to be true to the hermeneutic of progressive revelation.

The question is, how well does our system harmonize with Scripture? Do we have Scriptural difficulties such as election vs. free will? How about grace vs. works? Does salvation require fruits of the Spirit, as in Lordship Salvation? Or do the dispensationalists have it right when they argue free grace salvation? Does God have a plan that includes those who die having never heard about Christ? Is salvation a one-time decision or a journey? If it's a journey, then what about purgatory?

Do children who die young go to hell? If not, then what about the children of Pagans? Is amillennialism correct? Or is it premillennialism? What is the purpose of the millennial reign? What is the purpose of Old Testament prophecy? If everyone's eternal destiny is decided at death, then why not just let eternity begin when Christ returns? Why does the New Testament have so many verses that we must spend hours in explanations in order to try and make these verses fit our system? Why did Jesus and Paul seem to disagree on so much, when we know they didn't?

The application of Old Testament Jewish eschatology to the New Testament Church solves these seven major problems of Scripture, which have divided the Church over the centuries. The New Wine System literally interprets Scripture along the same lines as the Jewish eschatology system of that day.

The Jewish New Testament authors applied Old Testament prophecies about Israel to the New Testament Church. If we do the same, then seven major problems of Scripture are solved. In addition, many verses of other topics that have been hard to understand start fitting the system and become easily understood. For more information, refer to my book, *New Wine for the End Times*.

7.4) The Resurrection in Revelation 20

Now that we have looked at Isaiah 26:9-21, Daniel 12:1-3, John 5:21-29, and Acts 24:15, we can look at Revelation 20. Revelation 20 is to be read literally. But even then, it's not easily read. We don't want take hard-to-interpret apocalyptic language, written years later, and force our interpretation of that language back onto simpler text written years earlier. I'll do this by going through a few verses of Revelation 20 in order. First, I will establish the context. Then I will follow John's flow of thought.

The context of Revelation 20 is right after Armageddon (from chapter 19.) The broader context is that of the great tribulation. John sees the souls of the elect, who will rule with Christ over the nations.

Revelation 20:4a ESV Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.

Then, the focus of what John sees narrows. The focus becomes people who have died during the great tribulation. More specifically, John sees those who have been beheaded for refusing to take the mark of the beast.

Revelation 20:4b ESV Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.

They all come to life in order to reign with Christ. But the focus is still on those who refuse to take the mark.

Revelation 20:4c ESV They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The "rest of the dead" do not as yet come to life. Who are they? It depends upon the group in focus. Yes, John had noted that many will reign with Christ. But his focus has been narrowed to those who refused to take the mark of the beast. John has focused on those who die in the tribulation. Therefore, the "rest" are those who took the mark. They are now dead because of Armageddon and God's wrath after the resurrection. Taking the mark of the beast is an unpardonable sin. It's the rejection of Christ. The wicked are not resurrected. They must sleep until the thousand years are completed.

Revelation 20:5a ESV The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.

John is still talking about these souls coming to life. He has noted that those who took the mark have not, as yet, come to life. Now, John tells us this resurrection is the first resurrection. We already know there are two resurrections in the general resurrection. The first resurrection, from John 5:28-29, is those who have done good. They hear Christ's voice and believe. The second resurrection is those who still

have sinful habits. They hear Christ's voice. But they still do evil.

So John is telling us that the coming to life that he sees is in fact the first of these two resurrections in the general resurrection. John waits and tells us this after he has told us about the "rest of the dead" to make it clear that the context of the souls he sees has not changed. He then associates this first coming to life with the first resurrection.

When these two sentences of this verse are read with traditional premillennial views, the two sentences seem to be out of order. The reading becomes awkward. John is not saying that the "rest of the dead" come to life in the second resurrection. But when it's understood that the first and the second resurrection are both part of the general resurrection, then these two sentences read more naturally.

Revelation 20:5b ESV This is the first resurrection.

John is still talking about the first resurrection. They are no longer under judgment. They cannot die. But those who are raised in the second resurrection are still under judgment. They can die the second death.

Revelation 20:6 ESV Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

The "rest of the dead" are those who take the mark of the beast during the great tribulation. The mark of the beast is an unpardonable sin. It's rejecting Christ. We can generalize from this and say the "rest of the dead" are representative of

anyone who rejects Christ. They will die the second death. When you die the second death, you are no longer covered by the blood of Christ.

The millennial reign of Christ is all about bringing righteousness and salvation to the world. Anyone and everyone, from all generations, will have the opportunity to put their faith in Jesus Christ for the overcoming of sin. For the nations, this happens after the general resurrection for which Christ was the ransom. Christian perfection prior to the resurrection is required for inheriting the kingdom.

We need to go back to the basics of salvation and faith in Christ to completely overcome sin. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. And then, when people argue that very few will make it, remember that doesn't mean they will die and go to hell if they are not perfect when they die. But we must become perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect in order to inherit the kingdom. Without the millennial reign, the argument that very few will become perfect wins out. And people start convincing themselves that they are really on the path of the narrow gate when they are not.

**Overcome Sin, for the
Kingdom of
Jesus Christ is Coming Soon.**

Conclusion

In Southern Baptist churches, almost everyone has heard of the “Romans Road.” It’s a compilation of five or six verses from Romans that are used to lead a person to salvation. The goal is to “get people saved,” as in past-tense salvation. Here is a good example of selected verses.

Romans 3:10 NIV As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;

Romans 3:23 NIV for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 5:8 NIV But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 6:23 NIV For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 10:9 NIV That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:13 NIV for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

The Romans Road begins with the fact that everyone has sinned. Usually these verses are explained to mean that everyone is a sinner. In other words, everyone continues to sin. The Reformed view (not the Wesleyan view) is that you

can't stop sinning. Then verses are used to explain that Christ died for our sins. Finally, a few verses are used to explain that we need to make a profession of faith in order to become (past tense) saved.

The Romans Road became a methodology that was drilled into church members as to how to witness to people and "get them saved." The method has been criticized as being over simplistic. It comes across as a quick and easy formula for salvation instead of talking about the need of having a true relationship with Christ.

What does it mean to make Christ Lord of your life? The Great Commission says that we are to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And then we are to teach them all that Jesus commanded. You can't do this in five or six quick verses.

The fact that all have sinned is made clear. But the fact that we need to stop sinning, through this relationship with Christ, is obscured. Even Romans 5:8 says, "While we were still sinners." This would suggest that believers are no longer sinners. Verse 3:23 says, "All have sinned." It doesn't say all continue to sin. The need to overcome sin through a relationship with Jesus Christ is almost never presented. The Romans Road does not call for repentance. Some free-grace salvation advocates even claim that repentance is not required for salvation. You just have to believe.

The Romans Road does not focus on any specific passage. It pulls out a number of verses to build the case. Are these verses being taken out of context? Why is there no one passage that gives the whole gospel? One verse is Romans 6:23. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord." But look at the verse right before this verse:

Romans 6:22 NIV But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

This verse, in the very same context, says a lot of things that are rarely said during a Romans Road presentation. In Christ, we can be set free from sin. We are no longer slaves to the habits of sin which constantly draw us back. That means Christ can change us so that we no longer sin.

But of course this doesn't happen overnight. We need an ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ whereby we truly repent and become new creatures. Over time, we reap holiness. Over time, that holiness "results [in] eternal life." How many people are presented the Romans Road in this broader context? Remember that, "Without holiness, no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Paul makes that abundantly clear. But the Romans Road does not.

The Romans Road is a selection of verses from all over Romans in order to present the gospel in a way that is not found in one specific passage. Is it the true gospel? There is an alternative passage that presents the gospel in one single context. I call it the Philippians Road. Evangelicals avoid this passage because it becomes clear that we must overcome sin. But it's the gospel truth because it comes from a single passage, written by Paul, and is not taken out of context.

Paul said we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12-18, quoted below). Let's break these verses down a bit. Verse 12 begins with "therefore." We should first look to the previous verses to see the context from which Paul is thinking. In verse 10 and 11, Paul quotes from Isaiah. When Christ returns every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

C.1) The Philippians Road

Isaiah 45:22-25 NIV "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. (23) By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. (24) 'They will say of me, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.'" All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. (25) But in the LORD all the descendants of Israel will be found righteous and will exult.

This is what Paul is thinking about when he says we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Isaiah is talking about salvation in the Day of the Lord, in which the Messiah will rule over every nation to the “ends of the earth.” Every knee will bow and every tongue will swear allegiance because Jesus will be the literal King of the world. All the “descendants of Israel will reign with Christ because they will be “found righteous.” Paul’s quotes Isaiah:

Philippians 2:8-11 NIV And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! (9) Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Paul elaborates on those who will swear allegiance to Jesus. Paul elaborates “every knee” as including all who are in heaven, on the earth, and under the earth. Those in heaven would be the angels. Those on the earth would be those who are alive when Christ returns. Those under the earth would be everyone who has died.

Isaiah says, “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth.” This is why Paul includes knees from under the earth. He sees this as after the resurrection. All from the ends of the earth will be saved, meaning they will be resurrected. The obvious exceptions would be those who have explicitly become enemies of God. Everyone to the “ends of the earth” is resurrected. But only those of Israel are “found righteous.” Gentile believers are grafted into Israel. The righteous will reign with Christ over the nations.

The knees who will bow are not just those who have professed faith in Christ. This includes everyone from all generations. They will be resurrected. The exceptions are the enemies of God, both in heaven and on the earth. They will not be resurrected.

Now let’s break down Paul’s conclusion from all this and why we must “work out our salvation with fear and trembling.” Note that we must obey Christ. That means we must not sin. We must “continue” to work out our salvation. It’s not just becoming a believer. Then note that God works in us to make it happen. That’s important.

Philippians 2:12-18 NIV Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, (13) for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. (14)

Do everything without complaining or arguing, (15) so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe (16) as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. (17) But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. (18) So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

As we have seen, the salvation to which Paul is referring is all about the resurrection at Christ's return. It's salvation for those alive today, as well as for those who are under the earth (verse 10). We must "continue to work out our salvation with fear and trembling." It's not a one-time deal.

It's a journey that must be completed before we die or Christ returns. We see that truth because Paul believes his running and labor might be "for nothing." If his followers do not continue to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, then Paul's efforts would be in vain. Could they wind up in hell? No, they would still bow their knees to the Lord after the resurrection. But they would not be a part of the true Israel who is "found righteous."

We must "work out our salvation with fear and trembling" so that we "become blameless and pure, children of God without fault." Is this something that happens in heaven or after the resurrection? No because Paul says we must become "blameless and pure ... in a crooked and depraved generation." In other words, this while we are still living in the world. Paul also teaches about becoming "blameless and pure in his first letter to the Thessalonians.

1 Thessalonians 5:22-24 ESV Abstain from every form of evil. (23) Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (24) He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

Sanctification is a journey. It's a journey to the point of becoming "blameless." Paul is saying that the God of peace will himself sanctify us completely before the return of Christ. Paul says, "He will surely do it." In other words, we should have faith in God to make us holy. That means we have faith in God that all our sinful habits will be completely overcome. We can't just stand idly by and in a passive faith. Our faith must be active in that we really desire this holiness to the point of working out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

Back in Philippians, verse 14, Paul says, "It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." God works inside us to make us desire (will) and act according to God's will. This is grace. This is God's work because of God's presence, living inside us. When the Holy Spirit is in us we cannot sin because God does not sin.

God transforms us on the inside to become new creatures. It's clear that we become blameless and pure while living "in a crooked and depraved generation." But this is in preparation for the age to come. We become "children of God" because we are no longer doing the will of Satan. And we are new creatures in the fact that we are changed on the inside. But at the resurrection, we will be "born again" into new spiritual bodies. So we will literally be "children of God" instead of our earthly parents.

When we “become blameless and pure, children of God without fault,” Paul says we “shine like stars in the universe” (verse 15). So figuratively this happens in the present age as we become holy. But it is more literally fulfilled in the age to come. This phrase comes from Daniel 12:2-3.

Daniel 12:2-3 ESV And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (3) And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

The wise will shine like the stars, which are symbolic of angels. Angels are like men in appearance. But they have bodies that live forever and are designed for living in the heavens, whereas our bodies are mortal and are designed for living here on the earth. Sometimes angels are said to glow. The wise who work out their salvation with fear and trembling will bring many to righteousness, after they are resurrected, during the age to come.

How does the Philippians Road compare with the Romans Road? If we include Romans 6:22 in the context of 6:23, then we must have repentance. With true repentance, the Romans Road, the Philippians Road, and the Road of Christ are all identical. We are credited with righteousness. But we must make good on that credit by becoming “slaves to God.” Over time, we are thus set “free from sin” (6:22) by God’s grace. God’s grace is the presence and work of the Holy Spirit to change us on the inside, making us become new creatures. Over time, we become “perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Over time, we “sin no more” (John 5:14, 8:11).

C.2) The Road of Christ

Jesus said, “I am the [road], the truth, and the life. No man [journeys] to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). The Greek word for “way” literally means “road.” This means we don’t journey to the Father through Paul or any of the disciples. We don’t journey to the Father through Mary or any of the Catholic saints. The only way to the Father is through a Lordship discipleship relationship with Jesus Christ. Even the Romans Road says we must “confess with [our] mouth that Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9). If Jesus is Lord we must obey his commandments.

The word “repent” is used 10 times in the gospels, 5 times in Acts, and 10 times in Revelation. The letters of Paul never use the word repent. But Paul does use the word in Acts 17:30. Since Paul doesn’t use the word in his letters, many radical-grace teachers preach that you don’t need to repent for salvation. Jesus, however, uses the word 15 times in his red-letter spoken words. This includes 8 times in the letters to the seven churches in Revelation. These radical-grace teachers focus on the words of Paul in his letters and exclude the words of Jesus, even his words in Revelation.

The argument is that the gospel changed at the cross. I pointed out that the Great Commission, given after the cross, is to teach the nations everything Jesus commanded. This radical grace teacher responded by saying everything changed at Pentecost instead of the cross. They interpret grace as being the forgiveness of sins instead of the presence and work of the Spirit. Yes, things changed at Pentecost. We received the Power of grace at Pentecost. But the gospel of Jesus has not changed. We must stop sinning in order to inherit eternal life. At Pentecost we received the presence and work of the Holy Spirit and the Power to stop sinning. Most of the doctrines of today deny that Power.

2 Timothy 3:1-7 NIV But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. (2) People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, (3) without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, (4) treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— (5) having a form of godliness but **denying its power**. Have nothing to do with them. (6) They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, (7) always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth.

In the context these verses, what does Paul mean by saying they “have a form of godliness but deny its power?” He can only be talking to believers. All these verses must be talking about believers in the Church, in the last days. This power, in context, must be the Holy Spirit Power to stop sinning.

The true gospel is that we can have a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ. It’s not with Paul, The Virgin Mary, or any of the saints. People have tried to overcome sin throughout history and have failed because it was through self-effort. It can only happen through the Power of the Holy Spirit. We don’t change ourselves.

We must become spiritual beggars (Matthew 5:3) and daily beg the Father for righteousness. We must daily ask the Father to not lead us into temptation (Matthew 6:13). Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away from you.” This is hyperbole. Literally plucking out your eye would not stop you from sinning. But we must take any sinful habit that seriously.

John 8:34-36 ESV Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. (35) The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. (36) So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

Compare this verse of Jesus with the verse of Paul that was in the immediate context of the Romans Road verse.

Romans 6:22 NIV But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Believers are no longer slaves to sin because the Son has set us free from the slavery of sin. If we continue to sin, then we are still slaves to sin. But if instead we do the work of the Father, being slaves to God, then our lack of sin leads to holiness. And this, over time, results in eternal life.

This is the Road of Christ which leads to holiness. Only those who complete this journey with Christ will inherit eternal life. That doesn't mean those don't will go to hell. God's plan is bigger and smarter than that. But holiness is necessary before one can enter the wedding banquet. Jesus told the foolish virgins, "I do not know you" (Matthew 25:12). He said the same thing to preachers who will say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" (Matthew 7:22). But Jesus said, "I never knew you" (verse 23).

1John 2:4 One who says, "I know him," and doesn't keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth isn't in him.

1 John 3:3-6 Everyone who has this hope set on him purifies himself, even as he is pure. (4) Everyone who sins also commits lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. (5) You know that he was revealed to take away our sins, and in him is no sin. (6) Whoever remains in him doesn't sin. Whoever sins hasn't seen him, neither knows him.

They did not work as slaves of God, doing the Father's work. They did not obey Christ's commandments. They found their gospels in a misinterpretation of grace, and followed a misinterpretation of Paul. Or they decided to follow Catholics saints instead of Jesus himself. They don't follow Jesus because he says to live entirely without sin. After all, Jesus said we must be "perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect." You can't argue with the Greek meaning of "perfect" because it's also applied to the Father.

2 Timothy 4:2-5 NIV Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. (3) For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. (4) They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. (5) But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Sound doctrine is the Words of Jesus. We must preach the Words of Jesus. Sound doctrine is that we have been given the Power to live without sin. All else is excuses and myths.

Back in the introduction to this book, Glenn Beck interviewed Ruth Graham, daughter of Billy Graham. Glenn Beck was wondering how you can get people to hear the truth. It's a truth that is so obvious when you see it. But sin blinds us. Jesus had the same problem. The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law were blinded to the coming of their own Messiah. Glenn Beck talked about Billy Graham.

Glenn continued, "You say you are not a warrior. But the second thing that I got from him was... When he told that to me, we were setting closer than you and I, and he was holding my hand. And he straightened up. And I saw the warrior in him. It was a peaceful warrior. But it was a warrior that would turn over the tables. How do you turn tables over and still not be divisive? How do you speak the truth and not be divisive?"

I was talking to a visiting preacher at my church. I brought up the beliefs of Wesley. This Reformed Baptist pastor looked at me and asked, "Can you go even twenty-four hours without sinning?" I said, "Twenty-four hours is easy." He was taken aback with surprise. In the light of the teachings of both Jesus and John, if a pastor believes you can't go twenty-four hours without sinning, how can he claim to know Christ? Will he be surprised to hear Jesus say, "I never knew you?" I'm sure he knows these verses. But there is always a work-around for teachers to tickle their ears and make Scripture say what they want to hear.

I brought up the Catholics and the fact that they see salvation as a journey. The Catholics believe we must complete that journey before we can go to heaven. I also brought up the prayer of Jesus that we will be one as Jesus and the heavenly Father are one. Is the Church one today?

Could there be a truth that hides in the middle between Catholics and Protestants? His response was to consider Catholics as tares that are sown in with the wheat. There is always some way divisive way to avoid the truth. When it comes to the blinding nature of sin, there is always some way to spin the doctrine. Satan has divided the Church in ways that allows each of us to remain in sin and to blame the other side. One way or the other, every “myth” of doctrine distorts the true gospel in such a way that it allows for sin.

Do you have anger issues with a family member, son, daughter, or spouse? How about your boss or a co-worker? It’s easy to blame the other and remain angry. Sin causes us to cling to the myth. We often don’t really want to seek the Power of Christ that replaces anger with love.

Porn on the Internet is very alluring. It can be very hard to overcome sinful habits of sex. But sex outside of marriage between a man and a woman is sinful. This generation denies the Power of Christ to make us new creatures and to overcome sexual habits that are outside of God’s plan. It may take a while. But we must take sin seriously and we must continue to beg Christ to make us clean on the inside. Then we will be clean on the outside. We must daily ask the Father to lead us not into temptation.

As we do the works of the Father, the Holy Spirit will replace our sinful habits with love. We can learn to love those we are angry with, even if they have not said they are sorry. Men can learn to have love and respect for all women and to truly despise the power of Porn has had a hold on them. We must truly have a radical faith that Jesus can and will change us so that we no longer sin. That’s the only faith that truly saves. The Power of the Holy Spirit can change us on the inside. We can work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Without holiness nobody will see the Lord.

