A CATECHISM ON BIBLE DOCTRINE
WITH COMMENTARY

An Introductory study of Bible Doctrine
In the Form of a Catechism
With Commentary

W. R. Downing

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PREFACE

This Catechism is an introductory study of Bible Doctrine. It is in the form of a catechism for the ease of study, organization of subjects and memorization. It is intended for use in our own assembly. We believe it advantageous for fathers to use in family worship, for Bible classes, home schooling classes, for older children to use, and for the use of all who would desire to obtain a basic grasp of Bible Doctrine. As such it is intended for daily reading

This is a Baptist Catechism. It is intended for our Baptist people. While we have much in common with other Christians, we also have our own distinctives which we hold to be scriptural. These are emphasized and detailed when necessary.

This is a Catechism with Commentary. The basic and salient issues under each heading are briefly explained and discussed in an orderly manner. As such, it becomes an introductory manual for doctrinal study.

It is our intention, should Divine providence provide the time and facility, to enlarge this introductory work into a much larger work which would make use of exegetical, historical and theological notes, studies and quotations from various authors.

May this elementary work prove, in the kind providence of God, to be both acceptable and useful among our Baptist people.

W. R. Downing

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INTRODUCTION

Scriptures

"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons…the LORD said unto me…I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and *that* they may teach their children." Deut. 4:9–10

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." Deut. 6:4–9

"All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3:16–17

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Tim. 2:15

"…ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Eph. 6:4

The Term "Catechize"

The English word "catechism" is derived from the Gk. verb *katēchēo*, "to resound, teach orally, instruct by mouth." This term originally had the idea of "speaking down or from above" i.e., from actors on an elevated stage. It is a compound of the preposition *kata*, "down, throughout, thoroughly" and the verb *ēchēo*, "to sound," the source of our English word, "echo." There seems to be in this etymology the idea of a responsive answer. Catechizing has the connotation of thorough or repeated oral instruction, and is only one of several related terms for instruction or teaching found in Scripture. The term itself occurs eight times in the New Testament (twice as "informed" in Acts 21:21, 24, referring to word–of–mouth information):

"That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou *hast been catechized*." Luke 1:4.

"This man *had been constantly catechized* in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord..." Acts 18:25.

"And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, *being constantly catechized* out of the law..." Romans 2:18.

"Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might *catechize* others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." 1 Cor. 14:19.

"Let him who is *being catechized* in the word communicate unto him who *catechizes* in all good things." Gal. 6:6.

C. H. Spurgeon on Catechizing

(From the introduction to his own *Baptist Catechism*)

In matters of doctrine you will find orthodox congregations frequently changed to heterodoxy in the course of thirty or forty years, and that is because, too often, there has been no catechizing of the children in the essential doctrines of the Gospel. For my part, I am more and more persuaded that the study of a good scriptural catechism is of infinite value to our children....Even if the youngsters do not understand all the questions and answers....yet, abiding in their memories, it will be of infinite service when the time of understanding comes, to have known these very excellent, wise and judicious definitions of the things of God...It will be a blessing to them—the greatest of all blessing...a blessing in life and death, in time and eternity, the best of blessings God Himself can give….I am persuaded that the use of a good catechism in all our families will be a great safeguard against the increasing errors of the times, and therefore I have compiled this little manual...for the use of my own church and congregation. Those who use it in their families or classes must labour to explain the sense to the little ones; but the words should be carefully learned by heart, for they will be understood better as the child advances in years.

The Practical Use of a Catechism

The practical use of this catechism may be summarized in the following considerations:

1. *Catechizing is a scriptural practice*. It is taught in both the Old and New Testaments by both precept and example.
2. Many may have a general knowledge of the Bible, but greatly lack in the ability to reason from the Scriptures in a doctrinally consistent fashion. *We must know the Bible doctrinally and must know our doctrine biblically*. Unless we arrive at a consistent doctrinal knowledge of the Scriptures, our knowledge of the Word of God is both deficient

and defective. The use of a catechism leads one to think both scripturally and doctrinally. It is a very basic and necessary introduction to Bible doctrine and to elementary theology.

3. This is a catechism with a commentary. *Such a work is meant to educate the entire family*. Comments are meant for parents and older students as a means of educating themselves in basic Bible doctrine. The notes are meant to serve as a basis for family instruction and discussion of biblical truth.
4. Questions and answers are followed by one or more proof–texts, and should be memorized with the question and answer.
5. As to methodology, it is suggested that fathers instruct their children in the questions, answers and proof–texts, and then discuss the issues involved. Little children may be able only to memorize the questions and answers, while older children will be able to memorize one or more Scripture references. Those who are older can also begin to assimilate the issues involved.

Some Objections Against Catechizing Answered

OBJECTION ONE: Why, as Baptists, use a catechism? Do not catechisms belong only to the Romanists, Lutherans or Reformed Christians? We have only one creed—the Bible! We will not and cannot put any literature on par with the Scriptures, or add to the Word of God in any way.

ANSWER:

1. Catechizing, or repetitive oral instruction is scriptural. It was given by Divine mandate in the Old Testament and is ratified in the New Testament by inspired Apostolic example.
2. This is not a question of adding something to Scripture, but rather the use of a necessary aid toward a comprehensive grasp of its doctrinal teaching. God made us rational, morally responsible beings, created in his image and likeness. We have been created with both the ability and necessity to organize. An orderly or systematic approach to Divine truth is a necessity, as seen in the necessary existence of doctrine and theology. Sadly, many who object to the use of a catechism turn rather to the very questionable use of other religious teaching materials which are either doctrinally shallow or unsound.
3. A catechism is an organized elementary approach to the truth of the Word of God. It is a primary introduction to the doctrinal teaching of Scripture.
4. There is a great need for all believers to have at least two types of knowledge concerning the truth of God: *First*, every young person should at least have a general acquaintance with Scripture. What many call "Bible Stories" gives the younger child a general knowledge of the Bible, its historical format, the basic principles of redemptive history

and some knowledge about the various books of the Bible and their leading characters. *Second*, every young person should be taught to understand, think and reason doctrinally from the Scriptures. For centuries, this has been the purpose of a doctrinally–sound catechism. Catechizing ceased among our Baptist forefathers when they no longer emphasized their doctrinal distinctives and Confessions of Faith. In Sunday schools catechisms were replaced by "Quarterlies," which have proven, we believe, to be vastly inferior.

5. Baptists used catechisms extensively and with much spiritual profit until the past century. This objection itself demonstrates the sad departure of some Baptists from their own doctrinal distinctives and practice, and the ignorance of some modern Baptists concerning their own history and spiritual heritage. Following are some of the more well–known catechisms written and used by Baptists:

   - Henry Jessey, Particular Baptist, *A Catechism for Babes, or Little Ones*, 1652.
   - Hercules Collins, Particular Baptist, *The Orthodox Catechism* (adapted from the *Heidelberg Catechism*), 1680.
   - Thomas Grantham, General Baptist, *St. Paul's Catechism* (based on the six principles of Hebrews 6), 1687.
   - Benjamin Keach and William Collins, *The Baptist Catechism*, 1693.
   - The Philadelphia Baptist Association of Particular Baptists published a catechism appended to their *Philadelphia Confession of Faith*, 1742.
   - William Gadsby, Gospel Standard Baptist, published a catechism entitled *The Things Most Surely Believed Among Us*, 1809.
   - C. H. Spurgeon published *A Baptist Catechism* (compiled from the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* and Keach's *Baptist Catechism*), 1855.
   - The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention published two catechisms: the first by J. P. Boyce, *A Brief Catechism of Bible Doctrine* (1864) and the second by John A. Broadus (1892). The latter work was jointly published by both the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Publication Society.

OBJECTION TWO: Have not catechisms introduced error into the thinking of many?

ANSWER:

1. This may be true, but the fault lies not in the use of a catechism *per se*, but in unscriptural presuppositions and religious traditions which have been superimposed upon the Word of God.

2. A catechism is true and useful only as it accurately communicates the truth of Scripture.

3. Ideally, evangelizing through catechizing leads to a credible profession of faith.

4. A catechism should be a preservative of the truth and not an introduction into error. A given catechism is only as good, true or accurate as the doctrinal and theological presuppositions of its author[s]. As the very Word of God itself must be approached with consistent presuppositions, so must any religious literature, including a catechism.

OBJECTION THREE: There is a great danger in departing from biblical language both in wording and form.

ANSWER:

1. There is always a danger in departing from Scripture in both doctrine and practice. This is true in any type of preaching or teaching.

2. The best preventive from such a departure has been the use of concise, comprehensive statements that accurately and consistently declare the truth of Scripture—Creeds, Confessions and Catechisms—if they are doctrinally sound and accurately reflect the teaching of Scripture.

3. There is a need for concise and consistent doctrinal or theological propositions and summaries. The word "form" in 2 Tim. 1:13 refers to a distinct outline or summary of Divine truth. A given theological proposition or statement is necessarily more concise than any given verse of Scripture because—if true or faithful to and consistent with the Word of God—it is based upon the *analogy of faith* [the total, self–consistent teaching of the Word of God as it bears upon any one given aspect of Divine truth], and not upon one or even several proof–texts.

OBJECTION FOUR: It is very dangerous to teach young, unconverted children to give scriptural or correct answers to doctrinal questions.

ANSWER:

1. This objection is based on a great and legitimate concern for the souls of children who might become mere professing Christians by simply memorizing and mouthing the truth without an inward work of saving grace.

2. This objection might equally be brought against having young, unconverted children read or memorize Scripture, learn to pray or sit under a consistent, educational preaching ministry.

3. Every legitimate avenue for the communication of Divine truth must be used for the conviction, conversion, edification and spiritual maturation of ourselves and our families. This includes every means of grace, both public and private—personal and family Bible reading and prayer, corporate worship, the public ministry of the Word, sanctified fellowship with the people of God and the reading of sound religious literature.

4. The primary instrument after the Scriptures should be the use of a sound catechism. This is in keeping with the principles of instruction Divinely commanded in Scripture. A catechism is meant to supplement and enforce, not replace, the primacy of the Word of God.

OBJECTION FIVE: The use of a catechism promotes the very dangerous practice of developing a "proof–text" mentality i.e., the danger of basing a doctrinal system on a comparatively few selected passages of Scripture, a method used by various cults and others which often produces both a misunderstanding and a misinterpretation of Scripture.

ANSWER:

1. This objection is based in part upon the fallacy that the Word of God must declare a given doctrine repeatedly for it to be true. Once is sufficient, although no biblical truth stands on only one isolated text. The necessity for the repetition of any given aspect of Divine truth to establish its validity reveals a very defective view of both God and Scripture. Every statement of Scripture is both true and truth.
2. The truth of Scripture exists as a comprehensive, consistent, unified whole. While the catechism may only give a statement or two to verify the doctrinal teaching of Scripture—if these statements are clear and consistent with the "analogy of faith"—they form a scriptural basis for one's faith. Very often in evangelistic testimony or in the rigorous exercise of evangelistic apologetics, a clear, sound statement from Scripture may be the only firm or possible foundation for discussion.
3. It is hardly possible that any catechism could or should exist without a given amount of explanation or the necessity for further study. The questions, answers and proof–texts of the catechism provide an introduction to the doctrinal teaching of Scripture, not the final and exhaustive word. The questions and answers necessarily arouse the curiosity of the young child or new convert and call for additional explanation and discussion.

Questions and Answers Concerning The Use of a Catechism

The following questions and answers will serve to review and summarize the issues involved, and enforce the great need for the consistent use of a sound catechism.

QUESTION 1: Why use a catechism?

ANSWER: There are several reasons why churches, families and individuals should make good use of a suitable catechism:

1. *The use of a catechism is scriptural in principle* and is based upon the Divine mandate for biblical instruction in the Old Testament and also the inspired example of the New Testament (Deut. 4:9–10; 6:4–9; Lk. 1:4; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 6:1–4). The question–and–answer format of modern catechisms is incidental to the pervading scriptural principle of

catechizing, which evidently consisted of repetitive oral instruction, commitment to memory and an oral response.

2. *Everyone needs two types of biblical knowledge*: first, everyone should at least have a general knowledge of the Bible, its historical format, the basic principles of redemptive history and some knowledge about the various books of the Bible, the historical circumstances of their writing and their leading characters. Second, everyone should be taught to understand, think and reason *doctrinally* from the Scriptures. Since Bible times, this has been the purpose of a doctrinally–sound catechism. These two types of knowledge—biblical and doctrinal—necessarily complement one another. Doctrinal truth is the message of the Bible, the very "soul" of Scripture.
3. *The use of a catechism is the most concise and best method* to instill Divine truth in the mind and heart and impress it upon the memory.
4. *Catechisms can be written* (and have been written) *in such a way as to be adequate and appropriate for any given age or level of spiritual development*.
    - Little children can at least learn the questions and answers of a very simple catechism, and often begin to memorize at least one verse of Scripture with each set. Much must be done when the mind is young, prone to learn and absorb, and largely unoccupied with the issues of life.
    - Older children and new converts can profit greatly from catechisms, which necessarily and naturally call for explanation and discussion.
    - The very process of catechizing presupposes that those who catechize others have a sufficient foundation and maturity in the truth to explain from Scripture the truths declared in the catechism.

QUESTION 2: What are the necessary requirements for a catechism?

ANSWER: The necessary or essential requirements for a sound catechism are at least four in number:

1. The catechism must be thoroughly scriptural in the formulation of its answers.
2. The proof–texts should clearly teach the truth pertaining to the given question and answer.
3. The doctrinal presuppositions of the catechism should be sound.
4. The questions and answers themselves must be suitable, i.e., of such a nature that they are neither too involved nor complex to be memorized nor too simple to be useful to those who are older. Certain catechisms are better suited to little children; others are more suitable for older children and adults. Some questions necessitate extended answers to adequately convey the truth. Some of the answers in this catechism are necessarily lengthy.

QUESTION 3: What is the purpose of a catechism?

ANSWER: The purpose for the use of a catechism is at least nine–fold:

1. *To instruct in the essentials of the Christian faith*. The issue is truth—Divine truth! We must do everything we can to impress this truth upon the mind and heart of both the saved and unsaved, and especially our children. There are two issues: first, every child and new convert must be instructed in the basics or essentials of the Christian faith as thoroughly as possible (3 Jn. 4). Second, every Christian must seek to become both a Bible student and a theologian (2 Tim. 3:16–17; Heb. 5:11–14; 2 Pet. 3:18).
2. *To impress Divine truth upon the heart and mind*. The conciseness of the catechism as a series of clear doctrinal statements derived from Scripture, is calculated to instill the truth into the thinking process and impress it upon the mind and into the heart. Unless doctrinal truth is carefully and scripturally contemplated, it is never truly and fully grasped, adequately embraced or practically implemented in the life (Psa. 119:11).
3. *To evangelize the unconverted*. Christian parents catechizing their children is the very best means of truly evangelizing them in a consistent and balanced way. Their minds must deal with truth and their consciences may be probed in the context of the whole counsel of God. In later years the truth may be brought home to the conscience through the remembrance of such instruction (Eph. 6:1–4; 2 Tim. 3:15).
4. *To prepare for the public ministry of the Word*. The public preaching of the Word of God must touch upon a variety of issues—the truth of the Gospel, a Christian world–and–life view, the whole range of Christian doctrine and its application to the life of the church and the individual, the Christian family, the Christian's relation to the unregenerate society in which he lives and the varieties of Christian experience. Catechizing necessarily prepares parents, children and young converts for the ministry of the Word by instilling in them a God–consciousness, enabling them to begin to think consistently from the Scriptures, giving them a basic understanding of scriptural and doctrinal truths, and acquainting them with doctrinal and theological terminology (2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2)
5. *To act as a preventative from error and heresy*. The best preventative from error and heresy is the Word of God rightly [correctly or consistently] understood. The catechism is a concise and exact statement of the Word of God in its doctrinal expression (Eph. 4:11–16; 2 Tim. 4:1–5; 2 Pet. 3:16–18).
6. *To act as a preventative from spiritual decay*. The true knowledge of the Scriptures is necessarily a consistent [and therefore non–contradictory] knowledge of its doctrinal teaching. The use of a catechism as a concise, logical, systematic approach to Divine truth

should refresh the mind and heart and quicken one's zeal. There is a necessary and immediate relation between truth and the conscience and between truth and zeal—if the Spirit and grace of God are present (Heb. 5:10–14; 2 Pet. 3:16–18).

7. *To edify believers of all ages and levels of spiritual maturity*. Everyone without exception will profit from the use of a catechism. Little children and new converts will be consistently instructed in the faith, mature believers should be refreshed and quickened by the reiteration of truth and aged believers should be sustained and enlivened by the immutable truth set forth from the Scriptures.
8. *To review the essence of Christian doctrine*. The scope of its teaching and the conciseness of its answers make a catechism a primary source for a review of any aspect of doctrinal truth simply, concisely and scripturally stated.
9. *To provide a great and necessary help in defending the faith*. The conciseness of the catechism in expressing doctrinal truth, and the memorization of the proof–texts, provide the essentials necessary for defending the faith or explaining it to others clearly and scripturally (2 Cor. 10:3–5; 1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3).

QUESTION 4: How much time and effort should be given to the use of a catechism?

ANSWER: The time and effort spent on the use of a catechism should be as much as or more than the time and effort spent on any other discipline. Much time may be given to sporting events to develop necessary motor and social skills, but what good do these do for the soul? Catechizing is for both time and eternity. As the study of mathematics, history, the basic use of hand or mechanical tools, and the general acquisition of skills are deemed necessary for the education of the child, so time and effort must be expended to instruct the mind and heart and thus reach the soul. What instruction is more important than that of Divine truth? What skill is more important or lasting than that of understanding the doctrinal teaching of the Scriptures?

QUESTION 5: Who should benefit from the use of a catechism?

ANSWER: Everyone should greatly benefit from the use of a catechism:

1. *Little children*, who need to be instructed in the basic teachings of Scripture for the good of their own souls and their salvation, and to prepare them to sit under the preaching of the Gospel in an intelligent manner.
2. *Older children and young adults*, who need to know the truth of God's Word and the way of salvation.
3. *New converts*, who need to be confirmed in the faith through basic instruction in doctrinal truth.

4. *Mature believers*, who need to have a comprehensive knowledge of the truth in order to both live consistently and intelligently in the faith and also to instruct others in Divine things.

5. *Elders, ministers and teachers*, who must not only be firmly grounded in the faith, but must teach and minister to others also on their respective levels. A review of a catechism on essential doctrinal points should be an essential part of sermon preparation.

6. *The unconverted* of any and all ages. In the catechism they will find the truth scripturally, simply and consistently explained. Such will certainly work to their understanding of the preaching, and may work to their conviction of sin and intelligently closing with Christ in saving faith.

QUESTION 6: What are the values of a catechism?

ANSWER: There are two great values in the use of a catechism:

1. *An immediate or primary value*. This consists in the inculcation of Divine truth into the mind or heart, and through this, to the conscience and the life. To the unsaved, it provides a scriptural basis for the truth of the Gospel and the hope of salvation. To the saved, it builds a solid scriptural and doctrinal foundation for all of life.

2. *An ultimate or secondary value*. The catechism will to a given degree mark the person for life, whether saved or unsaved. The truth once committed to the memory will find its mark in instilling a God–consciousness, awakening the conscience and providing a scriptural sense of right and wrong.

What a different situation would exist today in our families and in society in general if most had been instructed in a sound catechism! What a different moral climate would prevail, what a blessed point–of–contact with the truth of the Gospel would have already been implanted in the mind and heart. Today we live in an openly secularized society where many men and women have no belief in God or concept of the truth whatsoever. Nothing exists in their hearts or minds to prevent their downward plunge into wickedness and immorality. At one time the necessary spiritual and moral barriers were erected and enforced by the use of a sound catechism in much of society.

What of the present lack of or even disdain for doctrinal truth among professing Christians? A true and complete knowledge of the Scriptures is a doctrinal knowledge. Unless we arrive at a doctrinal knowledge of Scripture, our knowledge will necessarily remain to a given extent partial, inadequate and often quite inconsistent. We must know the Bible doctrinally and we must know our doctrine biblically. This is the goal of catechizing.

And what of our churches? The present trend toward mere tradition, worldliness, subjectivism and irrationalism is largely the result of the awful absence of truth—truth believed and inculcated through preaching and the use of a sound catechism. What a difference would be seen in our churches today if our fathers had been faithful in catechizing this present generation! In an age

which questions all authority, challenges the veracity of Scripture and largely refuses to hear authoritative biblical preaching from the pulpit, a solid scriptural and doctrinal foundation is sorely needed. What a difference will be seen if we ourselves reverse this sad departure from the scriptural practice and begin to systematically, lovingly and patiently instruct and indoctrinate this generation! Would not this in itself be a true revival?

PART I
THE BELIEVER AND HIS GOD

The study of Divine things in general is termed "Theology," from the Gk. *Theos*, "God," and *logos* or *logia*, "word, study or doctrine of." The doctrine of man is called "Anthropology," from the Gk. *anthropos*. Literally everything is determined by one's doctrine of God as revealed through Scripture. It is of the utmost importance to be both scriptural and prayerful in such study.

Quest. 1: What is the only inspired, infallible and inerrant truth for man?

Ans: The only inspired, infallible and inerrant truth for man is the inscripturated Word of God, the Bible.

2 Tim. 3:16–17. 16All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Matt. 4:4. …It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

See also: Gen. 2:17–19; 3:1–12; Deut. 8:3; Heb. 1:1–3; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; 3:15–16.

COMMENTARY

Some catechisms and works on theology begin with God and then reason to the Scriptures as a necessary revelation of and from God. This is a philosophical approach. We must begin with the Scriptures. The Bible alone is objective, inscripturated truth (2 Tim. 3:16–17). This should ensure that our thinking will remain scriptural rather than philosophical in both consistency and in our approach to Divine realities.

The Bible is our sole rule of both faith [belief, doctrine] and practice [life]. The Scripture is our one objective source of truth and knowledge, and our standard for proper living because it is the very Word of God inscripturated [written down]. See Questions 7, 9 and 10. It is through the Scriptures that we have a true knowledge of God, ourselves and universe about us. We may know much about God from his creation (Rom. 1:18–20) and from our own instinctive thought–process, as we have been created in God's image and likeness [natural revelation]. But God's moral self–consistency [his absolutely righteous character], his redemptive love, his grace and mercy, and other necessary moral characteristics can be known only through the redemptive history inscripturated in his Word [special revelation]. See Question 5. It is in the Scriptures alone that we find salvation from sin, hope of deliverance in the active and passive obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ; true, objective reconciliation with God, and the certainty of hope for the future. Nature may cheer us with its beauties and wonders; we may have high and lofty thoughts in our imaginations, but only in the Scriptures do we find the heart of God revealed and discover the glory and sweetness of the gospel.

Further, we must understand that the Fall has affected the thought–processes of man, and his perception of spiritual realities is either very limited or distorted by sin [the noetic effects of sin, from the Gk. *noeō*, "to perceive, understand." Fallen man's intellectual and moral thought–process and judgment have been crippled by the Fall. Cf. Rom. 1:21–25; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17–19]. See Questions 37 and 38. Thus, natural revelation [God revealed through his creation] becomes distorted through a fallen and sinful perspective. Finally, what truth man does know through natural revelation to any extent [sufficient to hold him inexcusable], he seeks to suppress, as it aggravates his mind, convicts his conscience and sets itself against his natural and sinful presuppositions (Rom. 1:18–20). See Question 10. The Scripture does not reveal everything (Deut. 29:29), but it does reveal sufficiently what we need to know: that we are sinners before God, how to have forgiveness of sins, how be reconciled to God through the Lord Jesus Christ, how to live acceptably before him in this life and prepare ourselves for eternity. It is through the Scriptures alone that we have a consistent Theistic Christian world–and–life view, a valid Christian experience and a transcendent, yet practical faith. See Question 121.

Believing that the Bible is the very Word of God inscripturated is not merely theoretical or abstract. It is the substance of a living faith which rests in the truth of God's Word regardless of circumstances. Such belief is not mere *fideism* [a bare irrational faith]. Our faith is grounded in the rational Word of an intelligent, self–revealing God. The witness of the Holy Spirit authenticates this Word to the mind, heart and soul of the believer. Its commandments, prophecies, warnings and promises are wholly and infallibly true. The Scriptures are therefore to form the very fabric of our lives. See Question 10.

Many may disavow Christianity because they cannot believe in the miraculous, or presume that there are inconsistencies in the Christian system. These object to the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Virgin Birth, the vicarious nature of our Lord's death or to the resurrection, etc. These are thought to be unreasonable, i.e., contrary to reason. Such realities are never the real issue. The primary issue is that God has spoken plainly and with absolute authority to man (Heb. 1:1–2), and this record has been inscripturated. This Divine revelation in written form continues with full authority [the meaning of "it is written" (Gk. *gegraptai*, perfect tense) is "It stands written with undiminishing authority"]. The real issue is ever the veracity of God in and through the Bible. The Scriptures are his Word, and we are either obedient or disobedient to him and to them. See Part II.

Do the Scriptures have their proper place in our lives? Do our lives reflect their guidance and transforming power? Do we love and obey God as revealed in his Word?

Quest. 2: What is the chief end of man?

Ans: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

1 Cor. 10:31. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Rev. 4:11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

See also: 1 Chron. 29:10–14; Eccl. 7:29; 12:13–14.

COMMENTARY

This universe and everything and everyone in it exist for the good pleasure and glory of God. Man is the image–bearer of God, created like him and for him (Gen. 1:26–28). Man was created originally righteous to find meaning and fulfillment in serving God and enjoying his fellowship (Eccl. 7:29). See Question 33. The first man, Adam, was created to "think God's thoughts after him," i.e., to give the same meaning to everything which God had given to it by virtue of his creative act. See Question 31. In the context of primeval, unfallen creation, nothing more could be added to the joy and fulfillment of the first pair. However, in Adam the human race fell from its original righteousness and became intellectually incapacitated, morally depraved and sinfully empirical (Gen. 3:1–8; Rom. 1:18–25; 5:12; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:13–17). See Questions 34, 37 and 38. Salvation in time and human history is the redemption of the Divine image in man (Rom. 8:29). This necessitated the incarnation, humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5–11), and the union of believers with and in Christ (Rom. 6:1–14; 8:28–39; Col. 3:1–4). See Question 125. Ultimately, every Divine attribute will be glorified, either in the judgment or redemption of man and the universe (2 Pet. 3:7–13).

The nature and character of God revealed in Scripture form the basis for all truth, knowledge, hope and confidence for the believer. We trust God and rest in him by faith, not because of what he has done, does, or might do for us, to us or through us, but rather because of who and what he is, i.e., faith rests in God's Person, not merely in his actions. We only find meaning and fulfillment when we do so in the context of the true enjoyment and glory of God.

Have you found the chief end of man? Are you realizing why God created you and situated you at this point of time in history? Is the glory of God your constant and highest aim? Do you find enjoyment in your relationship to the Most High?

Quest. 3: Who is the one great Object of our knowledge, worship and enjoyment?

Ans: The one great Object of our knowledge, worship and enjoyment is the triune, self–revealing God of Scripture.

Psa 29:2. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

Psa. 73:25–26. [25]Whom have I in heaven *but thee*? and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire beside thee. [26]My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

Psa. 96:9. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

Prov. 1:7. The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge: *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Prov. 9:10. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Jn. 17:3. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

1 Cor. 10:31. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

See also: Rom. 1:18–32; 11:33–36; Acts 17:27; Eph. 4:17–19.

COMMENTARY

There are various approaches to the belief or disbelief in God. No belief–system is simply neutral; each carries with it necessary theological, moral and ethical implications. These implications have been and are seen throughout the history of mankind and in its various cultures and societies. Every religion, therefore, has a corresponding world–and–life view.

Theism is the belief in a god or gods. *Atheism* is the disbelief in God or gods. Atheism, as held by modern, secularized man, presupposes evolution, chance and fate. *Deism* is the rationalistic idea that God is an absolute personal being and creator of the universe, but that he has neither revealed himself nor is involved in the events of nature, history or the human drama. Thus, man need not fear God or retribution. *Polytheism* is the belief in many gods. Polytheism cannot bring all the Divine characteristics into one being. *Skepticism*, denying Divine revelation, believes that reason cannot prove the existence of God. *Pantheism* holds that God is identical with creation. It is the denial of the personality of God, and thus of any accountability to God. *Panentheism* provides a philosophical basis for open theism or Process Theology. God is identified with the universe, but he is more than the universe. He is the eternal mind of which the universe is the body, as it were. Both God and the universe are in the process of expanding; the future is unknown. *Religious Pluralism*, characteristic of postmodern philosophy, is the idea that all religions have some good, and men may have a meaningful relationship with God through various religious paths. These various views all lack a definitive, revealed source, a self–attesting Divine revelation—and thus a sufficient epistemological base [source of truth and knowledge].

Biblical Christianity is not merely theistic, i.e., it does not simply believe in the existence of a God. Biblical Christianity holds to *Christian Theism*, which necessarily means the triune, self–disclosing God who has revealed himself in creation, providence, history, his inscripturated Word and in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only Christian Theism possesses the sufficient basis, as revealed religion, to provide a coherent system of truth, theology, creation, history, morality and ethics—an inclusive world–and–life view. See Questions 120–123. Christian Theism as a belief–system holds that the triune God has revealed

himself, that he is the one Great Object of knowledge, and that having a right relationship to him through the Person and work of his Son leads to the highest meaning and fulfillment.

The triune, self–disclosing God of Scripture is the source of all true knowledge. Man, as a created being, must find the source of truth and knowledge outside himself. Thus, man is by necessity a creature of faith. Although modern man would fain consider himself to be scientific and empirical in his epistemology [science of knowledge and truth–claims], he is necessarily brought to a principle of faith, and therefore a presuppositional stance for what he considers to be true and truth. As the image–bearer of God, man must find meaning—truth and knowledge—in his Creator. See Questions 31, 120 and 121. For man to truly know himself, he must, as the image–bearer of God, begin with God.

God is the Creator, Sustainer and Governor of the created universe, and his laws reign in every sphere—spiritual, moral and physical (Rom. 11:36). To know God is to possess true knowledge; to suppress the knowledge of God is to deny the possibility of truth, knowledge and reality. To have a right relationship with God in the context of his Law–Word, i.e., to be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ by faith, is to truly know him and thus to possess the only correct and consistent basis for truly understanding anything or all things. To have a right relationship to God through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ is to find forgiveness, reconciliation, peace and communion—and thus communion with and enjoyment in God (Rom. 3:21–26; 5:1–2; 1 Jn. 1:3–7).

For believers, the inscripturated Word of God constitutes our sole rule of both faith and practice. Under the sovereign Lordship of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36), this Word is to govern every sphere of life—the spiritual, religious, moral, ethical, social, political and physical realms. Jesus Christ is the sovereign Lord of this universe and his Word is the believer's law. The totalitarian claims of Christ Jesus as sovereign Lord must be believed, loved, joyfully obeyed, declared and defended in every sphere of human existence.

As The Lord God is Creator, Possessor and Sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth, as every fact is a created fact and as we are to do all for the glory of God, there is nothing which is secular; all is ultimately sacred. Thus, everything in our thinking, speaking and acting is ultimately a form of worship—or ought to be. Formal worship, either private or public, must reflect the character of God; it is to be holy, righteous, reverent, joyful and God–honoring i.e., worship must be theocentric [God–centered] and not anthropocentric [man–centered]. True worship is to be regulated by the Word of God, not the innovation of man. Worship and entertainment are mutually exclusive. Much of contemporary "worship" is neither worthy of the name nor glorifying to the God of Scripture. See Questions 144 and 151.

True spirituality is essentially intellectual, as one must apprehend and come to terms with the inscripturated truth of God in order to comply with the gospel

and consistently apply this truth to the life and experience. There is no place for an irrational religion. An intelligent faith, which is grounded in Scripture, gives the proper and sufficient basis to feeling. Truth and the emotions are inherently related. The former is to serve as the basis for the latter or religion would become irrational and inconsistent. See Question 7. Do you know God? Do you enjoy him as he has revealed himself to you in his Word? Is your worship God–honoring? Does it reflect his holy, righteous character?

Quest. 4: How may we know God?

Ans: We may know God only as he has been pleased to reveal himself to us.

Job 11:7. Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

Psa. 19:1–3. [1]The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. [2]Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. [3]*There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard.

Acts 17:27–28. [27]That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: [28]For in him we live, and move, and have our being...

See also: Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:9, 18; Rom. 1:18–25; 2:14–16; Col. 2: 9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb.1:1–3.

COMMENTARY

God is our Creator; we are his creatures. The Scriptures are careful to maintain this Creator–creature distinction and relation. Therefore we can only know him as he is pleased to reveal himself to us. He is infinite; we are finite. He is absolute [self–existent and without any external limitations]; we are relative [dependent upon God and outward circumstances for our existence and meaning]. We are not only limited by our creatureliness, but also by the intellectual consequences [noetic effects] of sin (Rom. 1:18–25; 1 Cor. 2:14).

God has revealed himself to us in various ways. These ways are progressive in nature and history: first, God has revealed himself to us through the light of nature. Man is the image–bearer of God, and possesses an instinct for the Divine. The noetic effects of sin have dulled and distorted this. Man by nature is incurably religious, but lacks both the ability and motivation to seek God aright (Acts 17:22–31). He is "epistemologically bankrupt," i.e., sinfully futile in his incapacitated reasoning and suppresses what truth he does know, as his inner being is "darkened" (Rom. 1:18–25; Eph. 4:17–19). Second, God has revealed himself in and through his creation to the extent that fallen man is inexcusable, although he suppresses this witness (Rom. 1:18–20). See Question 10. Third, God has revealed himself through his providential dealings in history, but man interprets such superstitiously from his own presuppositions in terms of chance, fate or luck, not giving glory to God (Rom. 1:21–25; 2 Pet. 3:3–6). See Question 35. Fourth, God has revealed himself through his Word.

This revelation has been inscripturated and preserved (Jn. 17:17; 1 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20–21). It remains for all time as a witness to God's nature, character, purpose and veracity. In the Scriptures alone is the message of salvation and reconciliation. Finally, God has revealed himself in and through the Lord Jesus Christ, his eternal Son and the only Redeemer (Jn. 1:14, 18; Phil. 2:5–11; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1–4). See Questions 25, 70–75.

It is through the Scriptures that we may know God, ourselves, understand the world about us, and have a definite and authoritative revelation concerning salvation from sin, righteous living, human history and our own destiny. Do you know him? Do you know him and yourself as revealed in his Word? Do you know him savingly in the Lord Jesus?

Quest. 5: What are the two types of Divine revelation that God has given to us that we may know him?

Ans: God has given to us both general revelation and special revelation.

Matt. 4:4. But he [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Gen. 2:16–17. [16]And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: [17]But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

See also: Gen. 1:28–29; Psa. 19:1–14; Rom. 1:18–20; Heb. 1:1–3.

COMMENTARY

General revelation includes the light of nature, creation and the works of providence. Special revelation is spoken directly from God for us to understand. Man was neither meant to live apart from nor has ever been without a direct and understandable Word from God. Even unfallen Adam in the Garden of Eden had a direct Word from God to govern his life and actions (Gen. 2:15–17). No one can simply and fully understand the truth of God from nature (Rom. 1:18–20) or from his own thinking or feelings. Natural revelation is insufficient of itself, although it is sufficient to leave man inexcusable as to the reality and power of God. Philosophy begins with man and his search for the ultimate; Scripture is a direct revelation from God. Conscience alone is not a safe or infallible guide, as man is a sinful, fallen being (Acts 26:9; Rom. 1:18–32). The conscience must be subject to the Word and Spirit of God (Rom. 9:1). See Question 10.

Man was created "to think God's thoughts after him," i.e., to give the same meaning to everything which God had given to it. This was necessary because man was a creature and was placed in a world which had already been created and defined by God. Man was created and continues as a creature of faith because the source of truth and knowledge remains external to himself. Even those who do not acknowledge God or his Word are creatures of faith; this is

unavoidable. Man by nature must believe. He must believe in someone or something. At the very root of his being, every person is a creature of faith, and presupposes or assumes such when he seeks to interpret any fact or to reason about any issue. Behind rationalism, empiricism [the modern scientific method] or intuition, man still posits his approach by faith in something or someone. He remains by nature a presuppositionalist.

The Word that God has given to man is intelligent, comprehensible and perpetual. God gave his Word to be understood and obeyed. His Word stands forever—it never diminishes in its authority. Although God gave his Word thousands of years ago, it is as full and authoritative as though he has just spoken it. Note the words, "It is written," when the New Testament refers to the Old Testament Scriptures. The inscripturated Word of God stands forever with full authority. Do you know God through both natural and special revelation?

Quest. 6: What is the importance of the Scriptures?

Ans: The Scriptures are necessary to truly know, serve, enjoy, and glorify God.

2 Tim. 3:16–17. [16]All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17]that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Matt. 4:4. But he [Jesus] answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

See also: Psa. 1:1–3; 19:7–14; 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; 1 Jn. 5:13.

COMMENTARY

Apart from the Scriptures, our knowledge of God, ourselves and the world about us would be seriously, even fatally defective. Natural intuition, speculation and reason prove both insufficient and misleading because of the noetic effects of sin and natural disinclination toward God (Rom. 1:18–32; 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17–19). Religious experience, no matter how fervent or emotional, would be without a necessary stabilizing foundation in Divine revelation. We both need and have a direct, intelligent and sufficient word from God.

The opening statement of Scripture, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1) is determining for all which follows throughout Divine, inscripturated revelation. This statement is presuppositional concerning the existence of God, his absolute sovereignty, the eternal Creator–creature relation and distinction, and the truth that every fact is a created fact, i.e., there are no "brute" [undefined or uncreated] facts in the universe. See Question 30.

Because man is made in the image and likeness of God, he can only truly know himself by beginning with a study of God. God can only truly and adequately be known as he has been pleased to reveal himself in his inscripturated Word. Thus, the Scriptures reveal to us who God is, who we are, what occurred in the Fall, how we are to be reconciled to him, live for him and anticipate being forever with him. The Scriptures reveal all that is necessary for us to live godly in this life and to prepare for eternity. Thus, Scripture is to be our sole rule of both faith [what we believe] and practice [how we are to live]. From the Word of God we are to find and implement a Christian Theistic world–and–life view or biblical and comprehensive philosophy of life which is godly and consistent. See Questions 120–123. Are you reconciled to the God who has revealed himself in his Word? Do you seek to align your life to His truth?

PART II
THE SCRIPTURES AS THE WORD OF GOD

The doctrinal study of the Scriptures is termed "Bibliology," from the Gk. *biblos*, "book," which is the first word in the Greek New Testament. In this day, when the Scriptures are assailed as to their Divine inspiration and authority, it must be understood that the Bible is our only objective truth; everything else is subjective and subject to misunderstanding or change.

Quest. 7: What is the Bible?

Ans: The Bible is the special revelation of God to man in written form.

2 Tim. 3:16–17. [16]All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. [17]That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

See also: Ex. 17:14; 24:12; 31:18; Lk. 24:25–27, 45–47; Jn. 5:45–47; Heb. 1:1–3; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; 3:15–16.

COMMENTARY

The word "Bible" derives from the Gk. word for "book." It occurs as the first word of the Greek New Testament: "The book [*biblos*] of the generation of Jesus Christ..." (Matt. 1:1). It is from this occurrence that we have our English word "Bible," which now refers to all of the written Word of God. The Bible is both a book and a library of sixty–six books which comprise the canon of Scripture. The Scriptures form a unified, non–contradictory [coherent] whole as the very Word of the living God inscripturated [preserved in written form].

The Bible is also known as "Scripture," or "The Scriptures." The word means "writings" [Gk. *graphai*] and refers especially to the Word of God in written form—the Word of God *inscripturated* and preserved for us. The formula found seventy–one times in the New Testament, "It is written," means that it stands written with full and undiminishing authority.

The Christian life is comprised of two aspects, objective and subjective. The objective is revealed in the truth of Scripture as the standard of belief and conduct; the subjective aspect is our personal experience, which ought to derive from and reflect the objective aspect. Apart from Scripture, we would be left entirely with the subjective aspect. All would necessarily become relativistic (no final, authoritative word, except the strength of individual experience), empirical (all judgment would be based on experience alone), existential (completely subjective and tending toward irrationalism or emotionalism) and pragmatic (whatever seemed to work best would be right). Thus, the most emotional or mystical would be the most spiritual, and the strongest or most persistent personalities would determine the direction of Christianity. The only safeguard for such deviations is the inscripturated Word of God rightly

understood and correctly interpreted (Psa. 119:105; Isa. 8:20; Jn. 17:17; 2 Tim. 2:15).

The end of all Bible study is doctrinal truth. One simply does not know the Scriptures until he consistently arrives at their doctrinal teaching, and conversely, no one knows Christian Doctrine as he should, unless he understands it biblically. It is the doctrinal teaching of Scripture that is to govern our thinking, guide our lives and rule over our emotions.

Some might object to an "intellectual" Christianity, preferring a more simplistic or "devotional" approach, not realizing that the devotional—if legitimate at all—must derive from the doctrinal, and the doctrinal from the hermeneutical, and the hermeneutical from the exegetical [exact reading of the text]. Many seem to want a "heart" and not a "head" religion, which often becomes a misplaced zeal without adequate knowledge. Irrationality is not spirituality, nor is feeling the proper basis for faith or practice. We must understand that ignorance of Divine truth, religious irrationalism, and an aversion to doctrine, serious study and learning, are neither Christian virtues nor characteristics to be emulated.

As God made man with both a heart and a brain, and made him upright with his brain above his heart, we prefer a necessary balance as reflecting the Divine design. Emotions are to be responsive to Divine truth, never causative. Did not the Apostle Paul write to one of his most beloved churches, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all discernment, in order that ye may approve on examination things which differ…" (Phil. 1:9–10) And to another assembly: "I….cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him…" (Eph. 1:15–17). And did not the Apostle Peter close his last epistle with the words, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ…" (2 Pet. 3:18)?

Why study the Bible? The following are the main correct reasons: to glorify God, to commune with Christ, to know the will of God, to be obedient to God, to grow toward spiritual maturity, to further our sanctification, to prepare for the ministry of the Word, to understand the purpose and retain the purity of the church, to edify others, to evangelize the unconverted, to intelligently defend the faith and to prepare for eternity. Are you a lover and student of the Bible?

Quest. 8: What are the important terms concerning the Bible as the written Word of God?

Ans: The important terms concerning the Bible as the written Word of God are "inspiration," "authority," "infallibility," "inerrancy," "sufficiency," "canonicity" and "illumination."

COMMENTARY

If the Bible is the very Word of God preserved in written form [inscripturated]—and it is—then there are certain things that are necessarily true: The Bible is the *inspired* Word of God, not merely the work or words of men. Because the Bible is the very Word of God, it is authoritative—the very highest *authority*. As the very Word of God inscripturated, it is *infallible*—incapable of error and without deceit. As the inspired, authoritative, infallible Word of God inscripturated, it is necessarily *inerrant* or without error and wholly true in every respect. Because the Bible is the very Word of God and completely trustworthy in every respect, it is *sufficient* as our only rule of both faith [what we are to believe] and practice [how we are to live]. God has seen fit to authenticate and preserve certain books and no others. Together these form the *canon* or body of Divine truth we call "the Bible" or "the Scriptures." The process by which only these certain books were duly recognized is called the *canonization* of Scripture.

The very nature of Divine inspiration, authority, infallibility and inerrancy necessarily determines the preservation of the Scriptures throughout the ages in the original languages as the very Word of God.

There are three further, important terms with which one ought to be familiar: *exegesis*, *hermeneutics* and *application*. Exegesis [to bring out the significance of the text (word meaning, grammar and syntax) in the original language] pertains to the reading of the text, i.e., it answers the question, "What does the text say?" Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation. It answers the question, "What does the text mean?" (Lk. 10:26). Application refers to the text of Scripture as it may be applied to a given situation: "How does or can this passage legitimately be applied to our modern era and situation?" Application derives from interpretation. A necessary distinction must be made between interpretation and application. If these are confused, then one may believe that the application is the interpretation, and thus be removed from truly understanding a given passage. Some preaching violates this principle and leads to misunderstanding and confusion.

Quest. 9: What is meant by the "inspiration" of Scripture?

Ans: "Inspiration" is the work of God upon the hearts, minds and hands of men to give us the very Word of God in written form.

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

2 Pet. 1:20–21. [20]Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. [21]For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost.

See also: Isa. 8:20; 1 Cor. 2:9–14; Heb. 1:1–3.

COMMENTARY

The term inspiration derives from the Lat. *inspiro*, "to breathe into," referring to the human authors. The actual issue, however, is that the Scriptures themselves are "God–spirated," i.e., God–breathed [*theopneustos*] (2 Tim. 3:16).

The great truth of Divine revelation is that God has spoken to men (Heb. 1:1–3). He has not only spoken to men, but he has spoken in understandable terms. The great truth of inspiration is that this revelation is preserved and protected as the very Word of God inscripturated. Inspiration is the supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are the very Word of God. Thus, Divine inspiration extends to the very writings themselves. Any view of Divine inspiration which does not pertain to the very text itself as inspired, is both inadequate and defective. Inspiration is thus both *verbal* [extending to the very words, and therefore to the nuances of grammar and syntax in the original languages] and *plenary* [full or equal throughout].

There is a distinct difference between a translation and a version. The plethora of modern versions makes this discussion necessary. A strict translation begins with the original language and, while expressing itself in another language, keeps as closely as possible to the text in the original language with its grammatical intricacies, syntax and idioms—even to the sacrifice of style. A version differs from a translation in that it is a version of a previous translation in a second language, uses the grammar, syntax and idioms of that second language and makes much greater allowances for smoothness of reading and expression of thought. In short, a translation holds more closely the original language while a version holds more closely to the second language. To the extent that a given translation or version expresses the thought and truth of the original language, such a translation or version is the authoritative Word of God. This necessarily takes into consideration the idiomatic expressions of a language, the incapacity of some secondary languages to express the fullness of the original, and a determined faithfulness to the grammar, syntax, context and theology of the text.

Many modern "versions" are wholly inadequate, as they are not based on any given text, but are in reality paraphrases, and some have actually changed the meaning of the text and so altered its doctrinal teaching. There is no substitute for a knowledge and study of the original languages.

The Divine inspiration of Scripture is the primary presupposition of Christianity. It is Divinely revealed religion and thus stands unique among the religions of the world. The Scriptures are then the *pou sto* [Lit: "a place where I may stand"] or point–of–reference for the Christian. Biblical Christianity is Christian Theism, i.e., the truth of the triune, self–disclosing God of Scripture. All subsequent faith [what is to be believed] and practice [how we are to live] derive from this truth. The Scriptures are thus our only rule of both faith and practice. How vitally important it is then both to know them and to correctly interpret them. Is Scripture your rule of faith and practice?

Quest. 10: What is meant by the "authority" of Scripture?

Ans: The "authority" of Scripture is the rule or government the Bible is to have over our total lives as the very Word of God.

Matt. 4:4. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

2 Tim. 3:16–17. [16]All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17]That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

See also: 2 Cor. 10:4–5; Heb. 1:1–2; 1 Pet. 3:15; 2 Pet. 1:20–21.

COMMENTARY

The term "authority" derives from the Latin *auctor*, "originator" or "author." The authority of Scripture derives from the self–disclosing or self–revealing triune God of Scripture. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God because it is just that—the very Word of God inscripturated. Man as the image–bearer of God is Divinely and instinctively preconditioned to receive authoritative Divine revelation both in creation [natural revelation] and in God's Word [special revelation] (Psa. 19:1–6; Jn. 14:6; Rom. 1:18–20; Col. 2:3; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21). Both are sufficient to hold him inexcusable (Rom. 1:18–20; 2:11–16; 2 Pet. 3:3–5). The Scriptures are self–authenticating or self–attesting, i.e., they witness to themselves by virtue of their coherency [non–contradictory nature], the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, the witness and power of the Holy Spirit and their power to transform lives. See Questions 14 and 136.

The authority of Scripture is *necessary*. Man needs special revelation [a direct and authoritative word from God] to lead him to truly and rightly know God, be reconciled to him and live in the context of his revealed will. The authority of Scripture is *comprehensive*. It encompasses the whole of life and reality. The authority of Scripture is *executive*. The Word of God comes to us as mandate or command—his "Law–Word"—not merely suggestion or information—we must read, study, submit and conform to it as such. The authority of Scripture is *legislative*. It is to be our rule of both faith and practice. The authority of Scripture is *judicial*. It is the ultimate and absolute standard of what is right or wrong, revealing the moral self–consistency of God. The authority of Scripture is *perpetual*. It is never "old fashioned" to believe and obey the Bible. "It is written" means "It stands written with full and undiminishing authority." See Question 1. The authority of Scripture is *ultimate*. Because the Scriptures derive from God himself, there is no other criterion or authority to which they can be subjected or by which they may be judged. Thus, using the facts of history, science or various arguments to credential Scripture is inherently to give such evidence more authority than the Scripture itself. See Question 136.

There is an essential and primary matter which ought to be addressed concerning biblical authority. In a meaningful exchange [an intelligent

conversation at the presuppositional level, i.e., a conversation in which one speaks from his basic assumptions, expressing his faith and world–and–life view. See Questions 120 and 136] when the believer is asked by an unbeliever why he believes and holds the Bible to be the very Word of God, he answers, "Because the Bible declares itself to be the Word of God, and this assertion is evidenced by the witness of Scripture to itself." To this, his respondent may retort, "That is 'circular reasoning,' and thus, it is invalid! Circular reasoning is a logical fallacy. It is begging the question!" [*petitio principii*. This occurs when one assumes in his premises what he is attempting to prove in his conclusion]. But when speaking or arguing in the context of ultimate issues, all human reasoning is broadly circular or presuppositional, and is necessarily faith–based.

In other words, all facts are interpreted by one's presuppositions. This holds true for the Christian who acknowledges his faith–based presuppositions, and also for the non–believer who may deny this, and claims to rest in the alleged "neutrality of scientific facts." All facts are created facts. There are no "brute" or "neutral" facts, and the unbeliever himself necessarily, though unadmittedly or unknowingly, assumes Christian Theistic principles and laws or he cannot argue "scientifically"! Indeed, unless one assumes an ordered universe established by given laws, no coherence is possible on which to ground any science. The laws presupposed by science are God's laws. The question is, are one's arguments consistent with his professed system. In this respect, the believer is consistent [non–contradictory or coherent] and the non–believer proves inconsistent. See Question 136. Is God's Word authoritative in your life?

Quest. 11: What is meant by the "infallibility" of Scripture?

Ans: The "infallibility" of Scripture means that Scripture as the very Word of God is incapable of error and therefore fully trustworthy and free from deception.

Jn. 17:17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Lk. 24:44. And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me.

See also: Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:13–18.

COMMENTARY

Infallibility means incapable of error and free from deception. Because the Scripture is the very Word of God, it is necessarily infallible. Infallibility necessarily follows from Divine inspiration. The Word of God reflects the attributes of its Divine Author as to its veracity or trustworthiness.

The term "infallibility" also means "unfailing" or "certain." The Word of God is infallible in the sense that everything revealed or predicted in Scripture will certainly come to pass in the eternal purpose of God (Isa. 46:9–11; Eph.

1:3–11; Phil. 2:9–11; 2 Pet. 3:7–13). Further, God's Word sent forth will not return void of result, but will accomplish the Divine purpose (Isa. 55:10–11). The infallibility of Scripture is foundational to every promise and prophecy God has given.

The Eastern or Greek Orthodox Church holds that infallibility rests in the Councils of the Church. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that infallibility rests with the Pope [papal infallibility in matters of faith]. Biblical Christianity holds that infallibility rests with the Scriptures alone [*sola scriptura*]. One can easily see how closely the authority and infallibility of Scripture are related. Do we hold to the infallibility of Scripture in a practical sense? Do we trust God's promises? Do we heed his warnings?

Quest. 12: What is meant by the "inerrancy" of Scripture?

Ans: The "inerrancy" of Scripture means that the Scriptures are free from error and wholly true in every respect.

Jn. 17:17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

Also see: 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20–21.

COMMENTARY

Because the Bible is the inspired and authoritative Word of God, it is infallible and inerrant. The term "inerrancy" [without and incapable of error] dates from the nineteenth century when the trustworthiness of the Scriptures in historical and scientific matters was questioned. This term was added to the term "infallibility" as a further test of orthodoxy.

Some have tried to satisfy the charges of rationalistic biblical criticism and modern science and at the same time seem orthodox by attempting to hold to a "salvific" inerrancy [that the Scriptures are only true and trustworthy as they pertain to the truth of salvation, while alleging that they do contain historical and scientific errors]. This view is nothing more than a relativistic view of Scripture—a subtle accommodation to unbelief—and is in itself an inherent denial of inerrancy. If the Scriptures contained any error, such would be a reflection upon the veracity of God. He either could not or would not give us his Word without error.

Quest. 13: What is meant by the "sufficiency" of Scripture?

Ans: The "sufficiency" of Scripture means that the Bible alone is sufficient to rule or regulate our lives and teach us concerning God and our relation to him.

Matt. 4:4. ...It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

See also: Jn. 17:17; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Peter 3:18.

COMMENTARY

Man, as the image–bearer of God was created as a creature of faith because, first, every fact is a created fact, and, second, because the source of truth and knowledge was external to himself, i.e., his faith was to be placed in the Word of God. Only fallen man seeks to find the source of truth within himself, independent of God, i.e., fallen, sinful man considers himself to be autonomous [a law unto himself, i.e., self–determining and completely independent of God] (Gen. 3:1–7).

Christians are to have a "revelational epistemology" [Epistemology is the science of knowledge and truth–claims], i.e., the Scriptures are to form our authoritative, non–contradictory source for truth and knowledge. This holds true for our lives, worship, morality, corporate church life, evangelism and defending the faith.

Although the Scriptures do not reveal everything (Deut. 29:29), their revelation is sufficient for our knowledge, obedience and expectation. To go beyond Scripture in matters undisclosed to us is speculation. To reason from the Scriptures and draw "good and necessary consequences" is legitimate, as it is by this means that we apply the Scriptures consistently to our lives, remain consistent with preaching on aspects of doctrinal truth or to situations which may confront us—but only if such consequences or reasoning are both good and necessary. We must never base any doctrine on such reasoning. Good and necessary consequences are concerned with application, not interpretation. Our Lord used this means of reasoning from the spiritual nature of God to true spiritual worship (Jn. 4:23–24). He reasoned from the Scriptures to justify his healing, doing good on the Sabbath Day, and reasoned that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Matt. 12:10–12; Mk. 2:23–28; 3:1–5). He also reasoned from God's care of creation to comfort and provision (Matt. 6:28–32; 10:28–31; Lk. 12:22–31).

Historically, in the organized or state church [Roman Catholic], authority and sufficiency derived from Scripture, tradition [writings of the Church Fathers, ecclesiastical traditions, etc.] and Papal edict. At the Protestant Reformation, the cry became, *sola scriptura* [by Scripture alone], *sola fide* [by faith alone], *sola gratia* [by grace alone] and *solo Christo* [by Christ alone], as opposed to the Church of Rome with its traditions, Papal decrees, prayers to Mary and the saints, and its sacerdotal and sacramental doctrine of salvation. The Protestant Reformers held that the Scripture alone was sufficient and authoritative to guide both the church and the individual life.

Baptists, as true New Testament Christians and the inheritors of primitive Christianity, have always held to the sufficiency of Scripture as our primary distinctive or characteristic. Every other distinctive derives from this. See Question 156. Do we approach the Scriptures in such a consistent and practical way?

Quest. 14: What is meant by the "canonicity" of Scripture?

Ans: The "canonicity" of Scripture has reference to the various books that together make up the Bible [the scriptural *canon*] and the process by which they alone are recognized as Scripture [*canonization*].

2 Pet. 3:15–16. [15]And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; [16]As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

See also: 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21.

COMMENTARY

All of the Holy Scriptures together form a book—the Bible. But the Bible is itself comprised of sixty–six books. It is a Divine library of various books—thirty–nine in the Old Testament [Genesis—Malachi in our English Bible] and twenty–seven in the New Testament [Matthew—Revelation in our English Bible]—that together form the *canon* of Scripture.

The word *canon* is derived from the Greek *canōn*, and originally signified a measuring staff or straight rod. It was probably a derivative of the Hebrew *kaneh,* or reed, an Old Testament term for a measuring rod [a reed used as a measuring instrument]. By the time of Athanasius (c. 350), the term "canon" was applied to the Bible, both as the rule of faith and practice, and as the body of inspired and authoritative truth.

The existence and validity of a scriptural canon [a certain number of books or writings that are truly from God and are unique in that sense] necessarily presupposes Christian Theism [the belief in the triune, self–disclosing God of Christianity as revealed in the Scriptures]. Only if it is presupposed that the triune, self–revealing God of Scripture has spoken, and that this revelation has been inscripturated [written down] under Divine superintendence [inspiration], can the issues of canonicity [which books are truly God–given] be settled in a positive manner. See Question 9.

Early Christianity did not canonize the Scriptures by its own [the church's] authority, i.e., select which writings were to be included, but rather recognized those writings that were and are canonical. The differences between the canonical and non–canonical writings were and are immediately discernable. How did the early Christians recognize certain books as Scripture and reject others? The answer lies in the application of various principles gathered from early Christian writings which detail the process used by the early Christians and churches: first, is the book authoritative? Does it possess Divine authority? Second, is the book authentic, i.e., was it written by one of the Apostles or the stated author? Third, does it agree with the rest of Divine revelation and with the rule or "analogy of faith?" [This refers to the inclusive, non–contradictory or coherent nature of the Scripture as the very Word of God inscripturated. This

also refers to the self–consistent teaching of Scripture as it touches on any given point]. Fourth, is the book dynamic, i.e., does it possess the power of God to evangelize and edify? This refers to the witness of the Spirit in the power of his Word. Fifth, is the book recognized by the early Church Fathers? Sixth, Is the book received by the people of God? Thus, the Scriptures formed the churches, and not the reverse. Scripture stands upon Divine authority, not upon any ecclesiastical authority. The Scriptures, then, are self–attesting or self–authenticating. The Holy Spirit witnesses to the veracity of Scripture to the believer. See Question 10.

Some deny the finalization of the canon of Scripture, holding to a continuing inspiration, i.e., that God still speaks directly to and through men through visions, "tongues" [ecstatic utterances] or inspired "prophesying." Such leaves the Word of God in an incomplete and ultimately, in a non–authoritative state. See Question 84. Do we revere the Scriptures and love their Author as we ought?

Quest. 15: What is meant by "illumination"?

Ans: Illumination is the spiritual insight into the Scriptures given to the believer by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

1 Jn. 2:20, 27. [20]But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things....[27]But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

1 Cor. 2:9–10. [9]But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. [10]But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

See also: Matt. 4:4; Lk. 24:13–32, 44–47; Jn. 17:17; 1 Cor. 2:9–16; Eph. 1:15–21; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; Heb. 5:10–14; 2 Pet. 3:18.

COMMENTARY

The Spirit of God, who especially indwells every true believer, gives spiritual insight into the Scriptures, and through the Scriptures, into spiritual or doctrinal truth. Illumination, therefore, not only concerns the mind; it also includes the life in a two–fold sense: first, the end of all Bible study is the arrival at propositional or doctrinal truth. Every Christian in this sense is to be a theologian. Second, doctrinal truth is to have a profound effect upon the believer's life, i.e., "theology determines one's morality," or, "everything in life is ultimately disciplined by one's theology." There is a necessary relationship between Scripture rightly learned and held, and the personal character, i.e., a person's life is necessarily the reflection of his theology.

This anointing or illumination is distinct, a mark of grace, and utterly necessary for the Christian's experience and growth (Rom. 1:18–22; 1 Cor.

2:9–16; Eph. 4:17–19). This spiritual insight or perception enables true Christians to study the Scriptures, feed upon the Bible as their spiritual food, receive instruction, become doctrinally consistent and astute, be completely outfitted for their spiritual lives, and grow toward spiritual maturity.

Although there are not degrees of inspiration, there are degrees of illumination, depending upon one's faith, godliness, study of the Scriptures and spiritual maturity (1 Cor. 2:9–13; Eph. 1:15–19; 2 Pet. 3:18).

It must be carefully noted that spiritual illumination is not static, but may even decrease due to unconfessed sin, grieving the Spirit of truth, unbelief, spiritual sloth, or from turning away in fear or unbelief from any aspect of Divine truth (Eph. 4:30; Heb. 5:10–14). To come to terms with any aspect of scriptural truth and then reject it, for whatever reason, necessarily results to the same degree in the inability to discern truth from error. Do we pray for understanding and illumination (Psa. 119:18)? Do we seriously seek to live up to the standard of what truth we know?

Quest. 16: In what form did God give us his Word?

Ans: God has given us his Word in the form of redemptive history [the story or record of salvation].

Gal. 4:4–5. 4But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Lk. 24:44–47. 44And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me. 45Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, 46And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: 47And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

See also: Gen. 3:15; Lk. 24:25–27; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1–3.

COMMENTARY

The self–revelation of the triune God to man has been inscripturated. This revelation is termed "The Holy Scriptures" or "The Bible." This Divine revelation is progressive in nature. God did not communicate his truth completely in Genesis [both creation (Rom. 1:18–20) and redemption (Jn. 3:14–16; Gal. 4:4–5) are revelations of and from God.], the Pentateuch, the Prophets, the Psalms or even the Gospels. There is a progressive principle which extends throughout all Divine revelation—God began his self–revelation in Genesis, then continued this revelation through patriarchal history, the Law, the history of Israel as a nation set apart for this express purpose, the incarnation of our Lord and his earthly ministry, and finally, through the inspired Apostles who brought this revelation to a close. In other words, the Scriptures have not come from God as a Systematic Theology, but as redemptive revelation in an

historical format, i.e., in the form of redemptive history which is progressively revealed and developed from the creation (Gen. 1) to the consummation (2 Pet. 3; Rev. 19–22). Doctrine is not fully and finally set forth in Scripture at the very outset, but is first revealed in germ or essence, then progressively revealed to its fullness and finality. The guiding principle of Divine revelation is thus progressively historical, personal, chronological and doctrinal.

The Scriptures historically contain two Testaments. The first, or Old Testament [containing the Old Covenant], is preparatory and anticipatory. The second, or New Testament [containing the New or Gospel Covenant], is characterized by finality and fulfillment. Mark the following lines:

The New is in the Old contained,
The Old is by the New explained.

The Old Testament is largely personal (patriarchal history—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph), then national (the Mosaic legislation, the history of national Israel under the Unified Kingdom, Divided Kingdom and Isolated Kingdom) and prophetical. The New Testament is largely personal, ecclesiastical, universal (the earthly life and ministry of our Lord, the various epistles to churches and the gospel to sinful humanity without racial, national or cultural distinction) and prophetical.

All redemptive truth organically and doctrinally culminates in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Cf. Jn. 14:6; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:12–17; Heb. 1:1–3). It practically culminates in a consistent, godly life by the grace of God (Cf. the believer's union with Christ in both his death and resurrection–life and its necessary and practical results in the experience, Rom. 6:1–14; Eph. 1:3–14; 4:1; Cf. 4:22–6:9, and the practical Christian ethic that is to be demonstrated in the life. Cf. also Titus 2:11–14). See Question 77. This union will eschatalogically culminate in the future resurrection to glory and the new creation (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Rom. 8:11–23; Eph. 1:10; 2 Pet. 3; Rev. 19–22). See Part X.

Quest. 17: What is the central message of the Bible?

Ans: The central message of the Bible is the redemption of sinners through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

2 Cor. 5:21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Gal. 3:13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree.

See also: Gen. 3:15; Isa. 9:6; Matt. 1:21–23; Lk. 24:25–27, 44–47; Rom.3:21–26; 8:28–39; 1 Cor. 15:20–26; Gal. 4:4–5; Eph. 1:3–14; 1 Tim. 1:15; 3:16; Heb. 1:1–4; 7:23–25; 9:12; 10:10–14; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Jn. 2:1; Rev. 4:11.

COMMENTARY

The Bible is not a book about history, although it comes to us in an historical format. The Bible is not a book about ethics or morality, although the moral self–consistency [righteousness] of God is predominant and the Christian ethic is a necessary element. The Bible is not a book about science, although it speaks concerning creation, the universe, the earth, the heavens, plants, animals, man and spirit–beings. The Bible is not a book about philosophy, although it deals with (1) epistemology [the science of knowledge and meaning], (2) metaphysics [ultimate questions concerning God, reality, meaning, life, death, etc.], (3) a distinct world–and–life view and (4) Ethics [a standard of conduct and moral judgment]. It also speaks about and gives operative principles concerning such diverse issues as civil government, the environment, monetary inflation, sanitation and public welfare. The Bible is essentially about *salvation*—the history of the eternal, redemptive purpose of the triune God to save sinners from the curse, the reigning power of sin and its ultimate consequences.

The doctrine of salvation or redemption in the Scriptures is a true and complete salvation, not merely something potential or theoretical awaiting the ability of the sinner to make it effectual. The scriptural doctrine or message of salvation must be entirely of free and sovereign grace alone because of the awful sinful state and spiritual condition of man. If salvation derives from God, then it necessarily comes to man wholly by grace [undeserved and wholly unmerited favor].

The scriptural message of salvation must deal fully and finally with sin and its effects and consequences—the guilt, penalty, pollution, power and the very presence of sin. Salvation is from sin with all its effects, consequences and potential. Because the salvation revealed in Scripture derives from God in content and effectiveness, it is a complete and effectual salvation. See Question 36.

The doctrine of salvation in the Scripture must necessarily redeem the sinner from the reigning power of sin and truly and actually reconcile him to God, restore him to a right standing [imputed and imparted righteousness], and transform his soul, mind and body. See Questions 92 and 94. The scriptural truth of salvation is not fragmented, but rather a unified whole, which is necessarily complete.

God cannot arbitrarily set aside sin (Cf. Rom. 3:21–26). His moral self–consistency [absolute and perfect righteousness] forbids it. Sin must be fully and finally dealt with either in the person of the sinner or in the person of an innocent substitute. All Scripture points to the Lord Jesus Christ: the Old Testament by type and prophecy; the New Testament by realization and fulfillment. In his Person and work the Lord Jesus meets every requirement as Mediator, Redeemer, Lord and Advocate [Great High Priest]. See Questions 72 and 92.

This message of salvation—redemption and forgiveness of sin through the Lord Jesus Christ and reconciliation to God—is to be declared throughout the world. The God–ordained means is through the preaching of the gospel. See Questions 138–139. Has this message of salvation from the reigning power and ultimate consequences of sin become your hope and rejoicing?

Quest. 18: Why is it vital for every believer to study the Scriptures?

Ans: The Scriptures are the only and all–sufficient rule of both faith and practice. The Holy Spirit never leads the believer apart from or contrary to this inscripturated Word.

Matt. 4:4. …It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

2 Tim. 2:15. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Tim. 3:16–17. [16]All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17]That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

See also: Psa. 11:3; 19:7–14; 119; 138:2; Amos 8:11; Matt. 5:17–18; 1 Jn. 2:3–5.

COMMENTARY

The Scriptures are the very Word of God inscripturated. The vital importance of possessing the very Word of God in exact and written form cannot be overestimated. This is at once a great blessing, privilege and responsibility. It is the believer's only objective rule and guide. Everything else is relative and subject to change. Subjective religious experience can easily be misunderstood and misinterpreted. Religious feelings or impressions may and can deceive. Religious fervency, zeal or subjective experience can never become a substitute for an intelligent, humble obedience to the Word of God.

Believers need to study the Word of God for their spiritual health, doctrinal purity and practical consistency. The life of the church as the pillar and ground of the truth necessitates a biblical faithfulness. Evangelism and defending the faith presuppose a biblically–based content and impetus.

In a day characterized by doctrinal disinterestedness and looseness in both believing and living, an emphasis on subjective experience, and a lack of careful Bible study, the very foundations of Christianity continue to be shaken. Almost every biblical doctrine has either been modified or come under attack. The thrice holy God of Scripture is largely unknown. Multitudes of professing Christians are wholly ignorant of his Divine attributes. The salvation of sinners, biblically a spiritual work of God, is often reduced to the mere psychological level. What faithful, godly service God requires in his Word has often been cast aside for a pragmatic, innovative approach which is neither biblical nor godly. The regulative principle of worship, which seeks to be wholly scriptural and

glorifying to God, is often set aside for contemporary expressions which are man–centered and characterized by entertainment.

Indeed, even within the ranks of Evangelical Christianity, the authority of Scripture is often little valued. Many no longer look at modern religious innovations from a scriptural perspective, but tend to pragmatically view Scripture from the perspective of such modern innovations! The Scriptures are then twisted to conform to this modern, religious pragmatism. The only preventive against this current myriad of ills is to faithfully return to the knowledge, worship and service of God through his Word. May such a scriptural reformation lead to the blessing of revival! Both Scripture and history witness to such. See Questions 143–145.

It must be carefully noted that God honors his Word above all else, and so must we (Psa. 138:2; Matt. 5:17–18). Further, it is incontrovertible that the Holy Spirit never leads the believer contrary to or apart from the inscripturated Word of God. If we are to know the revealed will of God and walk obediently before him, then we need to have a thorough knowledge of his Word. Such is not always an easy matter. One must become a serious and spiritual student of Scripture, given to prayer for guidance and understanding, becoming acquainted with the proper principles of interpretation, making the necessary distinction between interpretation and application and coming to terms with biblical doctrine. All such study must then be consistently applied in practice. The true Christian may have to stand alone in his biblical convictions. Blessed is the believer who finds the fellowship of those who are like–minded in their reverence of and obedience to the Word of God! Do you live daily under the practical authority of God's Word?

Quest. 19: What does God require in his Word of every believer?

Ans: God in his Word requires that every believer is to live in loving obedience and humble submission to his revealed will.

1 Jn. 2:3–5. 3And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

2 Tim. 3:16–17. 16All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

See also: Rom. 12:1–2; 15:18; 2 Cor. 2:9; 7:15; Phil. 2:8; Plm. 21; Heb. 12:2–13; 1 Pet. 1:13–16; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Jn. 1:8–10; 2:1.

COMMENTARY

There is a principle of obedience and humble submission to God and his Word that is to characterize true believers. In the context of God's truth and revealed will, human beings are divided into those who are described as

unbelievers, or "the children of disobedience" and believers, or "obedient children" (Eph. 2:2; 1 Pet. 1:14). But believers still sin and act out of character as Christians when they neglect or disobey the revealed will of God. There is a direct correlation between one's faith and one's obedience to the Word of God. Loving, willful obedience betokens a relatively healthy faith; disobedience betrays a given amount of unbelief. The degree of loving, willful obedience and submission to God's Word in the life is in direct correlation to one's spiritual maturity (Heb. 5:10–14). A lack of obedience and submission means Divine chastening, which, though corrective and done in love, may be very grievous (Heb. 12:1–14).

The ultimate purpose of God in the life and experience of the believer is to conform him to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 1 Jn. 3:1–3). This is found in the path of obedience to the revealed will or Word of God. Disobedience, or acting out of character as a believer, necessarily calls forth Divine chastening and various trials and adversities which are designed to bring one back into the path of obedience, blessing and maturity. See Question 125.

Why do Christians—the very redeemed of Christ Jesus—disobey the Word of God? The reasons may vary. Sin is a sad reality, a failure, a terrible contradiction in the experience of every believer. Sadly, almost every believer at times simply neglects the Scriptures, and so thinks or acts contrary to God's truth because it is not as fixed or refreshed in his mind as it ought to be. He thus thinks or acts without the holy restraint of God's truth. We can all be blind to at least some of our sins through our ignorance or neglect of God's Word, because of our own inherent self–righteousness, or the alleged right of some cause, controversy or contention. It may often be all too easy to defend ourselves at the expense of Divine truth. Every one of us must deal with the reality of indwelling sin and remaining corruption, of which every sin is a sad manifestation (Rom. 7:13–25).

Unbelief masquerades behind every sin, and unbelief is inherent to our natures. At times, spiritual pride and self–righteousness may dull our minds and deceive our hearts. We may even excuse the very sins in ourselves which we condemn in others because our consciences are neither convicted by the Scriptures nor exercised regularly in prayer. A neglect of prayer grieves the Spirit of God who uses the Word to convict us of sin. Such are some of the more common reasons why Christians disobey God's Word. The only hopeful cure, apart from the severe discipline of Divine chastisement, is to make the study of the Scriptures, coupled with private prayer, our primary daily spiritual exercise. Do you pray? Do you obey?

PART III
GOD'S NATURE, PURPOSE AND CHARACTER

The general study of God is termed "theology," from the Gk. *theos*, "God," and *logos* or *logia*, "word or study of." The specific doctrinal study of God is termed "Theology Proper." A true and inspired knowledge of God is essential for a knowledge of everything and everyone else. Man is the image–bearer of

God. Only as he comes to know God scripturally can he truly know himself, the creation about him, understand history, situate himself in this great, Divinely–ordained context and view the future with the certainty of faith.

Quest. 20: What may we know about God from his Word?

Ans: We may know everything we need to know about God to be reconciled to him, properly worship him and live in obedience to his revealed will.

Deut. 6:4–5. [4]Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: [5]And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Matt. 22:37–39. [37]Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. [38]This is the first and great commandment. [39]And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Jn. 4:23–24. [23]But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. [24]God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

See also: Gen. 1:1; Ex. 20:1–17; 1 Sam. 15:22–23; Isa. 57:15; 64:6; Acts 4:12; 16:30–32; Rom. 3:19–26; 5:1–3; 8:7–8; Eph. 2:4–5, 8–10; 1 Tim. 6:15–16; Rev. 4:11.

COMMENTARY

God is unknowable, except as he has been pleased to reveal himself, and he has revealed himself in both creation [natural revelation] and in his Word [special revelation]. He is our Creator; we are his creatures. He is infinite; we are finite. He is eternal or supra–temporal; we are temporal. He is spirit; we are corporeal. He is omnipresent; we are physically localized. He is immutable; we are mutable. He is omnipotent and omniscient; we are relatively impotent and ignorant. He is infallible; we are fallible. He is absolutely sovereign in every sphere; we are utterly dependent upon him for life and breath and all things (Acts 17:24–25, 28). When we leave the objective, metaphysical realm and enter the moral realm, the contrast remains: God is absolutely holy; we are unholy. He is absolutely righteous; we are unrighteous. He is sinless or impeccable; we are sinful and depraved.

The moral attributes, however, coincide with our fallen, sinful state in the context of his eternal redemptive purpose: God is gracious and demonstrates his grace in redeeming the utterly undeserving. He is merciful and extends his mercy to those who suffer under the ravages of sin. He is righteous and imputes righteousness to us through faith in Jesus Christ. He is love, and believers are the objects of this love. He reveals himself redemptively as our "Heavenly Father," and we by grace and faith become his "sons" or "children." (Matt. 6:9; Rom. 8:14–18; Gal. 4:5–7; 1 Jn. 3:1–3). In the reality of redeeming grace, believers, though imperfectly, reflect God's moral attributes to a given degree

(Matt. 5:7; Lk. 6:36; Jn. 13:34–35; 15:12; Rom. 5:21; 8:4; 13:8; Gal. 5:22–23; Col. 3:12–14; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:7, 10). See Question 94.

Natural revelation points us to the greatness, power and majesty of God, but special revelation also points us to his moral attributes in the context of either redemption or judgment. Natural revelation is so great and inclusive that its witness leaves man inexcusable as to the power and Divine nature of God (Rom. 1:18–20). Special revelation satisfies the mind and heart as it reveals the fullness of God in his redemptive purpose and saving work.

God is absolutely holy [absolutely pure and separate from all his creation], and cannot be approached by anyone unholy or sinful. He is also morally self–consistent or absolutely righteous [right and incapable of wrong or inconsistency]. He demands, as is his sovereign right, that human beings, made in his image and likeness, also be holy and righteous (1 Pet. 1:15–16). In the scheme of redemption, God's love, grace and mercy rise to answer the demands of his moral self–consistency without any contradiction or inconsistency, providing deliverance and reconciliation through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 3:21–26).

Man, created originally righteous, apostatized from God in an empirical attempt to become autonomous from God and his Law–Word (Gen. 3:1–19). In Adam, who was Representative Man [federal head of the human race] man became a sinner by imputation, nature and tendency and by personal transgression (Gen. 5:3; Rom. 3:23; 5:12–19). By this, he became wholly alienated from God and brought himself under Divine condemnation.

The reality and need of redemption ultimately rest in the holy, righteous, moral self–consistency of God. A righteous, just and holy God cannot arbitrarily set aside sin without becoming morally inconsistent or self–contradictory (Rom. 3:21–31). This is why the eternal Son of God entered the human race through the incarnation (Matt. 1:21; Rom. 8:2–3; Phil. 2:5–9; 1 Tim. 3:16). The Lord Jesus Christ was and is God in the flesh, the God–man, the "Second Man," the "Last Adam," the Redeemer to save sinners, the Mediator to reconcile God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). In his infinite, eternal, redemptive love, God sent his Son to be the great propitiation [one through whom the absolute righteous demands of God can be satisfied. Through his active obedience he met the demands of the Divine Law and through his passive obedience, he paid its awful penalty], so believing sinners can be reconciled to him (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 3:24–26). Only in this way—through faith in the Lord Jesus—could God be "both just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

Because we are sinners by imputation, as well as by nature and personal transgressions, whatever we think, say or do is inherently tainted with sin. We cannot escape this. What righteousness we inherently have is a self–righteousness (Isa. 64:6). This is why salvation cannot be by works or self–effort. This is why God cannot accept our efforts to please him. If we are to be saved from sin, it must be by grace [unmerited favor—wholly and utterly

undeserved—in the place or stead of merited wrath] alone. There can be no mixture of grace and works. Any addition of works [human ability] would destroy the very principle and reality of Divine grace (Rom. 11:5–6). Free grace and free will are utterly opposed to one another.

How are we to be saved from our sin? How are we to be reconciled to God? How can we receive the grace of God? By faith. Faith is belief, trust, commitment, reliance on someone or thing ["faith" is the noun; "believe" is the verb]. Saving faith trusts, believes in and relies on God, his Word, and specifically his Son as both Lord and Savior. Saving faith lays hold of the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ in total commitment and appropriates it. This is what it means to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" and be saved (Acts 16:31). See Question 89. Have you savingly come to terms with God's truth?

Quest. 21: What are the names of God?

Ans: The names of God are those titles or designations by which God has revealed himself to man.

Ex. 20:7. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Matt. 6:9. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

See also: Gen. 22:14; 32:27; Ex. 3:13–15; 6:3; 9:16; 15:3; 17:15; 34:14; 2 Sam. 6:18; Psa. 20:1; 83:18; Isa. 9:6; 57:15; Jn. 10:25; Phil. 2:5–11.

COMMENTARY

In modern, Western society, names may mean very little, but God revealed himself in another era, in other languages, and to a culture in which names carried great significance. It is in this very important context that the names of God must be understood. A name was not only for personal identification, but also for personal revelation.

The names of God are very significant as an essential part of his self–revelation to men, so they, despite their finiteness, can sufficiently comprehend the incomprehensible and infinite God. These are the primary means of both his identification and his self–revelation as a distinct person (Gen. 17:1; Ex. 6:3). They reveal various aspects or characteristics of his Divine character, e.g., self–existence (Ex. 3:14–15), majesty (Gen. 14:18; 21:33; 24:3), power, strength or might (Gen. 17:1; Rev. 4:8), omniscience (Gen. 16:13; Acts 1:24), sufficiency (Gen. 17:1), provision (Gen. 22), holiness (Isa. 57:15), righteousness (Jer. 23:6), jealousy (Ex. 34:14), a God who is to be feared (Gen. 31:42, 53), etc. The names of God reveal his faithfulness in promises, power, judgment, covenant relationship and redemption (Gen. 24:12; Ex. 6:3).

The names of God in the Old Testament may be categorized as those which are generally used of God, and those which more specifically denote some

aspect of his character. The general names are: "God" [*El, Elohim*, "strong, powerful, mighty"], "LORD" [*Yahweh*, "Jehovah," the self–existent, covenant–keeping God"] and "Lord" [*Adonai*, "Sovereign Master"]. The more specific titles denote some aspect or attribute of the Divine character, such as "The Name" (Lev. 24:11), "The Rock" (Deut. 32:4), "God Almighty" (Gen. 17:1), "The Most High" (Gen. 14:19), "Lord of Hosts" (Isa. 1:9), "The Holy One" (Isa. 40:25), "Jealous" (Ex. 34:14), etc.

The names of God in the New Testament are also both general and more specific. The general titles are: "God" [*Theos*, equivalent to the Old Testament "El" and "Elohim"] and "Lord" [*Kurios*], used for Jehovah, for the Lord Jesus Christ and also in a mere human context for "Sir" (Acts 9:5; Jn. 4:11). *Despotēs* for *Adonai*, ["Sovereign Master"]. The more specific titles include: "The Almighty" [*Ho Pantokratōr*, or "All Powerful"], "The Blessed" [One to receive praise and honor] and "Father" (Matt. 6:9–13; Rom. 8:14–16; 1 Cor. 1:3; 8:5–6; 2 Cor. 1:2–3; 6:17–18; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 1:3ff).

It is significant that the titles of Deity are used of our Lord Jesus Christ in Old Testament (Isa. 9:6; Mal. 3:1) and the New: "God" (1 Tim. 3:16; Titus 2:13), "Lord" (Jn. 20:28; Acts 9:5–6; 22:6–10; Heb. 1:10; Jude 4; Rev. 19:16), "The Word" (Jn. 1:1) and "Son," implying an equality and a unique relation to and intimacy with God the Father (Jn. 1:18; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:8). The term "Son of Man" may not refer merely to his humanity; it is a messianic title, deriving from the Old Testament (Dan. 7:13–14).

Quest. 22: What are the attributes of God?

Ans: The attributes of God are those perfections inherent in the Divine nature which the Bible reveals concerning God.

Ex. 3:14. And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

Rom. 11:36. For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

See also: Lev. 11:43–45; 1 Kgs. 8:27; 1 Chron. 29:11–12; Psa. 31:5; 90:2; 139:1–17; 145:3, 17; 147:5; Isa. 6:1–3; 57:15; Jer. 23:24; Mal. 3:6; 1 Cor. 8:6; 1 Jn. 4:16.

COMMENTARY

The word "attributes" refers to those characteristics or qualities that are inherent in the Divine essence and thus attributed to [revealed about, assigned to or descriptive of] God in Scripture. We know or comprehend God in our finiteness through these attributes or characteristics. These are all perfections, i.e., God is necessarily perfect in every one of these qualities or characteristics.

The Divine attributes are coherent in God. The term "coherence" when used logically, philosophically or theologically, denotes consistency or to be without contradiction or conflict. If a system has any inconsistencies or contradictions,

it is said to be "incoherent." When used of the Divine attributes or perfections, it means that these Divine characteristics do not contradict or come into conflict with one another. There is no incoherence within the Divine Personality.

We can only know God as he has been pleased to reveal himself to us. Yet we can seek to understand God from the Scriptures and make our knowledge orderly and systematic. We can attempt to categorize or arrange the Divine perfections to help us think properly about God "as spirit, infinite and perfect, the source, support and end of all things" (Rom. 11:36). While our knowledge of God is only partial and inadequate due to our finiteness, fallen state and the noetic effects of sin, yet it is a true knowledge through our God–given capacity as the image–bearers of God, the context of Divine revelation and the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

Various attempts have been made to classify the Divine attributes. Most would classify these Divine attributes as: the Communicable and Incommunicable Attributes, i.e., those which belong to God alone (e.g., omnipresence, omnipotence, immensity, eternity, etc.) and those which to some extent are communicable to his moral creatures (e.g., love, mercy, wisdom, etc.). Others would classify them as Absolute (those belonging to God alone) and Relative (those expressed to some extent in man). Some would attempt to classify them as Immanent or Intransitive and Eminent or Transitive Attributes. All such attempts must ultimately prove insufficient, as God is simply transcendent in all his perfections.

God Considered as Spirit, Infinite and Perfect

God is spirit, i.e., God is neither visible nor material; he is incorporeal (Jn. 4:24). He may be perceived through the created universe (Psa. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:19–20), in the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:18; Col. 2:9), and personally and spiritually by faith (Heb. 11:6, 27). Because God is spirit, we cannot see him with our physical eyes. We "see" him through the "eye" of faith, i.e., by or through faith (Heb. 11:6).

When the Bible speaks of God as having "eyes," "hands," "feet," or "ears," etc., it is using human terms [anthropomorphisms] to help us understand that God sees, works, moves and hears, etc. Pure spiritual beings such as angels or demons are far superior to physical beings, and God is absolutely superior and ultimate—there is no one or thing above or beyond him. He is ultimate and infinite, the Creator, Governor and Sustainer of all things.

As a Spirit, God has life in himself and gives life to everything (Acts 17:25, 28; Heb. 1:3, 10:31). He is a personality, not merely an influence (Gen. 1:1; Ex. 3:14; Rom. 11:33–36).

God is absolutely perfect in everything and in every way. If there were any imperfection in God, he simply would not and could not be the God of Scripture. He is perfect truth. Because God is both true and truth, he can be trusted—believed in without fail (Deut. 32:4; Psa. 146:5–6; Titus 1:2; 1 Jn. 5:10). He is also perfect love. God's love cannot be separated from his other

perfections. His love is holy, righteous, just, gracious and merciful (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:8–10, 16). He is perfectly holy (Psa. 145:17; Isa. 57:15; 1 Pet. 1:15–16), righteous (Gen. 18:25; 2 Chron. 12:6; Psa. 11:7) and perfectly wise (Rom. 11:33–36; 1 Tim. 1:17).

God Considered as the Source, Support and End of All Things

This means that God is the Creator or Originator and Definer of all things, the one who sustains all things in the universe, and that all things exist and are being brought to final consummation [their final ordained end or conclusion] in him (Acts 17:24–28; Rom. 11:33–36; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:1–3).

In relation to time and space, God is transcendent, i.e., he far exceeds all the limitations of the universe he has created. He is above and beyond all time and space. There is nothing that exists above or beyond God. There is no law, person or thing to which he must answer; he is absolute, and all created reality is relative to him. He is moved only from within himself and his own moral self–consistency (Psa. 90:4; 113:5–6). God is also eternal or supra–temporal, i.e., he exists above and beyond time (Gen. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:17). He is immense and imminent, i.e., fully and personally present throughout the universe (1 Kgs. 8:27; Heb. 4:12–13).

In relation to creation, God is omnipresent (Psa. 139:7–10), omniscient (Psa. 139:1–5; Jer. 17:9–10; 23:24; Acts 1:24; 15:8) and omnipotent (Gen. 1:1, 3; Psa. 115:3; Isa. 46:9–11).

In relation to moral beings, God is faithful and truthful (Deut. 7:9–10; Jn. 17:17; 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:13–18; 1 Jn. 5:10), gracious, merciful and good (Psa. 103:1–2, 8–14, 17; Rom. 2:4; 8:28–39), loving and kind (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:5; Eph. 2:4–10; 1 Jn. 4:8, 16), righteous, just and holy (Psa. 145:17; Isa. 6:1–4; Hos. 1:1–11; Rom. 3:21–26; 11:33–36).

Quest. 23: What do the Scriptures teach concerning the nature of the Godhead?

Ans: The Scriptures teach that there is one God who eternally exists in Three Persons.

Deut. 6:4. Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.

Matt. 28:19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

See also: Gen. 1:1–3, 26–28; Isa. 44:6–8; 1 Cor. 8:4–6; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16.

COMMENTARY

The term "Trinity" derives from the Latin *trinitas*, or "threeness," from *tres*, three, and *uno*, one. The trinity or tri–unity of God is a great mystery. It is a Divinely–revealed truth because it is revealed only in the Scriptures and is received by faith. There is no analogy [corresponding truth or illustration] found in creation. Any attempt to illustrate the trinity or tri–unity of God from creation necessarily fails.

The truth of the Trinity can be seen as it is set forth from the Scriptures in four statements: God the Father is God (Matt. 11:25). God the Son [the Lord Jesus Christ] is God (Isa. 9:6; Jn. 1:1–3, 14, 18; Col. 2:9). God the Holy Spirit is God (Gen. 1:1–2; Acts 5:3–4; 2 Cor. 3:17). There is only One God (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 44:6–8; 1 Cor. 8:4–6).

There are two theological terms with which we ought to be familiar—the Ontological and Economic Trinity. These are two ways of viewing the one Trinity because of our finite comprehension. The word "ontological" means "being" [Gk. *ontos*, "being"], and refers to the Persons of the Godhead in their essence and relationship to one another. The word "economic" [Gk. *oikonomia*, "economy"] means "management" or "administration," and refers to the Persons of the triune Godhead in their unified cooperation in the works of creation, redemption and providence. The terminology "Ontological Trinity" means that God has eternally existed in Three Persons. Some hold erroneously that God is only trinitarian in relation to the created universe. Such a view necessarily and inherently denies the Ontological Trinity and thus both the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit. See Questions 25 and 26.

Quest. 24: Who is God the Father?

Ans: The Father is the eternal God, co–equal and co–eternal with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 6:9. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

See also: Matt. 11:27; Rom. 8:14–16; Eph. 1:3.

COMMENTARY

For an introduction to this question and answer, see Questions 20–23. God the Father has revealed himself as "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ," the "Father" to the nation of Israel as a corporate covenant people (Isa. 64:8; Mal. 1:6; Jn. 8:41), and as "Father" to the Christian individually and corporately (Matt. 6:9; Rom. 8:14–16). This distinction is eternal and ontological, and not merely related to the Economic Trinity (i.e., God is not a trinity only in relation to creation and redemption, but the distinctions within the Godhead are eternal—the Father has always been the "Father" in relation to the Son and the Spirit). See Question 23. This self–revelation of God as "Father" in the Scriptures is for our understanding, comfort, confidence and hope.

The revelation of God as our "Father" enables us, as finite creatures and his spiritual children, to apprehend him, know his love, love him in return and rejoice in such a filial relationship. This revelation enables the believer to know God as the One who loves him, receives him, protects him, provides for him, chastens him, hears his prayers, knows his trials and will one day receive him to himself in glory. Luther stated this blessed truth when he said that if he could but call God "Father," he could pray—and so can we! See Questions 99–102.

Quest. 25: Who is the Lord Jesus Christ?

Ans: The Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, co–equal and co–eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Jn. 1:1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Col. 2:9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

1 Tim. 3:16. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Titus 2:13. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

See also: Isa. 7:14; Jn. 1:14, 18; 14:6–11; Phil. 2:5–11; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8.

COMMENTARY

God is Spirit, and so invisible, i.e., incorporeal [without bodily parts] (Jn. 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:15–16). The Lord Jesus Christ in his incarnation is the full and final revelation and representation of the eternal God (Jn. 1:1–3; 14:6–11; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16)—the very "exegesis" of God (Jn. 1:18). It is in the Lord Jesus Christ that man's inherent desire to "see" God is fulfilled (Jn. 14:9). It is in and through the personality and actions of the Lord Jesus during his earthly ministry that we see revealed the power and moral attributes of God. In his transfiguration we see a glimpse of his eternal glory as very God (Matt. 17:1–8; Mk. 9:1–8; Lk. 9:27–36; Jn. 17:4–5; 2 Pet. 1:16–18).

The eternal Son of God became incarnate [took to himself a true and complete human nature, soul and body] for the redemption of sinners (Lk. 1:35; Gal. 4:4). He did not become incarnate as a mere individual, but as Representative Man, "The Second Man," "The Last Adam" (Rom. 5:12–18; 1 Cor. 15:45–47). It is in this capacity that we must view and understand his humanity, his perfect obedience to the Law, his wilderness temptation, his earthly life and ministry, his suffering and death, his glorious resurrection and his ascension into heaven to rule as the God–Man on the throne of his glory (Matt. 28:18; 1 Cor. 15:20–26; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 1:3).

He was and ever remains the perfect and sinless Son of God by virtue of the virgin birth, and so was alone qualified to be our Redeemer and Savior (Gal.

4:4–5; Lk. 1:26–35; Rom. 5:12–19). The Lord Jesus Christ could not be a mere human being and both live a perfect life under the law, then suffer and die for sinners—neither his life nor suffering and death would accomplish anything. He would only have died as a martyr—and for his own sins. The efficacy [effectiveness] of his work depended on his Person—his Divine nature and impeccable human nature.

At and through the incarnation, the eternal Son of God entered into the realm of time. The Lord Jesus Christ is thus the "God–Man," not the "Man–God." By this we mean that it was God the Son, the second Person of the triune Godhead, who took to himself a full and complete human nature through the miracle of the Virgin Birth, including a soul and body, and not a man who was or is in the process of becoming God. The two natures within our Lord (i.e., the hypostatic union of his human and Divine natures) are not commingled [mixed together] or confused, but separate and distinct, i.e., he is not half–God and half–man. The incarnation was necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ to be the perfect and effectual Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5), and therefore our Redeemer, Savior and Intercessor (Rom. 3:21–26; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Jn. 2:1). Because of his unique Person and finished redemptive work, he alone qualifies as the Savior of sinners (Acts 4:12).

The early Church Fathers, seeking to safeguard the eternal distinctions within the Godhead from error and heresy, to safeguard the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and using scriptural terminology, referred to the eternal distinction between the Father and the Son as the "eternal generation" of the Son by the Father. They also referred to the eternal distinction between the Holy Spirit and Father and Son as the "eternal procession" of the Holy Spirit, as Scripture declares that he proceeds from the Father and the Son (Jn. 14:16–17, 26; 16:7; Acts 2:32–33). This attempt at scriptural language was used to preserve the distinctions within the Godhead and was not meant to imply any inherent subordination, succession or emanation. Beyond the language of Scripture, we dare not go. The incarnation of the eternal Son of God remains the most profound mystery of the ages. To deny the eternal Sonship of Christ Jesus is to deny the Ontological Trinity, maintain only the Economic Trinity, and thus implicitly deny the immutability of the nature of the Godhead. See Question 23.

Through the Virgin Birth (Matt. 1:18–25; Lk. 1:26–35), his perfectly sinless life lived under the Law (Jn. 8:46; Gal. 4:4–5; 1 Pet. 2:21–22) and his sacrificial, substitutionary death (Lk. 19:10; Phil. 2:5–8; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 9:12, 27–28) and resurrection (Matt. 28:5–6; Acts 2:22–33; Rom. 1:3–4) our Lord became the God–Man, holy, impeccable and the only qualified Redeemer of sinners (Acts 4:12), our Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14–16; 5:5–10; 7:11–28; 1 Jn. 2:1) and the final Judge of all men (Acts 17:30–31; 2 Cor. 5:10; Phil. 2:9–11; Rev. 20:11–15). The name "Jesus" [Gk. *Iēsus*, "Yahweh is salvation"] refers to his humanity, "Christ" [Gk. *Christos*, "Anointed One"] to his office and mission as the promised Messiah (Jn. 1:41; 4:25) and "Lord" [Gk. *Kurios*, "Yahweh"] to his Deity and position of exaltation (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 1:1–13). His full name and proper title is "The Lord Jesus Christ."

The Divine nature of our Lord formed the basis for his personality and upheld and sustained his human nature as the God–Man in the hypostatic union [the union of the two natures in one Person]. Thus, he was necessarily impeccable, i.e., he did not and could not sin. The two Latin phrases are *posse non peccare*, able not to sin [peccable], and *non posse peccare*, unable to sin [impeccable]. The impeccability of our Lord was necessary to his redemptive work.

Although the modern emphasis is upon the redemptive work of Christ rather than his Person, most controversies have historically centered upon the latter. The great issue has been the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the relation of his two natures in one Person. The doctrinal heresies concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ have been: *Valentinian Gnosticism*, which denied the true Deity of Christ by holding that the "Christ element" came upon him at his baptism and left him in the garden agony before his crucifixion. Thus, he died as a mere man (Jn. 1:14, 18). *Docetic Gnosticism*, which, holding that all matter was inherently evil, denied the true humanity of Christ, holding him to be a phantom being (1 Jn. 1:1; 4:2–3). *Dynamic Monarchianism*, A second century anti–trinitarian heresy that denied the Deity of Christ and taught that he was a mere man who received an anointing at his baptism and so was in the process of becoming Divine. Modern representatives in principle include Socinians, Christadelphians, Unitarians, Theosophists and Mormons. *Modalistic Monarchianism*, an anti–trinitarian heresy that held to one Person in three manifestations rather than distinct Persons in the Godhead. Also called Sabellianism, Patripassianism, etc. United Pentecostals ["Jesus Only"] or the "Apostolic Church" is the modern representative of this ancient heresy. *Arianism*, an anti–trinitarian heresy which denied the absolute Deity of Christ. The modern representatives are Socinians and Russelites [Jehovah's Witnesses] (1 Tim. 3:16). *Apollonarianism*, an anti–trinitarian heresy which denied the true humanity of Christ. *Eutychianism*, which taught the fusion of the two natures in Christ. *Nestorianism*, which seemed to unduly separate the hypostatic union of the two natures of Christ into two persons. *Monophysitism*, which taught that Christ had a composite nature rather than two distinct natures. *Monothelitism*, which held that Christ had but one will and thus demeaned his true humanity. There were two views: either the human will was merged with the Divine will so that only the Divine will acted, or the two wills were fused into one. The more modern *Kenosis Theory*, deriving from Phil. 2:7. The extreme form of this theory holds that Christ emptied himself of his Deity or Divine nature and became a mere man. Modified forms of this theory are that in some way he emptied himself of some Divine attributes, and so was less than full Deity.

The controversies concerning our Lord's redemptive work center on the nature and extent of the atonement. Some hold that he suffered and died for all men without exception and so all will be saved [consistent universalism]. Others, that he died to make salvation possible and all men savable if they but add their ability to his work [inconsistent universalism]. Some consistently hold

that our Lord suffered and died for a specific people, and that every one of these will be infallibly redeemed [consistent particularism].

The Lord Jesus Christ is at once the only Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5), the only Redeemer and Savior of sinners (Rom. 3:24–26; Eph. 1:5–7) and our Great High Priest (Heb. 4:12–16; 7:19–28; 8:1–2; 9:11–14, 24; 1 Jn. 2:1). He will be the coming Judge of all men (Jn. 5:22). He is also our example and our goal. The Lord God is in the process of redeeming his image in believers, and we are being conformed to the image of his Son by the work of the Holy Spirit in our adoption, sanctification, chastening and testing. This conformity will be complete in the resurrection unto glory (Rom. 8:23, 29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Phil.3:20–21). For a full description of the Lord Jesus Christ, see Questions 70–76. Do you have a saving relationship to the Lord Jesus through faith?

Quest. 26: Who is the Holy Spirit?

Ans: The Holy Spirit is the eternal Spirit of God, co–equal and co–eternal with the Father and the Son.

2 Cor. 3:17. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Matt. 28:19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

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

See also: Gen. 1:2; Mk. 3:28–30; Acts 5:3–4, 9; 13:2–4; 16:6; 20:28; 1 Tim. 4:1.

COMMENTARY

God the Holy Spirit is a distinct Person within the Godhead. As the issue with the Lord Jesus Christ has been his Deity, so the great issue concerning the Holy Spirit has been his distinct personality. He is not a mere influence, impersonal force or an emanation from God (Acts 13:2, 4). He possesses the peculiarities, power and prerogatives of a distinct personality: he speaks (Acts 13:2; 1 Tim. 4:1), creates (Gen. 1:2), commands (Acts 13:2–4), possesses intelligent judgment and prerogative (Acts 15:28; 20:28), prohibits (Acts 16:6), can be tempted and lied to (Acts 5:3–4, 9), grieved (Eph. 4:30) and sinned against (Mk. 3:28–30). [Our Lord at times used the masculine form rather than the neuter in the Greek to refer to the Holy Spirit, when the word "spirit" itself is neuter, thus emphasizing his personality (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:8, 13–14)]. He was involved with the other Persons of the triune Godhead in creation (Gen. 1:1–3) and in the eternal Covenant of Redemption and Grace [the eternal redemptive purpose]. See Questions 67, 77 and 84.

The early Church Fathers, seeking to safeguard the eternal distinctions within the Godhead from error and heresy, and using scriptural terminology, referred to the eternal distinction between the Holy Spirit and Father and the

Son as the "eternal procession" of the Holy Spirit, as Scripture declares that he proceeds from the Father and the Son (Jn. 14:16–17, 26; 16:7; Acts 2:32–33). This language was used to preserve the distinctions within the Godhead and was not meant to imply any inherent subordination, succession or emanation. To deny the eternal personality of the Holy Spirit is to implicitly deny both the Ontological Trinity and the immutability of the Godhead. See Questions 23 and 25.

It is the peculiar office of the Holy Spirit to apply the work of our Lord's completed redemption or satisfaction [the finished work of Christ] to the life and experience of the Christian individually—in particular: regeneration, repentance, faith, adoption and sanctification—and to the church corporately (Gal. 5:22–23; Eph. 1:15–20; 13–14; 4:11–16, 30; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2). See Question 84. He thus makes our Christian experience possible and practical.

The work of the Holy Spirit within the believer's personality is one of enabling, transforming and sanctifying grace. Believers are commanded to walk in the Spirit and thus not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The Spirit of God restrains them from living as they once did (Gal. 5:16–18). The "fruit of the Spirit," i.e., those graces which the Holy Spirit manifests in the life, are among the essential marks of grace (Gal. 5:22–23). See Question 112. Do we bear the marks of God's grace and Spirit in our lives and experience?

Quest. 27: What do the Scriptures teach concerning the purpose of God?

Ans: The Scriptures teach that God has eternally purposed all things without exception for his own glory and the highest good.

Eph. 1:11. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Rom. 8:28–30. [28]And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. [29]For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. [30]Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

See also: Psa. 115:3; Isa. 46:9–11; Rom. 11:33–36; Eph. 1:3–14; 2:1–10; Rev. 4:11.

COMMENTARY

God as a person with a distinct personality must be a being with purpose and determination. As God himself is infinite, imminent and eternal, his purpose in relation to his creation is necessarily an eternal, all–inclusive purpose. As an infinitely wise and intelligent personality, his purpose must be the same.

The Scriptures reveal that God "works all things after the counsel of his own will," i.e., that he has purposed or predetermined all things. This is known as foreordination or predestination. By definition "predestination" means "to determine the destiny beforehand." The term has a three–fold usage in Scripture, referring, first, to the comprehensive, eternal purpose of God (Eph. 1:11); second, to his soteriological [pertaining to salvation] purpose (Rom. 8:28–31; 9:1–24; Eph. 1:3–14); and third, to the eschatological purpose realized in the believer's glorification and ultimate conformity to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29).

The comprehensive use of the term may be described as the eternal (Isa. 46:9–10; Acts 15:18; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 4:11), immutable (Isa. 14:24; 46:11; Prov. 19:21), all–inclusive (Acts 17:25, 28; Eph. 1:11; Rev 4:11), all–wise (Jer. 51:15; Rom. 11:33–35; 16:27; Eph 3:10–11; 1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 25), just (Isa. 45:21; Zeph. 3:5; Rom. 9:14) holy (Ex. 15:11; Isa. 57:15) and loving (Rom. 8:38–39; Eph. 1:3–5) decree or purpose of God (Isa. 14:24; Dan. 4:17, 24; Eph. 1:11), whereby, from eternity, from within himself (Psa. 115:3; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 11:33–36; Eph. 1:5, 9) and for his own glory (1 Chron. 29:11–13; Eph. 1:3–6, 12–14; Rev 4:11), he has determined whatsoever comes to pass (Rom. 11:33–36; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Neh. 9:6).

Although the terms "predestinate," "predestination" and "foreordained" occur but seldom in Scripture, there are a wide variety of terms in the original languages [thirty–two in Heb. and Gk.] which connote Divine purpose, determination, will, sovereignty and predestination. To eliminate the idea of Divine predestination from Scripture would completely change the nature and character of God, render relative or null and void his promises and prophecies, and destroy the very essence and fabric of Scripture. It would be, in effect, the complete abandonment of biblical Christianity for an "Open Theism" or "Process Theology" in which God himself would be growing and expanding with the universe, and the future would remain unknown, even to him. To say "God" is to say "purpose," and to say "purpose" in the context of God as revealed in Scripture, is to say "predestination."

The biblical doctrine of predestination is a most glorious, mysterious and yet intensely practical truth. As part of Divine revelation, predestination is to be known, studied and believed (Acts 20:20, 26–27). It preserves the Creator–creature relationship that pervades Scripture. Predestination is the fountain of all grace, giving to free and sovereign grace its glorious nature and distinct character (Rom. 11:5–6; Eph. 1:3–11; 2:1–10). It is the expression of God's sovereign, eternal, immutable love to his own, and is at the very foundation of the believer's confidence and assurance of salvation (Deut. 7:6–8; Rom. 8:28–39; Eph. 1:13–14; 1 Pet. 1:3–5, 18–20; 1 Jn. 4:9–10, 19). Predestination is the biblical source of all boldness, encouragement and comfort in trial (Rom. 8:28–39; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:7–9; Eph. 2:8–10). Rightly understood, it is a proper biblical incentive to holiness and responsible action (Eph. 1:4; 2:8–10; Phil. 1:29; 2:12–13; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:1–2; 1 Jn. 2:28–3:3). It must always be remembered that, scripturally, God has ordained the means as well as the end. See Questions 67 and 68.

The so–called "Problem of Evil" ought to be considered. This can be stated in the following terms: "How can evil exist in a universe created and governed by an all–powerful, benevolent [inherently and completely good] God?" This "problem" is more psychological than logical, theological or philosophical. Man would rather call God and his actions into question than submit himself to God in complete trust, even to a God who is benevolent in the context of his omnipotence and righteousness (Rom. 9:11–24). This question is largely a matter of unbelief in the face of Scriptural testimony to the purpose and patience of God in the fulfillment of his eternal purpose. But it remains a question which is often asked as a rebuttal to believers in general, and to those who hold to biblical Divine sovereignty in particular.

The possible answers, according to human reasoning, are: first, if evil exists [and it does as a sad and awful reality], then there is no omnipotent [all–powerful], benevolent God—the argument of the atheist.

Second, evil exists and therefore, if God exists, he must be either limited in his power or arbitrary in his moral character—the argument of those who espouse a non–biblical [pagan] concept of God.

Third, evil exists, therefore there is more than one God or there are equal dualistic forces [good and evil] in conflict. This is the non–biblical [pagan] argument of those who would posit a dualism (a "good god" and "bad god" or opposing good and evil forces or principles) in conflict for control of the universe.

Fourth, evil does not exist, except as an illusion in our human thinking. This is the non–biblical view of some western cults and Eastern religions (e.g., Christian Science, Buddhism). This would make any ultimate distinction between good and evil arbitrary, and thus deny the moral self–consistency of the Divine character.

Fifth, evil exists as a mystery, independent of God, who remains to a given [limited] degree powerful and benevolent, necessarily operating in a utilitarian sense. This is the inconsistent argument of some (including Pelagians and Arminians) who attempt to deliver God from the charge of being the "author of sin" and so unscripturally limit his power in order to retain his goodness.

Finally, evil exists in the universe of an omnipotent, benevolent God, who is completely sovereign over it and uses it for his own glory and the highest good—the argument of the biblical Christian [consistent Calvinist].

This final assertion is the only view that can be consistently aligned to the teaching of Scripture (e.g., Gen. 50:20; Judg. 2:15; 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14; 2 Kgs. 22:16; Psa. 76:10; Isa. 10:5–15; 45:7; Amos 3:6; Acts 4:27–28; Rom. 8:28; 9:11–21). Every other view, deriving from sinful humanistic reasoning, and so calling God and his actions into question (Rom. 9:19–21), seeks to point out an incoherence [inconsistency] in the Scriptures and the Christian system. These views either deny God and his power over evil, or limit God and seek to bring him down to the finite level (Rom. 1:21–25) and destroy his sovereignty and

moral self–consistency—and thus any sufficient or consistent basis for Divine coherence.

The existence of evil in a universe created and governed by an all–powerful and benevolent God is not incoherent if God has a morally sufficient reason for this evil to exist. Such a view does not take all the mystery out of the problem of evil. God is infinite, and so is his wisdom, power and purpose. We are finite, and simply cannot comprehend all that is implied in this profound issue. Why God, who is absolutely morally self–consistent, should ordain evil, must to a given degree remain a mystery to finite beings.

Further, when considering the problem of evil, one must take into account the reality of time. What might be considered as evil in the context of past or present reality may later prove to be great blessing or to result in such (Gen. 42:36; 50:20; Acts 4:27–28; Rom. 8:28–31). Finally, only if God is in absolute control of evil can he ordain it for good, and we can trust the purpose, prophecies and promises of his Word. Do we trust the purpose of God, although we may not understand it? Do we complain against his providence? Can we by faith grasp the truth of Rom. 8:28?

Quest. 28: What do the Scriptures teach concerning the moral character of God?

Ans: The Scriptures teach that God is absolutely holy, just and righteous, or morally self–consistent.

1 Pet. 1:15–16. 15But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Psa. 145:17. The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

See also: Isa. 6:1–3; 57:15; Rom. 3:21–26.

COMMENTARY

God is morally self–consistent, i.e., he is absolutely holy and righteous, and therefore cannot be inconsistent in his moral character. He is both right and righteous, never wrong or unrighteous. Because God is absolutely righteous, whatever he does or commands is right (Gen. 18:25). Because God is absolute and transcendent, there is no higher moral law or principle than the moral character of God. Man is fully accountable to God, but God is in no way accountable to man—or anyone else. Although God is not accountable to man, yet believers are challenged to argue his promises and persevere in earnest prayer (Lk. 11:1–13; 18:1–8; Jas. 5:16–18).

God is absolute, never arbitrary, as he himself is both the source, support and end of all things and is morally self–consistent [absolutely righteous]. Because God is morally self–consistent or absolutely righteous, he cannot arbitrarily set aside sin—he must be propitiated. His moral self–consistency demands that either the sinner be punished, or an innocent, suitable substitute

take the sinner's place [vicarious or substitutionary atonement]. The eternal, redemptive purpose of God is to redeem a covenant people, make them conformable to his moral self–consistency and conform them to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Eph. 1:3–7; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9). This redemptive purpose necessarily delivers from the guilt, penalty [justification], pollution, power [sanctification] and presence [glorification] of sin (Rom. 8:29–30). Have you been reconciled to this God through the Lord Jesus Christ?

Quest. 29: What do the Scriptures teach concerning the loving kindness of God?

Ans: The Scriptures teach that God is consistent in his love, grace and mercy.

Jn. 3:16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

1 Jn. 4:8, 16. [8]He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love....[16]And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

See also: Ex. 34:6–7; Psa. 23:6; 103: 8–14; 136:1–26; Rom. 8:35, 38–39; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:6; 2:4–5.

COMMENTARY

God has a general benevolence toward his entire creation. This causes him to providentially care for this creation, including the land (Lev. 26:34–35; 2 Chron. 36:21), the plants (Matt. 6:28–30), the animals (Deut. 25:4; Psa. 147:9; Matt. 10:29; 12:11–12) and mankind (Matt. 10:28–31; Rom. 8:28–39). This general benevolence, however, must not be confused with his redemptive love. This love must possess a definite moral character or quality. Redemptive love is in perfect harmony with other attributes of God. It is a holy, righteous, infinite, intelligent, gracious and perfect love. Such a love must have definite objects; by necessity such love could not be indefinite or nebulous in nature. The objects of this Divine, redemptive love are the elect of God among the Jews and the Gentiles (Jn. 3:16; Eph. 1:3–7). Christians are to reflect this love in their own lives and relationships (Matt. 22:36–40; Jn. 13:34–35; Rom. 13:8–10; 1 Jn. 3:10–18).

Grace is unmerited [undeserved] favor in the place or stead of merited [deserved] wrath. Divine grace views sinners as wholly or totally undeserving of love and kindness, yet moves toward them for blessing rather than the wrath and judgment they so rightly deserve. There are two aspects of Divine grace toward sinful men: common grace, or the kindness of God toward men in general, and saving grace, or the redemptive purpose of God exercised personally and effectually toward the objects of salvation in both eternity and time. See Question 78.

As grace views sinners as undeserving, mercy views them as suffering under the ravages and limitations of sin, and takes pity upon them (Psa. 103:13–17). The Scriptures emphasize that God's "mercy endures forever" (Psa. 136), i.e., that he is long–suffering and shows his loving kindness and pity to those who do not deserve it. Have you found this grace and mercy?

PART IV
GOD'S WORKS OF CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

The works of God are traditionally considered in a three–fold manner: creation, providence and redemption. This section considers the first two works. As the image–bearers of God, we have and find meaning and significance only in the context of God and his creative and redemptive purpose, i.e., we must know God as he has revealed himself to us before we can know ourselves.

The purpose of God is progressively revealed through Divine providence, which is that process through which he brings to pass his eternal decree in time and history. We should be in awe of the power and purpose of God revealed through his creation and providence!

Quest. 30: What is the work of creation?

Ans: The work of creation is God's making all things of nothing, by the word of his power, for himself, in the space of six days, and all very good.

Gen. 1:1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Heb. 11:3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Isa. 45:18. For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I *am* the LORD; and *there is* none else.

See also: Gen. 1:1–31; Psa. 148:1–5; Prov. 16:4; Isa. 40:26; 42:5; 45:12; 65:17; Acts 17:24–25; Rom. 11:33–36; Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:15–17; 2 Pet. 3:4–13; Rev. 4:11.

COMMENTARY

The triune God created the universe *ex nihilo* [out of nothing] (Gen. 1:1–3; Jn. 1:1–3; Col. 1:15–17). The triunity of the Godhead is ontological, i.e., God is essentially a triunity in himself, apart from creation. See Question 23. [It is presupposed that he created this nothingness or void in which he created this universe]. It must also be evident that if God created all things, then every fact is a created fact and creation was a definitive act. Thus, every fact is to be interpreted or understood in the context of God and his intended meaning and significance. This has great doctrinal, scientific and moral implications.

The opening words of Scripture, Genesis 1:1, are most profound, and set in order the remainder of Divine revelation. This opening statement is more than an historical statement concerning the origin of the universe or a proof–text against evolution. It is a declaration which is determining for all which follows in Scripture. Is the Bible inspired? Is it infallible? Is it inerrant? Is it coherent? If so, then, as the very Word of God, it is necessarily the ultimate authority,

self–consistent and non–contradictory throughout. See Part II. What we find in the opening statement must prove consistent through to the very conclusion of Scripture—from Genesis to Revelation.

First, there is a presuppositional principle. Scripture commences with a presuppositional stance. The Bible never seeks to "prove" the existence of God; this is presupposed from the very beginning. This principle is foundational. Man was created in the image of God as a creature of faith, with the source of truth and knowledge outside himself, and therefore was created as a presuppositionalist. He was placed in a world already created and defined by God. He was, in other words, created to "think God's thoughts after him," i.e., to give the same meaning to everything that God had given to it. To do otherwise would be sin. This presuppositional principle is absolutely determining for mankind. Our presuppositions, taken together as forming our world–and–life view, necessarily determine our thoughts, motives, words and actions. See Questions 120–123. Indeed, all facts are interpreted by one's presuppositions. This is absolutely inescapable. Ultimately, therefore, everything derives from a principle of faith—one's belief–system—whether one is a believer or an unbeliever. See Questions 31, 120 and 136.

Second, the Bible necessarily begins with a declarative or revelatory statement concerning the power and work of God. This principle also characterizes Scripture throughout. Man by nature begins with his needs; God begins with a declaration in his self–revelation, whether it be creative or redemptive (e.g., Gen. 1:1–3; 17:1; 28:10–17; 35:11; Ex. 3:1–6, 19–20; 5:2; 6:1; 20:1–2; Acts 7:2ff; 9:3–6; 22:14; Rom. 9:17). Creation itself is part of this Divine revelation. It reflects his power and Godhood, and exists to reveal his glory. This natural revelation is so pervasive as to hold man inexcusable with its testimony (Rom. 1:18–20; Psa. 19:1–3; Rev. 4:11).

Third, we find the self–existence and infinite nature of God, or his absolute independence from his creation. To say "…God created…" is to hold that God is not part of his creation. He is above and beyond it, prior to it, separate from it; and so not dependent in any way upon it. Man cannot add anything to God, nor can he take away anything from him—except in his own depraved imagination—which has no effect upon objective reality whatsoever (Rom. 1:18–32). This principle separates true and false religion.

Fourth, we are faced with the absolute sovereignty of God over his creation. See Question 22. This the Scriptures consistently maintain. God is infinite, omnipotent, immanent and transcendent. Man is finite, and beset with creaturely limitations. Man must never detract one iota from God, attribute to him finite attributes or human limitations, or detract from his glory. His perfections are necessarily immutable. Any perceived limitation or inconsistency in the Divine nature is only subjective and irrational, and derives from an innate principle of unbelief and sinful hostility.

Fifth, we must mark that every fact is a created fact. This necessarily means that there are no "brute" facts, i.e., uninterpreted or "neutral" facts in the

universe. Because every fact is a created fact, all the ground, literally and figuratively, belongs to God. There are thus no "neutral" facts to which unbelievers or secular science can appeal. There is no "neutral ground" on which the believer and unbeliever can meet for a meaningful exchange. There is common ground or a point–of–contact, but this is in the context of man being the image–bearer of God, having God's Law indelibly inscribed upon his heart, and existing in the context of created facts which he unconsciously takes for granted (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 2:14–15; 1:18–20). This truth is determining for worship, for the preaching of the Gospel, for the defense of the faith, for the Christian life, for science and for a Christian philosophy of education. It must be remembered that all facts are necessarily interpreted by one's presuppositions. See Question 136.

Finally, we have a revelation of the Creator–creature distinction and relationship. God is the Creator; man is his creature. Man is not in the process of becoming God, and God must not be humanized. From the opening statement to the closing declaration, the Bible maintains this Creator–creature distinction. Man has always, is now, and forever will be, utterly dependent upon God for his very existence and everything which pertains to it. There is not, nor can there ever be, any actual human autonomy—any actual or perceived independence from God—not in time, not in history, not in a state of sin, not in a state of grace, not on earth, not in heaven and not in hell.

These revealed realities are foundational for all worship, apologetics and for every aspect of the Christian life. As Christians, we are always challenged at the point of our faith, and our faith is always challenged at its point–of–contact with the Word of God. This was true of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:1–12). They were tempted at the point their faith was grounded in the Word of God. Every challenge or attack and every temptation comes to believers at this very same and crucial point as it did to our first parents—and for the very same reason—to separate us from the Word of God and seduce us to act autonomously.

Our faith, if it is biblical, is not irrational; it is necessarily intelligent and consistent, as it is God–given and distinct from mere human trust (Acts 18:27; Eph. 2:8–10). This God–engendered faith primarily enables us to believe that the Bible is the very Word of God inscripturated. Everything else flows from this one vital reality—the one basic and essential presupposition—our belief in creation as opposed to evolution, our comprehension of and response to the gospel, our understanding of Bible doctrine, our growth in grace and spiritual maturity, and our service for the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the vital connection between the Scriptures and faith. See Question 9. The Bible is the foundation of our "revelational epistemology," our sole rule of both faith and practice—and, whatever the challenge or attack, this is the ground which must be held at all costs. See Question 13. To reverently love its Author, to thoroughly study it, to live humbly in obedience to its mandates and to maintain its absolute authority and truthfulness before an unbelieving world, is the primary calling and task of every Christian. It is in this comprehensive context of Scripture that we must consider the Divine creation of the universe, the world and man.

The idea of evolution is neither benign nor neutral, nor yet merely academic. In modern secular science and the modern secular, statist educational system, the necessity of evolution is the predominant issue in the philosophy of Atheism. The belief in evolution enables men to completely exclude God from their world [a "closed universe" with no place for the supernatural]. It allegedly answers the question of ultimate issues [metaphysics] origins, morality and meaning. Man is left as his own "god," autonomous, and so determining for himself what is right or wrong (Gen. 3:1–7; Rom. 1:18–32; Eph. 4:17–19).

If evolution were true, it would necessarily be true only on atheistic principles. There would be no consistent basis for the spiritual realm, for morality, for ethics, for social order, or hope for the future. All existence would be ultimately meaningless. Any attempt to consistently deal with these necessary realities would be completely arbitrary and at the best based on the relative attempt of human consensus. Social Darwinism [the principles of evolution applied to society] has brought only materialism, relativism, disease, death, destruction, socialism and enforced totalitarianism. It is not without reason that modern philosophies tend to be materialistic, relativistic, pluralistic, existential and nihilistic. See Question 120.

Belief in either creation or evolution is a matter of faith—either faith in God and his infallible Word or faith in the fallen human perception of presupposed "brute" or neutral "facts" (Heb. 11:6). Every fact is interpreted by one's presuppositions. Thus, no amount of evidence can be completely convincing. A truly consistent scientific approach to the idea of evolution fails when aligned to the modern, scientific [empirical, or experienced–based] method. It is, essentially, a faith–based assumption. Belief in Divine creation rests in an intelligent, God–given faith in God's inspired and infallible Word.

The triune God created the universe and this world for himself as the theater in which he would demonstrate the manifold glory of his attributes to and through creation (Psa. 19:1–3; Rom. 11:33–36; Rev. 4:11). God was pleased to take six literal days for the creative process. The idea of geological ages in the reference to "evening and morning" is intrusive and illogical in the context of the biblical record (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Everything in the original creation was "very good," and this included primeval man, Adam. The defects, sufferings and horrors observed in the present world are the result of man's sin (Gen. 3:1–19; Rom. 5:12; 8:19–23). The redemptive purpose necessarily includes the complete restoration of the universe to its pristine and sinless state (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:7–13; Rev. 21:1).

A Christian view of creation is one which is inclusively scriptural, embracing such issues as theology, the Creation or Cultural Mandate [This mandate to multiply, replenish and subdue the earth was given man at creation, Gen. 1:26–28, but was to be fulfilled in the context of a given culture, thus, it can be termed the Cultural Mandate], natural science, redemption, a work ethic, the environment and eschatology. We are to "think God's thoughts after him" in every area and aspect of creation. Do we?

Quest. 31: How did God create man?

Ans: God created man male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.

Gen. 1:26. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Gen. 2:7. And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Gen. 5:1–2. [1]This *is* the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; [2]Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

See also: Gen. 1:1, 26–28; 2:18–25; 3:19; Psa. 8:6–8; Eccl. 7:29; 12:7; Acts 17:23–29; Rom. 2:14–15; 5:12; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10; Jas. 3:8–9.

COMMENTARY

The Scriptures declare that God created the universe and everything in it, including man (Gen. 1:1; Acts 17:24; Rom. 1:19–20). The Scriptures are very careful to maintain this Creator–creature relation and distinction throughout from Genesis to Revelation. See Question 30.

Divine creation was a definitive act, i.e., God not only created everything out of nothing [*ex nihilo*]. He defined everything in this creation—gave it his meaning. Every fact in the universe is therefore a created fact with its own distinct God–given meaning and significance. There are no arbitrary or "brute" facts that exist or have meaning apart from God. For a person to truly know God, reality and truth, he must give the same meaning to everything that God has given to it—he must "think God's thoughts after him"—interpret everything in terms of God's Law–Word. This has been called a "revelational epistemology," i.e., holding Divine revelation [Scripture] as our source of truth and knowledge. [Epistemology, from the Gk. *epistamai* is the science of knowledge and truth–claims]. Because the source of truth and knowledge was and is external to man, he is necessarily a creature of faith. He is also a presuppositionalist by necessity, i.e., as the image–bearer of God man naturally and axiomatically interprets all facts by his presuppositions or assumptions [axioms, first–principles]. See Question 30.

Man was created in the image of God. Thus, the image of God is the essential and primary definition of man. This image of God is ontological, i.e., it expresses the essence of man's being. It is being the image–bearer of God that makes man a rational, morally–responsible, self–determining being. When man sinned and fell, the image of God was not destroyed; he did not become an animal. The image of God was distorted, but not erased. His intellectual,

spiritual and moral nature, devastated in the Fall, is restored in principle at regeneration (Jn. 3:3; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10). See Questions 83, 94 and 95. The very fact that man is now a sinner, and in need of redemption, is a testimony to the retention of the image of God (Gen. 9:6; Acts 17:28–29; Jas. 3:9). Further, because redemption extends to man alone, and neither to brute beasts nor fallen angels, it is evident that God focuses the redemptive purpose on redeeming his image in man through Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 1 Jn. 3:1–3).

Because man is the image–bearer of God, God instilled within him the principles of law, morality, logic, mathematics and the ability of speech or communication on both the vertical [Divine–human] and horizontal [human–human] planes. Such are necessary for man as a rational being in God's ordered universe and also for the fulfillment of the Cultural Mandate (Gen. 1:26–28).

God created man as both male and female. Thus, the individual, either male or female, is incomplete in and of himself or herself. Society becomes fragmented when the basic element is the individual rather than the married couple and the family. Marriage is the natural and normal state for mankind. Marriage and family are necessities for the fulfillment of the Cultural Mandate. It is primarily in the context of the family and the church that the truth of God is to be both retained and promulgated to future generations. See Question 52.

Man cannot be considered as the Divine image–bearer apart from his calling to multiply, subdue the earth and have dominion over it—the Cultural Mandate (Gen. 1:26–28; Psa. 8). Spiritual responsibility, a biblical world–and–life view, a godly work ethic, and the God–ordained institution of marriage and the family, necessarily characterize the truly godly man.

Because man was created and remains in essence the image–bearer of God, the believer's attitude toward others is to be one of understanding and compassion, viewing his fallen, sinful fellow human beings as objects of evangelism. Have we come to terms with our being created in God's image and its implications?

Quest. 32: According to the Scriptures, why did God create man?

Ans: God created man because he willed to do so for his own good pleasure to glorify himself and to subdue the earth in obedience to his mandate.

1 Cor. 10:31. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Rev. 4:11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are [exist] and were created.

Rom. 11:33–36. 33O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? 35Or who hath first given to him, and it shall

be recompensed unto him again? [36]For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen.

See also: Gen. 1:26–28; 2:15–24; Psa. 8:1, 3–9; Eccl. 7:29; Eph. 1:3–11.

COMMENTARY

God created this universe and everything in it for his own good pleasure according to his sovereign will (Rev. 4:11). He was motivated solely and wholly from within himself and his own self–consistency. He positively ordained whatsoever comes to pass from within himself and did not merely foresee persons and events in a fatalistic [relativistic] fashion. Why did he ordain that evil should enter this universe and that man should fall? Why did he purpose, even before the creation of this universe, to save a number of human beings and redeem them to himself (Eph. 1:3–5)? From Divine revelation, it can be stated that God created this universe and everything in it, ordained the existence of evil and the subsequent fall and redemption of man to manifest to this creation the fullness of his attributes or Divine perfections for the praise of his own glory. This will be done in consummate glory or judgment. See Question 27 and "The Problem of Evil."

God created man for his own glory. All that pertains to creation and subsequent redemption, from election to glorification, will find its realization and ultimate fulfillment in the glory of God (Rom. 8:28–39; 11:33–36; Eph. 1:3–14). Christians, understanding this from the Scriptures, should seek to live for God and do all for his glory now (1 Cor. 10:31). "…ye are not your own…For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:19–20).

Quest. 33: Do the Scriptures teach that God created man in a state of innocence or original righteousness?

Ans: God created man in a state of original righteousness.

Eccl. 7:29. Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

See also: Gen. 1:31; Eph. 4:24.

COMMENTARY

As the image–bearer of God, man was created in a state of original righteousness. As reflecting the Divine moral character and therefore being inescapably moral himself, man could not have been created merely innocent, i.e., morally neutral. No true human moral neutrality could or can exist in a universe created and governed by a morally self–consistent [absolutely righteous] God. Romanists, Pelagians and Arminians maintain that Adam was created in a state of original innocence because they maintain the idea of "free will" [the power of contrary choice—that man can consistently choose contrary to his nature] for both unfallen and fallen humanity. Adam was only "innocent" in that, before his fall, he had not yet personally experienced sin. This original

righteousness was not moral perfection, and was evidently fragile. In the temptation, the devil only had to tempt Adam and Eve according to their natural [and as yet unfallen] tendencies (Gen. 3:1–14).

Quest. 34: What do the Scriptures teach concerning the relation of Adam to the rest of the human race?

Ans: Adam was the covenant–head or representative of the entire human race.

Rom. 5:12. Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men [the human race], for that all have sinned.

See also: Gen. 3:1–7; 5:3; Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:45–47.

COMMENTARY

Adam was not only created as an individual human being, he was created as Representative Man, i.e., the human race stood in Adam as their federal [Lat: *foedus*, a league or compact] or covenant–head. When Adam acted, he not only acted with reference to himself, but for all those he represented. When Adam sinned and apostatized from God, the whole human race fell in and with him. As the covenant–head of the human race in this representative action, Adam was a type [figure] of Christ (Rom. 5:12–14, 17–18).

By virtue of Adam's headship and representative character, the Fall left subsequent humanity with the imputation of Adam's sin (original sin or immediate imputation), the inheritance of his sinful nature (mediate imputation), and their own personal transgressions. Even if any could perfectly keep the Commandments of God [which is impossible due to their sinful natures], they could never atone for or expiate the imputation of original sin. Both perfectionism in all its forms and a works–righteousness [legalism] are utterly condemned.

As Adam was the head of the human race in its fall and apostasy, so the Lord Jesus Christ is the covenant or federal head of the redeemed race in his saving work [active and passive obedience], the proto–type of redeemed humanity. The Lord Jesus Christ is the "Second [representative] Man," the "Last Adam" in contrast to the first man Adam (Rom. 5:11–18; 1 Cor. 15:21–22, 45–47). Thus, the Lord Jesus did not become incarnate, live, die and come forth from the dead as simply an individual person, but as Representative Man. Those identified with him redemptively [are in union with Christ] partake of his perfect righteousness. See Question 77. Are you yet in union with fallen Adam, or by grace in union with Jesus Christ?

Quest. 35: What are God's works of Providence?

Ans: God's works of providence are his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions.

Psa. 145:17. The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Neh. 9:6. Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

Acts 4:27–28. [27]For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, [28]For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

See also: Gen. 9:21–22; Ex. 34:24; Deut. 29:5; 45:5–8; Judg. 9:23; 2 Sam. 17:14; 24:1; 1 Kgs. 12:15; 1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1:6–22; 2:1–10; Psa. 103:1–6; 104:24; Jonah 1:4, 15, 17; 2:10; 4:6–7; Matt. 10:29–31; Acts 2:23; 14:15–17; 17:23–28; Rom. 11:33–36; Eph. 1:11.

COMMENTARY

Divine providence is that process in time, history and experience wherein God brings to pass his eternal decree (Isa. 14:24–27; 46:9–11; Rom. 8:28–31; Eph. 1:3–11).

Time is contained within God. Biblically, time progresses from the future to the present and from the present into the past. This alone is true to Divine predestination, and forms the basis for all prophecy and every Divine promise. It is from this perspective that we must consider God's will and its infallibility.

The eternal realm governs the temporal realm; the spirit world governs the physical world. God not only created the world, he also preserves and governs it to the minutest detail and brings it toward its Divinely–predetermined consummation. There is no place for chance, fate or luck in the created order. Nature's laws are God's laws, and the word of his power sovereignly rules in the spiritual, physical, moral and social realms. There is no force, power or principle which exists or operates without his permission or apart from his purpose. To believers, this is a gracious and loving purpose in the context of Romans 8:28–39.

Evolution, as the predominant idea of *atheism*, denies design and purpose in the created order, positing universal chance and randomness. *Deism* denies the present government of God over his universe. *Pantheism* denies that God is separate from and thus sovereign over his creation. *Panentheism* views God as expanding with his universe. *Polytheism* denies that there is one Deity who is almighty and absolutely sovereign. All deny a comprehensive or inclusive purpose and constant Divinely–ordained order. In contrast, the Scripture declares that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, upholds all things

by his *fiat* decree [Lat: "Let it be done"], and in the sphere of his prerogative, the universe coheres (Matt. 28:18; Heb. 1:1–3; Col. 1:13–17).

Even the sinful acts of men are ordered and overruled by God (Psa. 76:10; Acts 2:23; 4:27–28). True faith does not question God or his dealings, as knowing God through the Scriptures necessarily means that we know his nature and character, and so must not doubt that all is according to his will and will work for his glory and our highest good—even if we do not at all understand it (Rom. 8:28; 9:19–21). That the triune, self–disclosing God of Scripture is absolutely sovereign, even over the wicked and sinful acts of fallen mankind, is a great mystery which may test the faith of even the greatest of believers. Unbelief, doubt and fear all arise from the infirmity of the flesh, from our limited knowledge or outright ignorance of God's overall purpose and its end and from our own inherent lack of faith (Deut. 29:29; Rom. 8:28). See Question 27 and "The Problem of Evil." Do we trust in God for who he is, even if we do not understand what he does? If we only trust him for what he does, or what we perceive, then we will doubt him for who he is!

PART V
SIN AND LAW

The doctrine of sin is termed "Hamartiology," from the Gk. *hamartia*, the general Gk. term for "sin." The doctrinal study of the Law of God is termed "Deontology," from *dei* and *deontos*, the Gk. term for "ought," or "necessary," referring to the obligation man has toward the absolute righteousness of God's Moral Law. Sin must be defined by Law. Apart from God's Law, sin becomes relative and the doctrine of salvation may be correspondingly altered. Legalism, self–righteousness, antinomianism, perfectionism, the denial of innate human depravity and the alleged power of contrary choice [human ability, free will] all derive from a lack of the proper influence of the Divine standard of the Moral Law and a consciousness of its convicting power.

Quest. 36: According to the Scriptures, what is sin?

Ans: Sin is any transgression of or lack of conformity to the Moral Law of God in disposition, thought, act or state of being.

1 Jn. 3:4. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

See also: Gen. 39:9; Ex. 20:1–17; Lev. 4:13; 1 Kgs. 15:30; Psa. 19:7–14; 39:1; 51:4; 109:7; Prov. 14:9; 21:4; Isa. 53:10–12; Rom. 3:19–20, 23; 6:1–14, 17–18, 23; 7:7–9; 1 Cor. 6:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 4:26; Jas. 1:15; 2:9; 1 Jn. 1:8–10; 2:1; 3:3–10.

COMMENTARY

Sin did not originate with the fall [apostasy] of man. Sin originated in the spirit or angelic world. Lucifer [Satan, the devil] apostatized from God through pride and self–will, and took a number of angelic beings with him (Isa. 14:12–15; Lk. 10:18). He it was in the guise of the serpent who tempted Adam and Eve and through this brought about the fall and apostasy of mankind (Gen. 3:1–19).

The entrance of sin into the human race came through Adam's willful disobedience to the explicit commandment of God (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:1–7; Rom. 5:12). The human race apostatized from God in Adam as their federal or representative head [the imputation of Adam's transgression or original sin]. All fallen humanity thus came under the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:1–23) and the sentence of death (Rom. 5:12).

Sin is a violation of, or anything contrary to, the Moral Law of God. The Moral Law is the eternal expression of God's moral self–consistency, the transcript of his righteous character. As this created universe exists in the context of God's moral character, anything that is in violation of or contrary to this is sin. Sin thus presupposes God in his absolute moral perfection. The epitome of God's Moral Law in its positive form is contained in Deut. 6:4–5 and its New Testament version, in Matt. 22:36–40. The epitome of this Law in

its largely negative form is found in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–17). Sin can exist as an imputation, a conception, an inclination, a disposition, a thought, an act or a state of being.

As sin presupposes God and his moral self–consistency, so all and every sin is against God (Psa. 51:4): Sin is rebellion against God's Law (1 Jn. 3:4). Sin is a defiance of God's authority. It is self–willed refusal to submit to his revealed will (Gen. 3:9–13; 4:3–14; Rom. 9:14–21). Sin is a willful ignorance of God's immanence (Jer. 23:23–24). Sin is a defiance of God's revealed will (Matt. 6:10). Sin is a denial of God's justice. It takes lightly the precious blood of Christ which has redeemed us, and despises the infinite sufferings of our loving Savior (Heb. 10:26–31; 1 Pet. 18–20). Sin is a refusal of God's righteousness (Rom. 3:21–26; Titus 3:5). Sin is an abuse of God's goodness (Rom. 2:4). Sin is a repudiation of God's grace (Eph. 2:5, 8–10). Sin is a rejection of God's mercy (Psa. 103:8–18; Psa. 136; Eph. 2:4). Sin is a betrayal of God's love (Jn. 3:16; Jas. 4:4; 1 Pet. 1:18–20; 1 Jn. 4:9–10). Sin is presumption upon God's providence (Psa. 19:13). Sin is a maligning of God's holiness (Lev. 10:1–3; Rom. 6:15–22; 1 Pet. 1:15–16). Sin is a polluting of God's moral purity (Ex. 20:14; Hab. 1:13; Heb. 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1). Sin is a despising of God's wisdom (Rom. 11:33–36). Sin is deceit and hypocrisy in the face of God (Gen. 4:5–10; Acts 5:3–4; Rom. 6:16–18). Sin is a perversion of God's command as to time (Ex. 20:8–11; 2 Cor. 6:2; Eph. 5:14–15). Sin is a disrespect for God's ordained authority (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1–4; 1 Pet. 2:13). Sin is a presumption upon God's justice and character (Psa. 19:13; Rom. 6:1–6; Eph. 5:3–4; Rev. 20:11–15). Sin is an insult to God's intelligence (Heb. 12:3–15). Sin is a provocation of God's anger (Heb. 10:31; 12:3–15).

Sin possesses five realities: guilt, penalty, pollution, power and presence. The biblical doctrine of salvation deals with each aspect: justification deals with the guilt and penalty of sin, sanctification with the pollution and power of sin, and glorification with the very presence of sin. Any doctrine of salvation that does not completely rectify these realities is not biblical.

Sin is not natural to the order of things; it is unnatural. It is an intrusion into a universe otherwise created and stated by God to be "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Sin has fractured the universe and permeated the world. It has brought disunity and disharmony spiritually, religiously, mentally, morally, ethically, socially and physically. In a world cursed by sin nothing is as it should be. In a world so greatly affected by sin, it is normal for things to go wrong, and, at times for everything to go wrong.

The ultimate consequence of sin is death—spiritual death, physical death and eternal death (i.e., eternal separation from God under judgment). See Question 165. When Adam sinned by his disobedience and apostasy from God, he died spiritually—the image of God within him was defaced. He later died physically. See Question 167. There will be a resurrection unto judgment for all who physically die apart from saving faith in Jesus Christ (i.e., the spiritually "dead"). This judgment will be everlasting. See Question 171.

Salvation is from sin, not only from eternal judgment. There is a necessary present deliverance from the reigning power of sin as well as a future deliverance from the ultimate penalty of sin (Rom. 6:11–14, 17–18; 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18). To hold otherwise is to deny the essential character of God (1 Pet. 1:15–16) and the necessary biblical realities of regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption and sanctification. The immediate consequences of sin, however, must often be endured. We must not misunderstand this. God may not, and usually does not deliver from the immediate consequences of sin. Conversion may not restore a failed marriage. The drunkard's health may not be restored. The fruits of immorality may have to be endured in this life. Crimes committed before conversion are not automatically nullified or forgiven by the judicial system. Such issues are to be endured and sanctified in the believer's experience; the ultimate deliverance from sin is our glorious expectation, not deliverance from its immediate consequences.

Sin has so fractured and permeated this universe, that its complete eradication must be the destruction of the old and the re–creation of the new, i.e., "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:7–13). Has the reigning power of sin been broken in your life?

Quest. 37: What was the sin of Adam?

Ans: The sin of Adam was a willful rebellion against the known commandment of God.

Gen. 2:16–17. 16And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Gen. 3:1–7. 1Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 2And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: 3But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. 4And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. 6And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. 7And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

See also: Rom. 5:12–14; 1 Tim. 2:12–14.

COMMENTARY

The temptation centered on the veracity of the Word of God—at the very point of faith in God's truth. Satan portrayed God as being too restrictive and

unreasonable, and of keeping back something good for Adam and Eve, i.e., of being untruthful. Eve became the first "spokesperson" for herself and her husband. He failed to act upon and sustain his headship. Both, as creatures of faith, failed at the point their faith was to coincide with and rest in the Word of God.

The offer of Satan in his deception and seduction was an alleged autonomy or independence from God. Man could be his own "god" and determine for himself what was right or wrong. He no longer had to "think God's thoughts after him," or define either himself or anything else in terms of God's Word. He would be as God himself—the very sins which caused Lucifer to fall—pride and self–centeredness. In this temptation, all the devil did was to play upon the natural—and yet unsinful—tendencies he perceived in the human nature of Adam and Eve. They were righteous, but evidently very vulnerable. The empirical attempt of Adam and Eve to gain and possess knowledge apart from God resulted in a sinful knowledge and experience. That is all man can expect when he thinks or acts apart from or contrary to the revealed Word of God.

Eve was seduced by the cunning of the serpent, but Adam, failing to act responsibly as the head of the relationship, acted willfully and as the responsible head under God, was held primarily accountable by God (Gen. 3:1–19; 1 Tim. 2:12–14). The human race fell in Adam, its constituted or federal head, not Eve. See Question 34.

What is our attitude toward sin? Do we understand that temptation comes to us the very same way it came to our first parents—at the very point our faith is to be grounded in God's Word?

Quest. 38: What were the results of Adam's sin?

Ans: Adam spiritually died. His act of sin was imputed to all his posterity. Every human being has also inherited his sinful nature, which expresses itself constantly under the reigning power of sin.

Rom. 3:23. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

See also: Gen. 5:3; Rom. 5:12, 18–19; 1 Cor. 15:21–22.

COMMENTARY

Adam died spiritually immediately upon his act of disobedience, i.e., his relationship to God, his personality and his nature underwent a substantial change of relationship. His personality was originally under the control of a righteous intelligence, but came under the sway of the physical nature and its appetites. This sinful shift in the personality can only begin to be set aside by saving grace (Jn. 3:3, 5; Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–3; 9–10). See Question 164.

Adam stood as Representative Man, and therefore when he sinned in apostatizing from God, the whole human race fell in him as their federal head. This is called "original sin," or immediate imputation. Even if a person could

begin from any point in his or her life and live perfectly without sin—even if this were possible—he or she would still be utterly condemned because of original sin [the imputation of Adam's transgression]. The condemnation and guilt of sin are thus inescapable. See Question 66.

When Adam and Eve, as sinners, had children, they, too, were sinners (Gen. 5:3). The defacement of the Divine image in man was passed to all of Adam's posterity by both imputation and inheritance. Thus, all human beings not only have original sin, but also a sinful nature and so are prone to personal sin. The inheritance of Adam's sinful nature and proneness to transgression is termed "'mediate' imputation" (Rom. 3:9–18). Both the immediate and mediate imputation of sin are awful realties.

Every subsequent human being consequently evidences his or her sinful state by personal sins in disposition, inclination, motivation, thought, word and deed as being under its reigning power. Because all human beings are sinners, all stand in need of salvation from both the reigning power of sin and from its immediate and ultimate consequences.

It is not only noteworthy, but absolutely vital to understand that, even with the curse, there came the promise of a redeemer (Gen. 3:15) [the *protevangelium*, or first promise of the gospel]. This Divine revelation to the serpent as a challenge and to man as a promise demonstrates constantly that God is a God of purpose, who delights in mercy and glories in grace (Isa. 45:22; Jn. 3:16–18)!

Quest. 39: Can any human being by his own efforts merit or earn acceptance before God?

Ans: No. By any attempt at justification by good works or self–effort man only sets himself against the grace of God in his own inescapably sinful self–righteousness.

Isa. 64:6. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Titus 3:5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

See also: Lk. 18:9–14; Rom. 1:16–17; 3:9–18; 5:1; 10:1–4; Eph. 1:6–7; 2:8–10; Titus 3:5.

COMMENTARY

The great question concerning our relation to God as sinful human beings is, "How can a man be right with God?" (Job 9:2). To be "right" means to be "just," i.e., justified [declared to be righteous] before God. God sent his eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to live and die for sinners to answer his claims of justice [the righteous demands of his holy Law] against them. By the active obedience of Christ [his perfect life lived under the Law], he fulfilled its

demands. By his passive obedience [suffering and death], he paid the penalty demanded by that broken Law. Thus, by his life and death he satisfied every requirement of Divine Law. Both the impeccable life of the Lord Jesus and his sacrificial suffering and death were necessary, and both are imputed to believers. The Gospel message is a message of justification, forgiveness of sins and reconciliation through the imputation of Christ's righteousness (Rom. 1:16–17; 1 Cor. 15:1–4). The Christian stands before God justified through the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith alone.

What is self–righteousness? It is anything that we can do in our own strength and by our own efforts to make ourselves allegedly acceptable to God [our most fervent, holy and religious actions]. It is a righteousness that attempts to set aside or bypass the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator, Redeemer and Surety. Because we are sinners by imputation [original sin], by disposition [a sinful nature], by domination [reigning power of sin] and by commission [personal sin], we can do absolutely nothing to merit [deserve, earn] God's acceptance or achieve the standard of his absolute righteous requirements. Any departure from grace in principle or performance is self–righteousness (Rom. 11:5–6). Self–righteousness [righteousness by works, self–effort, self–determination or human ability] may be very subtle. For instance, if faith and repentance are considered in some way as meriting our acceptance before God, they, too, are only the manifestation of a works mentality, a deceptive self–righteous and graceless state.

Saving grace is the redemptive work of God in the salvation of sinners through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. To say that "salvation is by grace," is to say that the saving grace of God is both free and sovereign, i.e., there is nothing that men can do to merit [earn] it [or it would no longer be grace but works, human ability, mere self–determination]—it is free grace. It is likewise sovereign grace, i.e., God sovereignly bestows this saving grace on whom he will. If there were any admixture of human ability—works, mere self–determination—whatsoever, then salvation would not be by grace alone (Rom. 11:5–6; Eph. 1:3–14; 2:1–10). Do you know grace as a reality in your life?

Quest. 40: According to the Scriptures, what has God given to keep man from attempting to save himself by his own effort or works?

Ans: God has given his Moral Law to reveal his righteous character, reveal his standard for man, expose sin and lead sinners to Christ for salvation.

Deut. 6:4–5. [4]Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: [5]And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Gal. 3:24. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

See also: Ex. 20:1–17; Matt. 22:36–40; Rom. 7:7–14; 1 Tim. 1:5–11.

COMMENTARY

The term "law" is used in Scripture in several different ways. Care must be taken to make the proper distinctions within the given context. Mark the following uses in Scripture: the entirety of the Word of God (1 Jn. 2:3–4; 3:4). The entire Old Testament (Matt. 5:17–18; Rom. 2:17–20; Heb. 10:1). The Five Books of Moses, or the Pentateuch (Lk. 24:44; Rom. 3:21). The whole Mosaic legislation. Human law or custom (Rom. 7:1–3). Various principles or powers of operation that exist in the created spiritual or moral order of things (Rom. 3:27; 7:21–23; 8:1–3). The Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1–17).

The Moral Law is epitomized in the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, and answers to the law ontologically embedded in man's nature at creation as the image–bearer of God (Rom. 2:11–16). The Moral Law was neither formulated nor instituted at Sinai; rather, it was codified and epitomized at Sinai in the Decalogue. The Moral Law expresses the moral self–consistency or absolute righteous character of the triune God. The Moral Law was codified as part of the progressively–revealed redemptive purpose (Rom. 5:20–21). [All post–Fall Divine revelation is essentially redemptive in nature]. The Moral Law was revealed to Moses and given to Israel in a codified and epitomized or summary form. Israel, as the covenant people of God, formed the repository of the Divinely revealed and codified Moral Law until the gospel took the true knowledge of God and his moral self–consistency to all the nations of the earth.

What is the purpose of the law for the unbeliever? First, it is revelatory. The Law gives the proper recognition of God. It is primarily a revelation of the Divine nature and character. It is particularly a transcript of the perfect righteousness or moral self–consistency of God and what God requires of man (Ex. 20:1–17; Eccl. 12:13–14; Matt. 22:35–40). Second, The Law was meant to bring a restraint upon sin (Rom. 2:14–16; 7:7). Third, The Law also aggravates the unregenerate mind or heart and causes it to both rebel against the commands of God and to lust after that which is forbidden (Rom. 7:7–13). Fourth, it is the God–ordained medium of conviction of sin (Rom. 3:19–20; 5:20; 7:7–13; 1 Cor. 15:56; Gal. 3:24; 1 Tim. 1:8–11). Finally, it is designed to lead the sinner to Christ (Gal. 3:23–24). [Note that the Gk. perfect tense in Gal. 3:24 ought to be translated "The law was and continues to be our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ…"].

What is the purpose of the law for the believer? First, it is his rule of life, not legalistically, but as the objective standard that is fulfilled in the context of grace (Matt. 22:34–40; Rom. 6:14). It must be noted in Rom. 6:14 that the definite article ["the"] does *not* occur before the word "law" in the Gk. Thus, it refers to a principle of law, i.e., a principle of mere outward command, as contrasted with the inward principle of grace. Second, it is the essence of the Christian ethic in the context of love (Rom. 13:8–10). As love fulfils the law,

so love is defined by law. See Questions 41 and 124. Third, the Law is for the believer's humility (Rom. 7:14–8:4). Finally, the Law causes the believer to constantly look to and glorify the Person and work of Christ in the context of sovereign grace, as the One who has delivered him from its condemnation (Gal. 3:13; 4:4–5; 6:14, 16; Phil. 3:7–9).

A consistent biblical concept of the Moral Law must include both its negative and positive forms, as clearly illustrated in the ministry and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. His teaching and that of the inspired Apostles did not set aside the Moral Law, but rather reinforced it (Matt. 5:17–18; 22:36–40; Rom. 3:19–20, 27–31; 7:7–13; 13:8–10; 1 Tim. 1:5–11). It is utterly incomprehensible that anyone should set the doctrine of our Lord and the inspired Apostles against the truth and reality of the Moral Law as given in the Old Testament. Further, the Moral Law in its fullest expression must include the moral commands of our Lord himself and his inspired Apostles. It is thus inclusive of all the moral commands of the Word of God. The Decalogue and the "Two Great Commandments" are only the epitome of the Moral Law, and the best commentary on the Moral Law is the remainder of Scripture.

The terminology the "Law–Word" of God is used throughout this section. By this is meant the Word of God which is in the nature of command or law for man. By this usage we seek to maintain the nature and authority of God's Word. In the context of God's Word, we are either in obedience or disobedience.

Quest. 41: Has the Law been abrogated by the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Ans: The Law of God has not been abrogated by the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rather, its content has been modified and its administration has been changed.

Ex. 20:1–3. [1]And God spake all these words, saying, [2]I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. [3]Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Rom. 7:12. Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Matt. 5:17–19. [17]Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. [18]For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. [19]Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Rom. 8:4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Rom. 10:4. For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

See also: Ex. 20:1–17; Dt. 5:1–22; Matt. 22:36–40; Rom. 7:7–14; 8:1–9; 1 Tim. 1:5–11.

COMMENTARY

Antinomians [Gk. *anti*, "against," and *nomos*, "law"] hold that the Moral Law has been abrogated through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, it allegedly has no place in the believer's life. [Some antinomians hold that "the law" has been replaced by "grace," and that since our Lord's sacrificial death, the law is irrelevant. Thus, it has no relationship to either unbelievers or believers]. See Question 134. Which of the Ten Commandments, as the epitome of the Moral Law, with the possible exception of the Fourth, has been abrogated? None. Each Commandment is yet in force and its breaking is considered as sin. The Sabbath issue, rightly understood, also needs to find its modern expression in both proper observance and in the anticipation of eternal glory. See Questions 50–51. The issue is not the abrogation of the Ten Commandments, but a scriptural approach to their perpetual relevancy, as they are all clearly reiterated in the New Testament, except for the Sabbath observance, which assumes a New Covenant context.

The Law as a covenant has not been abrogated. Rather, its content has been modified and its administration has been changed: first, its content has been modified. The Ceremonial Law—priesthood, sacrificial system and rituals—was fulfilled in the Person and redemptive work of our Lord. The Civil Law with its social restrictions and dietary laws were largely national and historical. The Old Testament distinctives of the covenant people of God [national Israel] were essentially physical, dietary and ceremonial; the New Testament distinctives of God's covenant people [believers] are spiritual.

In this context, the idea of "law" in the Epistle to the Galatians must be considered. The Apostle Paul is referring to "law" in an inclusive sense, not to the Moral Law, as he sets "law" and "grace" in juxtaposition. He includes Jewish festivals and circumcision in this idea of "law," and so is opposing the general Mosaic institution as representative of a works–religion as opposed to the gospel of grace. The issue is justification, not sanctification; works as opposed to the gospel of grace. The Moral Law remains as the revelation and epitome of God's holy and righteous character.

Second, its administration has been changed. (Ezk. 36:25–27; Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:1–13; Rom. 2:11–16; 6:14; 8:1–9; 2 Cor. 3:1–3, 6). The Law of God is no longer merely written upon tables of stone, but upon the heart [inner being] of the individual believer at regeneration. The Law has been internalized by the Spirit of God in the context of his enabling grace. Thus, the believer, by the dynamic of Divine grace through the Spirit, is necessarily and effectively brought into conformity with the Moral Law of God in principle.

The weakness of the Old Covenant was that the heart remained unchanged and religion was merely external, except for an elect remnant of true believers. Under the New or Gospel Covenant, the heart or inner being is transformed

through regenerating grace to conform in principle to the Moral Law. See Question 83. Any denial of this reality is a denial of Divine grace in regeneration, conversion and sanctification—and this strikes at the very heart of practical antinomianism. The believer's union with Christ is necessarily life–transforming spiritually, morally, intellectually and ethically. See Question 77.

If the Law has not been abrogated, then what is its relevance? The relevance and perpetuity of the Moral Law may be understood by the following considerations: first, the prologue to the Decalogue sets the historical, redemptive and covenantal context for the Law: "And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Ex.20:1–2). God reveals himself as Israel's covenant God and Redeemer. Thus, the Law was given to a redeemed covenant people that they might reflect the moral character of the Lord their God, not as a means to salvation or simply as a legalistic document for Israel. Redemption requires revelation, and revelation contains legislation in both the Old and New Covenants (Rom. 3:19–20; 1 Tim. 1:8–10; 1 Jn. 2:3–5). This historic giving of the Law in this codified manner must be understood in the greater context of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1–3; Ex. 2:24; Dt. 29:12–13). Believers in the Gospel economy are likewise to reflect the moral character of God as his redeemed covenant people in Jesus Christ (Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:14–16; 2:9), who is the true "Seed of Abraham" and the fulfillment of that covenantal promise (Gal. 3:6–26). The Law magnifies the Lord Jesus. His redemptive work fulfilled its demands as to our justification. We are to reflect the righteousness of the Law as to our sanctification in obedience to him by the grace and Spirit of God (Rom. 8:1–4; 1 Jn. 2:3–5).

Second, the nature, character and self–revelation of God must determine the relevance of the Law—not our own thinking or feelings. God is immutable. The Moral Law is the transcript of his moral self–consistency or absolutely righteous character. This is why the Moral Law and its abiding principles reoccur in the New Testament and have a necessarily close affinity with the Gospel (Matt. 22:37–39; Rom. 7:12, 14; 8:1–4; Gal. 3:24; Tim. 1:5–11; 6:14–16; Jas. 2:8; 1 Pet. 1:15–16).

Third, There must be a Moral Law for moral beings in God's created order and moral government. The Moral Law is for rational, morally–responsible beings who will one day stand before God to be judged (Rom. 3:19–20). It would be unthinkable for a holy, righteous God to have an unholy and unrighteous people as the glorious result of his bestowal of grace, or that the Divine standard for God's people should be left to subjective experience or speculation (Rom. 2:14–16; Titus 2:11–14; Heb. 12:14; 1 Tim. 1:5–11; 1 Pet. 1:13–16; 2:9).

Fourth, sanctification is conformity in principle to the moral character of God—a holiness that reflects God's Law. Gospel sanctification is not legalism, but a gracious and willful conformity to God's Word by the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:1–4; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17–18; 1 Jn. 2:3–5; 3:22).

Fifth, there is no "antinomian grace." Grace brings the believer into a principle of conformity to the Law of God (Rom. 8:1–4; 1 Jn. 2:3–5). Although the Law itself does not possess the power to sanctify [the failure of the Old Covenant, Rom. 6:14; 8:3–4], it is our standard for sanctification as it expresses the moral self–consistency or perfect righteousness of God (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Rom. 8:3–4; Eph. 2:5, 8–10; Heb. 8:1–13).

Sixth, sin, righteousness and love must be defined and understood in terms of Law (Rom. 8:3–4; 13:8–10; 1 Jn. 3:4). "Love" is not the fulfillment of the Law in a temporal sense, but in an interpretive sense. Apart from Law, love remains biblically undefined and stripped of its necessary moral character. The absence or abrogation of the Law is not freedom, but lawlessness (Rom. 13:8–10; Gal. 5:22–23; 1 Tim. 1:5).

Finally, the Moral Law of God is not only reiterated—it is strengthened in the New Testament, which reveals its true spiritual nature (Matt. 5:17–19, 27–29; 43–44, 48; Rom. 7:12; 1 Tim. 1:5–11; 1 Jn. 3:15).

Faith does not render the Law of God void, but rather establishes it (Rom. 3:21–31). As believers, we "died to the law" as an instrument of condemnation. By virtue of our union with Christ and faith in him the Law is established, not abrogated (Rom. 3:21–31; 7:4; Gal. 2:16–21). This "establishment of the Law" by faith is shown in two ways: first, in his active [his holy, blameless life] and passive [his suffering and death] obedience, our Lord vicariously both kept the Law for us and then paid its penalty. Thus, the claims of the Law against us have been fully answered by virtue of our union with Christ. Second, upon the basis of our Lord's redemptive work, the Holy Spirit enables us to conform to the Law in principle. This is not justifying behavior, but the sanctifying work of the Spirit of grace (Ezk. 36:25–27; Rom. 6:14; 8:1–4; 2 Cor. 3:1–6; Gal. 5:22–23; Heb. 8:1–13).

The Law is good if a man use it lawfully, i.e., the way God intended the Law to be used (Rom. 7:10, 12, 14; 1 Tim. 1:8), and not as a subject of debate, strife and legalistic religious tradition. The Law is spiritual in that it derives from God and deals not only with the outward life, but the heart or inner being of man (Rom. 7:12, 14). It not only forbids the outward act, but anything and everything that leads to such (Matt. 5:17–18; Gal. 3:19–24; Rom. 3:19–20; 5:20; 7:12–14a; 1 Tim. 1:8–11; 1 Jn. 3:15). No mere external compliance to these precepts is the true obedience that God demands, but a heart–conformity through enabling grace.

Divine Law is absolute and original; human law is relative and derivative. Human law is meant to reflect Divine Law. Apart from Divine Law, human law is necessarily based on social mores or human consensus, and thus becomes statistical, positive or inclusive in a totalitarian manner [negative law is necessarily limited and specific, positive law is unlimited and inclusive], morally relativistic, and so arbitrary, and often contradictory and inequitable.

The administration of God's Law is in the hands of his resurrected, glorified and ascended Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who now sits with all power and

authority as "King of kings" and "Lord of lords" over the created universe and as the final judge of all men (Psa. 2:1–12; Matt. 5:18; 28:18; Jn. 5:22; Acts 2:36; 1 Cor. 15:25–26; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 1:13–17; Heb. 1:1–3; Rev. 11:15; 19:11–16). Thus, the Lordship of Jesus Christ extends to every sphere of life—the individual, the marital, the family, the spiritual, the ecclesiastical, the moral, the ethical, the social, the political and the educational; the scientific, the economic and the environmental. Neutrality is a myth. There can be no autonomy for man, no area of reality where Jesus Christ is not Lord. Human autonomy leads either to political and moral anarchy or to totalitarianism and slavery. Submission to the Lordship of Christ means true freedom under God's Word. Do we love God's Law?

Quest. 42: What is the relationship between the Law and the Gospel?

Ans: The Law and the Gospel are not contradictory, but complementary. The Law is to be preached evangelically and the Gospel must not be preached legalistically.

Rom. 3:20. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Gal. 3:23–24. [23]But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. [24]Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

1 Tim. 1:8. But we know that the law *is* good, if a man use it lawfully.

COMMENTARY

Legalism and antinomianism represent the two extremes concerning the Law. Legalism in its most extreme form is simply salvation by works. In its more common form, it is a legalistic approach to spiritual issues. Legalism is not true spirituality. It is rather a system of man–made "do's" and "don'ts" which are substituted for scriptural commands. Antinomianism is a type of lawlessness, as the absence of law is not freedom, but lawlessness. Antinomianism, however, usually leads to legalism, because man, allegedly freeing himself from God's law, inevitably substitutes a "law" [legalistic system] of his own—inevitably a graceless system.

The preaching of the Law is not necessarily "legalistic preaching." As there is a legalistic way of preaching the Gospel, so there is an evangelical way of preaching the Law. The Gospel is preached in a legalistic way when it is perverted into a system of works or natural ability for salvation. If one looks to his own repentance or faith for salvation rather than to Christ, he is an unwitting legalist. The Gospel is also preached in a legalistic way when it is couched in terms of rules and regulations which are not scriptural, but rather man–made.

The Law is preached in an evangelical way when it stands in its proper connection with the Gospel. The Law is preached evangelically when it

neither contradicts the Gospel nor opposes it, nor stands as a substitute for the Gospel. Nor yet is the Law to be preached apart from the Gospel, or it becomes mere legalistic preaching. Biblically, logically, and evangelistically, the Law prepares the sinner for the Gospel by exposing sin for what it is in the context of God and his righteousness (Gal. 3:24; Rom. 3:19–20; 5:20; 7:7–13).

Unless one notes both the explicit and implicit use of the Law, he might well misunderstand the place of the Law in the evangelistic ministry of our Lord and the inspired Apostles: first, the explicit use of the Law is quite evident in the preaching of our Lord, as noted in the cases of the "rich, young ruler" (Matt. 19:16–26; Mk. 10:17–27; Lk. 18:18–27), and the "lawyer" (Lk. 10:25–37). This explicit use of the Law also seems to be evident in the ministry of Stephen and the subsequent conversion of the Apostle Paul (Acts 6:8–15; 7:58–60; Acts 9:1–8; Rom. 7:7–13; Phil. 3:1–9).

Second, there are far more examples of the implicit use of the Law in both the preaching of our Lord and that of the Apostles. In our Lord's ministry examples can be taken from his interview with the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn. 4:1–29), and the woman taken in adultery (Jn. 8:1–11). Both are concerned with the Seventh Commandment. Note must be taken of the inspired preaching of Peter (Acts 2:23–24; 3:13–15; 4:10; 5:26–33), Stephen (Acts 7:51–54) and Paul (Acts 13:26–30), charging the Jews with the murder of the Son of God—a clear breaking of the Sixth Commandment. The implicit preaching of the Law is also evident in the Apostle Paul's defense before the Areopagus in Athens [Acts 17:22–31, and the declaration against idolatry and of future judgment in righteousness] and in his discourse with Felix and Drusilla, when "he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (Acts 24:24–25).

Quest. 43: What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?

Ans: The sum of the Ten Commandments is to love God with the totality of our beings and to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Deut. 6:4–5. 4Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Matt. 22:37–39. 37Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 39On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Jas. 2:10. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.

See also: Ex. 20:1–17; Deut. 6:4–5; 1 Tim. 1:5–11; Jas. 2:10–11.

COMMENTARY

A general introduction to the Moral Law, Decalogue or Ten Commandments is necessary before an exposition of each separate Commandment in order to gain a proper understanding of the nature and character of God's Law.

The Decalogue may seem deceptively simple, as each Commandment is given in very specific terms, i.e., as an example of case law. Case law is representative of very broad and inclusive principles—as demonstrated by further examples of case law throughout the remainder of Scripture. These principles derive from the moral self–consistency God, and thus every Commandment necessarily either condemns any and all thoughts and inclinations which lead to any overt act of transgression, and likewise commends the conscience toward all thoughts and inclinations toward obedience. E.g., the one who looks upon a woman in lust has already committed adultery in his heart before God (Matt. 5:27–28). The one who hates his brother is a murderer (1 Jn. 3:15). This means that the Moral Law of God codified in the Decalogue is capable of infinite and inclusive expansion.

In each Commandment, the negative implies the positive, and the positive implies the negative. The Law in its positive declaration commands total and unswerving obedience, allegiance and devotion [love] to God; and due respect to, equitable dealings with and a love for all men (Deut. 6:4–5; Matt. 22:36–40). Negative law is necessarily specific and restricted; positive law is necessarily totalitarian and thus positive law is the domain of God alone.

The Law of God is a unity. To break one of God's Commandments is to break them all (Rom. 3:19–20; Gal. 3:10; Jas. 2:10). See Question 63. Every sin is against God. Every sinner is a law–breaker, an "outlaw" before God—whether one or all of the commandments are broken—and the one penalty for the breaking of one or all the commandments is death—eternal death—because all sin and every sin is against God himself—an infinite, eternal, holy and righteous God. God has legislated morality in the Decalogue. These Commandments cannot be improved upon, and, in principle, underlie the religious, moral, philosophical, legal and social basis of all historical attempts at equitable and consistent human law. We simply must not casually set aside or ignore the Moral Law of God!

The best commentary on the Moral Law is the Scripture itself. The principle variously known as the "analogy of faith," the perspicuity of Scripture or "Scripture interprets Scripture" demonstrates the true meaning and full implications of the Moral Law. The New Testament is the great, inspired gospel commentary on the relevant and inclusive nature of the Moral Law.

In the Decalogue, eight Commandments are framed in the negative, each definitely and strongly enforcing a perpetual prohibition in the Hebrew. Two are framed in the positive, and are also very stringent in their force, using the strongest possible grammatical construction.

Quest. 44: What is the First Commandment?

Ans: The First Commandment is, "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Ex. 20:1–3)

Quest. 45: What is the significance of the First Commandment?

Ans: The First Commandment requires man to know and worship God, and to acknowledge him to be the only true God in every sphere of life.

See also: Gen. 1:1–3; 39:8–9; Deut. 4:28; 5:6–7; 6:4–5; 26:17–18; 32:15–21; Josh. 24:14–15; 2 Sam. 22:32; 1 Kgs. 18:21; 2 Kgs. 19:15; 1 Chron. 28:9; Psa. 14:1; 66:18; 81:8–16; 96:4–10; 139; Isa. 40:15–31; Matt. 4:10; 6:24; Rom. 1:18–22; 11:33–36; 1 Cor. 8:4–6; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 1:2–12; Rev. 1:10–18; 4:8–11.

COMMENTARY

The First Commandment forms an introduction to the remainder of the Decalogue through the self–revelation of God, and is divided into three parts: a revelation of the Lord God, a declaration of deliverance with power and a perpetual prohibition against any and all false "gods."

God is absolute, and thus his rights over man in his Word are absolute. Because God is absolute, and every fact is created and defined by God, the whole realm of created reality and humanity is sacred, i.e., it cannot be divided into "secular" and "sacred." Everything without exception exists by and for God, and is to glorify him. He is to be absolutely sovereign over every sphere of life and activity. Thus, the acknowledgement of, and submission and obedience to God in every sphere of life is the very essence of worship.

This commandment prohibits any deviation from or perversion of the self–revelation of the Lord God of Scripture, including: *atheism* [no God], *polytheism* [many gods], *dualism* [equal good and evil principles vying for control of the universe], *pantheism* [God synonymous with and inseparable from creation], *panentheism* [a mixture of theism and pantheism holding that God is the universe and yet more than the universe, a complex being who is himself in the process of change], idolatry, and also religious ignorance, neutrality and hypocrisy. Whatever is first in one's life is his "god," demanding his time, his thoughts, his resources and his energies. Not all idols are made of sticks or stone, or of gold or silver. Some are mental or constitute a heart–idolatry. Anyone or thing which becomes an end in itself becomes an idol (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:5). God rightfully demands that he be our one great priority.

Although this commandment is framed in the negative, it enjoins certain positive duties: first, God must have absolute priority in the thoughts, actions and worship of every man in every sphere of life and activity. That is his sovereign right as Creator and Ruler of this universe (Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 10:31).

Second, man must know God. As God is infinite and man is finite, he can only know God as he has been pleased to reveal himself in both nature and Scripture (Rom. 1:18–25; 2 Tim. 3:16–17).

Third, man must fear God. To know God properly through his self–revelation is to fear him. This fear is a reverential fear which is consistent with a reverential love and awe. To fear him leads man to worship him (Ex. 20:20; Dt. 6:2, 4–5; 13:4; Psa. 86:11; Eccl. 12:13–14; Matt. 22:36–40). The Israelites were taught to fear God as he judged the "gods" of Egypt in the plagues and delivered them by a mighty hand (Ex. 3:19–20; 6:6; 9:13–14; 11:9; 12:12; Rom. 9:17). Believers are taught to fear God by reading his Word, realizing his power, his hatred of sin, his absolute holiness and righteousness, and experiencing his chastening hand (Heb. 12:3–12).

Fourth, the one true God must be the sole and true object of man's worship. This necessarily demands heart–worship and not mere outward religion, as true worship begins in the heart and mind (Dt. 4:29; 10:16; 6:4–5; Psa. 19:8, 14; 37:13; Matt. 22:37; Rom. 2:28–29).

Fifth, to scripturally worship God, fallen, sinful man must approach him through the Lord Jesus Christ as Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Surety and Great High Priest. The truth of the Gospel is an essential part of God's Law–Word (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5).

Sixth, worship implies service. Our Lord knew this in the Wilderness Temptation (Matt. 4:8–10). True worship cannot remain theoretical, abstract or detached from the remainder of the life, but must be expressed in the totality of the life (Ex. 20:5; Dt. 11:13; Rom. 12:1–2). Does God have the priority in our lives? Is our worship theoretical or expressed in service?

Quest. 46: What is the Second Commandment?

Ans: The Second Commandment is, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." (Ex. 20:4–6)

Quest. 47: What is the significance of the Second Commandment?

Ans: The Second Commandment requires that man receives, observes and keeps pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in his Word.

See also: Gen. 4:1–8 (1 Jn. 3:11–12); Ex. 20:25–26; 32:1–8; 34:12–17, 23; Lev. 10:1–3; 19:4; 26:1; Deut. 4:15–20; 11:16–17; 12:28–32; 16:21–22; 27:15; Judg. 17:1–13; 1 Kgs. 11:1–11; 12:28; Psa. 106:34–39; Isa. 40:18–

20; 42:8; 44:8–20; Jer. 10:14–15; Ezk. 8:1–18; 36:25–27; Hab. 2:18–20; Jn. 1:1, 14, 18; 4:24; Acts 17:16, 22–31; Rom. 1:21–25; 1 Cor. 10:7; Eph. 5:5; Col. 2:18; 3:5; 2 Tim. 3:5; Rev. 2:14; 21:8.

COMMENTARY

The Second Commandment may be summarized in four parts: a perpetual prohibition against making any object or representation with the intention of using it in idolatrous worship, a revelation of the character of Jehovah God, a retribution against sinners and their posterity to the fourth generation and an expectation of extended mercy for those who are obedient.

Both Romanism and Lutheranism merge this Second Commandment with the First, then divide the last Commandment into two to preserve the total number. This was done in both cases to avoid the issue of using images and pictures in worship.

Man as the image–bearer of God possesses a religious instinct, and so needs no command to worship; he rather needs direction for his worship because of his sinful, fallen nature. The First Commandment reveals the Object of our worship; the Second, the mode of our worship. In the First, God reveals himself as the one true God; in the Second, he reveals his nature and how he is to be worshipped. The First points us to the one true God; the Second points us to the one true religion. The First opposes all false gods; the Second opposes all self–willed worship and idolatry.

God is spiritual and must therefore be worshipped in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24; 1 Tim. 6:15–16). Any type of idolatry or physical, material representation perverts and limits one's concept of God. Not all idolatry, however, is physical or material. There is an unscriptural mental idolatry which limits one's concept of God. Mental idolatry distorts the truth of God in one's thinking in such realities as his nature, character (Ex. 5:2; Psa. 50:21–22; Isa. 29:15; 36:2–20), moral self–consistency (Psa. 73:9–11; Zeph. 1:12) or power (Gen. 20:9–11; 1 Kgs. 20:23, 28–29; 2 Kgs. 5:1ff). Thus, one—even without a material idol—may yet worship the "god" of his own imagination.

God determines how, when and with what he is to be worshipped. There is no place for human self–will in Divine worship (Col. 2:23). This was the sin of Cain. He was determined that God should accept him and his "offering" on his terms, not in the manner which God had revealed (Gen. 4:1–12; 1 Jn. 3:11–12). God is gracious in his demands, and will not accept the embellishments or additions of human innovation (Ex. 20:25–26), a pragmatic approach (1 Sam. 15:17–24), or worship that he has not commanded (Lev. 10:1–3).

The true worship of God is simply the worship that he himself commands—without any additions (Lev. 10:1–3) or deletions (Matt. 28:20). This is known as "the regulative principle." Worship is to be scriptural, and that which is unscriptural (contrary to the explicit or implicit teaching of Scripture, innovative, pragmatic or merely traditional or "contemporary") must be avoided.

Man's inherent desire to see or visualize the invisible God finds its answer in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh (Isa. 9:6; Jn. 1–3, 14, 18; Jn. 17:1–5; Col. 1:12–19; 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3). To worship the Lord Jesus is not idolatry, but true, biblical worship. Have we renounced and cast down all our idols? Is there anything in our lives which is an end in itself and not a means whereby we are to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:5)?

Quest. 48: What is the Third Commandment?

Ans: The Third Commandment is, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." (Ex. 20:7)

Quest. 49: What is the significance of the Third Commandment?

Ans: The Third Commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, word, works, and institutions, and prohibits their profanation in any way.

See also: Lev. 19:12; 24:10–14; Deut. 6:13; 23:21; 28:58; Psa. 8:1; 20:1; 29:2; 68:4; 109:17–18; 138:2; Prov. 30:8–9; Eccl. 5:1–6; Isa. 48:1–2; 65:16; Jer. 23:10–11; Ezk. 36:23; Matt. 5:37; 6:9; 7:21–23; 12:36–37; Lk. 6:46; Jn. 17:6; Acts 1:8; 4:12; 9:15–16; Rom. 2:24; 3:13–14; 2 Cor. 5:20; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 2:19; Titus 2:5; Rev. 13:5–6; 15:4.

COMMENTARY

This Commandment is two–fold in its analysis: first, a perpetual prohibition declared. God's name is not to be taken in any way less than that which properly and reverently reflects his true nature, worth, honor, glory and majesty. Second, a warning issued: Divine judgment or chastening is a certainty for the profaner.

The First Commandment reveals the Object of our worship—the one true God; the Second, the mode of our worship—true spirituality; the Third, our inward attitude toward God in worship—true reverence, or a proper frame of spirit.

There are many ways in which God's name can be taken in vain: in thought, word, or deed. Blasphemy, profanity, swearing and cursing are the four major explicit means of violating this Commandment. Lightness or frivolity concerning God's name is also forbidden, as is hypocrisy in religious profession. Demeaning God's Word is also necessarily included in this prohibition, as is invoking his name in prayer when praying in either self–will or in a manner inconsistent with his nature and character (Matt. 6:9). See Question 101.

There are several common ways in which God's name is taken in vain: first, blasphemy, railing or reviling is willful, injurious speech against the majesty of God (Matt. 12:24–32; Rom. 2:21–24).

Second, profanity, which presupposes God's name. Profanity specifically refers to the irreverent use of God's name or religious objects. The term derives from *pro*, "before," and *fanum*, "temple, shrine, sanctuary," and thus before [or outside] the temple [abode of the "god"] and hence "common, secular, outside the realm of God." God, however, is the God of all created reality, omnipresent, immense and immanent. There is nothing apart from him, nothing secular, common or profane. Thus, to profane anything associated with God is to take his name in vain (Matt. 5:33–37).

Third, swearing an oath. Swearing may refer to coarse language in general, but it refers specifically to an oath which invokes or refers to the name of God or some religious object as a means of enforcing one's veracity or determination. Swearing an oath may be either righteous and legitimate or sinful, i.e., taking God's name in vain (1 Sam. 14:44; 1 Kgs. 17:1; Matt. 5:33–37). A Christian is to be taken at his word, and therefore is not to swear by anything or anyone (Matt. 5:33–37).

Fourth, cursing, which may refer to coarse language in general, but it technically refers to calling down the wrath or judgment of God upon an enemy or evil–doer. Cursing may be either legitimate or sinful (Lev. 24:11; Numb. 23:8; Dt. 27:15–25; Josh. 6:26; 1 Sam. 17:43; 2 Kgs. 2:23–24; 2 Tim. 4:14).

Cursing is the most useless and senseless of sins. Unlike idolatry, it is transparently irreligious and immediately reveals the hypocrite. Unlike murder, there is not even the possible momentary satisfaction of revenge. Unlike lying or stealing, it brings not even temporary advantage. Unlike immorality, it brings no momentary pleasure whatsoever, nor does it satisfy any lust. Unlike covetousness, which is necessarily thoughtful, it is irrational and unthinking. Why, then, is cursing so prevalent? Mankind, created in the image of God, has the gift of speech to praise God and communicate with one another. Blasphemy, cursing or swearing is the awful expression of depraved sinners who are spiritually impotent to create, and can only articulate the frustration of their perverted "god–complex" by vocalizing their hatred and disdain for both God and man in wicked and destructive terms. Words become weapons, oaths become frustrated incantations and cursing becomes a perverted theology of self–destruction. The very gift of speech, meant to declare God's truth and make society coherent, rather profanes God's name, perverts the truth and fragments society (Rom. 3:13–14).

A civil or religious oath is an acknowledgement that God is the all–encompassing, living reality, that he is morally self–consistent, immanent and will infallibly bring men into judgment. It further acknowledges his Lordship and rule over all human and religious government, and the validity and priority of his Law. Thus, oaths are to be taken seriously and perjury is a serious offence to both God and man. A civil oath without God's Law–order is, however, meaningless, as witnessed daily in the modern civil courts.

Is it lawful to take a civil or religious oath? Some maintain that all such oaths—a political oath of office, testifying under oath in legal matters, religious

oaths or vows—are forbidden by our Lord (Matt. 5:33–37). The oaths forbidden by the Lord were either needless or distorted personal oaths. Something religious was invoked to give them force. The believer, our Lord taught, ought to be taken at his word ["Yes" or "No"] without such oaths. Further, it must be noted that Scripture records proper oaths in a positive way. A vow or oath is a serious matter and is not to be taken lightly (Eccl. 5:1–6). God blesses the person who gives an oath and remains faithful to his word, despite personal loss (Psa. 15:4). Many biblical personalities gave their oaths under suitable circumstances: e.g., Abraham and Eliezer (Gen. 24:2–9), Jacob (Gen. 28:18–22; 31:44–55) and Ruth (Ruth 1:17). Paul called upon God to be his witness (Rom. 1:9; 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 1:8), an angel takes an oath (Rev. 10:5–6), our Lord himself testified under oath (Matt. 26:59–64) and God himself gave his oath to strengthen his promise (Isa. 45:22–23; Heb. 6:13–18). Do we take God's name in vain by lip or by life?

Quest. 50: What is the Fourth Commandment?

Ans: The Fourth Commandment is, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Ex. 20:8–11)

Quest. 51: What is the significance of the Fourth Commandment?

Ans: The Fourth Commandment reveals that God is sovereign over time, and requires man to keep as holy unto God such times as he has appointed in his Word.

See also: Gen. 2:2–3; Ex. 16:25–30; 23:10–12; 31:13–17; Lev. 19:30; 23:3; 26:2; Numb. 15:32–36; Deut. 5:12–15; 2 Kgs. 4:22–23; Neh. 13:15–22; Isa. 58:13–14; Ezk. 23:38; Amos 8:4–5; Matt. 12:1–13; 28:1; Mk. 2:23–28; Lk. 4:16; 23:56; 24:1; Jn. 7:22–23; 20:1, 19; Acts 13:14–41; 17:3; 20:7; Rom. 14:5–6; 1 Cor. 16:2; Gal. 4:10–11; Col. 2:16–17; 2 Thess. 3:10–12; Heb. 4:1–11; 10:25; Rev. 1:10; 10:5–6.

COMMENTARY

The Fourth Commandment reveals the absolute sovereignty of God over man with regard to the use of his time—labor, rest, worship and recreation. The Sabbath, reflecting the rest of God upon finishing the work of creation, comes to man as a Divine blessing and gift, not a restriction or burden (Isa. 58:13–14). The division of this Commandment is four–fold: first, the strongest admonition both to remember the Sabbath and to keep it holy [set apart]. Second, the recognition of work, Third, rest from work. Fourth, the reason for the Sabbath.

It reflects the Divine rest after the work of creation—a rest of pleasure and satisfaction.

The First Commandment reveals the absolute sovereignty of God over our worship; the Second, the spirituality of our worship; the Third, our inward–attitude in worship. The Fourth Commandment reveals the absolute sovereignty of God over our time—work and rest, worship and vocation, labor and recreation.

One must work before he can rest. Six days are the God–given time–frame for work. Note that six days of work are not necessarily commanded, but rather that all man's work is to be done within six days that he might rest on the seventh: The opening words "Six days shalt thou labour…" must not be arbitrarily separated from the remainder of the statement, "…and do all thy work," implying a six–day time–frame for work that the Sabbath might remain separate as a day of rest.

The weekly Sabbath was not the only "Sabbath" that God commanded Israel to observe. There were weekly (Ex. 20:8–11; Deut. 5:12–15), monthly (Numb. 28:11–15; Rom. 14:5–6) and yearly Sabbaths (Ex. 12:1–20, 43–50; Lev. 23:15–44; Numb. 28:16–25; 29:1–40), one observed every seven years (Ex. 23:10–11; Lev. 25:1–7, 18–22; 2 Chron. 36:20–21) and one observed every fifty years (Lev. 25:8–18). Some were purely rest–days, some were feast–days and some were days of corporate worship. To correctly understand the full significance of the weekly Sabbath, one must understand the whole Sabbath–principle commanded by God. The following is a short study on the various "Sabbaths":

The Sabbath–principle of Israel was a principle of rest for man, animals and the land, instituted by God. It looked back to creation and Israel's deliverance from Egypt, looked to God in covenant–relationship and looked ahead prophetically to the redemption of the whole creation. This principle was also a principle of celebration. Both typically anticipated the redemption–rest in the Lord Jesus Christ and in future glory (Deut. 5:12–15; Rom. 8:18–23; Heb. 4:1–11; 2 Pet. 3:7–18).

To be biblical and consistent, one must make a distinction between the provisional [ceremonial, civil] and the perpetual: The Sabbath [rest and worship]–principle is perpetual, as reflected in both God's creation–rest (Gen. 2:2–3; Ex. 20:11) and the need for man to rest, i.e., "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mk. 2:27). The Sabbath–principle points ahead to the redemptive rest in the Lord Jesus Christ (Deut. 5:12–15; Heb. 4:1–11. Note that Heb. 4:9 literally reads "a Sabbath rest" in the Gk.), and so has a typical significance which will find complete fulfillment in the final redemption of man and the earth, when the Sabbath rest of God and man shall find its ultimate realization (Rom. 8:18–23; 2 Pet. 3:13).

What, then, in essence, is the perpetual and ultimate significance of the Sabbath? The Sabbath is described as "the Sabbath of the Lord God," i.e., *his* Sabbath and is traced back to his primeval rest of celebration, accomplishment,

satisfaction ["all was very good"] and anticipation (Gen. 2:1–3). The national or covenant significance to Israel was both temporary and typological (Ex. 16:25–30; 23:10–12; 31:13–17; Deut. 5:12–15), awaiting its true and full significance among believers within the New or Gospel Covenant (Heb. 4:1–11).

Believers are now brought into union with Christ and so rejoice in his finished redemptive work and spiritually "rest" by faith in him. We celebrate our glorious salvation. Note the anticipation of that "[Sabbath–]rest which remaineth for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). We await our future glorification (Rom. 8:14–23) and the restoration of all creation which, again, will render everything pristine and "very good" in the creation of "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:7–13). With creation ultimately and infallibly restored, and the elect of God finally and fully redeemed, the full and final rest of God will be accomplished. The Sabbath then, ought to be a celebration of our redemption, a delight, a rest, both physical and spiritual and an anticipation of that glory which is to come. Such thoughts ought to sanctify and make the Lord's Day a delight.

While it is true that in neither the Old or New Testaments did God explicitly change the weekly Sabbath from the seventh to the first day, since the resurrection of our Lord, Christians have met on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Acts 2:1ff; 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). It was our Lord's resurrection–day, the Day of Pentecost, which marked out the New Testament church as God's ordained institution for this Gospel economy by the empowering of the Spirit; and anticipates the full and final restoration of all things, of which his resurrection was but the first declaration. The first day (traditionally "Sunday") thus distinguishes Christian worship from Jewish worship. This was the inspired apostolic practice throughout the New Testament. Thus, observing the first day of the week as the Lord's Day is not merely traditional; it is implicitly and explicitly biblical (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).

Have you found that promised rest in the Lord Jesus? Do you find the Lord's Day a delight? Do you take time to anticipate and rejoice in the coming Sabbath of creation?

Quest. 52: What is the Fifth Commandment?

Ans: The Fifth Commandment is, "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. (Ex. 20:12)

Quest. 53: What is the significance of the Fifth Commandment?

Ans: The Fifth Commandment requires man to preserve the honor, and to perform the duties belonging to all in their positions and relations as legitimate superiors, inferiors or equals.

See also: Lev. 19:32; Deut. 5:16; 6:6–15; 21:18–21; 1 Kgs. 2:19; Prov. 6:20–24; 22:6, 15; 13:24; 23:13, 22; 30:17; Jer. 35:18–19; Matt. 10:37–

38; 15:3–6; Mk. 7:9–13; Lk. 2:51; 9:59–60; 10:16; 14:26; Jn. 19:26–27; Rom. 12:10; 13:1–7; Gal. 6:6; 1 Cor. 4:15; Eph. 5:21–24; 6:1–9; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:18–4:1; 1 Tim. 5:4, 16–17; 2 Tim. 3:15; Titus 2:2–3, 9–10; Heb. 12:11; 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 2:13–18.

COMMENTARY

The Fifth Commandment, as it represents the extension and representation of Divine authority in human relationships, forms a connection between the first four (the "First Table of the Law," or man's responsibility toward God) and the final six Commandments (the "Second Table of the Law," or man's responsibility toward man). The division is two–fold: first, the Divine, intensive mandate to honor father and mother; second, the Divine promise of longevity in the land. The Apostle Paul extends this wording to encompass all families with believing parents and longevity upon the earth (Eph. 6:1–3).

Children are to honor their parents. The term "honor" has the sense of "honoring, revering, respecting, giving much weight to" their fathers and mothers. Parents stand in the stead of God to their children, as an inherent part of the God–ordained order (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 3:14–15; 5:22–25; 6:1–4; Col. 3:18–22; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5–7), and must not ever be taken lightly in their commands. It is the God–ordained position of the parent over the child which is to be honored, regardless of the given moral character of the individual who occupies that position. Children must not dishonor their parents because of perceived imperfections or failures. The parents likewise carry a great responsibility to their children under God, as his representatives. In the God–ordained moral order, there is no place for dishonor, arbitrariness or irresponsibility.

The term "father" is of very broad application, referring to all legitimate authority, as the family is the primary social institution ordained by God. To the Hebrew mentality, "father" referred to anyone who was due respect and honor as being in a place of superiority, authority, influence or leadership. It is biblically used to refer to literal, physical fathers (Gen. 15:15; 27:19; Heb. 12:9), to patriarchs or celebrated ancestors (Ex. 3:6; Jn. 8:39; Jas. 2:21), to someone or thing as progeniture or source (Job 38:28), to God as a spiritual Father (Psa. 89:26; Isa. 63:16; Mal. 1:6; 2:10; Matt. 6:9; Jn. 8:41; Rom. 8:13–16; Eph. 3:15, 19; Phil. 1:2), to an idol (Jer. 2:27), to kings or rulers (1 Sam. 24:11; Isa. 22:21; 38:5; 49:23), to superiors (Acts 22:1), to counselors, advisors or prophets (Gen. 45:8; 2 Kgs. 2:12; 6:21; 13:14), to spiritual leaders (2 Kgs. 13:14; 1 Cor. 4:15–17; 1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1; 1 Pet. 5:13), to those who instruct others (2 Kgs. 2:12; Prov. 1:8, 10, 15), to those in a close relationship (2 Sam. 7:14; 2 Kgs. 2:12; Job 31:18; Heb. 1:5), to those who provide for or protect others (Job 29:16; Psa. 68:5; Jer. 31:9), to those whose character is emulated (Ezk. 16:3, 45; Jn. 8:28–49; Rom. 4:12, 16–17) and generally as a title of the greatest respect.

The created universe exists within the context of Divine Law—spiritual law, moral law, social law and physical law. Because Divine Law rules in every sphere, the Divine order has been established and is to be maintained. When the Divine order is maintained in any given sphere, there is blessing; when the

Divine order is disobeyed and disregarded, there is contradiction, confusion, irrationality, anarchy, dissolution and failure. Socially, the Divine order extends downward to and through the human race from God the Father, to the Lord Jesus Christ [as the God–Man, Mediator and Redeemer], to the man, to the woman and then to the children (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:18–24; 3:16; Eph. 3:14–15; 5:22–24; 1 Cor. 11:3, 7–9, 12; Col. 3:18–20; 1 Pet. 3:1–7). The family is thus the microcosm of the human race as ordained by God.

The family is ordained by God as the primary social unit or entity, not the individual. When the individual becomes the primary social unit, there is fragmentation, contradiction, confusion, and anarchy—because the Divine order is disobeyed, and every man does that which is right in his own eyes (Judg. 17:6; 21:25). There remains no social vehicle or context for the preservation and transmission of Divine truth, morality, authority or responsibility (Gen. 1:26–28; Prov. 30:11–14, 17; Rom. 1:18–32; 2 Tim. 3:1–7). Such fragmented social disorder spreads like poison throughout a disintegrating society. Although human government must begin with individual self–government through regenerating grace, the family is the primary social entity. It is the first "church," the first "society," the first "school" and the first "employment" for the children, as they learn to act and live responsibly in the context of obeying, sharing and caring through work and cooperation. When the God–ordained institution of the family is threatened, society is endangered; when the family is strengthened, society is safe–guarded.

God has ordained the family, the church and the state. The state or civil government was meant to have a limited sphere within the realm of humanity. When the state abrogates to itself total jurisdiction—becomes totalitarian—in the formation and transmission of the culture, it necessarily usurps the place of both God and Parent. In other words, it either dominates the family and institutionalized religion or seeks to render them inconsequential. In abandoning the reality of Divine Law and purpose [Divine predestination], it simply substitutes its own [e.g., Social Darwinism]. In a secularized society [which exists without reference to God's Law–Word] the State tends to perceive itself as both "god" [exercising immanent domain, establishing morality (or amorality) and "equity" "economic and social justice"] by human consensus] and "parent" [superseding both family and parents]. The statist educational system becomes the vehicle for the transmission of a godless, secular culture. Christians have always had to contend with a deified concept of the state or its leaders. It is vital to maintain a godly family, as its dissolution necessarily means the disintegration of society. Do we honor our Heavenly Father in this vital area ?

Quest. 54: What is the Sixth Commandment?

Ans: The Sixth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not kill." (Ex. 20:13)

Quest. 55: What is the significance of the Sixth Commandment?

Ans: The Sixth Commandment declares the sovereignty of God over life and death, and forbids the unlawful taking of human life, or whatsoever tends thereto.

See also: Gen. 1:26; 4:2–15; 9:3–6; 37:18–20; 49:6; Ex. 21:29; 22:2–3; Numb. 35:29–34; Deut. 5:17; 19:21; 21:1–9; 22:8; 2 Sam. 12:9; Psa. 8:3–8; 82:3–4; Prov. 12:10; 22:3; 23:1–3; Hab. 2:9–12; Matt. 5:21–22, 38–48; 15:18–20; Mk. 7:21–23; Jn. 8:44; Rom. 13:4; 12:19–21; 1 Cor. 6:19–20; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:28–29; 1 Tim. 4:1–6; Jas. 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:5–6; 1 Jn. 3:10–19.

COMMENTARY

The Sixth Commandment declares the sovereignty of God over life and death. There is in this Commandment: first, a perpetual prohibition against unlawfully taking human life; second, a positive implication. The antithesis is that we are commanded to love God supremely and completely, and in this context, we are to love our neighbor as ourselves (Deut. 6:4–5; Matt. 22:36–40). The term "neighbor" is inclusive of any and all human beings without exception, including not only friends, associates, countrymen, or those of like faith, but "strangers" [foreigners] and even one's enemies (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Deut. 10:12–19; Matt. 5:43–48; Lk. 10:25–37; Rom. 12:19–21).

The Fifth Commandment forms a connection between the first four (love to God) and the final five (love to neighbor), as it protects and perpetuates all God–ordained, proper authority. The Sixth protects human life, the Seventh protects the God–ordained institution of marriage, and thus the family; the Eighth protects one's private property, the Ninth protects one's reputation, and the Tenth protects everything pertaining to one's neighbor by mandating the proper inward attitude toward others and what pertains to them.

God is the source of all life—plant, animal, human and angelic. As the Creator, Sustainer and moral Governor of creation, God is absolutely sovereign over both life and death (Deut. 32:39; Jn. 18:10–11; Rom. 11:33–36; Rev. 1:18). He both gives and takes life as his sovereign prerogative and delegates the responsibility to man, his image–bearer and vicegerent, to both preserve and take life in terms of his Law–Word (Gen. 9:6; Numb. 35:31–33; Deut. 19:11–13). Thus, civil government has the responsibility to maintain capital punishment.

The Sixth Commandment forbids the unlawful taking of human life. This mandate is very broad, and applies to premeditated murder (Gen. 4:6–8; Numb. 35:16–18, 20–21, 29–34; Deut. 19:11–13; Mk. 7:21–23; Gal. 5:19–21; 1 Tim. 1:9), voluntary manslaughter [crime of passion] (Numb. 35:22–28), involuntary manslaughter through negligence, carelessness, or "accident" (Ex.

21:28–29; Numb. 35:10–15; Deut. 19:1–10; 22:8) and being an accessory to murder (2 Sam. 11:1–27; 12:9).

The Sixth Commandment not only forbids the overt act of unlawfully taking human life, it likewise prohibits every thought, motivation, inclination and action that tends toward that act. Thus, this Commandment, as case law, condemns all unrighteous anger, vindictiveness, envy, jealousy, covetousness, hatred, etc. All sin, including the unlawful taking of human life, begins in the heart. This is made absolutely clear by the teaching of our Lord (Matt. 5:21–22, 27–28; Mk. 7:21–23). Jewish tradition taught that only the overt act of sin was sinful; our Lord revealed that everything which led up to that act was, in itself, also sinful! To this the whole of Scripture agrees (Gen. 4:6–8; Matt. 27:18; Mk. 15:10; Rom. 1:28–32; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 4:17–19; 1 Jn. 3:11–15).

The Scriptures reveal that God cares for all living things—plants, animals and man (Gen. 1:1–31; 2:15–24; Lev. 36:33–35, 43; 2 Chron. 36:20–21; Psa. 104:1–31; Matt. 6:28–30; 10:29–31; Acts 17:25; Rom. 8:19–23; Col. 1:17). In the created order there are different levels of life. Plant life sustains both man and beast. Animals provide food and clothing for man (Gen. 3:21; 9:3). God has given man dominion over the lesser creation and permits the taking of plant and animal life (Gen. 1:29; 9:1–5; Psa. 8:3–8; Matt. 6:28–30; Rom. 14:2, 6, 14–23; 1 Tim. 4:1–6). Thus, not all life is equal. Human life is distinct and unique because man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26; 9:6; Lk. 3:38; Acts 17:28–29; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10; Jas. 3:9). Human life thus possesses a derived value established by God, not an inherent value (Gen. 9:5–6).

According to God's Law–Word, abortion is necessarily murder, the unlawful taking of a human life (Ex. 21:22–23; Job 10:8–12; Psa. 139:13–17; Lk. 1:41–44). Whatever is human life has always been uniquely human life, even at the very outset and in its most elementary form (Psa. 139:13–16). The inspired language of this Psalm is accurately descriptive of a fetus—a yet unborn human being. There is no evolution in the womb, no point where cells, tissue or animal life evolves into human life. It is anti–scriptural, anti–scientific and irrational to even suggest that a zygote [a fertilized human egg or embryo] or fetus [unborn baby] is simply a part of a woman's own body. It is clearly an entity in itself, the combination of the sperm of a man and the egg of a woman, the result is conception and the beginning of a distinct and unique life. Modern, Secular Humanism, being atheistic, anti–Christian, immoral, materialistic and evolutionary, denies the existence of the human soul, sin and moral responsibility. But perversion of the truth changes neither the truth nor its necessary consequences. Murder by any other name changes nothing.

Euthanasia is the counterpart to abortion. It is the killing of the aged, infirmed, insane and senile because these become a physical, psychological, emotional or economic burden to society. It is often termed "mercy killing" because it ends their suffering [taking these from mere physical suffering to that of the soul in torments!?]. In our modern, technological age, "death by natural causes" must be re–defined and great moral issues exist. We must differentiate among such realities as patient–assisted suicide, euthanasia without consent

["mercy killing"], passive euthanasia and termination of treatment. We must acknowledge that God alone has the prerogative to give and to take life. Even under seemingly simple circumstances, moral questions will always remain because technology in many instances has made "death by natural causes" almost abnormal. Remember, death is the result of sin; it is not "natural," it is unnatural (Gen. 2:16–17). The statement in Jn. 12:24, often meant to describe human death as though it were natural, refers to our Lord, not to anyone else. Physical death is unnatural and is the "last 'enemy" which shall be destroyed (Gen. 2:16–17; 1 Cor. 15:21–26).

Self–defense is not only taught in Scripture, it is implied in the Sixth Commandment. In defending one's self or others one ought to protect, one is seeking to prevent a breech of this Commandment (Eph. 5:25–29). A thief could be killed when breaking in at night, because the circumstances involved darkness, the possibility of hidden weapons or accomplices, and the means and motivation to seriously injure or kill the inhabitants of the house, etc. (Ex. 22:2–3). This was necessarily a form of self–defense.

The teaching of our Lord is very important, as it has been misused to teach an unscriptural pacifism (Cf. Matt. 5:38–48; Lk. 6:28–36). The reaction when smitten on the right cheek to turn the other [left] has not to do with legitimate self–defense, but suffering as a Christian. As most men are right–handed, this—and the context seems to support this interpretation—necessarily refers to a back–handed slap of contempt. We have a legitimate right to self–defense in light of the Sixth Commandment, but we may be called upon to personally suffer persecution as Christians, and such may be endured by the grace of God (Matt. 5:9–12; Jn. 15:18–25; Rom. 12:19–21; 1 Pet. 2:12–25; 4:1, 12–19).

Corporately and nationally, Christians may take up the sword as responsible citizens in defending their nation or to reconstitute a righteous government. In self–defense, one may not use a greater degree of force without assuming the part of an aggressor. There may be a very thin line between legitimate self–defense and sinful assault; God alone knows the heart and is the final Judge. Are we guilty of even heart–murder (1 Jn. 3:15)?

Quest. 56: What is the Seventh Commandment?

Ans: The Seventh Commandment is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Ex. 20:14)

Quest. 57: What is the significance of the Seventh Commandment?

Ans: The Seventh Commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts, intentions, words and actions.

See also: Gen. 2:18–25; 39:9; Lev. 18:1–30; 19:29; 20:10–23; 21:9; Deut. 5:18; 22:13–24; 2 Sam. 11:1–12:14; Job 31:1, 9–11; Psa. 51:1–4; Prov. 2:16–19; 5:3–23; 6:24–35; 7:1–27; 9:13–18; 23:27–28; Eccl. 9:9; Song of Sol.; Jer. 5:7–9; 29:23; Ezk. 16:15–17; Bk. of Hosea; Mal. 3:5; Matt. 5:27–32; 19:3–9; Mk. 7:18–23; 10:2–12; Jn. 4:16–18; 8:1–

11; Rom. 1:24–27; 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 6:9–20; 7:1–40; 10:7–8; Gal. 5:19–21; Eph. 5:3–6, 21–33; Col. 3:5–6; 1 Thess. 4:3–7; Heb. 13:4; Jas. 4:4; 2 Pet. 2:14; Rev. 22:14–15.

COMMENTARY

As with the Sixth and Eighth Commandments, there is necessarily a negative declaration: a perpetual prohibition against all immorality, and a positive two–fold implication: first, we must constantly sanctify our thoughts, intentions, words and actions, striving by the grace of God to keep them pure. Second, as marriage is the natural state ordained for man by God, we must keep faithfully to our own wife or husband, fulfilling and being fulfilled in that intimate relationship of love which God has commanded (Gen. 2:18, 24–25; Prov. 5:15–19; 1 Cor. 7:2–6, 9; Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19; Titus 2:4; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:7).

As the Fifth Commandment protects the authority necessary for the maintenance and perpetuation of the family and subsequently all human government, the Sixth Commandment gives the proper significance to human life (man as the image–bearer of God) which is necessary to the family and its God–ordained mandate and subsequently to society itself.

The Seventh Commandment protects the God–ordained institution of marriage, which is essential to the family and to all subsequent morality. These all separate man from brute creation and are foundational to the preservation of human society.

Man was created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore possesses an inescapable, responsible moral quality and character (Gen. 1:26). Man was also created as a sexual being [God created them male and female, Gen. 1:27]. Thus, human sexuality in itself is not inherently or morally wrong (everything that God created was "very good," Gen. 1:31), but God–given for man's purpose (the fulfillment of the Creation and Cultural Mandate), procreation (to propagate the human race) and pleasure (to be the most intimate expression of human love). See the Song of Solomon. God ordained marriage as the proper, exclusive, pure, responsible and fulfilling context for the sexual relationship. In marriage, the man and woman become one before God and men. Any sexual activity outside the marriage relationship is both immoral and a perversion of the God–ordained order.

The contemporary concept of and obsession with sex is perverted. Sex has been divorced from God's Law, and therefore divorced from the true love, which finds its legitimate fulfillment in marriage, responsibility, commitment and morality. Sex is thus commercialized, lust legitimized and perversion normalized. This age sees drugs and sex as merely amoral, recreational, escapist, or the ultimate quasi–religious experience.

As with the rest of the Decalogue, this Commandment includes all and every sin of mind, heart and preliminary act which leads to the overt act of sexual sin. Consider Matthew 5:27–28. Why did our Lord frame the issue in a traditional way—"ye have heard that it was said by them of old time" (v. 27)—

when the words came directly from God in the Seventh Commandment? He was not countermanding Scripture, but correcting Jewish tradition, which taught that only the overt act was sin. He stated that sin begins in the heart and the lustful look and thought is already heart–adultery before God (v. 28). In that society, the woman, married or unmarried, would be dressed befitting her marital status. The man himself would be either married or unmarried. Therefore the first look would be morally determinative. Here, as in other instances, the Law applies to thoughts, inclinations and motivations as well as overt sinful activity. The Law literally strikes at the very heart of the matter. Further, the extreme admonition which immediately follows in v. 29–30 to "cut off the right hand" and "pluck out the right eye" must be taken figuratively and not literally. The solemn significance is that one must take the most immediate, radical and drastic measures against even all initial forms of sin for the sake of his soul in light of eternal judgment!

The idea of evolution, with its subsequent legislative approval in re–defining sexuality, has had a devastating effect upon human sexuality, the idea of love and the institution of marriage. It has divorced human sexuality from all morality, responsibility, true masculinity and true femininity. It has re–defined sexuality in terms of "free love" [sex devoid of moral barriers or commitment], "self–love" [autoeroticism], uni–sexuality, bi–sexuality, voyeurism, transvestism, prostitution, feminism, homosexuality, lesbianism, incest, pornography, pedophilia and even bestiality. It has necessarily reduced human sexuality to a level lower than the brute. Any re–definition of any part of God's laws is inherently sinful and wreaks spiritual, moral, social and physical havoc (Rom. 1:18–32). Ideas do have consequences, and accepted "theories" or social mores do not absolve sinners from their sins. Immorality brings upon any people the judgment of God (Rom. 1:24–32). Are our minds, hearts and bodies pure unto the Lord?

A word should be given concerning spiritual adultery and its parallel to physical adultery. Scripturally, there is a distinct parallel between physical and spiritual adultery. In ancient times, male and female prostitution were closely linked to pagan worship. The Canaanites were to be exterminated because of their religious, gross forms of sexual perversion. One thousand prostitutes served the shrine of the *Akro–Korinthus* above the ancient city of Corinth in Paul's day. The issue is more than the mere physical act of sexual intercourse. There is a breaking of a covenant oath and bond, and the greatest betrayal of trust and commitment. God often illustrates his relationship to his own people in both the Old and New Testaments by the marriage relationship—the most profound and intimate human relationship possible—to portray the horrible sin of turning from him to either idols (e.g., Ex. 34:15–16; Lev. 17:7; 20:5–6; Numb. 14:33; 1 Chron. 5:25; Ezk. 16; 17, 23; Hos. 1:2ff) or to one's own selfish, worldly, sinful desires (1 Cor. 6:15–17; Jas. 4:1–4).

Have we been unfaithful to our covenant with our God by spiritual adultery, i.e., by setting up idols in our hearts? Anything or anyone which becomes an end in itself is idolatry (1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:5)!

Quest. 58: What is the Eighth Commandment?

Ans: The Eighth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal." (Ex. 20:15)

Quest. 59: What is the significance of the Eighth Commandment?

Ans: The Eighth Commandment forbids anything that does or may hinder or detract from our own or another's person, wealth, or inward or outward estate.

See also: Ex. 12:35–36; 21:33–34; 22:21–30; 23:4–11; Lev. 19:11, 13, 15, 35–36; 25:13–17; Deut. 5:19; 8:6–18; 22:1–4; 23:24–25; 27:17; Josh. 7:20–21; 2 Sam. 12:1–6; Psa. 37:21; 50:18; Prov. 3:27; 6:6–11, 30–35; 10:15; 11:15–16, 26; 18:9; 20:10, 14, 23; 21:4–7; 22:7, 9, 13, 20–21, 23; 27:23–27; 28:15–17, 19–22; 30:8–9; Isa. 1:21–26; Jer. 17:11; 22:13; Ezk. 45:9–12; 46:18; Hos. 12:7; Amos 8:4–8; Mal. 3:8–10; Matt. 7:12; 10:9–10; 17:24–27; 22:15–22; 25:19–30; Mk. 7:21–23; 10:19; Lk. 11:39–42; Jn. 12:4–8; Acts 2:44–45; 5:1–4; Rom. 13:8–10; 12:17; 1 Cor. 5:10–13; 6:1–11; 7:23; 2 Cor. 8:21; Eph. 4:28; 6:5–8; Col. 4:1; 1 Thess. 4:6; 2 Thess. 3:10–12; 1 Tim. 5:8, 16–18; 6:9–10, 17–19; Titus 2:9–10; Phlm. 18–19; Heb. 13:5; Jas. 4:1–4, 13–17; 5:1–6.

COMMENTARY

As with the Sixth and Seventh Commandments, there is both a perpetual negative declaration prohibiting theft and a positive implication that every man is to be industrious as to his own property, and also be practically concerned about the person and property of others.

There are three necessary thoughts concerning this Commandment in the context of the Moral Law. First, each Commandment has a direct relation to the prologue in Ex. 20:1–2, "And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." God owned the nation of Israel as their Redeemer and Deliverer. Thus, he had absolute authority over them through his Law. Second, as Jehovah delivered them out of the house of bondage, they should understand both slavery and freedom (The Eighth Commandment includes the prohibition of kidnapping for the purpose of slavery, especially in the context of the Sixth—Eighth Commandments). Third, there is an immediate relation among the Sixth, Eighth and Ninth Commandments, as he who steals a person or his property is presumably also ready to both kill and lie.

It is naturally and commonly thought that when any individual earns, receives, finds or inherits property, it is his by right to do with as he deems fit as its sole owner and possessor. Is the possession of private property a right? What is the source of such a right? Is private property a necessity? What was the original purpose for private property? How is man to use what he has earned, been given or inherited? What exactly is private property?

Ultimately, man owns nothing. He is a creature of God who depends upon him for everything (Acts 17:24–25), including his every breath (Gen. 2:7; Psa. 104:29; Isa. 2:22; Dan. 5:23; Acts 17:25) and daily sustenance (Matt. 6:11, 19–

33). The entirety of created reality belongs to—is owned by—Almighty God. "…the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth..." (Gen. 14:19, 22). "The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Psa. 24:1; 50:10). "…all the earth is mine." (Ex. 19:5). Imminent Domain belongs to God alone, not to the state. Man is thus simply a steward of the abilities, time, reputation, achievements, advantages, health, wealth or other property given to him by God. He has nothing that he can ultimately call or treat as his own. Everything he is and has must be considered as delegated to him by God for responsible use according to his Law–Word.

The Cultural Mandate is to "have dominion over…all the earth…to multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:26–28). This is humanity's "Magna Charta," its Primal Charter, Original Commission or Divinely–given Constitution. Man was created to work and to exercise godly, responsible dominion under God, and to find meaning, fulfillment, enjoyment and blessing in the fruits of his labor (Gen. 2:7–8, 15; 39:5; Lev. 25:18–23; Deut. 28:1–13; Prov. 10:22; Mal. 3:10–12).

Man is the trustee of the earth under God. The Cultural Mandate is thus the scriptural and moral basis for private property, as the accumulation of wealth [private ownership of property] is necessary for its fulfillment. Thus, private property is a God–given, inalienable right. Man in this context has a right to the ownership [stewardship] of property, if he has earned it legitimately, been given it, or inherited it. It is a God–given sacred trust. Therefore, all property without exception must be responsibly held and used according to the revealed will and Word of God. Upon this ordinance of God is founded the pervasive Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal."

Man was created and called to exercise godly dominion over the earth under God (Gen. 1:26–28). As he was created for this purpose, intelligent, responsible dominion was more than his calling, it was also an inescapable part of his nature. It was and is man's inherent nature to exercise dominion. It is in the context of man as the image–bearer of God and the Cultural Mandate that we must view the biblical work ethic. Man is meant to work as God's servant, i.e., to exercise a godly, responsible, consistent stewardship. Every task is to be approached, performed and completed "as unto the Lord" (Eccl. 9:10; Eph. 6:5–8; Col. 3:22–24; 1 Pet. 4:11). This is to remain true, especially for the believer, despite the curse and its subsequent effect upon work as exhausting and, at times, frustrating toil (Gen. 3:17–19; Eccl. 2:10–11, 17–24). The biblical work ethic finds its fullest and highest expression in the context of a converted life–style. Dominion begins with self–government, and self–government begins with regeneration (Jn. 3:3, 5; Eph. 4:22–24; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).

The apostasy of man from God in the person and sin of Adam centered on his seeking to be his own "god" and determining for himself what was right and wrong (Gen. 3:1–6), i.e., seeking autonomy with relation to his nature, position and calling. See Questions 37–38. It is not the existence of property which is sinful or wrong, nor the desire for such; it is rather the great spiritual and moral transition from the Cultural Mandate under God to the attempted

autonomy of fallen, sinful man in his "god–complex." His nature became perverted, but the urge to dominate remained, divorced from the equitable, sanctifying and directing effect of God's Law–Word. From this unhallowed, selfish urge to autonomously dominate the earth and everyone and everything in it derives all envy, jealousy and pride; every act of personal, marital and social strife; rape, theft, robbery, pillage, plunder and murder; personal, corporate and national oppression; every form of government which denies to its subjects private property—absolute Monarchy, Communism and Socialism [Social Darwinism]; and every attempt at ecclesiastical dominance, religious politics and persecution. Fallen, sinful man, both individually and collectively, is a thief, squatter and vandal on God's earth. Thus stands the necessity of God's Law–Word, "Thou shalt not steal." Do we steal?

Quest. 60: What is the Ninth Commandment?

Ans: The Ninth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." (Ex. 20:16)

Quest. 61: What is the significance of the Ninth Commandment?

Ans: The Ninth Commandment requires both the maintenance and the promotion of truth between human beings, and of our own and of our neighbor's good name, especially in witness–bearing.

See also: Gen. 12:11–13, 19; 20:1–14; 30:31–33; Ex. 1:15–21; 22:10–12; 23:1; Lev. 5:1; 19:11, 15–16; Numb. 35:30; Deut. 1:15–17; 13:1–18; 17:6–12; 18:20–22; 19:15–21; 22:13–21; Josh. 2:2–21; 1 Sam. 16:1–5; 19:1–5; 2 Sam. 17:15–22; 1 Kgs. 21:1–13; 22:6–28; 2 Kgs. 5:5–27; 6:8–20; Job. 5:21; 27:3–6; Psa. 5:6; 12:1–5; 15:1–4; 27:12; 31:6; 35:11, 16, 20–21; 50:16–20; 55:21; 58:3; 116:11; 139:4, 23–24; Prov. 6:16–19; 9:7–8; 10:18–21; 11:12–13; 12:6, 13, 18, 22; 14:5, 7, 9, 14:15, 25; 18:8, 21; 19:5; 25:9–10, 18; 26:18–28; Eccl. 5:1–8; Isa. 5:23; 59:13–15; 63:8; Jer. 18:18; 20:10; Hos. 4:2; Zech. 8:17; Matt. 5:33–37, 48; 7:1–6; 10:17–20; 11:16–19; 12:34–37; 26:59–62; Jn. 8:44; 14:6; Acts 5:1–10; 24:5–6; Rom. 1:25; 3:8, 13–14; 1 Cor. 4:3–5; 2 Cor. 2:17; Eph. 4:25, 29–31; Col. 3:8–9; 4:6; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:13–18; 10:28–29; Jas. 1:26; 3:5–13; 1 Pet. 3:16; 1 Jn. 2:21–23; Rev. 21:8, 27; 22:15.

COMMENTARY

As with the preceding three Commandments, the analysis is twofold: first, a perpetual negative declaration prohibiting falsehood, and second, a positive implication, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," i.e., maintain and promote truthfulness and equity to all those with whom we come in contact or have any relation to—within the bounds of Scripture.

The Third Commandment forbids perjury against God, the Ninth forbids perjury against our fellow man. The Fifth Commandment guards the rights of authority, the Sixth guards the rights of person and life, the Seventh guards the rights of marriage and family, and thus of society; the Eighth guards the rights of property. The Ninth Commandment guards the rights of both name and

reputation, and so necessarily guards the system of justice which is absolutely essential to society itself (Psa. 11:1–4; Isa. 1:17, 23, 26).

The purpose of this Commandment is to secure the truth among men, which is absolutely essential to preserve individual life, reputation, justice and society. When truth is considered relative, i.e., existential or apart from God–ordained absolutes, the very foundation of society is potentially destroyed, for human society is based upon the presupposition that men are speaking the truth to one another.

The nature of falsehood derives from the devil. He put forth the first lie (Gen. 3:1–6), and is called the father of lies (Jn. 8:44). Satan or the devil is described in Scripture as the destroyer (Rev. 9:11), adversary (1 Pet. 5:8), deceiver (Eph. 6:10; Rev. 20:10) and slanderer or accuser (1 Tim. 3:6–7; 1 Jn. 3:8; Rev. 12:10). His intent is to destroy God's law–order by opposition, deceit and accusation. Every lie reflects this devilish principle. Thus, every liar is in league with the devil and is set against the law–order of God.

Fallen man turned away from God and thus from any possibility of absolute and objective truth or reality. Fallen, sinful man has purposely "exchanged the truth of God for 'the lie,'" and thus the whole realm of humanity is based on a universal principle of falsehood with its depraved results (Psa. 58:3; Rom. 1:18–32). This principle of falsehood may be relatively mild in the form of flattery or social politeness, or malignant in the form of perjury and other malicious lies—yet it remains the one pervasive characteristic of fallen mankind.

To secure the truth, man must turn to the objective, authoritative Word of God, to Divinely–ordained absolutes, i.e., to a "revelational epistemology," i.e., a practical theory of knowledge and truth based on Divine revelation. See Question 13. The only approach to truth and knowledge is in and through the Word of God (Jn. 17:17; Rom. 1:18–25). God is not only true, he is the Source of all reality, truth and meaning. Apart from him, there is no truth—only empirical speculation at best and at worst, utter [spiritual and moral] irrationality.

Silence may be sin. One must exercise godly discernment as when to speak and when not to speak. Sometimes, it is sinful not to speak, and at other times, sinful to speak. Under certain circumstances, one must speak out for the truth or commit sin (Ex. 23:1–2; 1 Sam. 19:4–5; Psa. 50:18; Prov. 12:22), and at others, remain silent to protect one's self or another from those who have no right to know certain information (Prov. 11:9–13). At other times, we must discern how much truth ought to be revealed or concealed (1 Sam. 16:1–5). We must seek to maintain a clear conscience before God in accordance with his Word (Acts 23:1).

God created man in his image and likeness, as a rational, morally–responsible being to exercise godly dominion over creation. To fulfill this mandate, man was created with the faculty of speech to commune with God and communicate with his fellow man. Sin has dreadfully perverted the use of

the tongue. The very instrument created to praise God turns to curse him—and to curse one's fellow man. The tongue reveals the fullness of the heart or inner being and expresses its depraved nature. (Matt. 12:34; Mk. 7:21–23; Rom. 3:13–14; Jas. 2:2–12). Speech is "the exhalation of the soul." The believer is mandated to exercise dominion over his heart and tongue (Prov. 4:23; Rom. 6:14–18; Gal. 5:23; Eph. 4:22–25, 29–31; Jas. 1:26; 2:2–12). All government necessarily begins with self–government, and self–government necessarily begins with regeneration. A changed heart is necessary for a changed tongue, and a sanctified personality is essential to mortifying the sins of the tongue (Rom. 6:12–13; 8:13; Col. 3:5, 9–10). Do we lie?

Quest. 62: What is the Tenth Commandment?

Ans: The Tenth Commandment is, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbor's." (Ex. 20:17)

Quest. 63: What is the significance of the Tenth Commandment?

Ans: The Tenth Commandment forbids all discontent with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of others, and all inordinate emotions or affections to anything or anyone that is theirs.

See also: Gen. 6:5; 13:10–11; 30:1; 31:1–2; 39:6–12; Ex. 18:21–22; 34:23–24; Deut. 5:21; Josh. 7:1, 21; 1 Sam. 8:1–3; 12:3–5; 16:7; 25:1–38; 2 Sam. 11:1–4; 1 Kgs. 21:1–16; 2 Kgs. 5:5, 16, 19–27; Neh. 5:1–13; Psa. 10:2–8; 16:5–6; 51:1–17; 66:18; Prov. 3:5–10; 4:23; 6:6–11, 24–26; 10:4; 23:5–8; 26:24–26; 28:16; 30:8–9, 15; Eccl. 5:10; Jer. 17:9; 45:5; Mic. 2:1–2; Hab. 2:9; Matt. 5:27–30; 6:19–34; 13:7, 22; 15:1–9, 19; 19:17–26; 25:14–30; Mk. 4:18–19; 7:21–23; Lk. 12:13–32; 16:14; Jn. 12:4–6; Acts 5:1–4; 20:32–36; 24:24–26; Rom. 1:29–32; 7:7–13; 13:8–10; 1 Cor. 5:10–13; 6:9–11; 10:1–13, 24, 31; 12:31; Gal. 5:13–14, 19–26; Eph. 4:17–20; 5:3–5; Phil. 2:1–5; 3:11–14; Col. 3:1–6; 1 Thess. 2:14–16; 1 Tim. 3:3; 5:8; 6:6–11, 17–19; Heb. 4:12–13; 13:5; Jas. 1:13–16; 3:14–16; 4:1–4; 5:4–5; 1 Pet. 2:1–2; 2 Pet. 2:15; 3:11–14; 1 Jn. 2:15–17.

COMMENTARY

An analysis and exposition of the Tenth Commandment necessarily includes two considerations: first, the perpetual prohibition against covetousness; second, the presupposition that every sin begins in the heart or mind and then manifests itself in overt action. Covetousness stands at the root of every sin and is presupposed in all the negative Commandments.

The Tenth Commandment strikes at the root of all and every sin. Every sin begins in the heart or mind (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 12:34–35; Mk. 7:21–23; Rom. 7:7; Jas. 1:13–16). The Tenth Commandment thus has an immediate relation to all the other Commandments. Positively, this relationship can be stated thus:

God is sovereign over our worship (First and Second Commandments), our words and actions (Third Commandment), our time (Fourth Commandment), all authority (Fifth Commandment), our lives and bodies (Sixth Commandment), our bodies and morality (Seventh Commandment), our property (Eighth Commandment), all truth (Ninth Commandment) and our minds or hearts (Tenth Commandment). There is absolutely no sphere of our lives where we are to be or can be independent of God—no place for autonomy or lawlessness—even in the deepest recesses of our own hearts and minds. God claims the heart, mind and conscience as well as the body, soul and life.

The desire to acquire is not wrong. Private property, the accumulation of wealth, advancement and the taking of a wife, are essential to the fulfilling of the Cultural Mandate (Gen. 1:28). The Tenth Commandment forbids desiring or setting one's heart on what already belongs to another, and so thinking and acting in an unjust way to acquire it.

The ideas encompassing covetousness, lust, envy and jealousy are interrelated and represented in Scripture by a variety of terms. Covetousness is to set one's heart on what belongs to another, to long for with envy. Lust is a strong or intense desire to gratify the senses and so becomes covetousness as it finds its object or fulfillment in who or what belongs to another. Envy is a feeling of discontent and dislike because of the advantages or possessions of another and so is an aspect of covetousness. Jealousy is a watchful guarding of one's own or a resentful suspicion of another or what another has and so is an aspect of covetousness. The covetous person sets his heart on [longs, craves, lusts after, or stretches out greedily and grasps] more and more, is envious of what others possess, seeks to obtain it unjustly [by fraud, theft, robbery, seduction], and is jealous [selfish] concerning what he already possesses. He sins in thought, inclination, motivation and implementation.

Covetousness is the oldest sin. It was the sin of Satan, who said that he would ascend and "be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:12–15). It was the sin of Adam, as he desired to be his own "god" and determine for himself was what right or wrong (Gen. 3:1–6). The root of this sin grows in the soil of discontent and the desire for more, for what properly belongs to another—persons, property, position, prestige, pleasure or power. Do we desire what others have? Are we dissatisfied with Divine providence?

PART VI
THE REDEMPTIVE PURPOSE AND THE REDEEMER

The doctrinal study of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, is termed "Christology," from the Gk. *Christos*: "Christ," "Messiah," i.e., "Anointed One." The study of redemption is contained within the larger context of salvation, which is doctrinally termed "Soteriology," from the Gk. *sōtēria*, or "salvation, deliverance, restoration, health." The term "redemption" signifies a purchase, deliverance or release upon the payment of a ransom.

God is a God of purpose and determination. The central core of all history is the redemptive purpose of God which centers in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ—the redemption of sinners through the blood of the cross for the glory of God. Redemption will find its ultimate expression in a redeemed humanity of the elect and in a restored universe (Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:5).

Quest. 64: Did God leave all mankind to perish under condemnation in the state of sin and misery?

Ans: God having, out of his good pleasure from eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a Covenant of Grace to deliver them out of the state of sin and misery, and to bring them into a state of salvation by a Redeemer.

Rom. 3:24–26. [24]Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: [25]Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; [26]To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

2 Thess. 2:13–14. [13]But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: [14]Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eph. 1:3–7. [3]Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: [4]According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: [5]Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, [6]to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. [7]In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

See also: Jn. 17:1–10; Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:19–25; 5:11–21; 8:11–23, 28–39; 9:6–24; 11:5–6; Eph. 2:11–19; Col. 2:9–14; 1 Thess. 1:4–5; 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:1–2, 18–20.

COMMENTARY

How may sinners be declared righteous in God's sight and have their sins forgiven? How can we be reconciled to God? How can we be freed from the guilt, penalty, pollution and reigning power of sin? How can we escape the necessary, certain and dreadful judgment of God (Matt. 3:7; 2 Thess. 1:7–9; Heb. 10:26–31)? How can we obtain forgiveness of our sins? These questions are answered in the glorious biblical truth that God in free and sovereign grace, according to his eternal purpose, chose some in Christ—a multitude which no man can number—to be redeemed from among fallen mankind (Rom. 8:28–39; Eph. 1:3–14; Rev. 7:9). He accomplishes this redemption—forgives, justifies and reconciles sinners to himself, adopts them and sanctifies them, and yet remains holy, righteous and immutable—through the Lord Jesus Christ, the God–Man, the Mediator and only Redeemer (Rom. 3:21–26).

Salvation, or the redemption of sinners, derives from God, not man. It is not the sinful, miserable state of man by nature that is the source or root cause of salvation; it is rather the moral self–consistency [absolute righteousness] of God. The glorious message of the gospel is that there is deliverance from self, from the reigning power of sin, from the wrath and condemnation of God, through the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. This gospel came from God in his loving kindness, not man in his willful state of sinful misery and rebellion. The redemptive work of our Lord—his active and passive obedience—has answered the just claims of God against sinners for whom he died, enabling God to be morally self–consistent, yet loving, gracious and forgiving (Rom. 3:25–26).

The purpose of God to redeem sinners was not an afterthought; it did not begin when or after man fell and apostatized in Adam. God's redemptive purpose is eternal. It began before the beginning of time in the eternal counsel of the triune God. See Questions 69–70. It was manifest in time and history in the redemption accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ in his earthly life, suffering, death and resurrection. It is being evidenced in time and experience as God calls, regenerates, converts, justifies and sanctifies his people. It will be consummated in future glory in the full, final redemption of God's elect in their glorification (Rom. 8:17–23; 1 Jn. 3:1–3).

God cannot arbitrarily set aside or cancel sin. This is not some inherent inability or limitation on the part of God, but rather a matter of his moral self–consistency [absolute holiness and righteousness or justice]. If he could set aside sin without its penalty being paid, its guilt being lifted, its pollution being purged, or its reigning nature being defeated, he would necessarily be inconsistent with himself. He would not—could not—be the God of Scripture, for Scripture reveals that salvation or redemption is from sin in all its aspects, with all its liabilities and from all its penalties. A holy and righteous God has determined to make his people holy and righteous. This is the Divine purpose from eternity to eternity (Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 1:3–14; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9).

But who could qualify as a redeemer? Not a mere man, for he himself is a sinful creature, unable to save himself, much less another human being. Not an

angel, for although not sinful, no angel possesses the necessary properties to be a redeemer—a person with both a Divine and human nature. Further there has been a fall or apostasy on both the human and angelic planes. It would necessarily take one who was both God and Man to become Mediator, Surety and Redeemer in order to redeem sinners, satisfy the demands of God's Law, and reconcile God to men and men to God (Isa. 53:4–11; Rom. 3:24–26; 1 Tim. 2:5). Do you rejoice in the Divine purpose of grace? Have you laid hold of its promises?

Quest. 65: What is redemption?

Ans: Biblically, redemption means the actual and complete pur–chase for one's self by the payment of a ransom price.

Rom. 3:24. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Mk. 10:45. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Acts 20:28. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1 Cor. 6:20. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Gal. 3:13. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree.

Col. 1:14. In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins.

Heb. 9:12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption *for us*.

See also: Isa. 53:4–12; Matt. 1:21; 20:28; Jn. 10:11–18; 11:50–53; 17:1–2; Rom. 5:8–11, 18–19; Gal. 1:3–4; 4:4–5; 2 Cor. 5:18–21; Eph. 2:11–22; 1 Thess. 1:10; Titus 2:11–14; Heb. 10:1–14; 1 Pet. 1:18–20; 2:9, 24; 3:18; Rev. 1:5; 5:9.

COMMENTARY

Salvation is accomplished through the Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ. This redemption finds its primary necessity in the moral self–consistency of a holy, righteous and immutable God who cannot arbitrarily set aside sin (Rom. 3:21–26). Further, the Redeemer must be both God and Man to fully qualify as a sinless [impeccable], vicarious substitute to pay the purchase–price demanded by Divine righteousness and to lift men up to the Divine level in redemptive love and grace (Rom. 6:1–10; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:3–7; 2:4–7). What Divine holiness and justice demanded Divine love provided. This is the glory and infinite perfection of God's moral self–consistency. Only secondarily does the atonement become necessary because of human sinfulness.

Salvation is through or by means of redemption. The Lord Jesus Christ is not the Savior because of his incarnation, his love, his example, his miracles, his morality, or his teaching. He is the one and only Savior through his redemptive work—his incarnation, life [active obedience], suffering, death [passive obedience] and resurrection (Rom. 3:24–26; 4:25). Sin must be atoned for to be forgiven. Man as a sinner must be justified [declared righteous] before an absolutely righteous God. He can only be reconciled to God through the work of a redeemer.

Biblically, there are nine terms in our English Bible that reveal the essence of the doctrine of redemption: "redemption," "redeem," "redeemer," "ransom," "propitiation," "justification," "atonement," "reconciliation" and "satisfaction."

The first four terms are directly related to redemption. These have to do with purchasing for one's self by the payment of a price. They clearly teach that the Lord Jesus Christ, in his redemptive work—perfect life, vicarious and substitutionary suffering, death and resurrection—actually accomplished redemption (Heb. 9:12). The final five terms are indirectly related to redemption. Biblically, "propitiation" means to appease the wrath of an offended God (Rom. 3:24). This propitiation [not merely expiation] was accomplished through the sacrificial death of the Son of God. "Justification" means to be declared righteous or just before God as the righteous judge of all men before the demands of the Divine Law. God can declare the believing sinner just or righteous in his sight only through the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (Isa. 53:4–12; Rom. 3:25–26; 4:1–8). This righteousness stands in both the sinless life [active obedience] and substitutionary death [passive obedience] of our Lord and is appropriated by faith alone (Rom. 5:1). "Atonement" and "reconciliation" are the translations or interpretations of the same term. They mean "to cover, pacify, reconcile, exchange" and thus to change in attitude and relationship (Ex. 29:37; Rom. 5:10–11; 2 Cor. 5:18–20; Eph. 2:16). An additional historical and theological term, "Satisfaction," is used to denote the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus which fully and completely satisfied the claims of the Divine nature and Law (For the idea of satisfaction, see Numb. 35:31–32; Isa. 53:11).

According to the scriptural record and the terminology used, the Lord Jesus Christ did not die merely to make men savable or make salvation possible, but died a vicarious, substitutionary death. This necessarily means that he died for specific sinners and sins, and that those for whom he died must infallibly be redeemed. His suffering and death are thus efficacious and particular, i.e., the sins of God's people were imputed to him and he actually bore them as their substitute. Nothing can or need be added to the redemptive work of our Lord; it is therefore the finished work of Christ. Thus, there is sweet comfort and assurance in the vicarious and substitutionary death of the Son of God. Do you have such comfort and assurance?

Quest. 66: What is the Covenant of Grace?

Ans: The Covenant of Grace is the eternal, redemptive purpose of the triune God to fully and finally save sinners.

1 Tim. 2:5. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Jn. 17:1–2. [1]These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, [2]Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: [3]As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

Heb. 12:24. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.

Rom. 8:29–31. [29]For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. [30]Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. [31]What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

See also: scriptural references under Question 65; Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27**;** Rom. 3:21–25; 5:21; 8:28–39; 9:6–24; Eph. 1:3–7; 1 Thess. 1:4–5; 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:13–14; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 2:9–18; 8:1–13; 9:1–26; 10:1–18; 1 Pet. 1:1–2, 18–20; 2:9.

COMMENTARY

The English word "covenant" means a binding and solemn agreement. The source of the Heb. term "covenant" is uncertain, and may either denote "to cut" or "to fetter or bind." The Gk. term "covenant" or "testament" was used in both the Old and New Testament for the Heb. term *berith.* A covenant was a binding agreement between the parties involved. It was at times sealed with a solemn ceremony—an oath, sacrifice, meal, token or memorial. The covenants between God and men were either unilateral [i.e., "unconditional" or dependent upon God alone] (e.g., Gen. 12:1–3; 15:7–21) or bilateral [i.e., "conditional" or partly dependent upon the faithfulness of men] (e.g., Ex. 19:3–6; Lev. 26:1–46). The Covenant of Grace in its progressive revelation, reiteration and expansion in Scripture, has ever been unilateral or unconditional as a covenant of God's faithfulness in free and sovereign grace.

God has always dealt with man within a covenant relationship—from a principle of representation and imputation—and not merely on a personal basis. This was and is the Divine prerogative by right of both creation and redemption. Human beings have no say in this matter or right to complain against it as mere creatures of God—and sinful creatures at that (Rom. 9:19–24). Man was created to live in a covenant relationship with God (Gen. 1:27–28; 2:16–17; Jn. 17:1–2; Rom. 8:28–31; Eph. 1:3–14). There have been two covenants that determine the state of man before God—commonly called the Covenant of Works (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:16–17) and the Covenant of Grace.

The Covenant of Redemption and Grace refers to the eternal, redemptive purpose of the triune God to save sinners. The unconditional nature of this covenant is revealed in the following terms, which stretch from eternity past to eternity future: election (Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:3–4; 1 Thess. 1:3–5; 2 Thess. 2:13). Predestination (Rom. 8:29–39; Eph. 1:5, 11). Redemption (Matt. 1:21; Mk. 10:45; Rom. 3:24–25; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:14–17; Eph. 1:6–7; Heb. 9:12), Effectual Calling (Jn. 6:37, 44; Acts 18:27; Rom. 8:28; 1 Cor. 1:24), Regeneration (Ezk. 11:19–20; 36:25–27; Jn. 3:3; Rom. 8:7–8; 2 Cor. 4:3–4; Eph. 2:4–5, 22–24; Col. 3:9–10), Conversion (Eph. 2:8–10), Adoption (Rom. 8:17–23; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5), Justification (Rom. 3:21–28; 4:1–5; 5:1–2), Sanctification (Rom. 5:12–6:23; 8:1–16; Gal. 5:16–17, 22–23; Heb. 12:14) and glorification (Rom. 8:17–23, 29–39; 1 Jn. 3:1–4).

This covenant is unconditional because it rests in the eternal decree of God and does not depend upon man's ability or faithfulness for its initiation, maintenance or conclusion. It is termed the Covenant of Redemption because it is redemptive in nature. It is termed the Covenant of Grace because in this covenant man is considered as a sinner and must be saved by grace alone. Should any human ability enter into this covenant, it would necessarily become a covenant of works (Rom. 11:5–6).

The Covenant of Grace refers to the eternal redemptive purpose of the triune God to save sinners. In order to redeem sinners, God the Son became incarnate, not merely as Savior and Redeemer, but also necessarily and pointedly as Representative Man. The Covenant of Grace was especially made with the Lord Jesus Christ—the "Second Man" (in contrast to the "First Man," Adam) and the "Last Adam" (in contrast to the "First Adam") (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21–22, 45–47). By our Lord's active obedience [his perfect life lived in conformity to the Law and its fulfillment] and passive obedience [his vicarious suffering and death, which paid the Law's penalty, removed its curse, and answers to the righteousness of God, Rom. 1:16–17; 3:24–26; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13], those whom he represents are delivered from the curse of the law (Gal. 4:4–5; 3:13), justified and reconciled to God (Acts 13:38–39; Rom. 5:1–11; Heb. 9:12), predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:5), and infallibly, fully and finally redeemed (Rom. 8:23, 29–39). Are you included in this covenant?

Quest. 67: Who are the Divine Persons involved in the Covenant of Grace, and what is their respective work?

Ans: The Divine Persons involved in the Covenant of Grace are the Father, who elects, predestinates, effectually calls, justifies and adopts the elect; the Son, who is their Mediator, Surety, Redeemer and Great High Priest; and the Holy Spirit, who applies to the elect the redemption purchased by Christ.

Gal. 4:4–6. [4]But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, [5]to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. [6]And

because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Rom. 8:33–34. [33]Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. [34]Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Gal. 4:6. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

See also: the scriptural references in Questions 64–66; Jn. 16:7–14; Rom. 8:1–17; 1 Cor. 2:9–14; 12:4–13; 2 Cor. 3:3–6, 17–18; Gal. 5:16–18, 22–23; Eph. 1:13–20; 4:30–32.

COMMENTARY

It has been traditional to hold that the Covenant of Grace was made between God the Father (Jn. 6:37, 44; 17:1–4; Rom. 8:28–32; Eph. 1:3–14) and God the Son (Jn. 14:6; 17:1–4; Rom. 3:21–26; 5:1–21; Rom. 6:1–14; 1 Cor. 15:20–22, 4–47; Eph. 1:6–7; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 10:1–18; 1 Jn. 2:1–2), who acted on behalf of the elect as their Mediator, Surety and Representative, i.e., that this covenant essentially involved two Persons of the triune Godhead. However, all three Persons of the Godhead are inherently and necessarily involved in this eternal, redemptive purpose. The Holy Spirit must necessarily be included as the Person who applies the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ to the elect in time and experience (Jn. 16:7–14; Rom. 5:5; 6:4–5; 8:1–17, 26–27; 2 Cor. 1:22; 3:17–18; Gal. 4:5–7; 5:16–18, 22–23; Eph. 1:12–14). The Holy Spirit, in other words, makes salvation and Christian experience necessary realities.

The redemptive work of election, predestination, effectual calling, adoption and justification are ascribed in particular to God the Father. See Questions 68–69, 81, 92–93. The redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ is that of Mediator, Surety, Redeemer, Savior and Great High Priest. See Questions 70–76.

The Holy Spirit is the active agent in our calling and regeneration (Ezk. 36:25–27; Jn. 3:3–8; 2 Thess. 2:13), is active in our very consciousness that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:13–16; 1 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:12–14; 1 Jn. 3:24), is the active agent in granting spiritual illumination, i.e., in opening the Scriptures to our understanding and giving us that spiritual perception that is unique to believers (1 Cor. 2:9–15; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27). He is active in our sanctification—leading us, convicting us of sin, enabling us to mortify it, influencing our thinking, enabling us to pray aright and edifying us under the public ministry of the Word (Jn. 16:13; Rom. 8:11–13, 26–27; 1 Cor. 6:11; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 2:18; 4:30–32; 5:9; 6:18; Heb. 10:29). He is active in giving spiritual strength, courage and power to believers (Eph. 1:15–20; 3:16; 6:10–20), and in giving and maintaining the believer's hope of final salvation and future glory (Rom. 5:1–5; 8:23–25; Eph. 1:13–14). Further, he is active in taking the gifts given by the ascended Christ and effectively giving them to called servants of God for evangelizing the unconverted and for edifying the churches (Acts 13:2–4; 1 Cor. 12:1–11; Eph. 4:3–16; Phil. 1:19; 1 Thess. 5:19). He works in

believers individually, and corporately in the larger context of the local church, bringing scriptural and spiritual unity and harmony among believers (1 Cor. 12:1–13; Eph. 4:3–16; 5:18–21; Phil. 2:1–4). See Questions 77, 83, 94–96.

Quest. 68: What is Divine election?

Ans: Divine election is the free, sovereign and gracious work of God whereby some have been eternally chosen to obtain salvation.

Eph. 1:3–4. [3]Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: [4]according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

Rom. 8:33. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

Rom. 11:5–6. [5]Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. [6]And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

1 Thess. 1:4–5. [4]Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. [5]For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance…

2 Thess. 2:13. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

See also: Deut. 4:37; 7:6–7; 10:14–15; Psa. 33:12; Matt. 22:14; 24:22–31; Lk. 18:7; Acts 13:48; Rom. 9:11–13, 16; 11:4–7, 28; 1 Cor. 1:27–31; Eph. 1:11; Col. 3:12–14; 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Tim. 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1–2; 2:8–9; 2 Pet. 1:4–11; Rev. 17:8, 14.

COMMENTARY

There are several types of the election of persons revealed in Scripture: national, messianic, ministerial and salvific: first, there is the Divine choice of Israel to be the chosen people of God in a national sense, although only a small remnant of that nation was truly the spiritual people of God (Cf. Deut. 4:37; 7:6–7; 10:14–15; Psa. 135:4; Isa. 41:8–9; 44:1; 45:4; Rom. 4:11–17; 9:6–9, 23–24; 11:1–6). Israel in its national election was typical of God's elect spiritually chosen under the New or Gospel Covenant.

Second, there is the election of the Lord Jesus Christ as the "Elect" of God and true "Seed of Abraham." In the choice of Abraham, God chose a nation, and in that nation, he chose an individual—the Messiah—and in that individual, he chose a true covenant people—believers (Isa. 42:1–7; Jer. 31:31–34; Luke 23:35; Gal. 3:15–16; Eph. 1:4–5; Heb. 8:8–13; 1 Pet. 2:4–9).

Third, there is also an election unto service, as revealed in the choice of Moses, the Levites, various kings, etc. (Deut. 21:5; 2 Sam. 6:21; 1 Chron. 28:5;

Psa. 78:67–68; 105:26; 106:23). This principle is retained in the New Testament with the Divine call to the gospel ministry (Acts 9:10–16; 13:2–4).

Finally, there is an eternal, personal election unto holiness, which includes the totality of salvation and derives from the eternal Covenant of Redemption and Grace, or the believer's eternal union with Christ (Rom. 8:29–31; 11:5–6; Acts 13:48; Eph. 1:4–5, 11; 1 Pet. 1:1–2; 2 Pet. 1:10). See Questions 66 and 69.

There are two possible bases or foundations for Divine election: foreseen faith based on a bare foreknowledge [prescience], or a covenant love grounded in the Divine prerogative and expressed in free and sovereign grace. The Scriptures reveal that the ultimate cause of Divine election rests in the depths of Divine love and prerogative. God is never moved or motivated externally to himself. He is ever motivated from within his own self–consistency. Should he be mutable due to external causes, he would cease to be God, and be relative to his creation and subject to some nebulous, external absolute force such as chance or some impersonal fatalistic principle. The Scriptures reveal that the Divine choice of sinners to salvation rests in God alone. This is for the assurance and encouragement of the believer in his present experience—that he might be assured of the certain and infallible nature of his salvation, especially in the context of present trials and opposition (Deut. 4:37; 7:6–7; 10:14–15; Eph. 1:4–5; Rom. 8:28–39; 9:13–14; 11:33–36).

What of foreknowledge? Divine election based on foreseen faith would be election by mere foreknowledge [prescience]. The biblical usage must determine the exact significance of the term. What is the biblical teaching concerning the foreknowledge of God? Foreknowledge is not synonymous with omniscience. It is concerned, not with contingency, but with certainty (Acts 2:23; 15:18; Rom. 8:29–30), and thus implies a knowledge of what has been rendered certain. Acts 2:23 would make foreknowledge dependent upon God's "determinate counsel" by the grammatical construction which combines both together as one thought with "foreknowledge" referring to and enforcing the previous term. Foreknowledge is related to the Old Testament term "to know," implying an intimate knowledge of and relation to its object (Cf. Gen. 4:1; Amos 3:2). The passages in the New Testament (Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:2) all speak of *persons* who are foreknown, implying much more than mere prescience or omniscience—a relationship that is absolutely certain, personal and intimate. The only example of *things* being foreknown is clearly based on Divine determination (Acts 15:18).

Because Divine election or foreordination to eternal life is grounded in the immutable character of God, it is infallible. Were it based upon foreseen faith, mere prescience, or human ability, it would remain fallible and mutable. Because of its infallible and immutable character, Divine election or foreordination to eternal life is the source of the greatest comfort, encouragement and perseverance to the believer. This is exactly the way in which and the reason why this truth is revealed in Scripture! Note especially the great and glorious statement of the Apostle in Romans 8:28–39. Under inspiration, he puts this truth in the context of the present promise (v. 28), the

eternal redemptive purpose (v. 29–34), the very worst that believers can experience (v. 35–36), the redemptive, covenant love of the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 37) and the infallibility of the Covenant of Grace (v. 38–39).

God has ordained the preaching of the gospel as the means to bring the elect to faith in Christ in time and experience (Rom. 10:14–15, 17; 1 Thess. 1:4–10; 2:13). He has ordained the means as well as the end. To glory in the end without fulfilling the means would be inconsistent and sinful by disobedience. See Questions 139–140. Can you say that you are included in this number by Divine grace?

Quest. 69: What is Divine predestination in the context of redemption?

Ans: Divine predestination in the context of redemption is the infallible determination to conform the elect to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ and guarantee their final salvation.

Rom. 8:28–31. [28]And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. [29]For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. [30]Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. [31]What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Eph. 1:5–6, 11–12. [5]Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, [6]to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved….[11]In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: [12]that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

Acts 13:48. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

1 Thess. 5:9. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Tim. 1:8–9. [8]…God…[9]Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

See also: Neh. 9:6; Dan. 4:17, 24, 35; Isa. 46:9–10; Acts 13:48; 15:18; Rom. 9:6–24; 11:33–36; 2 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 4:11.

COMMENTARY

Divine predestination, as it pertains to one's personal salvation, is a truth filled with glorious blessing, unfathomable love and great encouragement. Predestination is the fountain of all grace, giving to free and sovereign grace its glorious nature and distinct character, as it puts salvation in the loving,

purposeful, omnipotent hands of a sovereign God (Rom. 11:5–6; Eph. 1:3–11; 2:1–10). It is the expression of God's sovereign, eternal, immutable love to his own and is at the very foundation of the believer's confidence, courage, zeal and assurance of salvation (Deut. 7:6–8; Rom. 8:28–39; Eph. 1:13–14; 1 Pet. 1:3–5, 18–20; 1 Jn. 4:9–10, 19). What hope or certainty would attend salvation if left ultimately at the mutable, fallible disposal of sinful men? It is the biblical source of all boldness, encouragement and comfort in trial. All is ultimately in the hands of our loving, heavenly Father, who has ordained all things for our good. (Rom. 8:28–39; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gal. 6:7–9; Eph. 2:8–10; Phil. 1:29). God grants sufficient grace for what he has purposed. Predestination, rightly understood, is a proper biblical incentive to holiness and responsible action. No effort is futile, no witness goes unnoticed or unblessed and no faithful service goes unrewarded (1 Cor. 15:58; Eph. 1:4; 2:8–10; Phil. 1:29; 2:12–13; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:1–2; 1 Jn. 2:28–3:3).

Whatever happens to believers in this life is in the context of God's glorious and loving purpose—to conform us to the image of his Son (Rom. 8:28–31; Eph. 2:8–10; Phil. 2:12–16; 2 Cor. 3:17–18). Whatever we think, do or say either brings us closer to this goal or necessarily puts us in the way of Divine correction, chastening and discipline (Heb. 12:4–8). How much time has been lost, energy expended, and trials endured needlessly simply because some have ignorantly thought that salvation was conversion—simply an event, an experience, the work of a moment—or that God would overlook sin in the lives of his own or that the Christian life was one of options. The truth of God's purpose should govern our thinking, transform our lives, sanctify our motives, mitigate our suffering, determine every human relationship, and quicken our feeble efforts to live obediently and faithfully as Christians—as those who are infallibly being conformed to the image of Christ. Does your religious experience manifest God's loving purpose of grace?

Quest. 70: Who is the Redeemer of God's elect?

Ans: The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was and continues to be both God and man, in two distinct natures and one Person forever.

1 Timothy 2:5. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

Acts 4:12. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

1 Tim. 3:16. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

See also: Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:2; Matt. 1:18–23; Lk. 1:30–35; Jn. 1:14, 18, 29; 3:16–18; 17:1–5; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Gal. 3:13; 4:4–5; Eph. 1:3–

7; Col. 1:12–17; 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:1–4, 10; 2:9–15; 4:14–16; 7:11–28; 1 Jn. 2:1–2; Jude 4.

COMMENTARY

The word "only" is extremely important in the answer to this question. It stresses that there is redemption in and through the Lord Jesus Christ—and only in and through him. This little word implies that the Lord Jesus Christ is unique, the very Son of God in the flesh, thus both Divine and human, and that he has wrought the necessary and complete redemption for his people. It also implies that there is no salvation or redemption outside of or apart from him (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:24–26; Heb. 9:12; 10:18). This term further implies that biblical Christianity is the only true religion and all other religions and "saviors" are false and devoid of hope.

The full name and titles of our Lord and Redeemer are the "Lord Jesus Christ," and ought to be used reverently and intelligently. "Lord" is his Divine title, who he is as to his Deity and Eternal Sonship, and his position as King, Lord and Master over all creation, head over his church and Lord over every true believer. The Lordship of Jesus Christ has been established by God himself at our Lord's resurrection and ascension into heaven. It is therefore not a matter for denial or debate (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36; Rom. 1:3–4; 9:5; 10:9; 2 Cor. 4:5; Eph. 1:17–23; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 1:12–17; Rev. 19:16). "Jesus" is his human name, and emphasizes both his human nature, and that he alone is our Savior (Matt. 1:21). "Christ," or "Messiah" means "The Anointed One," and is a title that refers to his fulfilling Old Testament prophecy as the promised One filled with the Holy Spirit, the anointed Servant of Yahweh, who came to reveal God, fulfill his will and redeem his people (Matt. 3:16; Lk. 4:32–37; Jn. 3:34; Acts 1:22; 10:38).

The Eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ refers to his eternally being the Son in relationship to both the Father and the Spirit. See Question 25. Thus, biblical references to his being "begotten" by the Father refer, not to his incarnation, but to his accession to the throne of his glory at the right hand of God the Father as Lord (Cf. Psa. 2; Acts 1:9–10; 2:30–33; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 1). The term "only begotten" also signifies the uniqueness and endearing relation between the Father and the Son (Gen. 22:2; Heb. 11:17–19; Jn. 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 Jn. 4:9).

The eternal Son of God "became man," i.e., became incarnate. The pre–existent Son of God took to himself a true and complete human nature, soul and body. The eternal Son of God entered into the realm of time. This was accomplished by the Holy Spirit through the miracle of the Virgin Birth (Isa. 7:14; Lk. 1:26–35; Jn. 1:1–3, 14; Rom. 8:2–4). The Incarnation neither altered nor diluted his Deity, but his human nature and body rose to a glorified state at his resurrection, and he forever remains the God–Man, exalted at the Father's right hand as the believer's present Great High Priest and the coming Judge of all men (Psa. 2:6–12; 96:13; Jn. 5:22; Rom. 1:3–4; 1 Cor. 15:20–28; Phil. 2:9–11; 3:20–21; 2 Thess. 1:6–10; 2 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 1:1–4; Rev. 20:11–15). The Incarnation remains the greatest and most profound mystery, not only in

redemptive history, but in the history of the universe. Although many stumble at the Virgin Birth, the miracles and the resurrection of our Lord, these are entirely credible—indeed, they are necessary—once we grant his incarnation (Jn. 20:27–29; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16).

Jesus Christ is the revelation of the Father [Jn. 1:18, "declared," lit: *exegeted*, i.e., a revelation and manifestation or expression of the original]. In the Person and work of our Lord during his earthly life and ministry and through his humanity we can see the character of the Father manifest in love, kindness and compassion to and among men (Matt. 9:36–38; 11:28–30; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; 23:37; Lk. 13:34; Jn. 3:16–18; 4:23; 5:36; 10:25, 32, 37; 14:9–10). Every sanctified human emotion and trait was found in him and raised to its highest expression: righteousness, justice, holiness (Matt. 23:13–39); suffering and righteous zeal (Heb. 4:14–16; 5:1–10; Jn. 2:13–17). Whatever he said was absolute truth; whatever he did, he did sincerely and was motivated from within his sinless soul, heart and mind (Jn. 8:46; 17:1–5).

The doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation are closely related. The doctrine of the Trinity declares that Jesus the man was and is truly Divine or God in the flesh; the Incarnation declares that the Divine Jesus was and remains truly human (1 Tim. 3:16; Phil. 2:9–11). Do you have this saving relationship to the Lord Jesus?

Quest. 71: How did the Lord Jesus Christ become the Redeemer of God's elect?

Ans: The Lord Jesus Christ became the Redeemer of God's elect through his humiliation and exaltation as the God–Man.

Gal. 4:4–5. 4But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Jn. 1:14, 18. 14And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth….18No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

1 Tim. 3:16. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

See also: Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Matt. 1:22; Jn. 1:14, 18; Acts 1:8–11; 2:22–36; 1 Cor. 15:1–4, 20–28, 45–47, 51–58; 2 Cor. 5:14–17; Phil. 2:5–11; 1 Tim. 3:16.

COMMENTARY

Theologically, it is customary to divide the existence of our Lord into three distinct states: first, his pre–existent state of glory and communion which he had with the Father before his incarnation (Jn. 1:1–3; 17:1–5; Phil. 2:5–6);

second, his state of humiliation, which commenced with his incarnation and ended with his death and burial (Gal. 4:4–5; Phil. 2:7–8; Heb. 2:9ff); and third, his state of exaltation or glory as the resurrected and ascended God–Man, which began at his resurrection and ascension into heaven and will last forever (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:31–33, 36; Rom. 1:3–4; Phil. 2:9–11; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1–3; Rev. 1:10–18).

It is necessary to understand the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ in a redemptive context, as this gives the true and complete biblical context for the accomplishment of redemption or the "finished work" of Christ. The following discussion is mainly a summary of the foregoing questions and answers. One's assurance of faith largely rests on a biblical grasp of the eternal redemptive purpose of God and the truth of the believer's union with Christ.

As the God–Man, our Lord grew from an infant into manhood under the discipline of his earthly parents (Lk. 2:49–52). As the God–Man he was subject to all sinless emotions (Isa. 53:2–4; Matt. 26:36–38; Jn. 11:35; Heb. 5:7–9) and infirmities, such as temptation, hunger, fatigue, and the necessity of rest and sleep (Matt. 4:2; 8:23–25; Jn. 4:6; Heb. 2:18; 4:14–16). As the God–Man he lived under the Law, and kept God's Law perfectly and vicariously for his own people (Gal. 4:4–5). It is vital to understand that the active obedience or Law–keeping of Christ is as important as his passive obedience. Through his active obedience he fully kept and fulfilled the absolutely perfect righteous demands of the Law of God.

The passive obedience of Christ, commonly called and epitomized in his "passion," refers to all his earthly suffering and finally, to his death. This began with his birth, circumcision and continued to the illegal and mock trials, the cruel scourging and torture, and then his public crucifixion, death and burial. The true Divine and redemptive significance is that God, through the unwitting, but willing hands of wicked men, gave up his Son unto death to answer the claims of Divine justice [to completely pay the penalty due the Law of God], to die for his elect, and to thus provide a perfect righteousness to be imputed to [reckoned to the account of] those who believe on him to salvation (Isa. 53:1–12; Mk. 10:45; Jn. 3:16; Acts 2:23; 16:31; 20:28; Rom. 1:16–17; 3:19–26; 5:8–11, 18–21; 1 Cor. 2:6–8; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 1:3–4; 3:13; Eph. 1:5–7; Col. 1:14; 2:10–15; 1 Pet. 1:18–20; 2:24; 3:18). It is of the utmost importance to biblically comprehend that both the active and passive obedience of Christ are imputed to his redeemed people for their justification. Only in this context can we speak of the "finished work" or the "satisfaction" of Christ. See Question 92.

The glorious state of exaltation began with our Lord's resurrection from the dead with the revivification and glorification of his body (Matt. 28:1–10; Jn. 20:19–20, 26–29) and his ascension into heaven to the Father's right hand on the throne of his glory (Acts 1:9–11; 2:30–33, 36; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 1:13–17; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1–3). He now intercedes as the believer's Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14–16; 5:1–10:18; 1 Jn. 2:1), and will return in glory and power to judge the world and take his own people to himself (1 Thess. 4:13–18; 2 Thess. 1:7–10; Titus 2:13; Jude 14–15). You will either bow now in faith and

repentance or on the Day of Judgment in silent condemnation (Rom. 3:19–20; Phil. 2:9–11; Rev. 20:11–15).

Quest. 72: What offices does the Lord Jesus Christ execute as our Redeemer?

Ans: The Lord Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer, executes the offices of Prophet, Priest and King, both in his state of humiliation and exaltation.

Acts 3:22. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

Heb. 5: 6. Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Psa. 2:6. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

Acts 2:36. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

See also: Deut. 18:18–19; Isa. 9:6–7; Matt. 4:23; 21:5; 28:18–20; Lk. 4:18, 21; Jn. 1:9; 17:1–26; Acts 17:5–7; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:12–13; 2:3; Heb. 2:5–18; 4:14–16; 5:5–10; 7:11–25; 8:1; 9:11–14, 24–28; 10:1–18; Rev. 19:11–16.

COMMENTARY

What is meant by "executes"? This term means to fulfill the duties of a given office. What is meant by "office"? It refers to a designated position of duty or service done with reference to others. Our Lord as Redeemer fulfills both the requirements and the duties of Prophet, Priest and King with regard to creation, humanity, biblical prophecy, his church and his people. He is king over all creation, Lord over his church and his people, and Great High Priest, interceding for those he has redeemed.

When a sinner believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, he must believe in him as he is—as God in his Word has revealed him—not as someone wants, feels or thinks him to be, i.e., Jesus Christ as prophet, priest and king, not the "Jesus" of someone's imagination. Thus, when the believing, repentant sinner savingly closes with Christ in faith, he does so with Jesus Christ as king or Lord of his life. He comes under the reign of King Jesus (the Lordship of Christ, Acts 2:36). He also comes to Jesus Christ as prophet. He is delivered from his sinful ignorance, taught by the Word and Spirit of Christ and is brought into submission to the revealed will of God (Acts 20:32; Heb. 8:1–13; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27). Finally, he is delivered from the guilt, penalty and polluting power of his sin through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for him as the one and only Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14–16; 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1). In short, the sinner is saved by the effectual grace of God—redeemed and converted only in and through the Lord Jesus Christ as Prophet (Acts. 3:22), Priest (Heb. 9:12) and King (Matt. 28:18).

Quest. 73: How does the Lord Jesus Christ execute the office of a prophet?

Ans: The Lord Jesus Christ executes the office of a prophet in revealing to us, by his Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation and our lives.

Acts 3:22. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

Jn. 1:18. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him*.

Jn. 14:26. But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

See also: Deut. 18:18–19; Isa. 9:6; Matt. 11:25–27; Lk. 7:16; 10:16; 24:45; Jn. 1:1–4; 6:45; 14:6; 15:15; 20:31; Acts 20:32; Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 2:9–12; 2 Cor. 4:3–7; Eph. 2:21; 4:11–13; 5:8; Col. 3:9–10, 16; 1 Thess. 4:7; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; Heb. 1:1–3; 12:14; Jas. 1:5–8; 1 Pet. 1:10–12; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27.

COMMENTARY

The biblical idea of "prophet" is one who declares the Word or will of God as well as foretelling it. The prophets were God's preachers or spokesmen. The basic names for prophets in the Old Testament designated persons who were recipients of Divine truth through visions, dreams, impulses, trances or a direct and audible word from God. The New Testament follows suit. Such Divine communications were then declared to men on God's behalf through the unction of the Holy Spirit (1 Kgs. 18:1; 22:5–28; Ezk. 1:3; Hab. 1:1; Heb. 1:1–3). In the New Testament, there were some who had a temporary and transitional revelatory or prophetic gift until the completion of the scriptural canon and the establishment or maturity of Christianity (Acts 11:27–28; 13:1–2; 20:22–23; 21:4, 10–14; 1 Cor. 12:10; 13:8–10).

The Lord Jesus Christ is primarily both the revelation and representation of God to men as the eternal Son of God incarnate (Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16). He was and is the one and only "exegesis" of God (Jn. 1:18). See Question 71. The Old Testament prophetic office found its fulfillment in our Lord, i.e., all the prophets were types of the one great Antitype (Deut. 18:18; Acts 3:22; Eph. 2:21). During his earthly life and ministry our Lord was the revealer and teacher of God and Divine truth to men (Matt. 11:25–27; Lk. 7:16; Jn. 1:14, 17; 3:2). When he taught, he did so with a unique and unmistakable authority because he was expounding his own Word (Matt. 7:28–29).

The Word of God is the Word of Christ, and the Spirit of God is the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 10:14, 17; Col. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:10–12). These are neither mutually exclusive nor do they contradict one another. The Word is insufficient by itself and often remains ineffectual unless the Spirit empowers it (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 2:14–17; 4:3–4; Eph. 2:1–5). The Spirit always works with

the Word and never apart from the Word (1 Cor. 2:9–16; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27). To emphasize the Word apart from the Spirit tends toward a bare, cold intellectualism; to emphasize the Spirit apart from the Word tends toward irrationalism [emotionalism] and mysticism.

To say that our Lord Jesus Christ as Prophet reveals the will of God for our salvation and our lives, is simply to say that his Word is to be our sole rule of both faith [what we are to believe] and practice [how we are to live]. The Scriptures reveal the Lord Jesus Christ as the way, the truth and the life—the only way to God (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). Salvation is through faith in him alone (Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:21–31; 10:9–10, 17; Eph. 2:8–9). Believers are to live holy, godly lives by alignment to his Word (Jn. 17:17; Acts 20:32; Rom. 6:17–18; 12:1–2; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:15–16). Is the Lord Jesus your prophet?

Quest. 74: How does the Lord Jesus Christ execute the office of a priest?

Ans: The Lord Jesus Christ executes the office of a priest in his once offering up himself a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice, in reconciling us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.

Heb. 2:17. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Heb. 4:14–16. [14]Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. [15]For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin. [16]Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Heb. 7:25. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Heb. 9:28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many...

1 Jn. 2:1. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

See also: Ex. 40:1–35; Lev. 16:1–34; Jn. 17:1–26; Rom. 3:24–26; 8:34; Eph. 13:17; Col. 1:21–22; 2:10–15; Heb. 4:14–5:10; 7:1–10:18, 21–22; 1 Pet. 1:18–20; 2:24.

COMMENTARY

Why is a priesthood necessary? Fallen, sinful man cannot stand before a holy, just and righteous God without dealing with the reality of sin. His sin separates him forever from God as an insurmountable spiritual and moral barrier. God established the principle of blood–sacrifice to deal with sin (Gen.

3:21; Heb. 9:22). God demands that there must be a suitable person to stand as a mediator and representative for the sinner, necessarily function through a sacrificial principle of blood atonement [appeasement, propitiation], and intercede for him. This person is a priest.

The great spiritual ministries of the Old Testament were the offices of priest and prophet. The prophets were God's spokesmen. They represented God to the people. The rise and ministry of a prophet signaled a time of spiritual declension. God would raise up [call, gift and commission] a spokesman to declare his truth to the people (Jer. 1:1–10; Ezk. 1:1–3). The priests, however, represented the people before God. They officiated through the call of God, through a sacrificial system and through intercession (Numb. 16:44–48). The only suitable persons were those whom God ordained (Ex. 28:1–4; 40:12–13). The only suitable sacrifice was the one God ordained (Lev. 10:1–3). The only effectual intercession was that which God ordained (Ex. 28:30). The priesthood found its fulfillment and culmination in the High Priestly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Matt. 27:50–51; Mk. 15:37–38; Lk. 23:45–46; Jn. 19:30; Heb. 2:10–18; 5:1–10; 7:1–28; 1 Jn. 2:1).

The Lord Jesus was both priest and sacrifice. He offered up to the Father his own life–blood (Heb. 9:11–14, 26; 10:10). By virtue of his perfect Person and the infinite value of his sacrifice, he made a complete and full atonement [reconciliation] for the sins of every believer. He "obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12). Because he, once resurrected and ascended to the Father's right hand, lives forever, his priesthood is perpetual and will have no end (Heb. 1:1–3; 5:10–10:10). He is the one and only mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5). Such is the completeness of his high priestly work and his identification with believers, that we have the utmost confidence and assurance to draw near to God through him. We have continual access in this state of grace through faith, and find God's throne to be a throne of grace to which we can freely come in the time of need (Rom. 5:1–2; Heb. 4:14–16).

The Scripture further declares that believers have been made "kings and priests unto God" by the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:13–22; Rev. 1:6; 20:6). This truth is known as "the priesthood of the believer," i.e., no Christian needs an earthly priest, but by faith can go directly to God as his spiritual Father through the mediation and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the glorious reality of our Lord's finished redemptive work and his effectual High Priestly ministry. Is the Lord Jesus Christ your Great High Priest?

Quest. 75: How does the Lord Jesus Christ execute the office of a king?

Ans: The Lord Jesus Christ executes the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

Acts 2:36. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Matt. 28:18. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

1 Cor. 15:25. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

2 Cor. 4:5. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

See also: Psa. 2:6–9; 8:3–8; 24:8; 110:3; Isa. 9:6–7; 32:1–2; 33:22; Jer. 23:5–6; Dan. 2:44; 7:13–14; Mic. 5:2; Zech. 9:9; Matt. 2:2–6; 4:17; 16:19; 21:4–5; 27:37; Lk. 1:32–33, 69–71; 17:20–21; 19:38; Jn. 1:49; 5:22, 26–27; 18:36; 19:19; Acts 2:22–36; 4:25; 15:14–16; 17:5–7; 1 Cor. 15:25–26; Eph. 1:22; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 1:13, 18; Heb. 1:8–13; Rev. 1:5; 5:5–14; 19:16.

COMMENTARY

It is the clear teaching of Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ is a king, and that, as a king, he has a kingdom over which he reigns. A study of Scripture, both of Old Testament prophecies and promises and New Testament fulfillment, leads to the conclusion that the Lord Jesus Christ is king in a two–fold sense: first, as the eternal Son of God, the Second Person of the triune Godhead, and so very God, he rules over an absolute and universal kingdom (Jn. 17:1–5; Heb. 1:1–3). As Deity, Creator and sovereign Lord over all creation he rules over all created reality—the universe, the earth, angels, men and all animal and plant life (Gen. 1:1–3; Jn. 1:1–3; Heb. 1:8–12; Col. 1:15–17). This kingdom is his by right of Deity, creation and an absolute sovereignty that is intrinsic, underived and inalienable. Second, as the God–Man, the "Second Man," the "Last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:21–26, 45–47), the resurrected and ascended Lord of glory, the head of the church, the Lord of every believer, and the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:11–16), he rules over a mediatorial and universal kingdom of power, grace and glory (Jer. 23:5–6; Dan. 2:44; 7:13–14; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22–23; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 1:12–17; Heb. 1:1–14). This kingdom is his by the derived right of his suffering, death, resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God as the only Mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5), Representative Man, the head of redeemed humanity (Acts 2:22–36; 1 Cor. 15:20–28; Phil. 2:5–11).

A central aspect of our Lord's mediatorial kingdom is his headship over his church (Eph. 1:22–23). He reigns as functional head of his church externally through his providence and his appointed officers, protecting his people and subduing his enemies. He reigns internally by his Spirit and his Word. Through this means he builds his church through effectually calling, regenerating and converting sinners through the proclamation of the gospel. These are sanctified and disciplined through the ministry of the Word (Eph. 4:11–16).

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only the head of his church in an ideal and corporate sense, but he is Lord or King over the believer in an individual sense. At his resurrection and ascension, Jesus Christ was constituted as Lord (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9; 2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:9–11). He is preached as Lord (2 Cor. 4:5). The believing sinner savingly closes with Jesus Christ as Lord of his life (Rom.

10:9–10). This means that every true believer is to submit to his Word, live in obedience to his Law–Word, and recognize his kingly claims [Lordship] in every sphere of life.

As the absolute sovereign Lord and King, he will sit in final judgment over the destinies of men at the final judgment (Jn. 5:22; Matt. 28:18; Rev. 20:11–15). Is he your Lord and King?

Quest. 76: How are we made partakers of the redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ?

Ans: We are made partakers of the redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit who applies this redemption effectually to us.

Jn. 1:12–13. 12But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jn. 3:3, 5–6, 8. 3Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God….5Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit….8The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

Jn. 6:37, 44. 37All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out….44No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

2 Thess. 2:13–14. 13But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Titus 3:5–6. 5Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; 6which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

See also: Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Jn. 1:12–13; 3:3–8; Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:9–12; 5:5; 8:1–16; 29–30; 1 Cor. 3:6–7; 6:11, 20; Eph. 1:3–14; 2:1–5; Heb. 8:1–13; 1 Thess. 1:4–6; 1 Pet. 1:1–2.

COMMENTARY

This question and answer mark the transition from the redemption purchased by our Lord to the application of it by the Holy Spirit. As this is the transitional question from the accomplishment of redemption to redemption in its application, there are three issues for consideration: the relationship between

the accomplishment and the application of redemption, the Trinity and salvation, and an introduction to the biblical doctrine of grace.

The Lord Jesus Christ did not suffer and die merely to make men savable or to provide an ambiguous [indefinite], general atonement. His active obedience fulfilled the demands of the Moral Law. His passive obedience was a satisfaction of Divine justice. He accomplished a full and complete redemption for his elect people, according to the Divine purpose (Isa. 53:10–11; Lk. 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 9:12). His redemptive work [active and passive obedience] is thus a finished work with infinite value. This accomplished redemption is efficaciously applied in time and experience to each of God's elect by the Holy Spirit, according to the eternal, infallible redemptive purpose. The ordained means for this application is the preaching of the gospel. See Questions 135, 138–139. The satisfaction of Christ forms the covenantal and redemptive basis for the believer's conversion and subsequent Christian experience.

The doctrine of the Trinity is basic to an understanding of the doctrine of salvation. God the Father gave an elect people to his Son (Jn. 17:2–4; Rom. 8: 29–39; Eph. 1:3–7). He also gave his Son to be the only Redeemer for his elect people. His Son accomplished a full and final redemption for this elect people (Heb. 7:28; 9:12; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). The Holy Spirit effectually applies this redemption to the elect in time and experience (Jn. 3:3, 5–6, 8; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13). Any system which claims to be "Christian" may be judged according to its faithfulness or unfaithfulness to this revealed truth.

The truth that the Holy Spirit applies the redemption of Christ effectually to sinners brings us to the study of the biblical nature of Divine grace. An introduction to the nature of Divine grace has already been given in detail. See Questions 20, 29, 39, 66 and 78. It remains simply to define Divine grace in principle, and to review and summarize its nature. Divine grace in principle is unmerited [wholly undeserved] favor in the stead of [in the place of] merited [wholly deserved] wrath. This means that there is absolutely no good seen or foreseen in either sinful mankind as a whole or in any sinner individually. Even saving faith itself is the gift of God sovereignly bestowed. If saving faith and repentance were native to man by nature, then they would become works, as would any human ability (Acts 11:18; 18:27; Rom. 3:9–12, 23–24; 9:11–17; 11:5–6; Eph. 2:1–10).

Saving grace is much more than a mere passive or neutral principle. It is a principle of operation which is wholly undeserved (Rom. 11:5–6; Eph. 2:9). Any distinction within the sinner which would cause God's grace to be put forth would destroy the very principle of grace. It is also a personification, i.e., all grace is mediated through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:16; 1 Tim. 2:5). He is the very personification of Divine grace. Every aspect of salvation and Christian experience exists by virtue of the redemption purchased by Christ and the believer's subsequent union with him. It is further a prerogative, i.e., God grants this grace to whom he wills, according to his eternal, infallible redemptive purpose (Eph. 1:3–11; 2:10; Acts 11:18). Finally,

it is a power put forth by and from God to both save the sinner (Jn. 1:12–13; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 2:8–10; Acts 11:18; 18:27) and enable the believer to live godly in Christ Jesus (Rom. 5:21; 6:14; 1 Cor. 15:10; Eph. 1:15–20; Phil. 1:29). Do you know the Spirit's presence and power?

Quest. 77: How does the Holy Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?

Ans: The Holy Spirit applies the redemption purchased by Christ by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

Jn. 6:37, 44. 37All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out….44No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Rom. 8:30. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Gal. 2:20. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Eph. 2:5, 8–10. 5Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)…. 8For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: 9it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. 10For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

2 Thess. 2:13. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Tim. 1:8–9. 8…God…9Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

See also: Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Jn. 1:12–13; 3:3–5, 8; 6:37, 44, 63; 14:20; Acts 18:27; 26:18; Rom. 5:10, 17; 6:1–14; 8:2, 9–11, 29–30; 1 Cor. 1:9, 22–24, 26–31; 6:17; 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:14–17; 13:5; Gal. 2:20; 3:27; 6:14; Eph. 1:3–14; 2:4–7; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:12–13, 26–27; 2:9–13; 3:1–3; 1 Thess. 1:3–5; 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:11–12; 1 Pet. 5:10, 14; 1 Jn. 3:24.

COMMENTARY

The truth of the believer's calling to salvation is considered in Question 81, "What is effectual calling?" At this point we need to consider the scriptural realities of the believer's union with Christ, which is one of the most profound and glorious truths in all scriptural teaching. The Scriptures clearly teach that

every true Christian without exception has been brought into spiritual union with Christ, and that this vital relationship finds its foundation in the eternal, redemptive purpose of God (Eph. 1:3–11), is analogically understood by the union or identification of all humanity in Adam (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:22), finds its reality in the incarnation and redemptive work [death and resurrection] of Christ (Rom. 5:10, 18–21; 6:1–10; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1–3), finds expression in biblical Christian experience (Rom. 6:1–14; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1–5ff) and will be fully realized in future glory (Eph. 2:6–7). This truth forms the eternal and objective basis for the believer's experience, confidence and hope. The believer's union with Christ is thus the biblical reality that forms "the central truth of all theology and all religion." Herein is the only scriptural basis for a true, biblical assurance of salvation.

The New Testament teaching concerning the believer's union with Christ consists of a two–fold approach: doctrinal statements which are explicit, and analogies which are illustrative:

The doctrinal statements concerning the believer's spiritual and indissoluble union with Christ may be arranged into four categories: first, statements describing the believer's position as "in Christ" or "into Christ" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:11; 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 15:22; Eph. 1:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11; 2:6–7, 10; 1 Pet. 5:14). Second, statements declaring that believers are identified "with Christ," especially with reference to his death, resurrection and ascension into heaven (Rom. 6:4, 6, 8; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:4–7; Col. 2:10–15; 3:1–3; 2 Tim. 2:11–12). Third, statements that describe the believer's relationship or standing before God "by" or "through" Christ (Rom. 5:1–2, 21; 6:8; Gal. 6:14). Finally, statements revealing that Christ is "in" the believer (Jn. 14:20, 23; Rom. 8:9–10; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27).

There are several scriptural analogies that are used to illustrate this vital union of the believer with Christ: first, the vine and the branches (Jn. 15:1–7). The branch must be in vital living union with the vine both to be alive and to produce fruit. Second, the husband and the wife, or the marriage relationship (Rom. 7:1–4; Eph. 5:23–33). The two become "one flesh" before God, i.e., a single entity. Third, the body and its members or parts (1 Cor. 6:15, 19; 12:13; Eph. 1:22–23; 4:11–16). Although each member possesses certain distinctions, each is an organic or vital member of a larger whole. Fourth, the building and its foundation (Eph. 2:20–22; Col. 2:6–7; 1 Pet. 2:4–5). Fifth, the natural identification of all men with Adam, which finds its spiritual counterpart or antitype in the believer's union with Christ (Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45–47). Sixth, the rite of scriptural baptism, which is for believers and by immersion, thus symbolizing the believer's identification or union with Christ. Indeed, the figure of "baptism" [identification] is used for the spiritual reality (Rom. 6:3–5; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12).

We ought to be familiar with the negative and positive aspects of our union with Christ. Negatively, union with Christ is not: a mere *natural* union—the rationalistic or pantheistic error. This supposes that union with Christ is merely part of the immanence of God as Creator in relation to his creation and so God

dwells in every individual. It is not merely a *moral* union—the Socinian and Arminian error—a union of mere love and sympathy. It is not a union of *essence*—the mystical error. Some medieval mystics and modern cults teach that believers partake of the Divine essence and become part of God. It is not a *sacramental* union—the sacramentarian error, which holds that one physically partakes of Christ through the sacraments.

Positively, what union with Christ is: It is an *organic* union. Believers become members of Christ as members of an organism, albeit this organism is spiritual. This spiritual union is to find expression in the local assembly (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:11–16; Phil. 1:27). It is a *vital* union. The life of Christ becomes the dominating and energizing principle within the believer through the Holy Spirit (Gal. 2:20; Rom. 5:10; 6:11–14; 8:5–14; 2 Cor. 13:5). It is a *spiritual* union. Not only is this union spiritual in nature, it is mediated and sustained by the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 8:9–16; Eph. 3:16–19). It is a *personal* union. Every believer is personally or individually united to Christ directly as to his spiritual life (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20). It is a *legal* or *federal* union. As the believer was once identified or in union with Adam, so he is now in union with Christ (Rom. 5:12–21; Gal. 2:20; 6:14). All the legal or covenant obligations of the believer rest on or are met in Christ, and all the legal or covenant merits of the Lord Jesus accrue to the believer. It is this union with Christ which underlies the believer's justification by faith and the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

It is, further, a *reciprocal* union. This takes into account both the objective and subjective aspects. The initial action is on the part of Christ, to whom the believer in faith reacts, interacts, or reciprocates. This is not only union, but necessarily communion with the triune Godhead through Christ (Jn. 14:6, 9, 16–17, 20; Rom. 8:9–16; Eph. 3:16–19). It is a *transforming* union. Believers are changed into the image of Christ according to his human nature. This began at regeneration, when the image of God was restored in principle in righteousness, holiness of the truth and knowledge (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 1:28–29; 3:9–10) and continues throughout the Christian experience as believers are "conformed to the image of his Son" in maturity, sufferings, etc. by the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:6, 14; 8:9–10, 14–17, 29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Eph. 2:10).

It is, finally, an *inscrutable* and *indissoluble* union: By *inscrutable*, old Divines meant the "mystical union" between Christ and his own, i.e., this union is mysterious in the sense of being incomprehensible and incapable of intelligent comprehension in our finite state. It is also an *indissoluble* union. This relation, identification or union between Christ and the believer can never be dissolved. Note that, in biblical teaching, justification by faith has an immediate relation to assurance of faith (e.g., Rom. 5:1–3). The believer is in union with Christ and even now is made to sit together with him in heavenly places (Eph. 2:4–7)! All and every spiritual blessing is bound up in our Lord, inseparable and indissoluble. This lies at the very heart of the believer's objective assurance of salvation.

This identification with, position in, or vital union with Christ, must be considered from both its objective and subjective aspects. Objectively, union with Christ is the very center, or heart and soul of the application of redemption. Believers have been eternally identified with or in union with Christ in the eternal Covenant of Redemption and Grace, beginning in election, continuing through predestination, calling, regeneration, conversion [faith and repentance], justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification (Eph. 1:3–7; Rom. 8:29–30). This is the foundation or source of all assurance, confidence and certainty for the believer.

Subjectively, the Scripture teaches a vital relationship between the objective and subjective aspects of the believer's union with Christ. The Bible does not separate justification from sanctification, but clearly reveals that everyone who is justified must likewise be sanctified. Imputed righteousness is never separated from imparted righteousness. Further, everyone so justified and sanctified will inevitably be glorified.

This is the very argument of the Apostle in Rom. 3:21–8:39. After establishing the utter condemnation of sinners from various approaches (Rom. 1:18–3:20), he doctrinally and historically demonstrates the reality of justification by faith (Rom. 3:21–4:25). Then he shows that such a free justification gives the utmost assurance: it gives unlimited access to God, cannot be shaken by the rigors of Christian experience, is brought home to the heart by the Spirit–engendered love of God, can be reasoned from God's love through the giving of Christ (Rom. 5:1–11) and finds its source in our union with him (Rom. 5:12–21). From our union with Christ, he explores sanctification, and warns against antinomianism (Rom. 6:1–23), legalism and presumption (Rom. 7:1–8:16), then demonstrates that those who have been justified (3:21–5:21) and are being sanctified (6:1–8:16), must infallibly be glorified (Rom. 8:17–39). At the very center of these glorious truths is our union with Christ as the pivotal reality. Do you have in your experience and hope, an affinity with Romans chapters 1–8?

PART VII
SALVATION AND CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

The doctrinal study of salvation is termed "Soteriology," from the Gk. *sōtēria*, "deliverance, restoration, health or salvation." The biblical doctrine is not only that of a "deliverance" or bare salvation, but also a "restoration" to spiritual health, i.e., a spiritually–upright condition which is consonant with the scriptural teaching on salvation.

Traditionally, historically and culturally, the term "Christian" may be used rather loosely or generally. A true Christian is one who is both the object of Divine love in the eternal, redemptive purpose of God and one who is experientially resting in Christ by faith for salvation. The Scriptures present the Christian from two aspects, objective and eternal, and subjective and temporal.

Scripturally, the word "Christian" means one who is identified with, imitates, reflects, or is like Christ. He is a "believer" [one who has entered into a life of belief or faith], a "disciple" [learner and follower], one who professes to the world that he is saved, i.e., has renounced a life of self–centeredness and sin and has taken up his cross [identified himself without reserve with] on a daily basis and is a follower of our Lord (Lk. 9:23). The Christian's "cross" is whatever it costs him to be fully and completely identified with Christ (Matt. 16:24; Mk. 8:34; 2 Cor. 5:14–15).

Salvation is both from the reigning power and the ultimate consequences of sin (Matt. 1:21; Rom. 5:9; 6:1–23; Gal. 1:4–5). It is commonly thought and taught that salvation is primarily from hell or eternal condemnation and punishment. Such an idea is misplaced. While it is true that salvation is from the ultimate consequences of sin, the Scriptures are very clear that salvation is primarily from sin—from its guilt, penalty, pollution and reigning or controlling power in the life (Rom. 6:1–23; Gal. 1:4; Tit. 2:11–12). This present deliverance is found in regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption and sanctification. Salvation is also from the *ultimate* consequences of sin—eternal punishment, but not necessarily from the *immediate* consequences of sin—ill health through dissipation, drug abuse, sexually–transmitted diseases; terminal sicknesses due to sin, a ruined marriage or broken home, the disapprobation of family and friends, loss of employment, criminal prosecution or even death, etc. In short, although God saves the believer from the reigning power of sin and the ultimate consequences of sin, he does not necessarily deliver him from the immediate consequences of sin, nor does he eradicate that principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption within the believer until physical death (Rom. 7:13–8:4). See Questions 165–167.

Quest. 78: What is the ministry of Divine grace in the salvation and experience of the believer?

Ans: The ministry of Divine grace in the salvation and experience of the believer is comprehensive: electing, redeeming, calling,

renewing, enabling, justifying, adopting, sanctifying, resurrecting and glorifying the believer.

Eph. 2:8–10. [8]For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast. [10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

2 Cor. 12:9. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 Pet. 3:18. But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen.

See also: Gen. 6:8; Jn. 1:16; Rom. 11:5–6; 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 1:6–7; Titus 2:11–15; Heb. 4:14–16; 1 Pet. 5:5.

COMMENTARY

Grace may be summarized in the following fashion: first, it is a *principle* of unmerited favor which is extended to men as sinners. Literally everything comes to sinful men—believers and unbelievers—as a matter of grace—man as a sinner deserves nothing but condemnation (Eph. 2:8–10). Second, it is a *personification*, i.e., grace is mediated through the Lord Jesus Christ alone. He is the very personification of God's grace. Third, it is a *power* or Divine enablement in the salvation and experience of the believer. Grace enables believers to believe, to persevere, to suffer and to serve (Rom. 6:14; 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 1:29). Finally, it is a *prerogative*, i.e., Divine grace is both free and sovereign—God grants such grace to whom he will.

"Salvation by grace" means that salvation or deliverance from sin is completely the work of God and therefore wholly undeserved by the recipient. It means salvation by the wholly unmerited or undeserved favor of God alone. See Question 20. It is monergistic [the work of one–God alone] in its initiation, and neither humanistic [the work of man, i.e., salvation by works], nor synergistic [the cooperation of God and man], i.e., a mixture of grace and works. Further, this salvation is through the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus, "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30–31). See Questions 70–71.

In a creative–cultural context, i.e., with regard to man as fulfilling the Cultural Mandate and, although a sinner, as a creature living in a world created and governed by God, Divine grace is given to fallen humanity. This is termed "common grace," i.e., Divine grace common to all men apart from salvation. Such grace is necessary for the preservation and maintenance of fallen, sinful mankind, the general restraint of evil and for the fulfillment of the Cultural Mandate to subdue and have dominion over the earth.

In a redemptive context, i.e., with regard to one's salvation from sin, grace is unmerited [unearned, undeserved] favor in the stead [place] of merited [deserved] wrath. This saving grace exists and operates in the larger context of common grace, as God, according to his eternal redemptive purpose saves his

own out of fallen mankind. While common grace preserves and stabilizes mankind in general, within this context, often from unconverted individuals and families, the elect of God are born, grow, are evangelized, converted, and live out their respective Christian experience for the glory of God, and eventually die in hope of the resurrection.

The grace of God which brings salvation is grounded in the Divine, eternal decree or purpose of God. It has an eternal, objective basis. The very first positive note of the principle of grace is found in Divine election and the believer's eternal union with Christ (Eph. 1:3–7). This principle of saving grace permeates every aspect of experiential salvation—saving conviction of sin, regeneration, conversion and sanctification—and reaches its final triumph in the resurrection and eternal glory of the believer (Rom. 8:18–23). The saving grace of God is therefore effectual and infallible—it cannot be nullified (Rom. 8:28–39).

The New Testament passages which put grace and law into juxtaposition are meant to contrast the principle of salvation by grace with a principle of law–works or a legalistic self–righteousness—a perversion of the purpose of the Law. What is the relation between grace and law? Grace frees us from the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:14) and from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13)—but it does not free us from the Law of God itself. The absence of law is not grace; the absence of the law is lawlessness. This is why grace without Law tends toward antinomianism—and there is no antinomian grace. Grace by its very nature brings us into conformity to God's Law–Word (Rom. 8:3–4). The failure of the Old Covenant was that it was merely external—written on tables of stone. The New Covenant is internal—the Law is written effectually on the heart [inner being], and so effectual by the grace of the Holy Spirit and not merely on tables of stone (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Rom. 6:14; 8:1–4; 2 Cor. 3:3). See Questions 40–43.

The free and sovereign grace of God in salvation commences with eternal election (Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29–31; 9:11–14; 11:5–6; 1 Cor. 1:27–31; Eph. 1:3–4; 1 Thess. 1:4–5; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:1–2). The Divine choice of utterly undeserving sinners to be redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ and saved from their sins in the context of time, and ordained to eternal glory, began in the Divine prerogative before time began. See Question 68.

The Lord Jesus, in eternity, freely gave himself up to become the redeemer of God's people—the objects of his gracious love (Jn. 17:1–5; Gal. 4:4–5; Phil. 2:5–11; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Pet. 1:18). This immutable grace of the eternal Son of God toward his own continues as he intercedes as our Great High Priest (Heb. 4:14–16; 9:11–12, 24). See Questions 71, 74 and 76.

In time and history, saving grace is made active and effectual in personal experience for each of the objects of God's redemptive love and purpose. The elect sinner is quickened to spiritual life (Jn. 3:3, 5–8; Eph. 2:1, 4–5) and effectually called or drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith for forgiveness of sin and reconciliation to God (Jn. 6:44, 47; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:29–31; Eph.

1:3–14; 2 Thess. 2:13). Although the general, outward call through preaching may be and often is resisted, this effectual call is not. It is, in reality a life–giving, enabling work of the Spirit of God bringing a necessary spiritual awakening, a conviction of sin, a longing for deliverance from the reigning power of sin, and an understanding of the gospel. God has ordained the means as well as the end. The message of the gospel is to be preached fully and without restriction to all men. There is neither hope nor reality to any who do not close with Christ by faith through the gospel. See Questions 134–135, 138–140.

Renewing grace describes the free and sovereign love and grace of God at work effectually in regeneration or the "new birth." It is the quickening of the sinner to spiritual life, the impartation of Divine life, the transforming work of God's grace within the personality spiritually, morally and intellectually (Jn. 3:3, 5–8; 1 Cor. 2:9–14; Eph. 2:5; 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10; 1 Jn. 3:9). Regeneration occurs in the context of gospel preaching. See Question 83.

The enabling grace of God is that effectual, transforming grace which is evidenced in conversion. Both saving faith and saving repentance are the gifts of God bestowed in regenerating grace. These are not merely the work or effort of the sinner alone. This work of Divine grace gives a saving character to both faith and repentance, distinguishing faith from mere human trust and repentance from mere human reformation or a legalistic turning from certain sins in one's own strength (Eph. 2:8–10; Acts 11:18). A smitten conscience and conviction may be very strong, yet not lead to salvation (Jn. 8:9). See Questions 83–84, 87, 90–91.

Our justification—being pronounced righteous before God through faith alone, that God–given faith resting in the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ—is imputed to believing sinners (Rom. 3:21–26; Titus 3:4–7). See Question 92.

Every believer is said to be "adopted" into the family of God, i.e., to become God's child or "son" at conversion (Jn. 1:12–13; Rom. 8:12–14; Gal. 4:4–5; Eph. 1:5). This is a work of Divine grace in which God takes sinners to himself as his children, gives to them the Spirit of adoption, a foretaste of their final adoption in the glory of the resurrection (Rom. 8:23). See Question 93.

Sanctification, in its most inclusive sense, is the most comprehensive doctrine in Scripture. It is a process of both separating and purifying, and so begins with Divine election and ends with glorification. As salvation is by grace, so sanctification, or holiness is by grace. In practical experience, the working of the grace of God through the Holy Spirit and the Word is the dynamic for sanctification (Jn. 17:17; Rom. 8:11–14; 1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 12:14). No one can live the Christian life in his own strength, by his own determination, or apart from the Spirit and the Scriptures. See Questions 94–96.

Salvation is all of grace, including the believer's future resurrection. Those on whom God has set his love are ultimately destined for resurrection to eternal glory (Rom. 8:18–23, 28–31). Everyone who is justified (3:21–5:21) must inevitably be sanctified (5:12–8:16), and everyone who is justified and

sanctified must inevitably be glorified (8:17–39). The free and sovereign grace of God will be brought to consummation in the believer's glorification. His adoption will be fully realized (Rom. 8:18–23), his conformity to the image of God's Son will be brought to consummation (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18), and his redemption will be complete (Phil. 3:20–21; Titus 2:11–15; 1 Jn. 3:1–4). His experience will then coincide with his position (Eph. 2:4–7). See Questions 165, 167 and 169. Can you by faith, experience and in hope lay hold of these blessed truths?

Quest. 79: Why is it vital to consider both the objective or eternal, and the subjective, or temporal and experiential aspects of salvation?

Ans: Salvation must be viewed in both the objective or eternal, and the subjective, or temporal and experiential aspects to properly understand the biblical truth of salvation, to avoid error and heresy, and to possess a scriptural assurance of faith.

Rom. 8:28–31. [28]And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. [29]For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. [30]Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. [31]What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

Eph. 1:3–7. [3]Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: [4]According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: [5]Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, [6]To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. [7]In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

1 Thess. 1:4–5. [4]Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. [5]For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

1 Thess. 2:13. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

2 Tim. 2:19. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Heb. 12:14. Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

See also: Rom. 6:1–23; 8:5–13; 12:1–21; Gal. 5:16–26; Eph. 4:25–32; Col. 3:1–10, 12–17; 1 Thess. 1:4–10; 4:3–4; Titus 2:11–15; Heb. 12:1–8; 1 Jn. 3:4–18.

COMMENTARY

The Scripture views the Christian from two aspects, objective and eternal, and subjective and temporal. Do we have to view the true Christian in both aspects? Yes, because the Scriptures take in both for good reason. Without these two very necessary aspects, our view of the reality of our being Christians, our relation to God, and our experience would be very unbalanced at best or utterly incomprehensible at worst. The eternal, redemptive purpose of God gives us as believers an objective, scriptural assurance of our standing before God and hope of glory. The experiential aspect is also essential, as saving faith is the primary identification of the true Christian, followed by the marks of grace or the essential biblical characteristics in his subsequent experience. See Questions 110–112.

Without the eternal purpose and power of God, we might tend to despair and seek to live the Christian life in our own strength, inherently deny the grace of God, misunderstand his purpose and love and live in constant fear of failure. Without the subjective and temporal aspect, we might tend toward a passive attitude and indolence. Evangelism and godliness would tend to wane or become detached from their necessary rigorous exercise. Throughout the history of Christianity, some have gone to both extremes because of their doctrinal imbalance of these aspects. While holding tenaciously to one aspect of Divine truth, it is very possible to deny or fail to realize the other.

A balanced perspective of the biblical teaching concerning salvation necessarily includes both its objective and eternal aspects as well as its temporal and subjective aspects. To over–emphasize the former has at times led to a doctrinal and practical antinomianism, or even a kind of fatalism—thinking that the Christian experience is either non–essential or arbitrary and irrelevant to one's state of grace. To over–emphasize the latter has led to the idea that salvation is essentially in the prerogative and hands of man. This has often resulted in doctrinal emphases which have taught that believers could apostatize and be lost, or that human nature is perfectible through human effort, or to evangelistic methodologies which have degenerated to mere psychological manipulation. We must seek to be as balanced as the Scriptures themselves, leaving the secret things of God to him (Deut. 29:29), and to be as faithful and zealous as God commands in those areas which he has revealed (Matt. 28:18–20; 2 Cor. 2:14–17; 7:1; Phil. 2:12–13). Does your hope have an objective basis in God's Word?

Quest. 80: What is the believer's confidence, assurance and encouragement in this present life and in his personal experience?

Ans: The believer's confidence, assurance and encouragement in this present life and his personal experience, rest in the infallibility of the eternal redemptive purpose revealed in God's Word, the ever–present providential care of his loving heavenly Father, the constant ministry of Divine grace by virtue of his union with Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 8:28–31. [28]And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. [29]For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. [30]Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.[31]What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

2 Cor. 1:3–4. [3]Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; [4]Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

1 Thess. 1:4. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

See also: Acts 17:23–28; Rom. 6:1–6; 8:18–39; Eph. 1:3–14; 1 Thess. 2:13; 4:13–18; Rom. 6:1–23; Col. 3:1–5ff.

COMMENTARY

The Bible is not only a book of history, principles, warnings and commands, it is also a book of glorious promises, great encouragement and blessed comfort. The deciding issue is one's relationship to God through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Divine promises, encouragements, and assurance all pertain to those whose sins are forgiven and who are vitally reconciled to God through saving faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is a fatal misunderstanding of Scripture to assume that one may take promises, encouragements and assurance from the Scriptures in an arbitrary or mystical manner without proper cause. To use Scripture in any way in which it was not intended—as a collection of philosophical or moral maxims—is likewise to be condemned. The Bible gives warnings of certain judgment and a mandate for faith and repentance to the unbeliever, but no comfort. The blessings of comfort, encouragement and assurance are to those who live by personal faith in the Lord Jesus in accordance with God's Word.

It is a tragedy that many modern–day professing Christians have been taught to despise or deny the glorious truths of free grace as Divinely–revealed in election, predestination and the blessed principle of scriptural particularism. Unavoidably, comfort, encouragement and assurance have to draw from other resources—necessarily from a misrepresentation of God or one's subjective experience. This has led to modern existential religion and a distortion of biblical truth. The

infallibility of God's redemptive purpose is both revealed and reiterated in Scripture for the believer's comfort, assurance and encouragement—it must be reiterated in our own minds and hearts as God has in his Word.

Divine providence is that process by which God, in time and history, brings to pass his eternal purpose. Time, according to a consistent biblical philosophy of time and history, progresses from the future into the present and then from the present into the past. God has predestined all things from the very beginning (Isa. 42:9; Acts 4:27–28; 15:18; Eph. 1:11). Divine providence by its very nature is both comprehensive and intimate, governing all things, both great and seemingly small, from the rise and fall of succeeding civilizations (Acts 17:26–27), to the defeat or success of military campaigns (Isa. 10:5–15), to the life or death of a single soldier (1 Kgs. 22:30, 34) to the most minute of incidents and circumstances (Psa. 139:1–18). While Divine inscripturated revelation is to be our rational guide, we are left to the working of Divine providence in the issues of life over which we have no control or definite direction. This also means that everything should and ought to be made a subject for prayer (Rom. 8:26–28; Eph. 6:18f; 1 Thess. 5:16–17).

Every true believer has been brought into an indissoluble union with Jesus Christ. See Question 77. This vital, spiritual union includes, among other realities, union in Christ's death, which means that the reigning power of sin has been broken. Union in his resurrection–life necessarily means that the same power which raised up the Lord Jesus from the dead now indwells and empowers the believer—the constant ministry of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:1–14; Col. 3:1–4; Eph. 1:15–23; Rom. 8:1–14; 1 Cor. 2:9–13; 2 Cor. 12:9–10; Gal. 5:16–26). As it is impossible to live a converted life bereft of the constant empowering, sustaining ministry of Divine grace, so it is impossible to live an unconverted life within the context of Divine grace (Rom. 6:15–18, 20, 22). We must never forget that God has ordained the means as well as the end, be it the proclamation of the gospel or our responsibility to live godly in Christ Jesus in joyful obedience to God's Word. See Questions 134–140. In what and in whom does your hope rest?

Quest. 81: What is effectual calling?

Ans: Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing the sinner of his sin and misery, enlightening his mind in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing his will, God persuades and enables him to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to him in the gospel.

> **Jn. 6:44.** No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.
>
> **Rom. 8:30.** Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.
>
> **Acts 13:48.** And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

2 Tim. 1:8–9. [8]...[God]...[9]who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

1 Pet. 1:14–16. [14]As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: [15]But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; [16]Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

See also: Ezk. 36:25–27; Matt. 20:16; Jn. 1:12–13; Acts 2:37; 7:51–53; 18:27; Rom. 1:6; 9:11, 23–24; 1 Cor. 1:22–31; 2 Cor. 4:3–6; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 1:18; 2:1–10; 4:4; Phil. 1:29; Col. 1:12–13; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:13–14; Heb. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:10; Jude 1.

COMMENTARY

The work of redemption was fully and finally accomplished in and through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is therefore proper to speak of "the finished work of Christ." Through the active [his perfect life lived under the Law to fulfill its demands] and passive obedience [his work of suffering, death and resurrection] of our Lord, redemption was purchased, completed, finished. Divine justice has been completely satisfied. It is thus fully effectual without any additional work or effort on the part of man to make it so. It is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the triune Godhead, who predominantly applies the finished work of Christ to the individual sinner in time, history and experience. The application of this redemption begins with effectual calling, proceeds to regeneration, conversion [faith and repentance], adoption, justification and sanctification in this life, and to our glorious resurrection in the life to come.

If it need be asked why, in the scheme of saving grace, one is called and another is not, or why one is regenerated and another is not, or why one is converted and another is not, the answer lies in the inscrutable purpose of God and the application of an accomplished redemption. The application of redemption is an integral part of the eternal Covenant of Redemption and Grace. See Question 66. It is on the infinite worth and particularistic basis of the atonement—the shed blood of Christ—that every aspect of the application of redemption is founded.

The Scriptures distinguish between an outward or external, general call to salvation which is to be made through the free offer of the gospel to all men without discrimination or distinction, and the personal, internal, effectual call to salvation. This distinction is made by context and implication, i.e., the doctrinal context in which the term occurs (e.g., Jn. 6:44–45; Rom. 8:28–30; 1 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:9), the implications of that context (e.g., Rom. 9:23–24; Eph. 4:1; Heb. 9:15), or the contrast with the general call (e.g., Matt. 22:14) serve to make the necessary distinction. This individual, internal or effectual call to salvation has been variously termed "the effectual call," "effectual calling," "irresistible grace," "infallible grace," or "efficacious grace" to distinguish it from the outward and general call through the gospel.

The gospel is to be preached to all men without distinction or discrimination (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8; 17:30–31). This gospel proclamation—the "free offer" of the gospel—declares that God is absolutely righteous and holy, and that he is sworn to punish sin; that man by nature is fallen, sinful, and under Divine wrath and condemnation; and that redemption has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ for sinners through his active and passive obedience. Sinners are urged to turn from their sin in repentance and look to Jesus Christ in faith as Lord and Savior, and thus be forgiven of their sins and be reconciled unto God through the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinners must believe (Acts 16:31), and they must repent (Mk. 1:15; Acts 17:31; 26:18–20). If sinners come to Christ in saving faith and repentance, they will be saved—delivered from and forgiven of their sins and be reconciled to a righteous, just and holy God (Jn. 6:37; Rom. 3:23–26). See Question 34.

This outward or general call thus goes forth in and through the message of the gospel—a call to repentance and faith (Acts 17:30–31). It is often either rejected or the claims of the gospel are misrepresented or misunderstood (Matt. 7:21–23; 13:5–6, 20–21; Acts 8:13; 1 Cor. 15:2; Heb. 6:1–6). It is rejected or misappropriated because it comes in word only and not also in the saving power of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:3, 5, 7–8; 6:44–45; 1 Cor. 2:4–5; 1 Thess. 1:4–5; 2:13). It is rejected because of the condition of the sinner by nature as a fallen, sinful being (1 Cor. 2:14); because of the nature of sin; and because of a superior, evil power, which effectively keeps sinners from comprehending the truth of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:3–6). Further, it may be received in a defective and temporary way through misunderstanding, a fear of judgment, or through a psychological or emotional reaction (Matt. 13:20–22; Mk. 4:16–19; Lk. 8:13–14).

The glory of the grace of God in salvation is that he speaks life to the sinner who is in a state of being a spiritual corpse (Jn. 3:3, 5; Eph. 2:4–5), re–creates the image of God in him anew spiritually, morally and intellectually (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10), breaks the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:14, 17–18), removes the innate hatred against himself and his Law (Rom. 8:6–8), and removes the blinding power of Satan (2 Cor. 4:3–6), so the sinner can freely and gladly embrace Christ as preached in the gospel. This efficacious call comes in the context of the gospel declaration and not apart from it. Any teaching which denigrates gospel preaching or biblical evangelism, or seeks other avenues to move men's hearts is decidedly unscriptural.

It must be noted that the evidences of effectual calling and conviction of sin may vary greatly. Saul of Tarsus was evidently greatly agitated and convicted for a length of time, fighting Christianity with all his might (Acts 9:1–6). The Philippian jailer was greatly affected (Acts 16:23–34). Lydia, however, was simply moved to believe, her conviction of sin being more internal with little, if any, outward evidence (Acts 16:14). The one common denominator is that these were all converted and their lives transformed.

The relationship of efficacious grace to the free offer of the gospel is an aspect of the relationship between Divine sovereignty and human

responsibility. We—human beings, Christians, preachers, evangelists—do not know who the elect are, or who will be effectually called to salvation. These are some of the "secret things" which belong only to God (Deut. 29:29), and are revealed in time after the fact. Certainly God has called and converted the most unlikely, as witnessed in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and outstanding persecutors, opposers, cult members and generally wicked persons in history, whose subsequent lives demonstrated their devotion to Christ (1 Cor. 1:26–31). Our concern must be faithfulness to what God has revealed in the realm of human responsibility—preaching the gospel to all men without restriction or reservation (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:7–8; 20:26–27; 1 Tim. 2:1–6). The burden of the gospel ministry is thus two–fold: first, that the gospel is preached to all without restriction, and, second, that the gospel is preached in its fullness, i.e., without any truncation of its doctrinal content or practical implications. Do our lives evidence that we have been "called out of darkness into his marvelous light?" (1 Pet. 2:9).

Quest. 82: What benefits do they who are effectually called par-take of in this life?

Ans: They who are effectually called, do in this life partake of regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanc–tification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.

Rom. 8:28–31. [28]And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. [29]For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. [30]Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. [31]What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

Rom. 5:1–5. [1]Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: [2]By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. [3]And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; [4]And patience, experience; and experience, hope: [5]And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Eph. 1:3–6. [3]Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: [4]According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: [5]Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, [6]To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

See also: Rom. 5:2; 1 Cor. 1:26–31; Eph. 5:18–20; Col. 3:15–17; Phil. 3:1; 4:4; 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Pet. 1:6, 8.

COMMENTARY

The Covenant of Grace refers to the eternal redemptive purpose as it addresses itself to sinners. See Question 66. It is unilateral, and therefore infallible, immutable and irrevocable. From Divine election to glorification, the number and personal identity of God's elect—the objects of his eternal, sovereign love, grace and mercy—remain the same. Thus, those who are effectually called as the first experiential evidence of this covenant relationship, will receive each and every benefit of this relationship, despite the varied circumstances of their earthly pilgrimage and experience (Rom. 8:28–39). This is and ought to be the greatest comfort and encouragement to every believer.

The benefits or blessings which come to those who are effectually called necessarily transcend this earthly life and are only completely fulfilled and experienced in the glory of eternity (Rom. 8:18–23, 28–39; 2 Cor. 4:14–18; 2 Pet. 3:13). There are many encouragements and comforts addressed to those experiencing present sufferings, persecutions and opposition, which point into eternity and future glory, from which believers are assured that "their reward is in heaven" and "that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." (e.g., Matt. 5:11–12; Rom. 8:35–39; Rev. 14:13).

This question and answer, however, focus upon the believer's present experience. There are great and present benefits and blessings in this earthly life, for which every believer ought to be constantly thankful, ought to rejoice in unceasingly, and ought to be humbly grateful for. To be or do otherwise would simply be unbelief, wrong priorities, or a sinful self–centeredness which would fail to rise to the level of biblical faith. Believers are regenerated (Jn. 3:33, 5–8), converted (Jn. 1:12–13), experientially brought into union with Christ (Rom. 5:12–6:23; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1–4), adopted (Rom. 8:14–17; Eph. 1:3–7), justified (Rom. 5:1–11) and sanctified (Rom. 6:1–8:14).

The benefits and blessings which flow from these spiritual realities are innumerable. Included in these innumerable benefits are: the breaking of the reigning power of sin over the life (Rom. 6:14, 17–18), a blessed and glorious entrance into a life of grace, faith and hope (Rom. 5:1–2), a spiritual and moral transformation (Eph. 2:8–10; 4:22–24), a new mind–set (Col. 3:9–10), all sins forgiven (Acts 13:38–39), reconciliation to God (Rom. 3:23–26; 2 Cor. 5:18–21), a true perception that all things are Divinely–ordered for our good (Rom. 8:28), our Divine comfort in trials (2 Cor. 1:3–4), a Great High Priest to intercede constantly, and so a constant access to the God of glory (Rom. 5:1–2; Heb. 4:14–16; 9:11–14, 24; 1 Jn. 2:1); and, in all such blessings a progressive conformity to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18). Special mention must also be made of and great attention given to the new, necessary and effectual dynamic in the life—the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:4–6, 14; 8:13–27; Gal. 4:4–7; Eph. 1:18–20). Although the believer has an immediate and intimate relationship with the triune Godhead

(Jn. 14:6, 16, 20, 23), it is the Holy Spirit specifically who is said to indwell the believer. Do we have this witness? (Rom. 8:11–16).

Quest. 83: What is regeneration?

Ans: Regeneration is the sovereign act of God, effected below the level of the consciousness, wherein he communicates Divine life to the sinner, giving a holy disposition to the mind, and is such that it secures a certain, immediate and voluntary obedience to the Gospel.

Jn. 1:12–13. [12]But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: [13]Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jn. 3:3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Titus 3:5. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Jas. 1:18. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

1 Pet. 1:23. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

See also: Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Jn. 3:3–8; Col. 1:12–13; Matt. 19:28.

COMMENTARY

Much misunderstanding surrounds the truth of regeneration or the "new birth." Considered negatively, or what regeneration is not: first, regeneration is not a ritual, i.e., sacramental. Many believe that regeneration is the result of a sacerdotal or priestly function, such as baptismal regeneration. Necessarily included in this view are those who hold that baptism is essential to salvation. It even includes those who equate physical movement with salvation, e.g., responding to an "altar call" as synonymous with salvation itself. The Scriptures teach that regeneration or the "new birth" is an act of God apart from human ordinances or rituals (Cf. Jn. 1:12–13; 3:3; Eph. 2:1–5). [The key verses for baptismal regeneration are Jn. 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21].

The teaching of baptismal regeneration or salvation by ritual is based upon a misunderstanding of the nature of regeneration and a confusion of the symbol or figure with the reality. Jn. 3:5, "born of water and the Spirit" refers to Ezk. 11:19–20; 36:25–27 and the promise of the New Covenant, which Nicodemus should have clearly understood (Jn. 3:5–10). Note Acts 2:38, "…Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins…" The command, although a compound verb in English, is unequal in Gk., giving the emphasis to repentance with a view to the remission of sins. The command to be baptized is a much lesser command. Mark the context and

statement of Acts 22:16, "…arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins…" Saul was already converted when this command was given, and so it has to be interpreted figuratively or symbolically. Note Titus 3:5 and "the washing of regeneration." The statement is self–explanatory. The rite of baptism lies within the realm of human actions. Finally, note 1 Pet. 3:21. Baptism is the answer of a good conscience; it does not put away the filth of the flesh, i.e., regenerate or cleanse the individual.

Second, regeneration is not an emotional or irrational experience. Some confuse regeneration with conversion, and conversion with irrationalism. Others make regeneration the Divine response to man's faith. The relation between regeneration and conversion is one of cause and effect. See Question 87. It is a Divine quickening to spiritual life, a "spiritual birth" that is necessarily evidenced both intellectually and emotionally in repentance and faith.

The following answer is general and summary so its pervasive nature may be perceived. Regeneration is being "born from above" or "born again" (Jn. 1:12–13; 3:3, 5). There are six essential spiritual realities which comprise regeneration, or the "new birth." If any one of these realities is not true or actual within the personality, the individual is yet unregenerate: first, the impartation of Divine life (Jn. 3:3, 5; Eph. 2:1, 4–5). Unless the individual receives such a principle of spiritual life, he cannot even "see" the kingdom of God, much less enter it. He may perceive, know or understand much, even so as to be without excuse, but his will is bent toward sin and evil and his inner being is darkened (Rom. 1:18–25; 1 Cor. 2:14).

Second, the breaking of the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:3–14, 17–18, 20, 22). Every human being by nature is a willing bondslave of sin. This power is broken by God in a definitive act of grace, and a radical cleavage is made with the reigning power of sin in the life. See Questions 94–95.

Third, the removal of natural heart–enmity (Rom. 8:7–8; 1 Cor. 2:14). Man by nature has an innate aversion to God and his truth. This animosity is removed by a sovereign act of God, enabling the sinner to savingly turn to God in the context of his truth.

Fourth, the re–creation of the image of God in principle (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–10). Both these passages refer to a past act, not to an entreaty. Man was created as the image–bearer of God. In the Fall, this image was devastated spiritually, morally and intellectually; the thought–process became fragmented and given to futility. The physical body, with its appetites and desires, assumed a controlling influence over the individual (Rom. 6:6, 11–14; Eph. 4:17–19). In regenerating grace, God re–creates the image of God anew in principle in righteousness, holiness of the truth and knowledge—a spiritual, moral and intellectual transformation. With the mind thus freed, and a holy disposition given to the personality, the sinner is enabled to freely turn to Christ in faith as presented in the gospel message.

Fifth, the removal of satanic blindness (2 Cor. 4:3–6). Above and beyond all matters of the will or heart, looms the awful, evil power of Satan, who specifically blinds sinners to the truth of the gospel. He further seeks to remove any influence of the gospel in any way he possibly can (Matt. 13:3–4, 18–19; Mk. 4:4, 15; Lk. 8:5, 12). This blinding influence is removed by an act of God's grace.

Sixth, the gift of saving faith (Eph. 2:4–10). Conversion, or repentance from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is inseparable from regeneration. Conversion is the infallible and immediate consequence of the work of the Holy Spirit upon and within the personality (Acts 16:14). The Scriptures usually consider regeneration and conversion inclusively as one. It is conversion, pointedly personal faith in the Lord Jesus and repentance from sin, which necessarily and infallibly expresses the work of God within the personality (Acts 13:12, 48; 14:1; 16:14, 27–34; 17:4, 11–12, 34; 18:8, 27; 19:18; Rom. 10:9–10, 13, 17; 1 Cor. 2:4–5; Eph. 2:4–10). See Questions 86–88.

The necessity of regeneration or the new birth is found in the utter spiritual impotence of man, the blinding power of the devil, the eternal redemptive purpose, and the righteous character and omnipotence of God. If any human being is to be saved or delivered from the reigning power of sin, his own innate animosity toward God, the blinding power of Satan, and ultimately delivered from eternal hell, God must initiate the work of salvation (Isa. 64:6; Matt. 13:3–4, 18–19; Acts 16:14; Rom. 1:18–25; 3:11, 27–21; 8:5–8; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3–6; Eph. 2:1–10; 4:17–19; Titus 3:5; 1 Jn. 5:19). To say all this is to declare that salvation is by grace.

Because of the mystery of this Divine operation, the inability of our finite minds to fully comprehend it, and the great possibility of misunderstanding its nature, God has been pleased to represent regeneration in human terms, using figures or metaphors to aid our understanding. Regeneration is described as a "spiritual birth." This is the most common designation. Cf. Jn. 1:12–13; 3:3, 5–8; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 Jn. 3:9. As a "birth," it is mysterious and miraculous, and so couched in figurative terms. Regeneration is described as a "quickening" to spiritual life. Regeneration is described as a "heart transplant." The Old Testament language of Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 11:19–20; 36:25–27, as fulfilled in 2 Cor. 3 and Heb. 8, although couched in Old Testament symbolic terms, anticipates the New or Gospel Covenant. Regeneration is described as a "translation" from one kingdom to another. Believers have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness [evil] into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:12–13). Regeneration is described as a "washing." This "washing" (Titus 3:5) cannot refer to baptism, for this is a ritual within the realm and scope of human activity and power. Further, baptism cannot spiritually quicken or cleanse (1 Pet. 3:18–21). This must be understood symbolically and according to the analogy of faith (Ezk. 36:25–27).

Regeneration is further described as a "renewing of the Holy Ghost." This language is inherent in the language of regeneration (Titus 3:5). It refers to the restoration of the image of God in man (Col. 3:9–10; Eph. 4:22–24), the "heart

of flesh" (Ezk. 36:25–27), the "new man," or regenerate personality (Rom. 6:6). Regeneration is described as a "change of nature" or "character" (2 Pet. 1:4; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10). These passages refer to the moral transformation of the personality or the restoration of the image of God in principle in man. Regeneration is described as a "new creation" (Eph. 2:4–10; 2 Cor. 5:17; 4:3–6). The new life, nature or entity imparted by God is the creation of the "new man" who corresponds in principle to the moral character of God.

Finally, regeneration is described as a spiritual "circumcision." Cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:26; Acts 7:51–53 with Rom. 2:28–29; Phil. 3:1–3; Col. 2:10–13. The antitype of circumcision is regeneration. Those in the Old Covenant were circumcised; those in the New Covenant are regenerated. Regeneration is thus the covenant–sign or seal of the New or Gospel covenant. Regeneration, as the antitype of circumcision, is a heart–operation performed by God alone ["a circumcision made without hands"] in taking away the preeminence of the flesh, i.e., breaking the reigning power of sin. Cf. Rom. 6:1–14. See Question 157.

Who or what is the efficient cause of regeneration? The two areas of theological tension are: first, that one must be spiritually quickened, the mind and heart must be freed from satanic blindness, the mind–set must be restored, the natural enmity removed, and the reigning power of sin must be broken before the sinner can truly understand, believe and savingly respond to the gospel. Second, the Scriptures imply that the preached Word is instrumental in the work of regeneration and specifically as to saving faith. We must never confuse the logical order with a chronological order. What can be consistently and safely stated is that regeneration occurs in the context of the hearing and comprehending of the truth of God, and not apart from it (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:44; Rom. 10:13–15, 17; 1 Cor. 2:1–5; Eph. 1:3–14; 1 Thess. 1:4–5; 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:13–14). As God has ordained the end—the salvation of sinners—so he has ordained the means to that end—their awakening [a saving conviction of sin], renewal [regeneration] and conversion [repentance and faith] through the preaching of the gospel. Are you a regenerate person? Do you exemplify the marks of converting grace?

Quest. 84: What is the exact ministry of the Holy Spirit in the sinner before conversion, in the same person at conversion, and as a believer after conversion?

Ans: The Holy Spirit is the Person of the triune Godhead who applies the redemption purchased by Christ. Before conversion, he effectually calls, regenerates, awakens, and convicts the sinner. At conversion, he graciously enables the sinner to believe and repent. After conversion, he ministers all grace necessary for the believer's experience.

Jn. 16:8. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

Jn. 3:5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Rom. 5:5. And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Rom. 8:26–27. [26]Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. [27]And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God.

Gal. 5:22–23. [22]But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, [23]Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

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

See also: Ezk. 36:27; Jn. 4:24; 7:39; 14:16–17; 15:26; 16:8–11, 13; Acts 10:19; 11:12; 13:2; 16:7; Rom. 8:1–5, 11–16; 1 Cor. 2:4, 9–14; 3:16; 6:11; 12:1–7, 11; 12:13; 2 Cor. 1:22; 3:3, 17–18; 5:5; Gal. 3:2, 14; 4:6; 5:16–18, 22–23, 25; 6:8; Eph. 1:13, 17–18; 2:18, 22; 3:16; 4:3, 30; 5:9, 18–20; 6:17–18; Phil. 1:19; 2:1; 3:3; Col. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:8; 5:19; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2, 22; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13; Rev. 22:17.

COMMENTARY

Within the triune Godhead and in the context of the eternal Covenant of Redemption and Grace, it is the Holy Spirit who applies the redemption purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ. See Questions 64 and 77. Thus, he is not only intimately involved in the whole of our redemption, but is especially prominent in its application throughout our Christian experience from our calling to salvation to our final state of glory. Throughout the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation, it is assumed that he always acts in concert with the Word of God and never apart from it.

Before conversion, the Holy Spirit providentially oversees the life and circumstances of the elect, yet unbelieving individual. He is providentially preserved and protected, and brought into contact with saving truth. The Holy Spirit calls, awakens, convicts and regenerates the sinner. He works saving conviction in the mind and heart of the sinner and reveals Christ to him as presented in the gospel.

At conversion, it is the Holy Spirit who opens the ears, eyes, mind and heart of the sinner to the truth of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:14–16). The Holy Spirit graciously enables the sinner to believe and repent (Acts 11:18; 18:27; Eph. 2:4–10). That saving faith which is the gift of God is given through the mediation of the Spirit in the context of hearing the truth of the gospel. It is the Holy Spirit who works that conviction which results in repentance in the mind,

heart and life. It is the Spirit who removes the spiritual blindness imposed by Satan over the mind and heart of the sinner (2 Cor. 4:3–6).

After conversion, the Holy Spirit, as the primary indwelling Person of the triune Godhead, ministers all grace necessary for the believer's experience. The Holy Spirit is generally termed "The Comforter," or *Paraclete* [Gk. *para*, "along side" and *klētos*, "called," hence "helper," "advocate"], the one who has replaced the personal, visible presence of our Lord during his heavenly ministry until his second return (Jn. 14:12, 16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 2:32–33). He empowered the New Testament church as the God–ordained institution for this gospel economy at Pentecost (Acts 1:8; 2:1ff). He initiates sending forth gospel ministers, and is the one who burdens and calls men to such a ministry (Acts 13:2–4; Eph. 4:7–12). He gifts men for the ministry and distributes varied gifts to his churches (1 Cor. 12:1–7ff; Eph. 4:11–12).

On an individual level, he sanctifies the believer in connection with the Word of God (Jn. 17:17; Rom. 6:1–23; 8:11–14; 1 Cor. 1:30–31; 2 Thess. 2:13) and gives him a sense of acceptance through the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:14–17). He illuminates every believer to understand the Scriptures (1 Jn. 2:20, 27). He reveals to believers the "deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:9–13). He fills believers with a sense of God's love and the love of Christ (Rom. 5:5; Eph. 3:14–20). He gives to believers both a restraining (Gal. 5:16–18) and an enabling or empowerment which is actual and effectual in their lives (Rom. 6:14; Eph. 1:15–20). He enables believers to mortify the manifestations of indwelling sin and remaining corruption (Rom. 8:11–13; Col. 3:1–5ff). He intercedes as a second, internal *Paraclete* in our prayers (Rom. 8:26–27).

It is through the ministry of grace by the Spirit that believers are being conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18). The Spirit of God also mediates all our comfort, grace and encouragement, as well as any conviction of sin or leading in a providential manner. The fruit of the Spirit are those gracious virtues which are the essential marks of grace in the personality (Gal. 5:22–23). Believers are thus commanded to be filled with the Spirit as the great, determining reality of their lives and empowerment for all their service (Lk. 11:11–14; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 6:3; 7:55; 9:17; 11:24; Eph. 5:18–20). Finally, it is the Holy Spirit who, as the earnest of final redemption, speaks peace to the believer's mind and heart concerning his assurance of faith and salvation (Rom. 8:14–16; 1 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14).

Because of this varied and necessary ministry of grace, the Spirit of God must neither be grieved (Eph. 4:30), nor his varied ministry in our lives quenched or hindered by blatant sin (1 Thess. 5:19). Believers are urged to "walk in the Spirit" so they "will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." The Spirit of God so ministers grace in believers' lives that they cannot live as they once did (Rom. 6:14; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Gal. 5:16–18).

What of spiritual gifts? The ascended Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit gives various gifts for exercise in the context of the local assembly and its ministry (Eph. 4:11–16). These gifts are for the edification of God's people

and the furtherance of his work. If the lists of the various spiritual gifts are closely studied, it will be noted that many of these were temporary and for the "infancy" [immature state] of the church, i.e., they were given until Christianity was firmly established and had reached its mature place in the world (1 Cor. 12:1–11, 28–31; 13:8–13; 14:1–19). The remaining gifts are mainly those of teaching, preaching and ministering, and therefore are to be exercised by the male leadership of the assembly.

Many today seek to "discover their spiritual gifts." Whatever gift one might possess, it is only given by the Holy Spirit in accord with the Scriptures, and given for exercise for the edifying of the assembly because of a given need. It is, further, a gift only if such ability is necessarily needed and God–given, and not merely a human characteristic which is commendable. Any competition, dissention or confusion in exercising an alleged gift simply reveals that one is probably mistaken about his "gift"! God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:26–37).

Old time Pentecostalism and the more modern Charismatic Movement make much of the "baptism in the Spirit." Mark the following: first, consider the reason for this phenomenon. These religious movements derived from Methodist [Wesleyan] Perfectionism and Oberlin Perfectionism, which teach that conversion is wholly within the ability of the person [free will], and also a "second work of grace," i.e. that a person must be both "saved" [converted, receive Jesus as Savior] and then subsequently "sanctified" [i.e., receive the Holy Spirit in a separate work of grace distinct from receiving Christ at conversion]. See Question 115. Thus completely separating justification from sanctification. Therefore, if one were to lose his sanctification [i.e., commit sin], he would become unjustified and lose his salvation. Such reverses the biblical order and bases one's justification upon one's sanctification! The possession of the Holy Spirit, then, is an evidence of one's sanctification—and an assurance of salvation. Much attention is therefore given to the "baptism in, with or of the Spirit." It can be readily noted that an unscriptural approach to human ability, the Holy Spirit, justification and sanctification can construct an entirely false system of doctrine, practice and experience. See Questions 92 and 94.

Second, in Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement, the evidence of this "baptism" is "speaking in tongues." It is through such an experience that one has an assurance of salvation and is "sanctified." If the Scriptural standard were maintained, the modern tongues movement would be seen to be utterly unscriptural:

- The various languages spoken at Pentecost needed no interpreter, as every man heard in his own language (Acts 2:1–11). This was a once–for–all miraculous event.
- The tongues at Pentecost and the house of Cornelius were signs to the Jews, not signs to the people themselves (Acts 2:1–11; 10:44–48; 11:1–18).

- The Corinthian tongues, whether these were either definite languages or ecstatic utterances, needed interpretation from someone distinct from the speaker, another who had the corresponding gift of interpretation.
- Tongues were a temporary gift for the infancy of Christianity, and would cease when it reached its place of maturity in the world and the canon would be closed (1 Cor. 13:8–12). See Question 14.
- Tongues were never promoted as a means of assurance.
- The gift of tongues was one of the least gifts (1 Cor. 12:7–11), only to be used under complete self–control (1 Cor. 14:29–32; Gal. 5:23), never to be exercised without an interpreter and never exercised in the assembly by a woman (1 Cor. 14:26–35).
- Thus such gifts were to be exercised through the men of the assembly only.

Third, although many hold that "every believer is baptized into the [mystical] body of Christ [the universal, invisible church] at conversion," the Scriptures teach differently. There are six passages in the New Testament that definitely and expressly teach the baptism of the Holy Spirit: Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:15–17. These statements, then, must form the substance for the doctrine in question. A close and thorough investigation reveals the following: first, the Lord Jesus Christ himself is the Administrator, or the one who does the "baptizing," "He [the Lord Jesus Christ] shall baptize you with [in] the Holy Ghost…" (Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16). "…the same is he which baptizeth with [in] the Holy Ghost." (Jn. 1:33). Second, the Holy Spirit is the one into whom or with whom they were baptized or identified. This is specifically stated in every single passage. Third, the incidents that occurred at Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:1) and at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:44–47; 11:15–17) are the only instances identified by inspiration with the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

There are four passages in the New Testament that are assumed to teach the baptism of the Holy Spirit: Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27–28; Eph. 4:5; Col. 2:11–13. Although some of these passages are questionable as to their relevance, they are nevertheless so used and thus included. A careful study will bring the following conclusions: first, there is absolutely no mention made of any administrator or one who performs the baptism. There is not the slightest mention of the Holy Spirit. Second, the Lord Jesus Christ is the One into whom these are baptized. Third, it may be inferred from the context in these statements that all believers are included. These passages referring to being "baptized into Christ" refer to the believer's union with Christ. See Questions 77 and 95.

To explain the seeming contradiction, some use 1 Corinthians 12:13 to teach that the Holy Spirit baptizes all believers into "one body," which they interpret as the "Body of Christ," or the "universal, invisible church." This, of course, neither explains the primary teaching as given in the first list (which should be the very foundation of the doctrine), nor considers it at all. The second list is used as a foundation for the doctrine on the basis of assumption.

1 Corinthians 12:13 is vital to understanding the doctrine and bears close study. An exegesis of this verse rightly brings it into harmony with the passages that definitely teach the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Mark the following: first, the rendering "by one Spirit" is literally "in one Spirit" This would bring the first part of this statement into accord with the basic and foundational teaching. The phrase "…are we all baptized into one body…" reads: "…into one body we *were* baptized…" The verb is aorist [an event], referring to the event of Pentecost, and should be grammatically translated "were" rather than "are." Further, Paul includes himself in the "we." This further stands against the argument that this verse refers to water baptism in the local Corinthian assembly. If this verse is taken in the light of those statements definitely teaching the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then it logically refers to the baptism of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost upon the New Testament church as an institution—a unique event.

Finally, what is the significance of Pentecost and the baptism in the Spirit"? There are two considerations: first, it was the anti–type or final fulfillment of the "Feast of the Firstfruits" yearly observed at that time. (Ex. 23:16, 19; 34:22; Lev. 23:10–12; Numb. 28:26). On this Pentecost the Spirit–empowered New Testament Church (Acts 1:4–5, 8) reaped an ingathering of the "First–fruits," some three thousand souls, the prototype of Spirit–sent and Spirit–empowered revival and awakening.

Second, this Pentecost was the credentialing and empowering of the already–existing New Testament church as God's ordained institution for this economy. This is seen plainly when consideration is given to the former institutions. The God–ordained institution for the Israelites in their travels was the Tabernacle, or Tent. (See Ex. 25:1–9). When this Tabernacle was completely constructed and functional, the priests ordained and the first offerings completed, then God in the visible *Shekinah* descended upon the Tabernacle "and the glory of the Lord filled" it (Ex. 40:33–35). It then became the God–ordained institution for that economy.

When Solomon's Temple was completed, the people and priests sanctified and the first offerings completed, then the *Shekinah*, or visible glory of the presence of God, descended upon and filled the Temple (1 kgs 7:51–8:11). The Temple was then marked out as the God–ordained institution for that time. The same was true of the New Testament church at this Pentecost. The great and final anti–type or fulfillment of both the Tabernacle and the Temple was visibly and unmistakably set apart, or credentialed as the only God–ordained institution for this gospel economy.

This is the significance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that occurred at Pentecost (Acts 1:4–5, 8; 2:1–21, 32–33). See Question 147. Do we possess the Spirit of God? Is he often grieved by our thoughts and actions? Do we understand his work in the lives of believers and the church?

Quest. 85: What is saving conviction of sin?

Ans: Saving conviction of sin is a Spirit–wrought conviction, not only of particular sins, but of sin as the reigning and controlling principle of the life. It is a conviction that does not stop short of saving faith and repentance, and continues throughout the believer's experience.

Psa. 90:8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance.

Jn. 16:8–11. [8]And when he [the Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: [9]Of sin, because they believe not on me; [10]Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; [11]Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

Acts 2:36–37. [36]Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. [37]Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?

Acts 24:25. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

See also: Matt. 27:3–5; Jn. 8:9; Acts 9:1–6; 16:27–34; 26:9; Rom. 3:19–20; 7:7–13.

COMMENTARY

The evangelical terminology "conviction of sin" does not occur in the Bible, although the truth and sense of such terminology are definitely present. The common New Testament term [Gk. *elencho*] occurs eighteen times, and is variously translated in the KJV as: "rebuke," "evidence," "convince," "tell one's fault" and "reprove." This is a legal or forensic term, which denotes a decision or verdict based upon a full and careful consideration of evidence. In a spiritual sense, the conscience or "heart" [inner being] is reached through the mind by the reception of Divine truth, which produces a conscious personal sense of guilt (Jn. 8:9; Acts 2:37; 24:24–25).

In essence, a conviction of sin occurs when the message of the gospel, emphasizing the truths of God's righteous character, the awful reality of sin and the eternal condemnation of sinners, presented to the mind, produces a conscious, personal, intense sense of guilt (Acts 2:37). The conscience is the entity within the human personality which is stirred, rebuked, reproved or convicted and convinced of guilt. It is a consciousness of sin, with its penalty and guilt that drives the sinner to Christ. The conscience is reached through the mind, i.e., through an intelligent comprehension and reception of Divine truth, not through the will or the emotions [affections]. There ought to be sufficient substance in the message preached to awaken the conscience and produce a true conviction of sin. It is in the conscience, or on the "heart" [inner being] that the

Law of God is written by virtue of man being the image–bearer of God (Rom. 2:11–16). It is this absolute standard of Divine righteousness, which, once the conscience is awakened and enlightened, produces a saving conviction of sin by the grace of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 3:19–20; 7:7–13). Although the Moral Law is the God–ordained medium for the conviction of sin, sinners must not be held up to the terrors of the Law separate from gospel preaching. See Question 38. This is mere legalistic preaching without gospel hope. The Law and the gospel are not enemies, and one must not be preached at the expense of the other. See Questions 41–42.

Because man is a fallen, sinful being, the image of God has been perverted, and thus the conscience by itself is not a safe guide (Acts 26:9). See Question 5. The conscience may be awakened and stirred by factors other than the work of the Spirit of God (Jn. 8:3–9). It must be spiritually awakened, spiritually illuminated and spiritually activated by the Spirit of God, bringing an awareness of the condemning power of sin in a most powerful manner. Old Divines called this "Holy Ghost conviction" or saving conviction of sin. Such conviction must infallibly and ultimately lead the sinner to Christ for forgiveness, pardon and reconciliation.

Not all conviction of sin is a saving conviction. Conviction of conscience may be very great, yet be only psychological or religious (Jn. 8:9). Some conviction of wrong–doing may express itself in great remorse, even to the point of extremity, despairing of life altogether, or even suicide, but such is not necessarily a saving conviction of sin (Ex. 9:27; 10:16; Numb. 22:34; Josh. 7:20; 1 Sam. 15:24, 30; 26:21; Matt. 27:3–5). The personality may be greatly affected by any number of factors which will evidence themselves in some kind of religious behavior or commitment, yet the Spirit of God is not effectually at work in an evangelical conviction of sin, e.g., fear of death and hell, fear of being caught for some crime or moral offense, a troubled conscience because of a rigorous religious upbringing, certain sins or crimes which may well plague the conscience and call forth the law written on the heart (Acts 24:24–26; Rom. 2:14–16). Unless such conviction brings the sinner to Christ by faith and in repentance, it is merely religious or psychological, not spiritual or saving conviction.

When considering the subject of conviction, a necessary distinction must be made between "sins" and "sin." A person may be greatly convicted because of certain particular sins which he has committed, and which may plague his conscience, when the producing agent is not the Spirit of God (Matt. 27:3–5; Jn. 8:9). He may demonstrate great fear (Acts 24:24–26) and remorse over such sins, and may even become religious or reform his behavior, without experiencing a true change of heart (1 Kgs. 21:27–29).

How can this be? The difference is between being convicted and repenting of particular sins as opposed to being convicted of sin as the ruling, governing principle of the life and coming to Christ in faith with a repentant heart. It is sin as the ruling, reigning, controlling entity of the life that must be dealt with, as this wicked ruling principle lies behind individual and particular sins which

might become prominent to the conscience. Unless we are driven to Christ for salvation from any and all sin, our conscience is deceitful and our conviction defective. Being convicted of, and leaving off some sins, yet still retaining a heart–affection for others, is simply a fatal self–deception (Rom. 6:14). However, it is possible that saving conviction of sin may begin with conviction about certain specific sins. Peter's preaching at Pentecost and subsequently in the Temple accused the people of Israel with murdering the Prince of life, an example of stressing a specific sin—the implicit preaching of the Sixth Commandment (Cf. Acts 2:23, 36–37; 3:13–15). See Question 42. Have your sins—and sin as the reigning power in your life—driven you to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness and reconciliation to God?

Quest. 86: What is conversion?

Ans: Conversion is the necessary and immediate consequence of regenerating grace, the turning of the life from sin to righteousness and godliness through saving faith and repentance.

Matt. 18:3. …Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Acts 3:19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Jn. 12:40. He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with *their* eyes, nor understand with *their* heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

Acts 16:14. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

See also: Psa. 19:7; Isa. 6:10; Matt. 13:15; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 22:32; Acts 11:18; 15:3; 18:27; 28:27; 1 Thess. 1:4–9.

COMMENTARY

The term "conversion" is used to signify turning to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith and from sin in repentance. Though seldom mentioned by this term, it is a fundamental salvific concept in Scripture for a change or reversal of life. In the New Testament, it is both an event and a state or process, i.e., it is both an entrance into the Christian experience and life through faith and repentance initiated by the grace of God, and also the lifestyle of the believer sustained by the grace of God. The major words in both the Old and New Testaments have the sense of "to turn," or "to turn [back] again." While such terms refer to the initial work of grace in conversion, there are also New Testament words used for the change in lifestyle which, in given passages, demonstrate the converted state. These are usually translated "conversation" [*anastrophē*, "turn upside down," *tropos*, "manner of life"] (2 Cor. 1:12; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 4:12; Heb.

13:5) or "walk" [*peripateō*, to "walk about, lifestyle"] (Rom. 6:4; 8:1; 13:13; 1 Cor. 7:17) in the KJV. (In Phil. 1:27 and 3:20 "conversation" is the translation of *politeuma*, "behavior of a citizen").

Conversion is the inevitable and immediate result of regeneration. The relation is one of cause and effect (Jn. 3:3–8; 1 Jn. 3:9). The two are thus inseparable. Although the logical order may seem distinct, we must beware of confusing this with any chronological order. These occur simultaneously; regeneration the cause, conversion the immediate effect. See Questions 83 and 87.

The constituent elements of conversion are faith and repentance. These are "the twin graces" of conversion, the evidence or manifestation of regenerating grace. As these are considered in subsequent questions and answers, only a summary need be given at this point: first, both faith and repentance are the experiential expressions or manifestations of regenerating grace. Saving faith is the gift of God, bestowed in free and sovereign grace (Acts 18:27; Eph. 2:8–10; Phil. 1:29). As such, it stands in stark contrast to mere human trust or belief, which is native to the religious nature of man, but may be merely psychological or presumptive. This is a most critical point, and misunderstanding here means an entrance into another system of belief, another gospel, another message, another methodology, and another religious experience—all unscriptural. Second, saving or evangelical repentance is likewise a gift of God (Acts 11:18). This distinguishes true, evangelical or gospel repentance from a legalistic or self–imposed, self–conjured experience of remorse and attempt at self–reformation. Third, both faith and repentance are essential to conversion. As there must be a turning to God in faith, so there must be a turning from sin to righteousness (Matt. 3:7–8; Mk. 1:14–15; Acts 17:30–31; 26:19–20).

Although faith and repentance are both Divine and gracious gifts, they become those of the sinner himself. It is his faith; it is his repentance. He believes, trusts in, and relies on the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin and pardon and a right standing before and reconciliation with God. From a willfully believing heart, he freely repents of his own volition and turns from his sin to God. But these can deceptively become the elements of an attempted salvation by works.

How can this be? Salvation by grace and salvation by works are forever distinct and opposed to each other (Rom. 11:5–6). Salvation by grace does not allow for any human merit whatsoever. Even the gift of saving faith, when it becomes the possession of the individual, is non–meritorious, i.e., salvation is by grace "through [or by] faith," never "because of faith." Faith is ever instrumental, never causative. See Questions 87–89. To seek to make God obligated to save because one has believed or has repented is to give these gracious gifts saving merit. This is a subtle approach to salvation by works. We must never turn the grace of God into a works–system. This is why we must be absolutely clear that faith and repentance are graciously bestowed and not simply the products of human nature, i.e., mere human trust and mere self–reformation. Are we repentant?

Quest. 87: What is the necessary relation between regeneration and conversion?

Ans: The necessary relation of regeneration to conversion is one of cause and effect. Faith and repentance are the gracious, immediate effects of regeneration, deriving their reality from regenerating grace.

Jn. 1:12–13. [12]But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: [13]Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jn. 3:3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Jn. 3:7–8. [7]Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. [8]The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

1 Jn. 3:9. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

See also: Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Jn. 6:44; Acts 11:18; 16:14; Eph. 2:1–10; Col. 2:13; 1 Thess. 1:4–10; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 Jn. 3:4–10; 5:1.

COMMENTARY

The relation of regeneration to conversion is one of cause and immediate effect (Jn. 1:12–13; 3:3–8; 1 Jn. 3:9). Regeneration is monergistic; conversion is synergistic, i.e., in regeneration the individual is passive; in conversion the individual is responsively active, exercising faith and repentance by the grace of God (Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; Acts 11:18; 16:31; 18:27). Regeneration is internal; conversion is the external or discernable manifestation of regenerating grace. Regeneration is thus invisible, while conversion is largely visible (Jn. 3:7–8). Regeneration means a new heart; conversion means a new life. Regeneration is the impartation of spiritual life; conversion is the necessary immediate and continued expression or manifestation of that spiritual life. Regeneration is a spiritual birth; conversion is the resultant spiritual life. As with its natural counterpart, it is a life which grows and reaches a degree of maturity (Rom. 8:29; 2 Pet. 3:18). Regeneration is causative; conversion is responsive. It must be remembered that in one's experience, it is conversion and not regeneration which is perceived. Regeneration and conversion occur inseparably and simultaneously. The logical order must neither become chronological nor considered apart from the context of the gospel. Do we manifest the reality of regenerating grace?

Quest. 88: What is the difference between biblical conversion and modern "decisionism"?

Ans: Biblical conversion is the necessary turning from sin to righteousness and godliness through faith and repentance by the grace of God. "Decisionism" is a modern substitute for conversion, and is scripturally defective and inadequate as a saving experience.

Acts 16:31. 30And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Acts 17:31. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.

Acts 26:19–20. 19Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

Heb. 12:14–15. 14Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 15Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled.

See also: Lk. 9:23; Gal. 1:6–9; Phil. 3:17–19; Titus 1:15–16.

COMMENTARY

The following discussion is necessarily couched in contrasting terms. Although there may be varying degrees of "decisionism" or "easy–believeism," the system itself lacks a sufficient scriptural basis and often contradicts the doctrine of the gospel. It is a relatively new innovation in religious history. Conversion and "decisionism" are defined by their biblical, doctrinal and historical context. Conversion is biblical; "decisionism" is scripturally defective. Doctrinally, conversion is necessitated by the awful reality and devastating results of sin; "decisionism" often fails to adequately comprehend and deal with this awful reality and devastation. Conversion is a thorough transformation of the personality; "decisionism" is a mere re–directing of the will. Conversion is spiritual; "decisionism," as generally practiced, is psychological. Conversion is the beginning of a transformed life; "decisionism" as a system stands isolated from the dynamic of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of godliness.

Conversion is the infallible and immediate evidence of regenerating grace. It is comprised of faith and repentance, both of which are graciously given by God (Acts 11:18; 18:27; Eph. 28–10), enabling the sinner to savingly comply with the gospel mandate to repent and believe. "Decisionism" refers to the modern idea that what is necessary for salvation is not a radical change of nature [regeneration], evidenced by a radical change of life [conversion], but simply a re–direction of the will. Thus, "decisionism" reverses the scriptural and logical

order, making regeneration the Divine response to one's religious decision, implying that man's will has remained unaffected by the Fall, and that he possesses plenary [full] ability, or the power of contrary choice—the ability to consistently choose contrary to his governing nature. See Questions 83, 86–87.

Conversion, in its biblical context, maintains and glorifies the grace of God; "decisionism" is anthropocentric in nature, and remains isolated from a necessary biblical and doctrinal context. Where is the necessary biblical and doctrinal context of regenerating grace, the believer's union with Christ, justification and sanctification? See Questions 83, 86–87.

Conversion is comprised of both faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance from sin. A religious "decision" is an act of the will, usually in the context of the "invitational system" ["walking the aisle," "coming forward" during the "altar call"] which is equated with "receiving Jesus as one's personal Savior." Physical movement and spiritual reality are considered to be one and the same. However, one may make physical movement without spiritual renewal, being simply emotionally stirred toward a psychological or emotional decision. Repentance is usually a nonentity, as one has the option of either living as a "Carnal Christian," or at some later time "making Jesus 'Lord' of one's life"—a direct contradiction of Scripture See Questions 70, 72, 75, 112 and 123.

The motivation for conversion is the awful burden of sin which drives the sinner to Christ for deliverance; the motivation for a religious "decision" may be salvation, deliverance from various kinds of abuse or addiction, saving one's marriage or family, or finding meaning to and fulfillment in life. Conversion is necessarily preceded by a saving conviction of sin; a religious "decision" may be irrational [emotional, subjective, existential] or merely and simply intellectual.

The glorious realities of regeneration, conversion and a subsequent converted lifestyle [sanctification] are often reduced to a mere intellectual or emotional religious "decision" which derives its legitimacy from the time and place or context of its occurrence. Any evangelistic methodology which is based on religious pragmatism should immediately be suspect. Evangelism which culminates in a religious decision rather than the scriptural requirements of a converted life is certainly inadequate. See Questions 86, 94–96, 109–112. Conversion is but the beginning of one's Christian experience, not the culmination of it. The focus must be on scripturally proclaiming the message of salvation and gaining converts, not merely getting religious decisions. Whether a mere religious decision or a true conversion experience, the subsequent life will bear testimony to the reality or non–reality of God's grace in a transformed life.

The teaching that one may take Jesus as his "Savior" only, and then later make him "Lord" of his life is utterly unscriptural—a form of modified perfectionist teaching. [Perfectionism is the idea that fallen human nature is perfectible. This translates into either a sinless perfectionism in this life or some

modified form in which one either experiences a "second work of grace" or progresses from "carnal" to "spiritual" by either an experience or some ritual of "rededication"]. See Questions 108–110. God made Jesus Christ "Lord" at his resurrection and ascension into glory (Acts 2:36). To "receive" him as anyone less is to receive the "Jesus" of one's imagination and not the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9–10; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:5). Any evangelistic methodology which equates physical movement ["walking the aisle," "coming forward" at the invitation] with savingly coming to Christ is actually sacramental, ritualistic and psychological—not spiritual. The "invitation," or urging sinners to Christ, is scriptural; the "invitational system," as it is usually practiced, is not. Sinners are to be urged to Christ, exhorted to flee to Christ and pointed to Christ for salvation in the preaching, during the sermon and after the sermon (Acts 2:40; 17:30–31), and in evangelistic conversation on a personal basis. To add another part to the religious service in order to make the message evangelistic or effective is highly questionable. Is it not a tacit admission that the message itself is either incomplete or inadequate, or must have some psychological methodology added to it to make it effectual?

What assurance of salvation is given in the decisionist system? Assurance is usually linked to a time, a place and a religious decision, rather than derived from the doctrinal truth of the Scriptures. Biblical assurance of faith rests objectively in the doctrinal realities of the eternal redemptive purpose of God and his promises. Subjectively, assurance rests in one's sanctification, which witnesses to the reality of his justification (Rom. 5:1–6:23; 1 Jn. 2:3–5), i.e., the marks of grace manifest in the life—a converted lifestyle (2 Pet. 1:4–11). Finally, assurance rests in the witness of the Holy Spirit and his peculiar work in the true believer (Rom. 5:5; 8:11–16). See Questions 110–112. Are we converted or have we merely had a momentary religious experience?

Quest. 89: What is evangelical or saving faith?

Ans: Evangelical or saving faith is the gift of God, the consequence of regenerating grace, which, without reservation, lays hold of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior for salvation.

Acts 16:30–31. 30And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? 31And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Rom. 10:9–10. 9That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Eph. 2:8–10. 8For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: 9Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

See also: the following are examples of faith as personal, saving belief: Matt. 18:6; Mk. 1:15; Jn. 1:12–13; 9:35–38; 11:27; 12:39–41; 20:31; Acts 4:4; 8:36–37; 13:39, 48; 14:1; 18:27; Rom. 3:21–23, 27–31; 4:11, 24; 10:13–14, 17; 1 Cor. 1:21; 2:1–5; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Thess. 1:10; 1 Tim. 1:16; 4:3, 10; Heb. 4:3; 10:38–39; 11:1–40; Jas. 1:2–4; 1 Pet. 1:5, 7; 2:7; 1 Jn., 2:23; 5:5, 13.

The following are examples of "the faith" as connoting the doctrinal content or the substantial teaching of Christianity, the content of Divine revelation which the faithful are to believe: Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; Rom. 1:5; 10:8; 14:1; 1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:23; Eph. 4:5, 13; Col. 1:23; 2:5; 1 Tim. 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:7; Titus 1:4, 13; Jude 3.

The following are examples of a defective or temporary "faith" or "belief" which is distinct from true, saving faith: Lk. 8:13; Jn. 2:23–25; 8:30–59; 12:42; Acts 8:13–24; 26:27–28; Heb. 6:1–9; 10:38–39; Jas. 2:14–26.

COMMENTARY

There are few words and entities in Scripture or in the Christian religion which are more important and significant than "faith." Faith stands as the epitome of salvation by grace. The term itself is used to denote the doctrinal or substantial content of Christianity. Further, faith is synonymous with one's relation to God, and is descriptive of the Christian experience as a whole. Such a subject thus demands the utmost scrutiny. Any deviation here may well prove fatal to one's very relationship to God and his truth, and to one's hope of eternal salvation.

The biblical terms are both nominal, "faith," and verbal, "believe." To believe is to have faith, and to have faith is to believe. Faith, unless it is wholly irrational, needs a distinct nature, a basis or warrant, a function, an object, and a confidence or assurance.

The Nature of Saving Faith. This can be found in the following particulars: faith consists of a belief, an assent to truth and its implications, a corresponding commitment—a trust or reliance upon its object. It is the gift of God, graciously imparted at regeneration. This makes saving faith unique and gives to it its distinct, objective character. Although it is the gift of God, faith is exercised by the individual as his own. Mere human trust, however, is entirely subjective, and possibly without any objective character, and so would necessarily vary from one person to another. As the gift of God, saving faith reflects that unique faith described in Scripture and remains identical in character for each and every true convert. Faith necessitates a corresponding kind of life or consistent expression, i.e., Christian faithfulness. One enters into a life of belief and trust.

When considering the nature of saving faith, we must carefully note that not all faith is saving faith. About this, the Scriptures are very clear (Matt. 13:5–6, 20–21; Lk. 8:14; Jn. 2:23–25). The attitude of many within modern evangelical Christianity is that all faith *is* saving faith, and that a person's profession of faith is to be taken at face value and never questioned. Further, it is assumed that saving faith is synonymous with mere human trust, and that such faith is, indeed, the product of our own personalities. Every person, it is

assumed, has the faith to believe in Christ, the only issue is where he directs such faith. See Question 88.

There are various kinds of "faith" described in Scripture, and these need to be carefully marked. To be defective at this crucial point is to be fatally deceived: first, there is a doctrinal faith (Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; 16:5; 24:24; Rom. 1:5; 10:8; 2 Tim. 4:7; Jude 3). To speak of a doctrinal faith is legitimate. The New Testament uses the term "faith" to denote either the doctrinal content of Christianity or Christianity in general. It is quite possible, however, to have a merely doctrinal faith without saving grace. There are those whose faith is contained within creeds or confessions, but it is not vital and life–transforming.

Second, there is a merely intellectual faith (1 Cor. 15:1–2; Jas. 2:19). It is possible to have such a bare faith, yet to "believe in vain" [to no purpose]. This is a faith which is isolated from Scripture and a conversion experience with its subsequent life. This may describe many who only have a momentary or isolated religious experience. This seems to be the case of those "sown among thorns" who, although retaining their profession "bring no fruit to perfection" (Lk. 8:14). This may well describe many nominal professing Christians.

Third, there is a temporary faith (Matt. 13:20–21; Jn. 2:23–25), which may be either merely intellectual or emotional, based upon something seen or felt, but not solidly grounded in the Scriptures. It was so with the people in Jn. 2:23–25, who gawked at the sights, but their hearts remained unchanged. The same was true of the stony ground hearers who endure in their profession for only a short time (Matt. 13:5–6, 20–21).

Fourth, there is a merely theoretical faith, which exists only in principle, for the sake of convenience or for personal advantage (Jn. 12:42–43; Acts 26:27–28). This characterized some secret, compromising Jewish leaders, and also King Agrippa II who, although an Idumean [descendant of Esau], had become a devotee of Judaism.

Finally, there is a selective faith, which chooses to believe some things in the Scripture, but not others. For example, this may be a faith which may believe in heaven, but not in hell; or it may be a faith which does not come to terms scripturally with the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9–10; 2 Cor. 4:5). We cannot accept or receive the Lord Jesus Christ as anyone less than he is. God has made him "Lord," and we must receive him as such. To "accept" him as anyone less is not saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ of Scripture.

Saving faith possesses three elements: first, an intellectual element, or knowledge. This is the cognitive foundation for faith, i.e., its ground or warrant in God and his Word (Rom. 10:17). Second, an emotional element, or an assent as cognition passes into conviction that Christ is the only and all–sufficient Savior (Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:9–10; Eph. 2:8–10). Third, a volitional element, or the active, joyful and self–abandoning trust in Christ for deliverance, pardon, forgiveness and reconciliation (Rom. 1:17; Eph. 1:13; Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:3–5). Saving faith is utter, unreserved commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior

(Jn. 3:16; Acts 16:31; Phil. 1:29). The grammatical constructions of the New Testament are as follows: We have "faith in Christ" (Gal. 3:26), "believe in [into] Christ" (Jn. 3:16; Phil. 1:29), or "believe on [upon] Christ" (Acts 16:31) for salvation. These were technical expressions in the culture and language of that day; there was no question wherever the gospel was preached as to the commitment of faith—it meant nothing less than utter, unreserved commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord.

The Basis or Warrant of Faith. Faith involves a right belief about God and his Word. Biblical faith in general, and saving faith in particular, has its basis or ground in the triune, self–disclosing God of Scripture. His inscripturated Word is absolute truth (Jn. 17:17), and as the very Word of God, it is self–authenticating. Faith receives the Scriptures as the very Word of God. Biblical faith thus has, as its warrant or reason for belief, the veracity or trustworthiness of God through his Word. See Questions 7–19. In the matter of salvation, faith rests in the truth of God in general, and in the promises of the gospel in particular. The sinner has sufficient warrant because he is a sinner and is invited, yea, urged and commanded to repent and believe. The focal–point of saving faith is the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. This perfect righteousness, procured by the active and passive obedience of the Lord Jesus, is appropriated through faith alone. See Questions 70–71 and 89.

The Function of Saving Faith. Faith is instrumental, not causative, in our salvation. In other words, we are *not* saved "because of faith," but rather "through" or "by" faith (Eph. 2:8–10). This is a critical matter. This is, indeed, the watershed between salvation by grace and salvation by works [innate human ability]. To be saved because of faith would necessarily mean that such faith would be mere human trust, which would stand opposed to the very principle and reality of Divine grace.

The Object of Saving Faith. The efficacy of saving faith rests in its Object, the Lord Jesus Christ in the fullness of his Person and work as revealed in Scripture. It is not faith itself that saves, but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that saves. Faith without an object is wholly irrational.

The Assurance of Saving Faith. Faith and assurance are inherently related. To claim or express religious faith, trust or reliance, one also necessarily claims some kind of persuasion, confidence or assurance. A faith with no confidence or assurance would be an absurdity, as faith itself is subjectively belief, trust or reliance upon Christ in all things pertaining to salvation. If the faith is true, genuine, saving faith, then the assurance is valid; if the faith is defective or false, then so is the assurance. See Questions 91, 110–112. Does our personal faith reflect the truth of Scripture?

Quest. 90: What is evangelical or saving repentance unto life?

Ans: Evangelical or saving repentance unto life is the gift of God, the immediate consequence of regenerating grace, and is evidenced in turning from sin to God.

Mk. 1:15. …The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

Lk. 24:47. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Acts 11:18. When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Acts 17:30–31. [30]And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: [31]Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

See also: Gen. 6:6; Ex. 32:7–14; 1 Sam. 15:28–29; Job 42:6; 2 Chron. 7:14; Jer. 31:19; Jonah 3:4–10; 4:2; Matt. 3:2, 7–8; 11:21; 12:41; Mk. 2:17; Lk. 11:29–32; 13:1–5; 15:7; 16:30; 17:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; 11:29; 2 Cor. 7:9–10; 2 Tim. 2:25; Heb. 6:5–6; 12:17; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 2:5, 16, 21–22; 3:3, 19.

COMMENTARY

As with saving faith, an understanding of evangelical or saving repentance is vital to understanding biblical Christianity. In modern, evangelical Christianity, repentance has largely become a lost doctrine. It is either unscripturally made necessary to salvation by being connected to baptism, made synonymous with faith, being merged with faith, or yet relegated basically to the Jews, until it is simply no longer relevant.

The term "repentance" signifies a change of mind. Soteriologically, it is a change of mind or heart concerning sin which results in a turning from sin to God, attended by a subsequent change of lifestyle (Matt. 3:7–8; Mk. 1:14–15; Acts 17:30–31; 20:21; 26:19–20).

Repentance applies both to the unconverted and converted, i.e., when one is converted, he repents from his sins and sin (Lk. 24:47; Acts 17:30–31). After conversion, as a believer, because he still must deal with the manifestations of indwelling sin and remaining corruption, he continues to be repentant throughout his Christian experience (1 Jn. 1:7–10; 2:1; Rev. 3:1–3).

The use of the term "repentance" in the English Bible may result in some confusion because there are two different Gk. terms translated as such. E.g., in Matt. 27:3–5, Judas is said to have "repented" [was filled with remorse or regret] then later, "went and hanged himself." Judas did not repent in the sense of changing his mind or turning his life from his sin to God in the context of his wicked deed, but was rather only filled with remorse or regret [*metamelomai*].

True, saving repentance will have its share of remorse, regret, sorrow or grief, but will also be a change of mind [*metanoia*] concerning sin, a confession of it, and then a departure from it by the enabling grace of God.

There are three necessary elements which pertain to true evangelical repentance. Note that there is a picture drawn in Scripture for us in the repentance of Nineveh (Note the relationship between Lk. 11:29–32 and Jonah 3:1–8): first, the intellectual element: sin admitted, or conviction. Second, the emotional element: sin abhorred, or contrition. Third, the volitional element: sin abandoned, or conversion. Repentance is from sin and toward God—a change of the mind and will. It is an act of the will, enabled by grace, to forsake and turn from sin. True, saving repentance culminates in conversion. Have you turned from your sins—all sins and sin as the ruling principle of your life—to the Lord Jesus?

Quest. 91: What is the logical and chronological relation between faith and repentance?

Ans: Logically and chronologically, the gracious consequences of regeneration are faith and repentance. Although repentance is usually given priority in command and experience, both faith and repentance occur simultaneously.

Mk. 1:14–15. 14Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, 15And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

See also: Acts 3:19; 20:21.

COMMENTARY

In summary, faith and repentance are Divine gifts of free and sovereign grace (Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:4–10), bestowed at regeneration (Jn. 3:3, 5–8), and immediately evidenced in the life and experience. See Questions 83, 86–87. In conversion, one not only believes and repents, but he enters into a state of believing and a state of being repentant which extends throughout his Christian experience. It is important to note that repentance comes forth from a believing heart and mind.

It is vital to understand that repentance and faith are not works by which we earn or merit our salvation. Although we freely and willingly repent and believe, we are graciously enabled to do so. The first step toward thinking that repentance or faith can merit one's standing before God is taken when it is thought that salvation in general and justification in particular are "because of faith" rather than "by or through faith." This is the watershed between salvation by grace and salvation by works. Are you resting in Christ or in what you have done? Salvation is by grace, not by performance.

Quest. 92: What is justification?

Ans: Justification is a forensic and gracious act of God, wherein he pardons all the believer's sins, declares him to be righteous in his sight, by virtue of the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, and is received by and reconciled to God by faith alone.

Rom. 3:24. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Gal. 2:16. Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Rom. 5:1–2. [1]Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: [2]By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Phil. 3:9. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Rom. 4:5–8. [5]But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. [6]Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, [7]Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. [8]Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

See also: Gen. 15:6; Deut. 25:1; Job 9:2; 25:4; Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 5:23; 53:11; Hab. 2:4; Matt. 5:6; 12:37; Lk. 18:14; Acts 13:39; Rom. 1:17; 3:19–20; 3:21–5:21; 8:1, 29–34; 1 Cor. 1:30–31; 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:13–21; Gal. 2:15–5:1; Eph. 1:7; Phil. 3:4–14; Heb. 10:38; Jas. 2:14–26; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Jn. 1:9.

COMMENTARY

The essential issue of justification is the most primary and basic question of all religion: "How should a man be just with God?" (Job 9:2). In reality, this question presupposes the fall, apostasy and alienation of sinful man, the awful reality and nature of sin, and the absolute righteousness and awful wrath of a thrice–holy God. Only through the imputation of a righteousness which answers to both the requirements and the penalty of the Moral Law of God can the ungodly be justified and reconciled to the God of Scripture.

Justification by faith is thus the very heart of the gospel. Because this biblical doctrine is the core of objective truth, it is vital to understand it thoroughly. Justification by faith, i.e., a free or gracious justification, determines the very character of Christianity as a religion of grace and faith. It defines the life, suffering and death of our Lord as a full satisfaction in the context of Divine Law and justice. It sets in both proper perspective and bold relief Divine justice, mercy and grace in the punishment of sin and the

pardoning of sinners in relation to the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It clarifies both faith and Christian morality, and forms the very basis of Christian confidence, assurance and hope (Rom. 5:1–2). Justification by faith makes Christianity the one and only true religion for all mankind. Every other alleged refuge for man is false (Rom. 3:21–26).

The English terms "justify" and "justification" derive from the Latin *justificare* and *justificatio* [from *justum* and *facere*], and may mean either "to *pronounce* just or righteous" or "to *make* just or righteous." This ambiguity has resulted in the false teaching that justification is an infused righteousness [*justitia infusa*] rather than an imputed righteousness [*justitia imputata*]. Because of this ambiguity, the meaning of justification must derive from the use of the biblical terms themselves, not simply their etymology. An infused [imparted] righteousness would confuse justification with sanctification, and would inevitably result in salvation by works, i.e., justification would depend upon one's sanctification [holiness of life]—the error of both Romanism and perfectionism. See Questions 34, 84, 88 and the introductory paragraph to Part V.

Separated into its constituent parts, the truth of justification by faith is explained in the following statements. This analysis serves as both a summary and an introduction to the remainder of this study on justification: first, justification is a revealed truth without analogy in the natural realm of general revelation or Natural Theology, or even in the human legal system, which seeks to justify the innocent and condemn the guilty. It is solely a matter of Divine, special, redemptive revelation.

Second, justification is an objective, declarative and constitutive act of free grace on the part of God; it is neither deserved, nor is it a process (Rom. 3:24). It is not a subjective experience, i.e., it is not to be combined or confused with sanctification. God declares the believing sinner just or righteous; he does not make him just. The first is justification; the second is sanctification. See Question 94.

Third, justification is forensic and constitutive, i.e., it is a legal pronouncement which declares the sinner righteous before the Divine tribunal. It answers fully and completely to both the demands and the penalty of the Moral Law of God (Acts 13:38–39; Rom. 3:19–31).

Fourth, justification is the imputation of righteousness, not the impartation of righteousness [sanctification], i.e., it is the very righteousness of Christ imputed to the believing sinner, not a righteousness imparted or infused. Justification changes one's standing or state before the demands and penalty of the Law as the standard of Divine righteousness; it does not change one's character or nature. In short, the sinner is declared righteous, not made righteous. God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5–8).

Fifth, the mediatorial righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, procured by his active obedience to the Law during his earthly life, wherein he completely fulfilled its demands, and his passive obedience, including his suffering and

death, wherein he made full satisfaction for the Law's penalty, are both imputed to the believing sinner who, until the moment of justification, is yet ungodly (Rom. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Sixth, the believer's sins are all imputed to Christ and his righteousness is imputed to the believer (Rom. 5:12–19; 2 Cor. 5:21). Thus, there is pardon, forgiveness and remission of sins, the imputation of a positive righteousness and reconciliation with God.

Seventh, the imputation of Christ's righteousness is by or through faith alone (Rom. 5:1). As a gracious declarative or constitutive act, it cannot be "because of faith," nor can the faith of the sinner stand in the stead of such Divine righteousness without destroying the gracious nature of justification and the reality of Divine imputation.

Eighth, justification is an absolute, declarative act. All sins are pardoned or remitted—past, present and future. The believer will never come under Divine condemnation for his sins (Rom. 8:1). He stands in a justified state before God. He may lose the consciousness of his fellowship with his Heavenly Father (Eph. 4:30; 2 Pet. 1:4–10), and be chastened (Heb. 12:4–14), but never condemned. One cannot lose his justification, i.e., become "unjustified," and so become lost and come under condemnation again.

Ninth, as an act of God's free and sovereign grace, justification does not vary from one believer to another, i.e., there are no degrees of justification. Both the most wicked sinner and the most self–righteous moralist can be equally justified through faith. The same is true for the weakest and the strongest believer. All stand equally justified through the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and have equal access to the Father (Rom. 3:21–31; 5:1–2; Eph. 2:13–22).

Tenth, justification is inseparable from regeneration, adoption and sanctification. Those whom God quickens and to whom he imputes righteousness, he also infallibly makes righteous. Although he justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), they do not remain so, but are both declared righteous [justification] and then made righteous [sanctification] (1 Cor. 1:30–31; 6:11).

Eleventh, justification results in a state of peace between the believing sinner and an absolutely righteous God (Rom. 5:1). Not only is there pardon or remission of all sins, but also a restoration to Divine favor, with all the amenities and privileges of sonship (Jn. 1:12–13; Rom. 5:1–10; 8:14–34; Gal. 3:6–7, 24–26; 4:4–7).

Twelfth, although not an experience, such as conversion or sanctification, the reality of justification forms the basis for the patience, joy, confidence and hope of the Christian experience (Rom. 5:1–11).

Thirteenth, saving faith is justifying faith, and the sole Object of such faith is the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith grasps the Lord Jesus Christ at the point of his righteousness. The Scripture graphically and succinctly declares that we are "…justified freely by his grace through the redemption that

is in Christ Jesus…through faith in his blood…" (Cf. Jn. 3:16, 36; Acts 10:43; 16:31; Rom. 3:22, 25; 10:9–10; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:9).

Fourteenth, the Protestant and Baptist Confessions add the word "alone" to the biblical statement of justification by faith, i.e., "…by faith alone" because the Romish Church and others teach a mixture of faith and works. Faith and works [human ability] stand in juxtaposition. They are opposites. Saving faith is the gift of God, and therefore justification is a gracious act. We are justified by faith alone, but by a faith which does not stand alone, i.e., justification must not be divorced from sanctification. Justifying faith subsequently produces good works (Eph. 2:8–10; Jas. 2:14–26). See the following comparison and contrast of Paul and James on justification.

It has been alleged that, while Paul teaches justification by faith alone, without works (Rom. 3:24–31; 4:1–8; Gal. 2:16), James teaches justification by faith and works (Jas. 2:14–26). An alleged contradiction has been perceived which has led to various errors concerning the nature of justification, even to the confusion of justification and sanctification. This has resulted in the belief in an infused righteousness rather than an imputed righteousness.

It must be remembered that the Bible as the inscripturated Word of God is necessarily coherent [does not contain any inherent contradictions]. Any seeming contradictions are the result of human misunderstanding and doctrinal prejudice. The following contrasts and comparisons reveal the respective emphases of James and Paul, and their compatibility: first, James wrote to Jewish Christians, some of whose profession of faith was contradicted by their conduct. Paul wrote to Gentile believers who had fallen prey to the Judaizers who taught that one must become a Jew in order to become a Christian, i.e., sought to bring them under the bondage of the law (e.g., Acts 15:1). James was dealing primarily with faith; Paul primarily with justification. Thus, the subjects, the religio–cultural situations, the reasons for writing and the readers were diverse.

Second, James denounces a dead faith; Paul writes concerning the necessity of a living faith. James describes what a living faith is as evidenced in the life and experience; Paul writes concerning faith as the instrumental means in justification.

Third, James writes against antinomianism, which, while professing faith, lacks its necessary and proper fruit. Paul writes against legalism, which sought justification either through a works–righteousness [self–righteousness, law–keeping], or a combination of both faith and works.

Fourth, the concern of James was with faith and its manifestation by good works. The concern of Paul was with the instrumental means of justification, which is through faith alone. Good works are the evidences of our faith and of justification, but never their cause.

Fifth, the emphasis of James is that we are saved by faith alone, but by a faith that does not stand alone. The emphasis of Paul is that we are justified by

faith alone. In other places Paul states that this faith is not alone, but "works by love," i.e., evidences itself as a living faith (Gal. 5:6). Both James and Paul decry a "dead" faith, and hold that true faith must evidence itself in good works (Jas. 2:14, 18, 26; Titus 3:8). James speaks of justifying our faith before men. Paul speaks of our justification before God by faith alone.

Sixth, both James and Paul point to Abraham as the great example of justification by faith, and by a faith that evidences itself in good works (Jas. 2:21–24; Rom. 4:1–3, 9–22). The issue is the juxtaposition of two incidents in Abraham's life. Paul points to Gen. 15:6, which focuses on the faith of Abraham apart from any and all his subsequent works. James points to the act of faith in the offering up of Isaac, which occurred about twenty–five years later (Gen. 22). Thus Paul, using Abraham as an example, emphasizes justification by faith alone, and James, using Abraham as an example, emphasizes that justifying faith evidences itself in acts of faith, i.e., good works.

Any system which denies the necessity of our Lord's active obedience, or denies the imputation of Christ's righteousness, is a serious departure from the biblical gospel, as all gospel truth is inherently interrelated and coherent. The heretical positions espoused by the Church of Rome, Perfectionist and semi–perfectionist schemes, the "New Perspective on Paul" and the "Federal Vision" Theology are examples, of not only denying these truths, but centering salvation on baptism and "covenant faithfulness" rather than justification by faith alone in the gospel of God's grace.

Are you right with God? Can you answer the age–old question, "How can a man be just with God?" in the affirmative? Do you rest in the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Quest. 93: What is adoption?

Ans: Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby the believer is received into the number, and has a right to all the privileges of the sons of God, including the reception of the Holy Spirit. The full and final realization of adoption awaits the bodily resurrection unto glory.

Jn. 1:12–13. 12But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: 13Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Rom. 8:14–16. 14For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Rom. 8:22–23. 22For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan

within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

Gal. 4:4–7. [4]But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, [5]To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.[6]And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. [7]Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Eph. 1:3–6. [3]Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: [4]According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: [5]Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, [6]To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

1 Jn. 3:1–3. [1]Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. [2]Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. [3]And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

See also: Rom. 8:17–23; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Jn. 3:1–3.

COMMENTARY

The Fatherhood of God is revealed in Scripture in several different filial relationships, none of which must be confused with the others: first, a trinitarian or ontological filial relationship scripturally designated in terms of "Sonship." The Lord Jesus Christ is God the Son, an ontological, eternal or generational Sonship, which is unique. See Questions 23 and 25. This designation distinguishes the second Person of the triune Godhead from the first and third Persons. Second, a creational sonship, which includes angelic beings and human beings created by God as rational, moral, self–determining beings. Although all men are the children ["offspring'] of God in a creational sense, as bearing the Divine image (Gen. 1:26; Acts 17:28; Eph. 3:14–15; Jas. 3:9), this does not imply the "universal Fatherhood of God" and the "universal brotherhood of all men." Such would deny the Fall, its consequences, the reality of sin and the necessity of redemption. Third, a national sonship, which designated Israel under the Old Covenant (Ex. 4:22–23; Rom. 9:4, 6–8). Fourth, a redemptive filial relation or sonship. This relationship is grounded in the sovereign love of God the Father (Eph. 1:3–5), through the mediatorial work of the Son (Gal. 4:4–6; Eph. 1:5–7), and evidenced by the ministry and witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 8:14–17; Gal. 4:4–6). It is inseparable from regeneration and justification, and yet redemptively unique. It is this last sonship to which the biblical doctrine of adoption refers.

The English term "adoption" derives from the Latin *adoptio* (from *ad*, "to" and *opto*, "choose"). The term occurs five times in Scripture, all in the New Testament, and all in the writings of Paul: Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5. The Gk. term is *huiothesia*, from *huios*, "son," and *thesis*, "a placing," and literally means "to place as a son," a process and ceremony upon one's majority, which referred to natural sons within the family as well as to adopted sons from outside the family. One must take care not to read into the Scriptures either the bare Latin etymology, the legal, or the modern idea of adopting someone into the family as a child. The biblical terminology and its use designate this, but also much more.

Adoption, then, is a distinct, forensic, separate and gracious act of God which brings us into that filial relationship and intimacy as his beloved sons and children. It is through adoption that we receive the Holy Spirit and the status of sonship (Rom. 8:14–17; Gal. 4:4–7).

This forensic, gracious act of God—separate and distinct from regeneration and justification—stands at the foundation of our filial relationship to God as our Heavenly Father, and inclusively of our whole Christian experience. It is in the context of our adoption that we must consider our Father's mercy and grace (Eph. 1:3–7; 2:18; 3:14–19), our relationship to him as "Father" (Gal. 4:5–7), our prayers to and communion with him (Matt. 6:9, 14–15; Lk. 11:2), his loving kindness, chastening and providential care (Rom. 8:14–17, 23, 28; Heb. 12:5–14), and that glorious presence, witness, seal and earnest of the Holy Spirit, who makes our Christian experience a reality, retains our glorious inheritance and preserves us unto his heavenly kingdom (Rom. 5:5; 8:15–16; Gal. 4:4–7; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30; 2 Tim. 4:18; 1 Pet. 1:4).

Adoption possesses a vital eschatological aspect. The New Testament associates our final adoption [placing as a son] with our resurrection unto glory. Our resurrected, glorified bodies will signal our full and final status as the sons of God manifested before all creation (Rom. 8:17–23; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Jn. 3:1–3). Do you have the Spirit of adoption? (Rom. 8:11–16).

Quest. 94: What is sanctification?

Ans: Sanctification is the work of God's Word and Spirit, whereby the believer is renewed in the whole man after the image of God, has died to the reigning power of sin, and is enabled to live more and more unto righteousness, and to mortify the manifestations of indwelling sin and remaining corruption.

1 Cor. 1:1–2. [1]Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother, [2]Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

1 Cor. 1:30–31. [30]But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

[31]That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Eph. 4:22–24. [22]That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; [23]And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; [24]And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

1 Thess. 4:3–4, 7. [3]For this is the will of God, *even* your sanct–ification, that ye should abstain from fornication: [4]That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour….[7]For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

Heb. 12:14. Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

1 Pet. 1:15–16. [15]But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; [16]Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

1 Pet. 2:9. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Jn. 17:17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

2 Cor. 7:1. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

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

See Also in the Old Testament: Gen. 2:3; Ex. 13:2; 19:14; 20:8; 28:36, 41; 29:43; Lev. 10:3; 20:7; 21:8; Numb. 27:14; Deut. 5:12; Ezra 9:2; Psa. 24:3–4; 29:2; Jer. 1:5; Ezk. 22:26; Joel 2:16.

See also in the New Testament: Matt. 1:21; Acts 26:18; Rom. 6:1–23; 7:12; 8:29; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; 7:14; Eph. 1:4; 5:26; Phil. 2:12–13; Col. 3:1–10; 1 Tim. 2:8; 4:1–5; 2 Tim. 1:9, 14; 2:19–22; 3:15; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 3:5, 15; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; 3:11; Jude 1.

COMMENTARY

The essence of sanctification is that of separation and purification. Although these two principles characterize the whole of the eternal redemptive purpose, they are preeminent in the biblical truth and reality of the believer's sanctification or holiness of life. Sanctification practically means a life lived reflecting the moral character God as revealed in his inscripturated Word—a life lived in willing obedience to his commands. The process of sanctification is inclusive of the believer's entire experience, and the goal of sanctification is ultimate conformity to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 2 Pet. 3:18). See Question 125.

The essential terms related to sanctification in the English Bible are: "sanctification," "sanctify," "saint," "sanctuary," "holy" and "holiness." The

former derive from the Latin *sanctus* and *sanctificatio,* which bear the connotation of "consecrated, established as inviolable, sacred, divine, pure, holy," and "sanctification or made holy, consecrated." The word "saint" also derives from the Latin. The words "holy" and "holiness" derive from the Old English *hálig* and *hálignes,* from *hál*, "whole, hale, kept or regarded as inviolate from ordinary use and set apart for religious use, consecrated, dedicated, holy, sacred." The Old Testament terms are *qadash*, "to cut or separate," and *chasiyd*, "kind, merciful." The main New Testament term is *hagios*, a noun form of the verb *hagiazō*, "to cut or separate." Other terms are: *hosios*, "devout, pious, pure;" *eusebeia*, "piety, reverence, godly or devout;" *katharizein*, "to cleanse, purify," and *hieroprepes*, "reverence."

The two–fold principle of sanctification—separation and purification—is that of separation from what is common or unclean and separation or dedication unto God, with the cognate realities of purity, cleanliness and devotion to God. The Old Testament emphasis is on persons, sacrifices, objects, places, times and things separated from the common or profane unto God, and thus dedicated or consecrated unto him. The New Testament emphasis is rather upon separation from the pollution of the world and sin, and subsequent personal piety, godliness or holiness of life. In other words, the Old Testament tends to emphasize external, ritual or ceremonial separation and purification, while the New emphasizes personal moral purity and an obedient conformity to the character and Word of God (1 Pet. 1:14–16; 2 Cor. 3:1–18; Jn. 17:17; 1 Jn. 2:3–5; 3:22–24; 5:2–4).

The necessity and character of sanctification derive from six biblical truths: first, the moral character and glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9; 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Cor. 3:17–18); second, the nature of sin as a polluting and reigning power in the life (Rom. 6:14; 2 Cor. 7:1); third, the nature and goal of the redemptive purpose (Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9); fourth, the restoration of the image of God in principle in the believer (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9); fifth, the ultimate salvation of the whole person, i.e., glorification or the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 Jn. 3:1–4). Finally, the corporate sanctification of the church. Believers are not only sanctified as individuals, but in the context of their brothers and sisters in Christ within the context of the local assembly (Jn. 13:34–35; 1 Cor. 12:13–27; Eph. 4:25–32; Col. 3:9–23).

Sin in the Bible is characterized by five realities: guilt, penalty, pollution, power and presence. The biblical reality of salvation necessarily deals with every aspect of sin. The guilt of and penalty of sin, and the resulting alienation from God are dealt with in Justification and Adoption. The pollution and power of sin are dealt with in regeneration and sanctification. The presence of sin, as well as all other aspects, is fully and finally dealt with in glorification. Sanctification is, therefore, a biblical necessity. Any view of salvation which does not adequately and effectively deal with the polluting nature and reigning power of sin is scripturally defective. Sanctification maintains and perpetuates the reality of regeneration in its positional [union with Christ], definitive [a

radical cleavage with the reigning power of sin] and progressive [practical] aspects.

What is the very essence of Christian experience? Is it not the reality of salvific truth graciously vouchsafed to the life? Our justification is evidenced by our sanctification. No discernable sanctification, no reality to any claim of justification. Righteousness imputed is never isolated from righteousness imparted. The comprehensive argument of the Apostle Paul in the first eight chapters of Romans, after exploring the condemnation of all men under sin (1:18–3:20) is that everyone who is justified (3:21–5:21) is likewise necessarily sanctified (5:11–8:16). Everyone who is justified and sanctified must infallibly be glorified (Rom. 8:17–8:39).

The biblical and historic faith rests solely upon the inscripturated Word of God as its point–of–reference. Sanctification proves to be no exception. The all–sufficiency of Scripture for both faith and practice fully applies to the believer's sanctification. It is the Scripture which is used by the Spirit of God in our sanctification (Jn. 17:17; 1 Cor. 2:6–16; 2 Cor. 3:1–18; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; Jas. 1:19–25; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27). The Holy Spirit uses the Word and illuminates our minds to the Word to teach, edify, reprove, correct, convict and sanctify us.

The Moral Law or Law of Christ, as an essential part of the Word of God, is the one and only standard of sanctification for believers. Although it is epitomized in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:1–17) in its largely negative form, it is positive in its essence (Matt. 22:36–40; Rom. 13:8–10). This is the only standard of right and wrong which was given as a creation ordinance, and ontologically implanted within man's bosom, and still retained after the Fall (Rom. 2:14–16). All other suggested standards, such as "the law of love," are necessarily relative to this Law. See Questions 40–43. The Moral Law alone stands as the revelation or manifestation of the Divine moral self–consistency. Obedience to the Moral Law can never sanctify, and may in itself prove to be mere legalism, but the Moral Law remains the Divine standard. It is by grace that believers love and conform to it in principle in the context of the grace of the New or Gospel Covenant (Rom. 6:14; 8:1–4).

Gospel sanctification, i.e., the sanctification of the believer in the context of the New Testament, is at once a position or relationship, a definitive act and also a practical and progressive state. Defects, doctrinal errors and heresies have resulted from not comprehending the entire reality of gospel sanctification, and thus emphasizing one aspect to the exclusion of the others. Carefully mark the following: first, sanctification is a spiritual position or status, a relationship which is described as the believer's union with Christ. The believer is considered before God justified and sanctified "in Christ" and even, as it were, already in heaven, as to his position, although he proves to be imperfectly sanctified in actual experience (1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:4–7). See Question 77.

Second, sanctification is a definitive act which occurs simultaneously with and inseparable from regeneration. It consists in the breaking of the reigning

power of sin, the re–creation of the image of God in principle, the removal of satanic blindness (2 Cor. 4:3–6), the impartation of the Holy Spirit by virtue of the believer's union with Christ in his death and resurrection–life, and adoption as a son (Rom. 6:1–14, 17–18; 8:9—16; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–10). See Question 83.

Third, sanctification is the practical and progressive state descriptive of the believer's experience and spiritual pilgrimage. This state is to be viewed in the context of the vivifying [enlivening] ministry of the Spirit, the mortification of sin, Divine chastening, and an increasing conformity to the image of God's Son (Gal. 5:16–18; Rom. 8:1–4, 11–16, 29; Heb. 12:4–11; 2 Cor. 3:17–18). See Question 95. Do you exemplify that "holiness without which no man can see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14)?

Quest. 95: What are the three necessary aspects of sanctification?

Ans: Sanctification is at once a spiritual position or status, a definitive act and an experiential and progressive state. These three realities are all necessarily true for each and every believer.

1 Cor. 1:30–31. 30But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

1 Cor. 6:9–11. 9Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

2 Thess. 2:13. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

1 Pet. 1:15–16. 15But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

2 Cor. 7:1. Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

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

See also: Rom. 5:12–8:16, which is a lengthy, detailed exposition of sanctification in the context of justification, union with Christ and glorification. Cf. also Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 1:1–2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:16–18; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–10.

COMMENTARY

When all the biblical statements concerning sanctification are gathered, exegeted, properly interpreted, systematized and harmonized, one is left with sanctification necessarily revealed in three aspects, which overlap with other doctrinal truths, but which may be extracted and studied separately.

Positional sanctification refers to the spiritual position or status which results from the believer's union with Christ. See Question 77. This union is an indissoluble and unalterable union which raises the believer to the greatest possible identification and the highest possible position "in Christ" (Eph. 2:4–7). Every spiritual blessing and privilege which is "in Christ" thus accrue to the believer, who is "sanctified in Christ Jesus."

The scriptural passages most closely associated with positional sanctification are: first, those statements in which believers are already considered as sanctified, i.e., sanctification, not as a process, but as a completed act. Such an act pertains to the believer's union with and identification in Christ, and not to his experience (Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1:30; 6:9–11; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 10:10, 14; Jude 1).

Second, the statements referring to all believers, irrespective of their individual Christian experience, as "saints" or "holy [sanctified] ones" (e.g., Acts 9:13; 26:10; Rom. 1:7; 15:26; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:1; 14:33; 2 Cor. 1:1; 8:4; 9:1; Eph. 1:1; 2:19; 4:12; 5:3; Phil. 1:1; 4:22; Col. 1:2; Jude 3).

Third, statements describing the believer's position as "in Christ" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:11; 8:1; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 15:22; Eph. 1:1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11; 2:6–7, 10; 1 Pet. 5:14). Such statements occur at least twenty–eight times in the New Testament.

Fourth, statements revealing that Christ is "in" the believer (Jn. 14:20, 23; Rom. 8:9–10; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27).

Finally, the metaphors which are descriptive of the believer's union with Christ and thus of his status and position: The vine and the branches (Jn. 15:1–8), the head and the body (1 Cor. 12:12–27; Eph. 1:22–23; 4:12–16), the husband and the wife (Eph. 5:22–33), a building of which our Lord is the foundation (1 Cor. 3:9–11) or chief cornerstone (Eph. 2:20–22; 1 Pet. 2:4–8), baptism, which symbolizes this union in his death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:1–6) and, by comparison and contrast, identification with both Adam and Christ (Rom. 5:12–21).

The believer is thus considered before God as sanctified "in Christ" and even, as it were, already in heaven, as to his unalterable position, although he proves to be imperfectly sanctified in actual experience (1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:4–7). This has an immediate relation to the believer's assurance of faith as an objective, immutable truth and reality.

Definitive sanctification is that aspect of the redemptive purpose and process, wherein a definitive breech or radical cleavage is made with the reigning power of sin in the life beginning at regeneration. This aspect of

sanctification necessarily derives from one's position "in Christ" [positional sanctification] and is itself necessarily evidenced in a converted life [progressive sanctification]. Definitive sanctification is therefore distinct but inseparable from the believer's union with Christ and the grace of God in regeneration.

The believer's union with Christ is determinative for his Christian experience. Union with Christ, as a revealed truth in Scripture, is necessarily a union in both our Lord's death and his resurrection. Both aspects are essential to the reality of one's Christian experience. (Cf. Rom. 6:1–14). What is the exact significance of being brought into union with our Lord's death? The answer is given in detail in Romans 6:1–10, 14; Col. 2:20; 3:1–5ff; 1 Pet. 2:24; 4:1–2. Carefully mark the Gk. verbs in Rom. 6:2–10. They are all in the aorist tense and ought to be translated as a past event ["died" rather than "dead" or "are dead"] to be reckoned as an objective, present reality, not a merely possible state which is to be sought as a subjective religious experience, i.e., "are enabled more and more to die unto sin." The inescapable conclusion is that union in the death of Christ necessarily means that the reigning power of sin has been broken in the life of the believer—every believer. The Scriptures neither teach a two–stage salvation or sanctification, nor do they contrast a "carnal" and "spiritual" Christian as normal to the Christian life. Some of the Corinthians were called "carnal" because they looked to men as their ideal rather than our Lord (1 Cor. 3:1–4). In Romans, the contrast is between the converted and unconverted (Rom. 8:1–11).

But does not the believer still sin? Yes, but he no longer lives under its reigning power. Sin no longer "lords it over him" (Rom. 6:14). Although he commits *acts* of sin, he no longer *lives* in sin as his native element or under its dominating power as his master (Rom. 6:14, 17–18; 1 Jn. 2:1; 3:9). The verbs translated "sin" in 1 Jn. 2:1 are in the aorist tense, referring to acts of sin. The reigning power of sin has been broken, as witnessed by the very language used in Rom. 6:11–14. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it [the body] in the lusts thereof." The prerogative rests with the believer, i.e., he is no longer viewed as being under the sway of reigning sin. Further, the command to stop yielding to the solicitations of sin and yield one's self to God without reservation necessarily means that sin's dominating power over the believer has been broken. Salvation in this aspect is a change of masters (Rom. 6:17–18). See Questions 113–117.

Rom. 6:6 describes the crucifixion of the old man. "Our old man was crucified with him in order that the body, as dominated by sin, might be robbed of its prominence and power, in order that from that point onward we should no longer serve as willing bondslaves to sin." Who or what is the "old man"? Cf. Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10. Note that Eph. 4:22–24 and Col. 3:9–10 are not commandments to be implemented, but present realities based on a past fact. The contrast between the "old man" and the "new man" is neither a contrast between an "old nature" and a "new nature," nor is the believer a spiritual schizophrenic comprised of two persons living within him. The "old man" was the old, unregenerate self, who was crucified with Christ. Believers

are now the "new man," or the regenerate self, re–created in the image of God in righteousness, holiness of the truth and knowledge—a necessary spiritual, moral and intellectual transformation. The source of the believer's sin is neither an "old nature" or "old man," but a principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption which will be laid aside at death (Rom. 7:7–8:4, 23). See Question 114.

Union with Christ not only means that every believer has been identified in the death of Christ, but also necessarily identified in his resurrection–life (Rom. 6:4–5; Col. 3:1–4). How does this union in the resurrection–life of Christ translate into Christian experience? The very same power which raised our Lord from the dead—the presence and power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 1:3–4)—now indwell each and every believer and form the spiritual dynamic of his life.

Thus, union with Christ, regeneration, the believer's adoption and sanctification are all inherently interrelated (Rom. 1:3–4; 6:4–5; 8:11–16; Eph. 1:13–14, 17–20; Col. 3:1–4). There has been a dynamic transfer of engaging or operative power in the one united to Christ and thus identified in his death and resurrection–life. Once he was disengaged from the principle of righteousness, i.e., although righteousness had a claim upon him, it had no motivating power to cause him to live righteously (Rom. 6:20). Now he is engaged by righteousness and disengaged from the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:22). Thus, union with Christ necessarily means union in both his death and resurrection–life, and these both translate as present realties in the believer's experience in definitive sanctification.

Progressive or practical sanctification is the manifestation of both positional and definitive sanctification in the life, experience and spiritual pilgrimage of the believer. In other words, practical or progressive sanctification is coextensive with Christian experience. This process is to be viewed in the context of the reality of conversion and in both the continuation and progress of grace in the life (2 Pet. 3:18).

Mark the following: first, the redemptive purpose and grace of God are infallible. Positional sanctification must necessarily express itself in personal holiness (Heb. 12:14). Second, the Scripture contains exhortations to the believer to conform to the moral self–consistency of God (2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:14–16; 2:9), to live a consecrated life in both body and soul (Rom. 12:1–2), and to have a regenerate mind–set because of the re–creation of the image of God within (Col. 3:9–10). Such exhortations are not left to natural strength or determination, but everywhere presuppose the enabling grace of God (Eph. 4:22–32; Col. 3:1–10). Third, the Christian experience, although it may at times be characterized by Divine chastisement (Heb. 12:4–14) and spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10–18), is primarily one of spiritual progression (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Eph. 4:13–16; Col. 2:6–7; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18). Fourth, the internal conflict of the child of God is not that he is at the same time an "old man" and a "new man," or has both an "old nature" and a "new nature." Rather, because the physical nature remains relatively

unchanged and yet awaits its redemption (Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:20–21), a principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption responds through the members of the body to the solicitations of sin (Rom. 6:11–13; 7:13–8:9). The believer is to take an aggressive attitude toward any manifestations of indwelling sin and remaining corruption by mortifying these (Rom. 8:11–13; Gal. 5:16–17; Col. 3:5ff).

Failure to relate positional sanctification to both definitive and progressive sanctification, or to deny these other aspects, has led many into error. In other words, deriving from the believer's union with Christ, and thus, his positional sanctification, is his definitive sanctification. His positional and definitive sanctification make possible and necessary his practical [progressive] sanctification. Positional sanctification is a once–for–all, unchangeable objective reality. Practical sanctification, on the other hand, is necessarily incomplete in this life. At the death of the believer, and certainly at his resurrection unto glory, positional sanctification and practical sanctification will become one and the same. Divine grace is effectual and infallible in conforming us to the image of God's Son, and so all three aspects are necessary. Does our Christian experience stand up to that which is described in God's Word?

Quest. 96: What are the two aspects of progressive or practical sanctification?

Ans: The two aspects of progressive or practical sanctification are the positive, or vivification, and the negative, or mortification of sin.

Rom. 6:11–14. 11Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. 12Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. 14For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Rom. 8:12–14. 12Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Col. 3:5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

See also: Rom. 7:13–8:16; 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:16–18, 24; Eph. 4:22–32; Phil. 2:1–16; 3:10–21; Col. 3:1–14; Heb. 12:14–15; 2 Pet. 1:4–11.

COMMENTARY

"Sanctification" in the narrow sense of practical or progressive sanctification, as contrasted with the mortification of sin, may be termed "vivification," i.e., the positive enlivening of Christian graces by the power of the Holy Spirit and the constituted means of grace underlying a life of humble obedience to the Word of God.

Vivification. There are five elements which must be seriously considered in such sanctification or vivification: first, sin has been dethroned in every individual who has been effectually called, regenerated and converted, and thus, in everyone without exception who has been and is being sanctified. Believers are no longer under the dominating power of sin, but do commit acts of sin which must be dealt with (Rom. 6:11–14; 1 Jn. 2:1; 3:9). See Questions 114–115. The realities of union with Christ, effectual calling, regeneration and definitive sanctification must find appropriate expression in practical or progressive sanctification (Rom. 6:14; 2 Cor. 5:14–17; 1 Jn. 3:9; 1 Jn. 5:4, 18).

Second, professing believers are either subjects of the redemptive, transforming grace of God or they are graceless. There is no middle ground or place for a true Christian to continue to live in sin (Matt. 7:21–23; Acts 8:18–24; 2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 3:12–13; 12:7–8, 14–15).

Third, the agent or operating power in such sanctification is the Holy Spirit. Believers do not sanctify themselves in their own strength, although they are necessarily exhorted to godly living (2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Thess. 4:7; 1 Pet. 2:9). There is a gracious, operative dynamic which works to conform believers to the image of God's Son in principle in the context of the eternal redemptive purpose (Rom. 6:14; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Phil. 2:12–13).

Fourth, the goal of progressive sanctification is conformity to the moral character of God; specifically, conformity to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 1 Jn. 3:1–4).

Fifth, there is an undeniable principle of progression in practical sanctification which the Scriptures clearly reveal. This progressive nature is due to the effectual work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, practical sanctification is most thoroughly described as progressive sanctification (Matt. 5:48; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 1:17–20; 3:14–19; 4:12–16; Phil. 1:9–11; 2:12–13; Col. 1:9–12; 2:6–7; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 1 Jn. 3:3).

Vivification may at times be feeble, static, and at times seem to even be in reverse, yet in the state of grace, such is an on–going reality. Sanctification can be illustrated by the southward flow of the Mississippi River. This river at times flows west, east and even north as it winds its way, but its tendency is south, and it ultimately flows south into the Gulf of Mexico. Divine correction is present in the form of conviction of sin and Divine chastisement (Heb. 12:4–13).

The Mortification of Sin. This is the negative aspect of practical sanctification. "Mortification" derives from the Latin *mortifico*, and means "to

put to death." The word "mortify" occurs but twice in Scripture: Rom. 8:13 [*thanatoute*, pres. imp., "constantly put to death"] and Col. 3:5 [*nekrōsate*, aor. imp., "with a sense of urgency and determination deaden, deprive of power"]. Both passages discuss how the believer is to deal with sin in his life and experience.

Mark the following four considerations: first, the doctrine of the mortification of sin is neither questionable nor of little significance because the term only occurs twice in Scripture. God has to state a given reality but once in Scripture for it to be true and significant.

Second, omission of the doctrine of mortification would leave a huge void in the doctrine of sanctification itself, as well as the practical aspects of the believer's union with Christ, regeneration and the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's experience. Such omissions would open the door to various forms of erroneous antinomian and perfectionist teaching.

Third, the context of each statement is worthy of note. Rom. 8:13 is situated in the context of the necessity, reality, power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Col. 3:5 is in the context of the believer's union with Christ in his death and resurrection–life, and the re–creation intellectually of the image of God within him. In both passages, mortification is viewed as an absolutely necessary mark of the grace of God.

Fourth, both statements deal with indwelling sin and remaining corruption, not directly with the body, i.e., mortification is concerned, not with the body, but with "the deeds of the body" (Rom. 8:13). The "members which are upon the earth" are not bodily members, but sins which are expressed through the body (Col. 3:5–6). Biblical mortification is neither legalism nor asceticism.

As with every aspect of biblical truth, there are many erroneous views. This is especially true in the matter of sanctification. Why? Because every sincere religious individual within Christendom is aware that sin [or perceived sin] is foreign to the tenor of Christianity and a violation of the Scriptures, tradition and a religious conscience. It is an inherent contradiction. This is especially true for the genuine believer whose conscience is subject to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and the objective truth of Scripture. [See Question 112 and the statement concerning the renewed conscience under "Evidential Assurance"]. Inconsistencies, transgressions, weakness toward certain sins, repeated offenses and human frailties grieve the religious person, awaken the conscience and often give rise to an intense desire to be done with sin altogether—to cease and desist—and to live in unbroken communion with God. But it is this very desire which makes sincerely religious people, saved or unsaved, vulnerable to error. This is the probable source for such errors as perfectionism [the idea that fallen human nature is perfectible. This translates into either a sinless perfectionism in this life or some modified form in which one progresses from "carnal" to "spiritual" by either an experience or some ritual of "rededication"], a "second work of grace," wherein one is both "saved and sanctified." Modified perfectionism plagues most forms of professing Christianity.

The great questions concerning mortification must be, "How do we actually mortify sin?" "How do we deal with sin scripturally and effectively in our lives and experience?" The following ought to be carefully noted that as Christians:

- We have a sinful, corrupt human nature inherited from Adam [mediate imputation], which has a proclivity to sin in general and to some sins in particular (Gen. 5:3; Heb. 12:1).
- We retain in this corrupt nature and in our yet–to–be–redeemed bodies, a natural tendency to use our members in the service of sin (Rom. 6:11–13).
- Every sin is a manifestation of this corrupt nature, which still retains the reality of indwelling sin and remaining corruption (Rom. 7:13–25).
- Because of this principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption, we each still have a given level of rebellion in our hearts against the very God of our salvation and the righteousness of his Holy Law, resulting in contradiction and grief.
- God has re–created his image within us in principle in righteousness, holiness of the truth and knowledge—a spiritual, moral and intellectual transformation (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10).
- God has given to us the indwelling presence and power of his Spirit to enable us to live converted lives in principle (Rom. 6:1–6; 8:1–4, 10–16; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Gal. 4:5–7; 5:16–17).
- The reigning power of sin has been broken, so we are dealing with a wounded and dethroned enemy (Rom. 6:1–14).
- We still retain to a given extent a "slave mentality" and force of habit which have a tendency to concede to the solicitations of sin (Rom. 6:11–14).
- We are admonished to replace evil habits with habits consistent with true godliness (Eph. 4:25–32).
- Our adversary, the devil, seeks to deceive, overpower and defeat us (Eph. 6:11; 1 Pet. 5:8–9).

Thus, we are engaged in a constant spiritual warfare (Matt. 6:13; Eph. 6:10–18; 1 Pet. 5:8–9). It ought to be noted, then, that although we are a redeemed people—believers, the elect and beloved of God—we are still vulnerable and must give attendance to the means of grace which God has ordained for our spiritual welfare.

The means to the mortification of sin include the following: first, mortification of sin is an utter impossibility apart from the power of the Spirit. Mortification is necessarily "through the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1–4, 11–13) because it is necessarily a spiritual work. Apart from the dynamic of the Spirit, any attempt to effectively deal with sin in the life is doomed to legalism, Phariseeism, asceticism and mere self–determination.

Second, faith is descriptive and determinative of all that is of grace and power in the believer's experience (e.g., Acts 6:5, 8; 11:24; Rom. 5:1–2; 12:3; 14:23; 2 Cor. 4:13; 5:7; Eph. 6:16; Heb. 11:1–39; 1 Jn. 5:4). Faith appropriates the truth of God and acts upon it. Thus, every truly Christian act is an act of faith, be it prayer, persevering through trial or tragedy, preaching, giving, witnessing, studying the Scriptures, persevering in godliness, etc. Faith further anticipates the grace of God, i.e., faith both appropriates and anticipates the grace and power of God to mortify sin. In short, when we seek to mortify sin by the grace of God, we do so by faith.

Third, prayer is faith articulate, i.e., prayer itself is an act and expression of faith and so inherently related to it. Prayer is faith reaching out in both praise and petition. We have a constant general duty to pray and seek communion with God for the good of our souls and the consistency of our walk. Prayer, as it were, is to be the tenor of our lives (1 Thess. 5:17; Phil. 4:6–7). We also have scriptural warrant to pray for deliverance from temptation and the devil (Matt. 6:13; Lk. 22:40). Prayer and mortification thus go hand–in–hand. See Questions 97–107.

Fourth, we have a general duty to believe, read, study, feed upon and act upon the inscripturated Word of God (Psa. 1:1–2; 19:7–14; Jn. 17:17; 2 Pet. 3:18). The Word of God is the one great armory and offensive weapon for the Christian (Matt. 4:4; Eph. 6:17; 2 Tim. 3:16–17). The Spirit of God empowers the Word. The *locus classicus* for the relationship between Scripture and temptation is the wilderness temptation of our Lord. He began every answer to Satan's temptation with, "It stands written…!" (Matt. 4:1–11). It is through Scripture that we expose sin for what it is. We define it, unmask it and confess it as such through the definitive and spiritual principle of Divine truth—and then forsake it by the grace of God.

Fifth, God is pleased at times to providentially reveal to us the natural corruption of our own hearts and our own proclivity to sin in order to awaken us to a renewed sense of urgency in mortification (Prov. 30:8–9). God is also pleased at times to convict us of and correct us about our heart–sins before they become overt actions. A smitten heart and conscience which deliver us from outright sin and the involvement of others is a sweet providence! We are taught repeatedly to mortify the first conscious out–break of indwelling sin and remaining corruption (Prov. 4:23; Mk. 7:21–23). God may allow us to fall into some sins and chastise us in order to keep us from other and greater sins (Heb. 12:4–13). A wounded and repentant spirit because of sin may become a great preventative! He may even smite us with some great discomfort in order to keep us from sin (Gen. 20:6). This was the very experience of the Apostle Paul who, in Divine providence, contracted a devastating chronic illness to keep him humble, and keep his ministry in a right perspective (2 Cor. 12:7–10).

Sixth, we may be providentially warned of the necessity to mortify sin through the awful example of others. The horrible sins of David in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, and the subsequent judgment upon his family ought to serve as a stern warning not to let sin abide in the heart (2 Sam. 11ff). The

episode of Ananias and Sapphira is preserved for us in Scripture to serve as a warning against hypocrisy (Acts 4:32–5:11), as is the sad ending of Demas (2 Tim. 4:10). Because of sinfulness in the Corinthian church and failure to administer church discipline, God stepped in and judged the church, administering spiritual devastation, disease and even death (1 Cor. 11:30–32)!

Seventh, by nature, we do not hate sin, we love it (Psa. 66:18; Jer.17:9–10). Even as believers, we have indwelling sin and remaining corruption which have a great affinity for manifestation through our members (Rom. 6:11–13; 7:13–25; Col. 3:5). But we must hate sin. We must confess it, strive against it and forsake it. Unless we do, we will never mortify it (1 Jn. 1:9; Heb. 12:4; Prov. 28:13).

Eighth, self–denial is one of the primary principles of Christianity (Lk. 9:23; Matt. 5:27–30; Rom. 15:1–3; 2 Cor. 7:1; Titus 2:12; 1 Pet. 2:11). It is first evidenced in saving faith and repentance, in which the sinner turns from a life of sin and self–indulgence to one of repentant, humble obedience to God and his truth. Jesus Christ becomes his Lord and Savior (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9–10; 2 Cor. 4:5). The Lordship or Kingship of Jesus Christ with its totalitarian claims over the entire life is thus a practical reality for the believer. Self–denial means abstaining from anything contrary to the Word of the Sovereign to whom we have sworn everlasting allegiance. Self–denial ought to include anything that is sinful, would lead us into sin or corrupt our souls.

Ninth, the Christian life in general and the mortification of sin in particular demand a sanctified, aggressive attitude toward both vivification and the mortification of sin by the grace of the Holy Spirit (Prov. 4:23; Rom. 6:11–14, 17–18; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Phil. 4:8; 1 Tim. 4:7; Heb. 12:1–4, 14). We must stop yielding to sin. We must refuse to submit to the enticements of sin. We must break habits and tendencies toward sin. We must be on guard against sin. We must replace old, sinful habits and tendencies with new, godly habits and tendencies (Eph. 4:25–32). Do we manifest the realities of grace and the power to mortify sin in our lives?

Quest. 97: What is prayer?

Ans: Prayer is an address to God in the name of Christ as Mediator, under the influence and by the assistance of the Spirit of God, in faith, for such things we stand in need of, which are consistent with the will of God, are for his glory to bestow, and therefore to be asked with humble submission.

Psa. 62:8. Trust in him at all times; *ye* people, pour out your heart before him: God *is* a refuge for us. Selah.

Matt. 6:7–8. 7But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Mk. 11:24. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*.

Jas. 4:2–3.[2]…ye have not, because ye ask not. [3]Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume *it* upon your lusts.

Heb. 11:6. But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

1 Jn. 5:14–15. [14]And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: [15]and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

See also: Psa. 66:18; Matt. 6:5–15; Lk. 11:1–13; 18:1–8; Acts 9:11; Eph. 1:15–20; 3:14–19; Phil. 1:9–11; Col. 1:9–13; 1 Thess. 5:17, 25.

COMMENTARY

The description of prayer in the answer above necessitates some additional comment. "*Prayer is an address to God*…" Prayer is an address, therefore we are entering into the conscious presence of and speaking to God in the most articulate manner we can, seeking to be understood, and fully conscious of whom we are addressing. He is God, the Almighty, the Sovereign Creator and Ruler of all creation; he is also our Heavenly Father who loves us, cares for us and is intimately concerned about everything in our lives (Gen. 1:1; Psa. 62:8; 139:1–18; Matt. 10:30; 1 Pet. 5:7).

"…*in the name of Christ as Mediator*..." We have no other basis on which to approach God. "Name" stands for authority. We stand in our Lord's imputed righteousness, have access only through him, and should be conscious of his intercessory ministry (Rom. 5:1–2; Heb. 4:14–16; 7:25).

"…*under the influence and by the assistance of the Spirit of God*..." The work of the Holy Spirit is crucial to our prayers. If he is to lead us, we must neither quench nor grieve his influences in our hearts, minds and lives (Rom. 8:26–27; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19).

"…*in faith*..." We cannot rightfully pray in unbelief. Prayer is faith articulate—faith expressed (Heb. 11:6). Our faith must rest in God himself—who and what he is—and not merely in what he does, as what we discern in our present experience may often be misunderstood (2 Cor. 12:7–10).

"…*for such things we stand in need of*..." The very act of prayer expresses our extremity. As our Heavenly Father, God is concerned about our needs, and invites us to put them before him (Matt. 6:7–8, 11–13; Lk. 11:1–13).

"…*which are consistent with the will of God*…" We must ever come to God submissively, as he knows much better than we what we need. It is God's will, not ours, which must ever be the determining factor in prayer (Matt. 6:10; Lk. 22:41–42; 1 Jn. 5:14–15).

"…*are for his glory to bestow*…" The end of all things is the glory of God; thus prayer must seek this and not simply our own will, way or agenda (1 Cor. 10:31).

"…*and therefore to be asked with humble submission*." True prayer resigns itself to God as the One whose will must reign supreme in all things. Answers to prayer derive from his power, his purpose and his will, not ours. Prayer is thus laying aside our own inherent "god–complex" and taking our rightful place before him as his creatures, subjects, willing servants and spiritual children. Such does not preclude or discourage fervency and perseverance in prayer, but rather aligns us to God's will and his glory (Lk. 18:1–8; 22:42; Acts 21:10–14; Jas. 5:16–18).

Prayer is the supreme act of faith in the believer's present experience, the great focal–point of doctrine, experience and hope. It is the life–breath of the renewed soul. It is faith articulate. When the Lord revealed to Ananias that Saul of Tarsus had been converted, he did so with the words, "…behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11). A "prayerless Christian" would be a contradiction in terms.

Human beings are not only creatures, but sinful creatures, and so need a right standing before God in order to pray aright. All true prayer is mediated through the intercessory work of the Lord Jesus Christ as both our Mediator and Great High Priest (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:14–16; 7:25; 9:24; 1 Jn. 2:1). Unless one stands justified, i.e., in a right relationship to the Father, he has no right standing from which to pray (Rom. 5:1–2; 8:33). Can creatures pray? The Scripture pictures beasts as crying out to God for their food (Job 38:41; Psa. 147:9). Can sinful creatures pray? They can cry out to God as sinful creatures, and beseech God to show them his mercy. God hears the sinner's prayer for deliverance from sin and for forgiveness (Lk. 18:13–14). No sinner will ever set his heart to seek the Lord in vain (Hos. 10:12; Jn. 6:37; 2 Cor. 6:2).

Further, true prayer is authored by the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26–27). Is it not significant that in the reality and act of prayer, more than in any other spiritual activity, we must have two intercessors within the Godhead, one within, even the Holy Spirit, and one in heaven, even our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:26–27; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 Jn. 2:1)? This also presupposes that we are not grieving the Spirit of God by our sinfulness and that he is working in our hearts and minds to burden and lead us to pray aright (Psa. 66:18; Eph. 4:30; 1 Jn. 5:14–15).

Prayer is, indeed, a trinitarian exercise, as it is addressed to God the Father (Matt. 6:9); it is in and through the mediatorship and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:14–16; 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1); and it is by the enabling grace, guidance and intercession of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26–27).

Prayer is inclusive of the believer's experience and relationship with God. It necessarily includes praise, thanksgiving, confession of sin, petition, supplication, intercession, and communion or fellowship with God. Prayer may be joyous or sorrowful (Psa. 103:1–5; 51:1–12), filled with praise or with ardent petitions (Phil. 4:6–7). It may be tearful and agonizing (1 Sam. 1:10) or be filled

with thanksgiving (1 Sam. 2:1–10), or uttered at times with groans (Psa. 6:6; 32:3) or in a struggling mixture of faith and unbelief (Mk. 9:24). The believer in prayer, through his or her varied experience and spiritual pilgrimage, may eventually travel the whole range of spiritual, mental and emotional depths and heights. Prayer has been described as simply "talking with God," "pouring one's heart out to God," or as "transacting serious business with heaven." It must be noted that in every true prayer in the New Testament the petitions are framed in the aorist imperative, a fervent, passionate approach filled with a sense of urgency and determination. There are no true, casual prayers! The very nature of prayer itself calls forth a sense of fervency (Psa. 62:8; Jas. 5:16–18). The pervading issue of prayer is, God knows; he loves; he understands; he answers prayer—and if not, his will remains the highest good.

The Scriptures describe true prayer as that which is scriptural, believing, fervent, persistent and effectual (Mk. 11:24; Lk. 11:1–13; 18:1–8; Jas. 5:16–18). The great enemies of prayer are unbelief and impatience. Unbelief stifles prayer. Impatience causes us to leave off prayer before an answer is given. The trouble with most professing Christians is that they will pray, but with a mixture of faith and unbelief, with presumption or through tradition, and thus either simply "try prayer" or do not persist in prayer until they receive an answer. We either pray in faith or we can attempt to pray in unbelief. The first is true prayer; the second is an act of either presumption or frustration.

It is quite possible that many professing Christians never adequately comprehend the scriptural significance of true prayer. Most are content to simply attempt to pray without seeking to understand its great and awesome significance. Others only seek to pray when some crisis arises. Some simply mouth the words and phrases they have been taught or learned from others and "say their prayers;" others experience difficulty in attempting to pray because of a consciousness of sin or an uncertainty of their standing before God. Some attempt to pray in the simplicity of their faith, yet in error because they are ignorant of the Scriptures or the power and purpose of God. Still others seek to pray scripturally and try to frame their prayers from biblical truth and principles. Only if the reality of prayer is understood from the Scriptures, does it begin to assume its proper place and perspective in the believer's life and experience.

It is extremely helpful to consider the presuppositions of prayer, i.e., those scriptural assumptions which underlie true prayer. Consider the following: God exists. He responds to our faith. We do not pray to a non–entity (Heb. 11:6). He is a distinct Person, with whom we are to have an intimate relationship through the Lord Jesus (Matt. 6:5–13; Rom. 5:1–2; 1 Cor. 8:6). He is a prayer–hearing and prayer–answering God (2 Chron. 7:14; Jer. 33:3). He is absolutely sovereign over all things, including the physical (1 Kgs. 18:21–39; Matt. 6:11), social (Ex. 3:19–22; 12:35–36; 34:23–24), political (Judg. 9:22–23; Prov. 21:1; Isa. 10:5–15; 1 Tim. 2:1–3), moral (Gen. 20:6; Psa. 76:10; Matt. 6:12–15) and spiritual (Jn. 3:3, 5–8; 6:44) realms. Thus, prayers pertaining to any of these realms may be answered—prayers for forgiveness, protection, for social conditions, for changes in government or for the conversion of sinners. Further,

God as a distinctly moral personality has a definite purpose or will, and he answers those prayers which are agreeable to it (Eph. 1:3–14; Rom. 8:26–27; 1 Jn. 5:14–15). It is the believer's duty and privilege to submit to the Divine will, which is the highest good, whether this is immediately comprehended or not (Gen. 18:25; Matt. 26:39, 42; Lk. 22:41–44; Acts 21:14; Rom. 8:26–27). Again, God has a distinct moral character. No answer to prayer can be arbitrary or contrary to his holy, righteous will (Gen. 18:25; Psa. 145:17–20). See Question 98 for a discussion of prayer and predestination. Prayer cannot derive from our own prejudice, self–centeredness, self–righteousness or lusts (Jas. 4:2–4). We cannot truly pray with an unforgiving attitude (Matt. 6:12, 14–15). Finally, God is intimately involved in his creation. Thus, nothing is too great or small a matter for prayer (Psa. 147:7–9; Matt. 6:11, 24–34; 10:29–31; Phil. 4:6–7; 1 Pet. 5:7). Do we pray or merely "say our prayers"?

Quest. 98: What is the significance of prayer in the life and expe–rience of the believer?

Ans: Prayer is the primary mark of grace, that vital communion with God which expresses the believer's faith, aligns the life to the nature and will of God, enlivens every other grace, procures every blessing and sanctifies all obedient service.

Heb. 11:6. But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

1 Thess. 5:17. Pray without ceasing.

Jas. 5:16. …The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

See also: Psa. 66:18; Matt. 6:5–15; Lk. 18:1–8, 9–14; Acts 9:11; Eph. 1:15–20; 3:14–19; Phil. 1:9–11; Col. 1:9–13; 1 Thess. 5:17, 25; 2 Thess. 3:1–2; Jas. 4:2–3; 5:13–18; 1 Jn. 5:14–15.

COMMENTARY

As noted in the previous question and answer, prayer is the primary mark of grace. See Question 112. It is the universal, inevitable mark of a sincere believer. Although Satan may counterfeit some marks of grace, he never drives the mere professing Christian to earnestly seek the face of God in prayer. Prayer reflects the very essence of the believer's faith, which is, perhaps, the major reason why many believers find earnest, believing, persistent prayer to be a most difficult exercise.

Who and what are we to pray for? Scripture reveals the following: we are to pray for the glory of God, the extension of his kingdom and for his will to be done without opposition or complaint (Matt. 6:9–10), for ourselves (Matt. 6:11–13), for our daily needs (Matt. 6:11), for forgiveness of sins (Matt. 6:12), for other believers (Eph. 1:15–20; 3:14–19; 6:18; Phil. 1:9–11; Col. 1:3, 9–12), for the cause of Christ (Eph. 6:19–20; Col. 4:3; 2 Thess. 3:1), for the salvation of the unconverted (Rom. 10:1; 1Tim. 2:1–4), for times of revival and spiritual

awakening through the Holy Spirit (Matt. 7:9–11; Lk.11:9–13; Acts 3:19; 4:29–31), for the success of the gospel and deliverance from the ungodly (2 Thess. 3:1–2), for officials, rulers and magistrates (1 Tim. 2:1–3) and even for our enemies (Matt. 5:44–48; Rom. 12:14).

How are we to pray? With faith (Mk. 11:24; Heb. 11:6; Jas. 1:6), with fervency and thankfulness (Phil.4:6–7; Jas. 5:16–18), with a view to God's majesty and glory and our own unworthiness (Gen. 18:27; Eccl. 5:2; 1 Cor. 10:31), with fervency and persistence (Lk. 11:5–13; 18:1–8; Jas. 4:2; 5:16–18) and with a humble submission to his will (Matt. 6:9; Lk. 22:42; 1 Jn. 5:14–15).

Prayer is the great sanctifier. Any work attempted for the cause of Christ, any Christian service which is not sanctified by prayer, necessarily lacks that spiritual quality and character which receives the fullness of Divine blessing. Much energy may be expended and time consumed without the intended blessing because the will and face of God have not been carefully and humbly sought through believing prayer and obedience to the revealed will of God.

It is noteworthy that our Lord himself prayed constantly during his earthly sojourn (Matt. 14:23; 26:36–44; Lk. 5:16; 11:1; 22:31–32; Jn. 11:41–42). His recorded prayers are fervent and intimate, though reverent (Jn. 17). He spent whole nights in prayer (Lk. 6:12). If our Lord—the sinless Son of God, the God–Man, the last Adam, the one who ever did his father's will and pleased him—both needed and desired to spend hours alone with his Heavenly Father in prayer, how much more do we who are weak, sinful creatures, needing constant grace, mercy and forgiveness, Divine protection, leadership and the sustaining ministry of his Spirit!

Does prayer change things? If we view answers to prayer only from our own human perspective, then, yes; but if from the Divine perspective, it may be stated that prayer is the God–ordained means of fulfilling his will (1 Jn. 5:14–15). It is also the way in which God often changes the one who prays to be conformed to his will. Growth in grace and spiritual attainment are always in relation to one's prayer life. Prayer enlivens, sanctifies and strengthens every other grace. Thus, the trials and adversities which every believer must face and overcome are sanctified to his experience largely through means of believing and persevering prayer. As God is absolutely perfect and any change would be an imperfection, it is erroneous to think that we can change God's purpose by prayer.

It may be asked, "Why pray if all is predestined?" See Questions 27 and 69. It is often objected that if God foreordained all things, prayer would be without significance. Mark the following: first, this is not a valid objection against predestination as such, for it could equally be argued on the basis of mere prescience [a bare foreknowledge] that if God foresaw what would be prayed for, such prayer would likewise be needless (Matt. 6:7–8).

Second, such a remonstrance ignores the biblical commands to pray, and pray urgently with perseverance (Matt. 7:7–11; Mk. 11:24; Lk. 18:1–8; 1 Tim. 2:1–8; Jas. 5:16–18). Believers are commanded, urged and taught to pray by

precept, principle and the examples of Bible prayers, which cover in principle every conceivable human condition and situation.

Third, such thinking arises from a misunderstanding of the biblical use of means and the very nature of prayer. God has ordained prayer as a means of fulfilling his will as certainly as he has ordained preaching to convert sinners and ordained faithfulness to his revealed will in the Scriptures to procure his blessing. To conclude that prayer changes God is to misunderstand the nature of God and to misinterpret the meaning of prayer.

Fourth, the very essence of prayer necessarily includes an acknowledgement of and a submission to the will of God (Matt. 6:9–10; 26:39, 42; Rom. 8:26–27; 1 Jn. 5:14–15). Prayer is an act of worship in the highest sense, never an attempt to force our will upon God.

Our concerns, in the context of God's secret will (Deut. 29:29), ought to be the following: first, we must not live or think so as to grieve the Holy Spirit and thus hinder his leading and impressions in our lives and prayers (Rom. 8:26–27; Eph. 4:30). Second, we must pray intelligently according to his revealed will, i.e., the Scriptures. Third, we must seek through prayer and the Scriptures to discern his will. Fourth, we must get ourselves in such a state before God that we are open to know his will, regardless of what it may be. Impressions, human relationships, misinterpreted providences and our own prejudices and desires may preclude discerning his will aright. Finally, we must pray fervently and with perseverance until either our prayers are answered or the will of God is otherwise providentially made known. This explains why many, even most of our prayers may not be answered, answered in ways we never intended or answered after seemingly long delays.

Are we praying people? Do we seriously seek the will of God in every given situation through the study of the Word and persevering prayer? Do we live in such a way before God that his Spirit is neither grieved nor quenched? Are we ready to know and submit to God's will, regardless of what it is or its consequences are?

Quest. 99: What rule has God given for our direction in prayer?

Ans: The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer, but specific direction is given by the Lord in the Model Prayer.

Matt. 6:9–13. 9After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. 11Give us this day our daily bread. 12And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

See also: Lk. 11:1–4; Rom. 8:26–27; 12:12; Eph. 6:17–18; 1 Thess. 5:17; Jas. 1:5–8; 4:2–3; 5:16–18.

COMMENTARY

We need direction in prayer (Lk. 11:1–13; Rom. 8:26–27). We often pray amiss for various reasons, and may find some of our most sincere and ardent prayers unanswered or answered in a way quite different from how we prayed or anticipated (2 Cor. 12:8–9; Jas. 4:2–3; 1 Jn. 5:14–15). It is noteworthy that our Lord gave such direction for prayer on two different occasions (Matt. 6:5–15; Lk. 11:1–13).

This prayer is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer," but this he did not and could not pray as the impeccable and eternal Son of God, as it contains a confession of sin and also asks deliverance from both temptation and [the] evil [one]. This is rather the Model Prayer our Lord taught his disciples as a template for personal, private and public prayer, "After this manner therefore pray ye" (Matt. 6:5–8). This prayer has a preface, six petitions and a conclusion or doxology.

This Model Prayer must not be relegated to a past era, as though it pertains more to the Old Testament and law rather than the New Testament and grace, or yet to some future time. Indeed, grace characterizes both Testaments. It is in principle and substance the model taught by our Lord and is entirely fitting for every believer. Two further objections have been raised against this: first, this prayer does not end in Jesus' name. Our Lord's teaching concerning praying in his name was given later to the very same disciples as he prepared them for his passion (Jn. 14:13–14; 15:16; 16:23–24, 26). It was our Lord's final lesson in prayer before his passion. Second, our own forgiveness is based on our forgiving others, rather than upon the righteousness of Christ and confession of sin. The truth remains that one simply cannot pray statically with an unforgiving attitude and have any expectation that the Lord will answer such prayer. Self–righteousness is the opposite of the humble attitude necessary to prayer (Isa. 57:15; Matt. 6:14–15). The self–righteous have an unforgiving attitude because they have not felt either the desperate need to be forgiven or the joy of being forgiven. An unforgiving attitude would be completely out of order with the whole tenor of not only this prayer, but prayer itself. Graceless prayers are neither authored by the Spirit nor answered by a gracious God (Lk. 18:9–14).

The context of this Model Prayer (Matt. 6:5–8) must be considered, as it contains some valuable and necessary admonitions and directions: first, the instructions for this Model Prayer are concerned with private prayer, thus what our Lord here teaches us is primarily for private prayer; it is not directly related to public prayer. The rote repetition of this prayer in public worship, in view of our Lord's teaching, is questionable at the least. We are not to pray in order to make a scene or to seek to produce an effect.

Second, prayer is a private matter between the individual and God. Such prayer, if possible, ought to be as private as possible so there are no distractions or human listeners. This may imply that one may give way to the whole range of words and emotions without any human audience. When one is alone with

God in communion with him, there ought not to be any restrictions or inhibitions.

Third, our Lord stringently forbids meaningless phrases and empty expressions which do not betoken the true spirit of prayer, and reflect negatively on one's concept of God. We are to pray as Christians, not pagans! One is to pray with a biblical knowledge of God and not with misconceptions and misunderstandings.

Fourth, our prayer is to reflect the character of God. He knows what things we have need of before we ask him. This implies that our knowledge of God, his nature and character, are to be reflected in our prayers. He is a true theologian who can pray aright!

Finally, our Lord promises an open reward in answer to private prayer. Are we a truly praying people? Are you a praying person? (Acts 9:11).

Quest. 100: What does the preface to the Model Prayer teach us?

Ans: The preface teaches that God is our Father, that he is exalted in sovereign power and glory, and that our approach must ever be with proper reverence and humility.

Matt. 6:9. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven…

See also: Lk. 11:13; Rom. 8:15; Eph. 2:18; 1 Jn. 3:1–2, 10.

COMMENTARY

This Model Prayer is a template for our personal, private and public prayers as to its content and characteristics (Matt. 6:5–15; Lk. 11:1–4). It is not a prayer to be repeated by rote or in a ritualistic, unintelligent manner, although it may serve to give the heart and mind a proper frame.

Although the context clearly marks this as private prayer (v. 5–9), yet God is to be addressed as "Our Father." As our Lord was teaching his disciples, the use of the plural might be expected, but is there not a sense of community, a consciousness of others, especially other believers, even in private prayer? This plurality characterizes the entire prayer in both examples. The believer is not considered in Scripture, nor should he consider himself, as an isolated entity. There is no place for self–centeredness in the believer, not even in private prayer.

Only those who can rightly claim God as their Father according to the testimony of Scripture can truly pray. True, biblical prayer presupposes a right relationship with God, a right basis of approach through the Lord Jesus Christ as both Mediator and Great High Priest (Rom. 5:1–2; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:14–16; 7:25; 9:11–14; 1 Jn. 2:1), by the aid of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:14–17, 26–27; Gal. 4:6–7), and a right attitude of approach (Phil.4:6; Lk. 24:42). The prayers of Cornelius were noted by God, who was preparing him for conversion (Acts 10:1–6, 22, 34–35; 11:13–14).

The preface teaches that although God is our Father (Rom. 8:14–15), he must not be approached with undue familiarity, but with reverence, humility and a consciousness of his power, glory and majesty. This God–consciousness and corresponding humility progress throughout this prayer. Do we live with a true God–consciousness?

Quest. 101: What does the first petition of the Model Prayer teach us?

Ans: The first petition teaches us that God's name is to be magnified and that we are to glorify him in all things.

Matt. 6:9. Hallowed be thy name.

See also: Psa. 5:11; 86:11; 111:9; 145:1; Isa. 42:12; Matt. 5:16; 1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Pet. 4:11.

COMMENTARY

This petition is born of both a desire and a sense of duty. This prayer begins with a true God–consciousness which pervades its entirety. We are to desire that the name of God be treated and regarded as holy in all things. This presupposes an aversion to sin in ourselves, a willing submission to Divine providence, and an effort to bring our powers to bear within our realm of influence for God's glory and honor. This is to be primary and uppermost in our lives and thoughts. This must at once cancel any self–centeredness, self–righteousness or personal agenda. We also need God's Word for direction, and his grace and Spirit for enablement to glorify him aright.

This first petition ought to be life–transforming, as it affects the whole of life and reality. To pray for God's name to be hallowed means that literally everything in the realm of reality is to be brought to subservience to this great and glorious truth—our work, energies, pleasures, relationships, purposes, service, desires and hopes. How quickly do we forget this unless it is constantly impressed upon our minds and hearts!

Quest. 102: What does the second petition of the Model Prayer teach us?

Ans: The second petition teaches us that Satan's kingdom will be destroyed and Christ's kingdom of grace will be increased and the kingdom of glory will be hastened.

Matt. 6:10. Thy kingdom come.

See also: Dan. 7:27; Matt. 3:2; 6:33; 7:21; 11:12; Mk. 10:15; Lk. 1:33; 17:21; Rom. 8:28; 14:17; 16:20; 1 Cor. 4:20; 15:24–28; Eph. 2:2–3; Col. 1:12–13; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Tim. 4:1, 18; 2 Pet. 1:11; 3:13; 1 Jn. 3:8; Rev. 12:12; 20:1–10; 22:20.

COMMENTARY

As the first petition is concerned about the holiness or glory and honor of God's name, the second is concerned with the increase of his kingdom. Is it not significant that the increase of God's kingdom is to be one of the primary concerns of every believer? It is to be more of a primary concern than our own daily needs.

Our Lord came to dismantle the works or kingdom of Satan (1 Jn. 3:8). This began with his wilderness temptation (Matt. 4:1–11) and ended with his passion, resurrection and ascension into heaven (Heb. 1:1–3; 2:9–15). Satan's kingdom is kept by his power (2 Cor. 4:3–6; Eph. 2:2–3; Rev. 12:12), but God is destroying it and will ultimately destroy it forever (1 Cor. 15:24–25; Eph. 2:4–10; Col. 1:12–13; Rev. 20:1–6, 10).

In this petition, we pray that Satan's kingdom will be destroyed and that Christ's kingdom will increase. This implies, first, the ultimate victory of the gospel throughout the world, i.e., that the gospel will be preached unto all nations, the conversion of the Jews (Rom. 11), and that our faith is to rise above and beyond present trials, spiritual warfare and opposition, to rest itself in the ultimate, infallible purpose of God. Second, this petition implies that believers are to be evangelistic domestically and through foreign missions. The kingdom of God is his spiritual rule, and this begins on an individual basis in regeneration and conversion. The proclamation of the gospel has been vouchsafed to believers individually and to churches corporately (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:46–47; Acts 1:8). Third, this petition implies that we should pray for times of revival and spiritual awakening, the promised "times of refreshing [which] shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). To truly pray this prayer is to be willing to do what we can to extend God's kingdom among men. Is the increase of God's kingdom a priority in our thinking and acting?

Quest. 103: What does the third petition of the Model Prayer teach us?

Ans: The third petition teaches us that we are to pray that God by his grace would make us able and willing to know, obey and submit to his will in all things without question or complaint, as it is done in heaven.

Matt. 6:10. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven.

See also: Psa. 119:4–5; Dan. 4:35; Acts 21:14; Rom. 8:7–9; 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 2:14; Col. 1:11; Heb. 12:5; Jas. 1:2–4; 4:1–3, 13–15.

COMMENTARY

The first three petitions are all taken up with thoughts of God, his holiness, glory, kingdom, will and purpose. These are the great priorities for our minds, hearts and wills. These are to be held as the greatest priorities, even before our own personal and daily needs.

This petition refers to both the secret will of God (Deut. 29:29) and to his revealed will, i.e., his inscripturated truth. While we must submit to the latter in

obedience, we may be sorely tried by the former when it comes to pass in the form of dark providences, unexpected trial or tragedy, all quite contrary to our will or expectation. Murmuring or fretting against the secret will of God when it is made known in contrary fashion derives from both a lack of sanctification and an inherent element of unbelief. Such at times may plague even the most godly among believers until the heart and mind are subdued (2 Cor. 12:7–10).

By nature, this petition goes against our minds, hearts and wills. We naturally want our own creature comforts and our own way as a great priority. In the realm of grace, however, we will be called upon to suffer adversity and to unjustly suffer persecution for the sake of the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:35–37; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:1–2). It is only by faith that we can truly submit to the will of God without question and complaint, and without anxiety or misgiving (Rom. 8:28–31; Phil. 4:6–7; 1 Pet. 2:19–23; 5:6–7).

When considering the matter of God's will, and the believer's humble submission to it, the issue of unanswered prayer ought to be discussed. Few things are more trying, even agonizing to the believer, than for his prayers to remain unanswered. If such earnest prayers are manifestly for the cause of Christ and the glory of God, and not from self–interest or for self–comfort, why are not such fervent petitions always answered? Is it not true that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"? that "men ought always to pray and not to faint"? that we are to "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"? That we are to persist shamelessly until we have an answer? (Lk. 11:5–8; 18:1–8; Jas. 5:16–18; Heb. 4:16).

The reasons for unanswered prayer are varied: first, it simply may not be the will of God to answer a given prayer. The will of God, not our urgency, fervency or importunity, is the ultimate deciding factor. God glorifies himself in the highest good, and that is often a matter of his secret will, which remains unknown to us (1 Jn. 5:14–15). We might be very fervent or emotional, but not have the leadership of the Spirit for such petitions (Rom. 8:26–27). This is a hard saying, but it is according to the teaching of Scripture. We trust that such burdens in prayer do derive from the Spirit, but emotions and longings of heart may easily become substitutes for the prompting of the Spirit. Often, time must reveal why God does not answer some of our prayers. We might have settled for something far below what our Lord was later to bestow. We would have made great mistakes to which we were blind at the time. God is never unkind when he does not answer our prayers as we want (Rom. 8:28). There is no harshness in his attitude toward us (Eph. 2:7). A great Christian once said that he had lived long enough to thank God that he had not answered many of his prayers! Another wrote, "I am sure that I shall receive either what I ask, or what I should ask."

Second, we must be certain that our prayers are in accordance with God's revealed will, i.e., his inscripturated Word. Prayers which run contrary to God's revealed will are asked amiss, as are prayers which are simply selfish (Jas. 4:1–

4). The best praying person should be the one who is saturated with Scripture rightly understood.

Third, unconfessed sin hinders our communion with God and precludes true prayer (Psa. 66:18). To think that we can pray with a conscious knowledge of unconfessed sin is an affront to the holiness and moral self–consistency of God.

Fourth, prayer is an act of faith. Indeed, it is the supreme act of faith for the believer in this life. The presuppositions of prayer all call for faith. See Question 97. If we pray in unbelief, we cannot expect our prayers to be answered. We must remember, however, the great examples of unbelieving prayer which God yet answered: the murmuring of the people of Israel at Kadesh–Barnea (Numb. 14:1–30), and the prayer for Peter's release from prison (Acts 12:1–17). In the first, God heard their murmurings and complaint, and gave them their awful answer, which they never expected. In the second, the church kept up prayer, though they mistakenly thought that if God were to answer their prayer, he would have done it before he did. He literally waited until the very last moment. We would learn that we should take our prayers and complaints before God seriously, and we must persevere in prayer in faith despite any doubts, fears or unbelief.

Fifth, it might not be God's time. Either we might not be prepared to receive such answers as we so earnestly desire, or the varied circumstances might not yet be aligned in the Divine purpose. God's delays are not necessarily his denials. If our cause is just, we must persevere until there is clear evidence that it is not God's will (2 Cor. 12:7–9).

Finally, God may not answer for an extended time until we are brought to the end of ourselves and utterly broken. Such agony of unanswered prayer then becomes a great trial to strengthen our faith, lead us to confession of sins we might not usually deal with or want to deal with, and to teach us patience (Lk. 11:5–8; 18:1–18; Jas. 1:2–8). God's greatest blessings are never gained easily. Should all of our prayers be answered immediately, where would be our faith, patience and perseverance? Would not such breed a certain amount of presumption and impatience?

We must therefore seek to be as certain as we can that our prayers proceed from pure, God–honoring and God–glorifying motives, that they are scriptural in principle, that our burden is from the Lord and not merely from emotional fervency or religious idealism, that we ask in faith and not in unbelief, and that we pray with a resignation to God's will. Can we and do we submit to our Father's will without objection or complaint?

Quest. 104: What does the fourth petition of the Model Prayer teach us?

Ans: The fourth petition teaches us that our daily needs for the cares of this life are of concern to God and are rightly to be made subjects for prayer.

Matt. 6:11. Give us this day our daily bread.

See also: Gen. 2:17; 3:17–19; Deut. 8:7–18; 28:15–18; Psa. 103:1–5; 128:2; Prov. 6:6–8; 30:8–9; Matt. 4:4; 6:25–34; Mk. 7:18–23; Lk. 24:30; Rom. 8:35–37; Eph. 4:28; Phil. 4:6–7, 19; 1 Tim. 4:1–5; 6:17; Jas. 4:2–3; 1 Pet. 5:6–7.

COMMENTARY

When man fell in Adam and apostatized from God, he forfeited the right to the abundance of the earth and became subject to various privations, exhausting labor and diminished results (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:17–19). Yet God cares for all his creatures, even the sinful ones, and especially for his own spiritual children. The essentials of life and even its mundane enjoyments are matters of concern for him (Acts 14:15–17; Phil. 4:6–7, 19; 1 Tim. 4:1–5; 6:17; 1 Pet. 5:6–7).

In this petition we are reminded of our frailty and limitations as creatures and our utter dependence upon God as our loving, caring heavenly Father. For believers, every day of our earthly existence with its needs and cares is a test of faith.

We are taught in this petition that we are to trust God on a daily basis for the necessities and legitimate joys of life. As man is not to live by bread alone, this petition may be considered as extending also to our daily spiritual needs (Matt. 4:4). We are also forbidden to worry about the future, as though our God would overlook our needs or fail to provide for us (Matt. 6:24–34). We are further taught that we are to learn to be content with what God has providentially provided (Phil. 4:11–13, 19). Finally, we are taught that our Heavenly Father is a God who is near at hand and not remote from us (Psa. 103:1–6, 13–14; 139:1–18; Matt. 10:29–31; Acts 17:25–28; Heb. 4:13). Do we bring everything to God in prayer?

Quest. 105: What does the fifth petition of the Model Prayer teach us?

Ans: The fifth petition teaches us that we are all guilty of sin, and that this consciousness should prohibit an unforgiving spirit and lead us to forgive others.

Matt. 6:12. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

Lk. 11:4. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.

See also: Psa. 68:11; Matt. 5:43–44; 6:14–15; Lk. 18:9–14; Rom. 12:14; Jas. 4:2–3.

COMMENTARY

Sin, here termed a debt, possesses five awful realities: it is real or actual, and not merely the figment of one's imagination. It carries both guilt and penalty; it also pollutes and exists as a usurping power which seeks to dominate the life. See Question 36. Every human being is a sinner by imputation, by nature and by personal thoughts, words and actions. Each and every sin is against God (Psa. 51:4). A God–consciousness and a sin–consciousness ought to be inseparable for sinful creatures (Gen. 18:27; Job 40:4; 42:5–6). This means that when one truly seeks the face of God in prayer, he is necessarily beset by his own inherent sinfulness. His only ground of acceptance and approach is in the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ and his intercessory work (Rom. 5:1–2; Heb. 7:25; 9:11–14; 1 Jn. 2:1). See Question 74. This petition stands against all pretended superiority and self–righteousness on the part of any believer. Both the glory of the cross and the realty of prayer are meant to humble and level every one of us. It ought to be noted that this petition is the only one to which our Lord adds a further comment after his teaching on prayer (Matt. 6:14–15).

This petition teaches us that we cannot approach God in prayer with an unforgiving attitude. Such would be utterly foreign to and preclude any possibility of true prayer. Such an unforgiving attitude derives from a sinful self–righteousness, self–centeredness and a lack of adequately understanding our own forgiven state before God. When we approach our Heavenly Father, who is enthroned in glory, with a true God–consciousness and a right self–consciousness, we approach him as a true act of worship, are greatly humbled, and filled with a sense of our own forgiveness, acceptance and reconciliation through Christ Jesus. A sinful self–consciousness may produce great humility, but a consciousness of Divine grace brings both great humility and great joy. Do we have a forgiving attitude? (Mk. 11:25–26; Lk. 11:4; 17:3–4; Eph. 4:32).

Quest. 106: What does the sixth petition of the Model Prayer teach us?

Ans: The sixth petition teaches us that, even as believers, we are susceptible to temptation and evil, and are in need of constant Divine support and deliverance.

Matt. 6:13. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

See Also: Gen. 3:1–7; 22:1; 39:7–9; Deut. 13:3; Judg. 2:21–22; 1 Kgs. 22:19–23; 2 Chron. 32:31; Job 1:12; 2:6; Psa. 119:113; 141:4; Matt. 16:21–23; 26:41; Lk. 9:53–56; 22:31–32; Jn. 13:2; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3; Eph. 6:10–17; 1 Tim. 2:12–14; Heb. 11:37; Jas. 1:2–4; 13–16; 1 Pet. 5:8–9.

COMMENTARY

At this point, we might note the descending scale in this Model Prayer. It has been said that we begin as a child to his Father, then as a creature to his God, as a subject to his King, then as a servant to his Master, as a beggar to his

Benefactor, as a debtor to his Creditor, as a slave to his Deliverer, and finally, we rise as a citizen to his Sovereign.

This petition introduces the so–called "Problem of Evil" in the thinking of some who are devoid of a scriptural faith. This is discussed in Question 27.

The language of this petition may be understood in a different sense from the Gk: "Do not even begin to lead us into temptation," i.e., keep us far from temptation or trial, as the same word may be either "temptation" or "testing." It then becomes the heart–cry of the believer, conscious of his liability to temptation and sin, to be kept far away from either. The second part may be translated, "but deliver us from the evil one," referring to the devil personally rather than only to evil in general. We constantly need deliverance from both.

Due to indwelling sin and remaining corruption (Rom. 7:13–8:4), the wiles of the devil and his fierce attacks (Eph. 6:11; 1 Pet. 5:8–9), and seduction of the world (1 Jn. 2:15–17), believers are still very much liable to temptation and sin in this life (Eccl. 7:20; Jas. 1:13–16; 1 Jn. 1:8–10; 2:1). This reveals the necessity for watchfulness, mortification and the constant ministry of Divine grace in our lives (Jn.1:16). Grace sanctifies us. Grace sustains and keeps us (Eph. 2:8). Grace encourages us to pray (Rom. 5:1–2; Heb. 4:14–16). Grace enables us to serve in the cause of Christ faithfully (1 Cor. 15:8–10). Grace enables us to faithfully endure and suffer adversity (2 Cor. 12:7–10; Phil. 1:29).

How many Christians daily and seriously pray for deliverance from the evil one? Satan may have tremendous power under the sovereign permission of God (2 Thess. 2:8–9). He can influence decisions (1 Chron. 21:1ff), influence marauders and armies (2 Kgs. 6:15–17; Job 1:6–17), send natural disasters (Job 1:18–19), smite with disease (Job 2:4–7; Lk. 13:16; 2 Cor. 12:7) and was blatantly bold enough to tempt the very Son of God (Matt. 4:1–11)! The devil is actively engaged to deceive believers (Matt. 16:21–23; Lk. 22:31; 2 Cor. 2:10–11; Eph. 6:10–18), disrupt their evangelistic and ministerial labors (Matt. 13:19; Mk. 4:15; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 4:3–6; 1 Thess. 2:18) and render them ineffective in their lives (1 Pet. 5:8–9). He is our arch–enemy and we need constant, daily deliverance, according to our Lord's teaching on prayer. The awful reference to Ananias and Sapphira serves as a stern warning as to the power and influence of the devil in professing believers (Acts 5:1–10). The family and the church provide fertile soil for the devil's work (1 Cor. 5:1–5; 7:5; 2 Cor. 11:13–15; 1 Tim. 5:14–15). Do we take this petition seriously?

Quest. 107: What do the conclusion and doxology of the Model Prayer teach us?

Ans: The conclusion and doxology teach us to enforce our arguments in prayer with an appeal to God in his sovereignty, power and glory. The testimony of our desire and assurance is stated in the "Amen."

Matt. 6:13. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

See Also: 1 Chron. 29:11–13; 2 Chron. 20:6; Psa. 21:9; 96:10; Isa. 6:1–3; Dan. 4:35; 7:27; 9:18; Rom. 15:30; 2 Cor. 10:17; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:6–7.

COMMENTARY

Although some ancient texts and the other gospel record (Lk. 11:2–4) do not contain the conclusion and doxology, the elements are taught elsewhere in Scripture and are in full accord with the analogy of faith or the general and coherent teaching of Scripture (1 Chron. 29:11). The conclusion and doxology are fitting to true prayer. The statement is a befitting conclusion to the entire prayer and also has a close connection with the immediate petition. We pray to be delivered from the evil one, for the kingdom and the power and glory belong to God, not to the evil one! In times of great trial, temptation and spiritual opposition, and in the context of this evil world, this is a blessed reminder.

We are taught in Scripture to use argumentation or reasons when enforcing our pleadings with God in prayer (Isa. 41:21). Such argumentation must never be based upon our own faithfulness or works, but upon the rule, faithfulness, promises, purpose and glory of God. As here, we ought to join our petitions with praises (Psa. 103:1–5; Phil. 4:6). This conclusion further teaches us that all of our strength, power and hope are in the Lord Jesus Christ, apart from whom we can do nothing (Jn. 15:5).

The word "Amen" derives from the Heb. verb "to believe, confirm." "Abraham believed in the Lord," i.e., literally said "Amen" to the promise of God or confirmed it in and to himself (Gen. 15:6). When we pray in Jesus' name, we seek to pray properly under his authority, trusting solely and boldly his righteousness, and in submission to his will. When we end our prayer with an "Amen," we are saying by faith, "So let it be," or "I [we] believe it" (Numb. 5:22; Deut. 27:15–26; 1 Kgs. 1:36; 1 Chron. 16:36; Neh. 5:13; 8:6; Psa. 41:13; Rom. 1:25; 11:36; 1 Cor. 14:16). Are our prayers true acts of worship?

Quest. 108: Are there false Christians as well as true Christians?

Ans: Yes. There are "mere professing Christians," who are not true believers, and there are true, biblical Christians.

2 Cor. 13:5. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

1 Cor. 15:1–2. [1]Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; [2]By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Matt. 7:21–23. [21]Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. [22]Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? [23]And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

See also: Matt. 7:21–29; 13:20–22; Jn. 2:23–25; 12:42–43; Acts 8:5–23; Gal. 2:4; 2 Tim. 4:10; Heb. 6:1–10; 10:38–39; 12:14–15; Jas. 2:14–26.

COMMENTARY

The Word of God reveals that not everyone who outwardly professes faith in Jesus Christ is a true Christian. According to the Scriptures, it is quite possible to have a mere traditional or empty Christian profession of faith without a true, saving relationship to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. See Question 89. It is possible to experience very strong, but temporary religious impressions, and yet be lost and apart from Christ (e.g., Matt. 13:5–6, 20–21; Jn. 2:23–25; Jn. 8:30–44; Acts 8:9–13, 18–24; 2 Tim. 4:10). It is possible to have an empty faith that is devoid of the works which are the necessary manifestations of true faith (e.g., Jas. 2:14–26). Such faith is all talk, but lacks the character and activity of saving faith. The demons "believe," and are terrified by their belief in God. Can one have saving faith and remain unmotivated, unfearful and inactive, and devoid of works befitting such faith? It is also possible to have a merely intellectual or an irrational faith (Matt. 7:21–23), or a merely theoretical faith (Acts 26:27). Some professing believers in the churches of the New Testament were unconverted and wrought havoc (1 Cor. 5:10–13; 2 Pet. 2:1–22; 1 Jn. 2:9, 18–19; Jude 3–4, 8, 10–16).

It is possible even to preach and perform mighty wonder–signs in the name of Christ and yet be faithless and condemned, lost and utterly undone (Matt. 7:21–23). Consider Judas, who was completely unsuspected by the other disciples, even after three years' ministry. Did he, with the others, perform miracles, cast out demons, and even raise the dead? Evidently so. No one but our Lord knew or suspected his true spiritual state (Matt. 10:1–8; Lk. 10:17–20).

We must remember that the Scriptures give to us our only objective and infallible guide and measurement. All else is subjective, experiential and relative. But our assurance is necessarily partially subjective and inseparable from our experience. If our faith reflects or answers to that which is delineated in Scripture, we have some degree of assurance that our faith is true, saving faith. The Scriptures declare that we can and should examine ourselves as to our spiritual state (2 Cor. 13:5). To ascertain any degree of subjective assurance, we must lay aside every sin, especially our besetting sins, and look to Christ alone (Heb. 12:1–4). Further, it is our responsibility to add the graces of true salvation to our faith. In other words, we must spiritually prepare ourselves and persevere in order to consider our spiritual state. This is not something to be lightly considered or given by the Holy Spirit to those who take indulgence in sin lightly or are spiritually unprepared. True, saving faith never exists or stands alone. It is to exist in a harmonious blend of graces which witness to one's spiritual state and is expressed in the life through human responsibility and growth in grace (Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Pet. 1:4–11; 3:18). Are you a true Christian, or only a professing one?

A biblical assurance of faith is three–fold, i.e., it is inferential, evidential and internal or immediate. See Questions. 109–112.

Quest. 109: How is one to know the difference between the "mere professing Christian" and the true Christian?

Ans: One can know with a given degree the difference between the "mere professing Christian" and the true biblical Christian by one's evidence of grace, scriptural faith, love of the truth, consistent practice and continued perseverance, according to the Scriptures.

2 Cor. 13:5. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

See also: Matt. 7:21–23; Jn. 2:23–25; 8:30–44; 12:42–43; Acts 8:5–23; 1 Cor. 15:1–2; Heb. 6:1–10; 10:38–39; 12:14–15; Jas. 2:14–26; 2 Pet. 1:4–11.

COMMENTARY

Only God infallibly knows the true Christian, as he knows everything and everyone, and in his free and sovereign grace has eternally purposed the infallible redemption of his elect (Rom. 8:29–39; Eph. 1:3–14). No Christian knows himself thoroughly (Psa. 139:23–24; Jer. 17:9–10; 2 Pet. 1:9–10), and, as a mere creature and still beset by the noetic effects of sin, may sincerely believe himself to be a true believer and yet be deceived, or be a true believer and at times have serious doubts. No believer is without sin, and every believer is at times beset with sin (1 Jn. 1:8–10), satanic temptations and troubles (Eph. 6:10–18; 1 Pet. 5:8–9). There is, however, a scriptural and a relative knowledge for the believer concerning his own spiritual state and that of others.

In our answer to this question, five Christian characteristics are given. Each is now briefly considered: first, the individual's evidence of grace. Is the grace of God a Spirit–engendered reality in the life and experience? We are either in a state of grace or in a graceless state. Divine grace is necessarily transforming through the indwelling presence and power of the Spirit (Acts 18:27; Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:1–10). True grace may exist, when there may be little of it evidenced. A weak and trembling believer is still a believer. A sinning saint, though tried and chastened, is still a saint (Heb. 12:4–13). See Question 78.

Second, the individual's faith. Is our faith scriptural or merely traditional, theoretical or presumptive? Does our faith correspond to that which is revealed and described in Scripture (Rom. 4:13–22; Eph. 2:8–10; Jas. 2:14–26)? See Question 89.

Third, the individual's love of the truth. Is this merely outward or is it inwrought by the grace of God (Matt. 7:21; 1 Thess. 1:3–10; 2:13; 2 Thess.

2:10; 1 Jn. 2:3–4)? A genuine love of the truth necessarily brings us into obedience to it to a discernable degree.

Fourth, the individual's consistent practice. Does our experience correspond with Scripture to any degree? Even the godliest of believers have inconsistencies, and are beset by indwelling sin and remaining corruption (Matt. 7:21; Rom. 7:14–8:4; Gal. 5:16–18, 22–23; 1 Jn. 3:4–10).

Fifth, the individual's continued perseverance. Despite indwelling sin and remaining corruption (Rom. 7:13–8:4) and the reality of spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10–18), is there some discernable growth in grace (2 Pet. 3:18)? Do we persevere in the faith (2 Tim. 4:7) and in our Christian experience (Rom. 8: 11–16; Eph. 4:20–32; Col. 3:1–10; Phil. 3:8–17), evidencing that we have passed from death unto life (Jn. 5:24; 17:3)? When all these characteristics are taken together, they give a certain degree of assurance that one is in a state of grace. See Questions 111 and 112. What does your life manifest?

Quest. 110: What is the assurance of faith?

Ans: Assurance of faith is the scriptural hope, persuasion and confidence that the believer is truly resting in the Lord Jesus Christ by faith.

2 Cor. 13:5. Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

2 Pet. 1:8–11. 8For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

See also: 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Jn. 2:3–4; 3:4–10, 14–15; 5:10–13.

COMMENTARY

"Assurance of faith," "assurance of salvation" and "assurance of hope" are usually held to be synonymous terms (Rom. 5:1–2; 1 Thess. 1:5; Heb. 6:11; 10:22; 1 Jn. 3:14–19). There is a great difference, however, between "the eternal security of the believer" and "the perseverance of the saints." The former may be presumptive while the latter is necessarily exhortative. The subsequent life may belie the profession in the former, but not in the latter. The biblical emphasis is upon one's perseverance, not upon presupposing a spiritual status (Matt. 10:22; Jn. 8:30–32; Heb. 3:14), together with various warnings against the awful possibility of apostatizing from one's outward profession of faith (Heb. 2:1; 3:7–19; 6:1–6; 10:24–39; 12:14–17).

From the witness of the New Testament, we might affirm that a degree of assurance is normally the culmination of the conversion experience. The

believing sinner, in the context of God–given faith and repentance (Eph. 2:4–10; Phil. 1:29; Acts 11:18; 18:27), through the comprehension of Divine truth (Jn. 17:17; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27), the witness of the Spirit of God (Rom. 5:5; 8:11–16), and the realization of the dynamic of Divine grace in the life (Rom. 6:1–14, 17–18), possesses a reasonable certainty that he is a new creation in Christ Jesus and rejoices in the same (2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 5:1–2). He is made aware of God's unreserved love, which is vouchsafed to him by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). This elementary assurance is doctrinal, inferential and experiential. See Question 112. The profound realities of regeneration and conversion are life–transforming—not by human determination, but by the dynamic of Divine grace.

The question of assurance of faith did not seem to be the problem in New Testament Christianity that it is in our day. Paul, for instance, had to exhort the Corinthians to examine themselves as to their salvation and spiritual state (2 Cor. 13:5); it was evidently simply assumed. The New Testament era was a time of revival for the first twenty years after Pentecost, and also a time of social opposition, and religious and state persecution. Such obstacles and opposition, by their very nature, strengthened Christian profession.

Further, it must be noted that in Apostolic Christianity, there was no absence of sound doctrinal preaching and teaching, no "easy–believeism," and no "Carnal Christian" error. See Question 88. That faith and repentance were Divine gifts was not questioned (Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8–10). Faith and repentance were never separated—both were demanded, which meant a radical conversion, not a religious "decision." Holiness of life and obedience to the commands of Christ were assumed (Heb. 12:14; 1 Jn. 2:3–6). The Moral Law was identical with the Law of Christ. There was no dichotomy between having Jesus as one's Savior and having him as one's Lord. Saving faith in Jesus Christ meant owning him as Lord or King of the life (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9–10; 2 Cor. 4:5). Salvation was both doctrinally and practically, a change of masters (Rom. 6:17–18). One's justification was evidenced by his sanctification (Rom. 5:1–8:16; Heb. 12:14). The system of biblical doctrine promulgated by the Apostles culminated in the glory of God and the glorification of the believer (Rom. 8:28–31; 11:33–36; 2 Tim. 1:13). New Testament converts were expected to lead transformed lives—and evidently largely did so by the grace of God.

Quest. 111: Is there a defective assurance of faith as well as a true and scriptural assurance of faith?

Ans: Yes. A true assurance of faith rests upon a scriptural basis, whereas a defective assurance rests upon unscriptural principles.

Matt. 7:21–23. 21Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

See also: Jn. 6:37, 44; Phil. 1:6; 3:17–19; 2 Pet. 1:5–11; 2:1–22. Jude 3–19.

COMMENTARY

The modern denial or absence of various aspects of biblical truth, as delineated in the previous question, answer and commentary, has had its corresponding denigration of a biblical assurance. Corresponding to a defective doctrine of salvation [“easy–believeism” or “decisionism”] in our day in some quarters has arisen a defective doctrine of assurance. It is grounded in a specific place, a specific time and a specific subjective action, experience or religious decision, rather than upon scriptural criteria and example.

The believer’s assurance or confidence, comprehensively considered, is both objective and subjective. Objectively, it rests in the eternal, immutable redemptive purpose of the triune Godhead (Rom. 8:28–39; Eph. 1:3–14; 2:4–10; Phil. 1:6); subjectively, it rests in the following: the promises of God’s Word (Jn. 5:24; 6:37, 44; 10:27–30; Rom. 10:9–10; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:3–5); various characteristics common to believers (Lk. 9:23; Acts 9:11; Rom. 6:1–14; 7:13–8:4; 8:11–13; Col. 3:5–10; 1 Thess. 4:3, 7; Heb. 12:4–14; 2 Pet. 1:4–11; 1 Jn. 2:3–6; 2:15–17; 3:1–19); and the witness of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 8:16; 9:1). Taken together, these give a general and inclusive biblical assurance of faith. Is your assurance of faith scriptural?

Quest. 112: What are the biblical aspects of the assurance of faith?

Ans: Biblically, assurance of faith is three–fold: inferential, evidential, and internal.

Jn. 5:24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

1 Jn. 3:14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not *his* brother abideth in death.

Rom. 8:16. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

See also: Jn. 6:37, 44; 10:27–30; Lk. 9:23; Rom. 6:1–14; Phil. 1:6; 2 Pet. 1:4–11; 1 Jn. 2:1–4.

COMMENTARY

Only God infallibly knows the true Christian. There is, however, a relative, scriptural and subjective knowledge for the believer concerning his own spiritual state and that of others. The three aspects of a subjective assurance of faith are: (1) inferential, (2) evidential, and (3) internal or immediate. Care must be taken to note that each of these is only an aspect or facet of the whole and is necessarily inadequate in and of itself to provide a scripturally complete doctrine of assurance. These three aspects are necessarily interrelated. The inferential aspect by itself might lead to presumption, the evidential by itself

could be mere legalism, and the internal or immediate by itself might tend toward mysticism—but when taken together these three aspects give an inclusive or comprehensive, scriptural assurance of faith.

Inferential Assurance. This refers to the explicit statements of Scripture from which the believer may infer that he has a valid claim to salvation (Jn. 5:24; 6:37; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9–10, 13). If he believes, then he is saved, has passed from death with its condemnation unto spiritual life with its gracious realities and is the object of God's love and saving grace. The Apostle thus argues from justification to a certain expectation of future glory (Rom. 5:1–2). It is common to limit one's assurance of salvation to such inferential statements, without dealing with the necessity of a subsequently converted life, which exhibits the marks of grace, or the realities of the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Inferential assurance alone may coincide with religious "decisionism" rather than a scriptural conversion and thus, by itself may fail to give an adequate scriptural assurance.

Evidential Assurance. This refers to the alignment of the life and experience to the Scriptures. One's justification is evidenced by his sanctification, i.e., righteousness imputed is manifest by righteousness imparted. See Rom. 3:21–8:39. The inspired argument of the Apostle extends throughout the first eight chapters of Romans. After establishing the utter condemnation of all men (Rom. 1:18–3:20), he demonstrates that everyone who is justified (Rom. 3:21–5:21) must inevitably be sanctified (Rom. 6:1–8:16) and everyone so justified and sanctified will infallibly be glorified (Rom. 8:17–39).

Does the professing believer possess any "marks of grace," i.e., any of the "distinguishing characteristics" of true Christian character? These marks or characteristics are varied and cover the whole range of Christian experience. These are discernable in the life, despite the principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption, and the spiritual infirmities which plague each and every believer in this life of spiritual warfare, struggle and imperfection:

- Does the essence of converting grace manifest itself in the life? Is there any evidence of regenerating grace or of the reigning power of sin having been broken (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Rom. 6:1–14; Gal. 5:16–18; 1 Jn. 3:4–10)? See Questions 78, 95, 114 and 115.
- Are the principle and fruits of true, saving repentance evidenced in the life? Saving repentance is not merely a one–time act, but a constant principle at work in the experience of the believer as he continually confesses and turns from sin in his life (Matt. 3:7–8; Acts 11:18; 17:30–31; 1 Jn. 1:8–10). See Question 90.
- Is the reality of saving faith to any extent manifest in the life? Saving faith is nothing less than utter, unreserved commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is the response of the whole man to the whole Christ. Saving faith is God–given and so a distinct entity that evidences a given character, including an acceptance of the entire Word of God inscripturated (Acts 2:36; 8:36–37; Rom. 10:9–10). Is one delivered

from the reigning power of sin in his present experience? See Question 89.

- Is there a good conscience before God in the context of his inscripturated truth? A renewed conscience is to be governed by the Spirit and Word of God. Much emphasis ought to be placed on a renewed conscience, which answers to God's Spirit and is to be led by God's Word. This is quite distinct from a merely religious or legalistic conscience (Jn. 8:9; Acts 26:9), which, although it may be very powerful, is easily distorted. This conscience–work is an integral part of the Spirit's work in the believer's experience (Rom. 5:5; 8:11–16; 9:1; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; Heb. 9:12–14; 10:22).
- Is there a principle of heart–obedience to the Lord and his commands? One cannot have a valid claim to a right relationship with God and yet live in constant and willful disobedience to the Word of God (Rom. 6:16; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Jn. 2:3–5).
- Is there an experiential godliness and conformity to the Word of God in the life which may be characterized to any given extent as "the practice of righteousness?" Christianity is both doctrinal and practical; it is a system of Divine truth and also a life to be consistently lived in the context of that truth (1 Jn. 3:3–10).
- Is there any evidence of a praying heart or attendance to the private means of grace? The private means of grace are principally prayer and communion with God and the reading and study of the Scriptures. A praying heart is a primary indicator of saving grace (Acts 9:11). (Cf. Psa. 1:2; Matt. 26:41; 1 Thess. 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16–17). See Questions 96 and 126.
- Has the reigning power of sin been broken in the life? There is no one sin which can nullify or terminate the believer's union with Christ and its necessary consequences. According to the clear and unmistakable teaching of Scripture, however, there is no sin that can continue to dominate the believer. The believer may commit acts of sin, but he cannot habitually live in sin and under its reigning power, contradicting the effectual work of the grace of the Spirit of God (Rom. 6:1–14, 17–18, 20, 22; Eph. 2:1–5; 1 Jn. 2:1; 3:9). See Questions 95 and 115.
- Is there a painful consciousness of indwelling sin and remaining corruption? There should be an increasing consciousness of sin as the believer grows in spiritual maturity. This consciousness of sin may be misunderstood by one newly converted, and further intensified by a morbid introspection, but self–examination is often a necessity (Rom. 7:13–8:9; 2 Cor. 13:5). The cure for the reality and agony of any and all sin is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24–26; 1 Jn. 1:8–10). See Question 115.
- Is there any evidence of the principle and power of grace to mortify sin? Sin is to be dealt with scripturally and aggressively by the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11–13; Gal. 5:16–18; Col.

3:5–10). No one is without sin. The true believer, however, cannot long remain in sin once it is made known to him. The consequences will either be repentance or Divine chastisement (Heb. 12:4–14; 1 Jn. 1:8–10). See Questions 96 and 117.

- Is there any reality to spiritual opposition in the life and experience? The believer, as a citizen and subject of the kingdom of God, now lives in an alien world. He is necessarily engaged in spiritual warfare and a spiritual struggle with "the world, the flesh, and the devil," and often with his own lack of faith. He will experience satanic opposition in various forms (Matt. 6:13; Lk. 11:4; Jn. 17:15; Gal. 5:16–17; Eph. 4:27; 6:10–18; Phil. 1:27; 1 Tim. 3:6–7; 2 Tim. 2:26; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:7–8). See Questions 130–131.
- Is there a principle or practice of scriptural self–denial? The Christian life is not one of self–indulgence, but primarily one of self–denial and the mortification of sin, characterized by spiritual priorities and submission in everything to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (Lk. 9:23; 14:25–33; 1 Jn. 2:15–17). See Question 96.
- Is there any experience of Divine chastisement? Such discipline or correction is a reality in the life of every true believer. If a person is never corrected and restored from sinning, it is a horrible mark of being spiritually illegitimate (Heb. 12:4–17). Persistence in sinful behavior may even result in being taken from this life prematurely (1 Cor. 11:30–32; 1 Jn. 5:16–17).
- Has the tenor of the life been turned from the love and seduction of the world? The "worldly Christian" is, simply, a "worldling," not a Christian. The so–called "Carnal Christian" in the modern sense of a professing believer habitually living an unconverted life does not exist. He is simply carnal. The Corinthians were termed "carnal" because they looked to men rather than to the Lord Jesus, not because they lived unconverted lives. Rom. 8:1–11 is a contrast between the converted and unconverted. Such a "two–stage Christianity" cannot be derived from the Scriptures (e.g., Rom. 6:1–23). True believers cannot continue in sin without experiencing the gravest consequences (Rom. 6:1–23; 8:1–9; 1 Cor. 3:1–4; 11:29–32; 1 Jn. 2:15–17; 5:16–17). See Question 88.
- Is there any evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in the life and experience? Such "fruit" is not what might be worked up or produced by human effort, but rather what the Holy Spirit bears in the life as graces or virtues (Rom. 8:11–17, 26–27; Gal. 5:22–23). Is the enabling, sustaining and restraining work of the Spirit at all in evidence (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Gal. 5:16–18)? See Questions 26, 77 and 84.
- Is there a desire for and evidence of true Gospel holiness in the life? Gospel holiness is the one great requirement for heaven. There are no substitutes (2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 1:3–5; 4:1; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 1:14–15; 2:9). See Question 94.

- Is there any experiential progression in conformity to the image of God's Son? The comprehensive and glorious reality of Christian experience through the work of the Spirit is to conform believers to the image of Christ and reflect the moral character of God in the life. Every aspect of the application of redemption points to this. This explains all spiritual growth, individually and corporately, all spiritual unity and maturity, all Divine chastening and providential dealings (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9). See Question 125.
- Is there a growing or progressive comprehension of the truth as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ? Unlike some poor children born in the human realm, who are beset with the worst maladies and mental infirmities of sinful mankind, God has no *spiritual* idiots, morons or retarded persons as his children. No true believer remains a spiritual infant. The Holy Spirit in regeneration neither aborts nor fails in progressively reproducing the image of Christ in his own spiritual children (Jn. 17:3; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Eph. 2:10; 4:13–16; Col. 2:1–7; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; 2 Pet. 3:18). This image will be perfected in the resurrection unto glory (Rom. 8:17–23; 1 Jn. 3:1–4). See Question 115.
- Is there a desire for and a practice of attending to the public means of grace? How can the professing Christian expect anything other than chastisement and spiritual declension if he chooses to absent himself in disobedience? How can it be that he neither longs for the ministry of the Gospel nor the worship and fellowship of the people of God (Heb. 10:25; 1 Jn. 3:14)? See Questions 96 and 127.
- Is there any affinity for the people of God? This is not an emotional, irrational love or feeling devoid of moral character, but a true, scriptural love that reflects the moral character of God and is expressed in responsible desire and behavior (1 Jn. 3:10–19; 4:7–11). Do we desire to be among God's people in public worship and fellowship (Jn. 13:34–35; Heb. 10:23–31)? Is our Christian love expressed in self–sacrifice and practicality (2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Jn. 3:10–19)? See Question 164.
- Is there any manifestation of a forgiving attitude which reflects the believer's union with Christ? If anyone has been forgiven fully, completely and finally, how can he possibly continue to exhibit a hateful or unforgiving spirit (Matt. 6:14–15; Lk. 17:3–4; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12–14)? The self–righteous are unforgiving because they have never felt the need for or experienced the joy of forgiveness themselves. See Question 105.

Internal or Immediate Assurance. This refers to the internal and immediate or direct witness of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us as the "Spirit of adoption." He has taken away a slavish attitude of fear and enabled us with confidence to cry unto God, "Abba, Father"—the instinctive confidence of a spiritual child, a true member of the family (Rom. 8:9, 14–16). The Holy Spirit constantly bears witness with our spirit, or our deepest regenerate self–consciousness, that we are truly God's children, and makes us conscious of his

love (Rom. 5:5; 8:11–17, 26–27; 2 Cor. 1:21–22; 5:5; 3:17–18; Gal. 5:16–17, 22–25; Eph. 4:30; 1 Jn. 4:13) and of our union with Christ. He opens our minds and hearts to be filled with a consciousness of the Lord Jesus and the fullness of our life in him. See Question 77. The Holy Spirit will never lead contrary to Scripture and his witness will always be in accord with Scripture.

This witness seems to be direct and immediate, and thus distinct from the presence and power of the Spirit's indwelling ministry revealed in such realities as enabling one to understand the Scriptures (1 Cor. 2:11–13; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27), convicting of sin, prompting to godly action or the Divine call to and guidance in a given work. See Question 85.

A self–examination (2 Cor. 13:5), which is inclusive of such a broad, scriptural approach, should bring a believer to as full an assurance of faith as is possible in this life. Do you personally enjoy such an assurance?

Quest. 113: From what is the believer saved or delivered?

Ans: The believer is saved from the present reigning power of sin and the ultimate consequences of sin, although he may not presently be saved from all the immediate consequences of sin.

Jn. 5:24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Rom. 6:14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

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

See Also: 2 Sam. 12:5–13; Rom. 3:21–8:23; Heb. 12:14; 1 Jn. 1:8–10; 2:1; 3:3–10.

COMMENTARY

Salvation denotes both deliverance and restoration. See the introduction to this section. Salvation, as revealed in Scripture, is necessarily both present and also future. To think that salvation is merely from future condemnation or eternal judgment is to misread the Scriptures and misunderstand the very nature of deliverance from sin. Remember, sin possesses the realities of guilt, penalty, pollution, power and presence—and salvation must necessarily deal with all these aspects. See Question 36. Beginning with regeneration and ending in our present experience with sanctification, salvation is from the reigning and polluting power of sin in the life (Rom. 6:1–23). If the reigning power of sin is not broken, then we are not in a state of grace, but rather in a graceless state. Freedom from the reigning power of sin means a positive righteousness evidenced in the life by the grace of God (Rom. 6:17–18; 1 Jn. 3:3–10). The scriptural truths and realities of conversion, our union with Christ, justification, adoption, sanctification and future glorification cannot be fragmented or disassociated (Rom. 3:21–8:23). Everyone who is justified is also being

sanctified and only those who have been justified and are being sanctified will ultimately be glorified. This is the overall reasoning of the Apostle in Romans Chapters 1–8.

What of the immediate consequences of sin? Although the believer is delivered from sin as the reigning or dominating principle and power in his life, he may yet suffer from the immediate consequences of his sins. What is meant by this? God usually leaves believers to suffer the effects of their sins committed prior to, and sometimes committed after conversion. This can be explained by example. The drunkard, upon his conversion, does not gain a new liver, and may not gain a new reputation. The prisoner who is converted does not have his sentence automatically commuted. Conversion may not reverse a sinful divorce or restore a disrupted family. The murderer, though forgiven by God, is not released by the state. Lawsuits are not dropped because a person becomes a Christian. Although immorality can and will be forgiven, sexually transmitted diseases will not be cured by conversion. When Christians sin, some of the immediate effects may linger with them throughout their lives. At times, God does intervene in his all–wise and blessed providence to overrule some of the immediate consequences of sin. Usually, however, such things must be borne as part of one's Christian experience for his humility and instruction in grace.

Quest. 114: What is the believer's relation to sin?

Ans: The reigning power of sin has been broken for every believer by virtue of his union with Christ in his death and resurrection–life.

Rom. 6:14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Rom. 6:17–18. [17]But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. [18]Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

See also: Jer. 17:9; Jn. 8:31–36; Rom. 6:1–23; 7:13–8:4; Eph. 4:22–24, 25–32; 5:1–12; Col. 3:1–10; Heb. 12:14; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 Jn. 1:8–10; 2:1; 3:3–10; 5:16–17.

COMMENTARY

There is a difference between being in a state of grace and being in a graceless state. Every human being sins. If anyone says that he has no sin [as a constant reality in his life], he only deceives himself (1 Jn. 1:8). Believers as well as unbelievers sin. What, then, is the difference between sin in the unbeliever and sin in the believer? While the unbeliever, according to his character, lives under the constant reigning power of sin (Rom. 1:18–32; 6:20; Eph. 2:1–3; 4:17–19), the believer, contrary to his character, commits acts of sin (1 Jn. 2:1). [The Gk. uses the aorist tense, referring to acts rather than the present tense, which would refer to a constant action or practice].

The unbeliever is unregenerate, unconverted and so graceless, and thus lives under the reigning or dominating power of sin. Sin is the ruling principle of his life. He is the willing bondslave of sin; it is his master (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:9–12; 6:17). Everything he thinks, says or does is tainted or permeated with sin; this is inescapable apart from saving grace. Sin reaches into the very motives, inclination and manifestation of his heart and mind, and is inevitably expressed in his life. Further, he has no true, abiding interest in the truth of God, but stands opposed to it and finds it insipid (Rom. 1:18–20; 8:5–9; 1 Cor. 2:14). This does not mean that an unbeliever cannot be very religious, moral or ethical, or be socially upstanding and philanthropic to his fellow man. It means that such actions do not issue forth from right motives and inclinations, i.e., from a regenerate heart and renewed mind–set, and are thus sinful. Further, an unbeliever may be physically, morally, and even religiously active, but he remains spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1–3).

The believer, by contrast, has been freed from the dominating or reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:11–14, 17–18). He is no longer a willing bondslave to sin; it is no longer his master. Having been freed from the reigning power of sin, he is now in principle the willing bondslave of righteousness (Rom. 6:17–18, 20, 22). Salvation is, in essence, a change of masters. The source of this transformation is a principle of grace which derives from the believer's union with Christ, which is a union in both his death and in his resurrection–life (Rom. 6:1–23; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–10). Union in Christ's death necessarily means that the reigning power of sin has been broken in the life. Union in his resurrection–life necessarily means that the enabling grace of God through the Holy Spirit is the empowering dynamic in the life and experience of every believer. See Question 77.

It is vital to understand Rom. 6:6 in this connection: "Knowing this, that our old man...[was, aorist tense] crucified with *him*, [in order] that the body of sin might be destroyed, [in order] that henceforth we should not serve [as willing bondslaves to] sin." The "old man" was the unregenerate self, who was crucified with Christ, i.e., died with Christ in his death. The reason is so the body with its appetites might no longer dominate the personality, and that the believer will now no longer live as he once did—a willing bondslave to sin. The believer is the "new [regenerate] man" in Christ. The "crucifixion of the old man" is therefore not a subjective experience to be sought, but a reality to be reckoned in the experience, as noted in Romans 6:11–14 and 1 Peter 2:24. See Question 95.

Contrary to some traditional teachings, the believer is not comprised of an "old man" and a "new man;" he is the "new man" in union with Christ. The "old man," or unregenerate self, was crucified with Christ. If he were comprised of two different "men" or "natures" within himself, then he would be ever frustrated and stymied in any attempt toward holiness and victory over sin. He would be a kind of "spiritual schizophrenic," not the biblical description of the person in whom the reigning power of sin has been broken. Godliness would forever remain either a crippled half–possibility, dependent upon his own self–determination or an option, i.e., he could either remain a "Carnal Christian" or

seek to become a "spiritual" believer. He could constantly blame the "old man" or "old nature" for his difficulties and never take full responsibility for his sin. His union with Christ could be largely nullified. But the Scripture declares every believer to be a "new man" in union with Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). This is the reality of the definitive aspect of sanctification. See Questions 94–95.

What, then, is the source of the believer's struggle with sin in his life? It is not the "old man" or the "old nature," but rather a principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption that expresses itself in acts of sin. It has been traditional on the part of many to refer to this reality of indwelling sin and remaining corruption as the "old nature."

Mark carefully Rom. 6:15–8:15 and closely note the following realities: first, the statement of Romans Chapter seven ends, not at 7:25, but at 8:16. The idea, therefore of "getting out of Romans Chapter Seven and into Romans Chapter Eight" is based on a misunderstanding of this passage. Second, chapter and verse divisions are not inspired. The passage ends on a note of victory through the enabling grace of the Spirit, not in defeat. Third, the Apostle has waited until chapter eight to discuss the reality and power of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. The entire section, which reveals the believer's relation to the law, extends from 6:15 to 8:9. Fourth, Romans 7:14–25 is, we believe, the statement of a mature believer who is horribly conscious of all and any indwelling sin and remaining corruption. When held before the absolute standard of the law, he is the very epitome of weakness and inconsistency, or "carnal" [lit: "made of flesh"]. Fifth, he makes a very clear distinction between "I" or himself and the "sin that dwelleth in me," not the "old man" or the "old nature." Finally, his strength and hope of victory lie in the grace or power of the Holy Spirit, which enables him to conform in principle to the righteous demands of the Moral Law (Rom. 8:1–16). Has the reigning power of sin been broken in your life?

Quest. 115: If the believer is effectively brought into union with Christ, with all such union implies, why and how does he yet sin?

Ans: The believer, though no longer under the continual reigning power of sin, yet commits acts of sin due to a principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption.

Rom. 6:15. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

Rom. 6:17–18. [17]But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. [18]Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Rom. 7:17–21. [17]Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [18]For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.[19]For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I

would not, that I do. [20]Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. [21]I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

1 Jn. 2:1. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

See also: Rom. 6:1–23; 7:13–8:16; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–10; 1 Thess. 5:24; 1 Jn. 1:8–10.

COMMENTARY

See Questions 95, 113 and 114. It is the clear teaching of Scripture that the reigning power of sin has been broken in the life of every true believer by virtue of his union with Christ. This is not dependent on the believer's personal strength, determination or dedication, but upon his objective union with the Lord Jesus Christ and entrance into a state of grace. Although the believer is no longer under the dominating or reigning power of sin, he still commits *acts* of sin, i.e., he "died" to sin's reigning power, but he is not "dead" to its reality in his experience (Rom. 6:11–14; 7:13–8:4). The great and determining difference between the believer and unbeliever, or the mere professing Christian, is that the unbeliever lives in a state of sin and under its reigning power, while the believer, because he is in a state of grace, acts out of character and commits *acts* of sin.

Five realities must be noted: first, the Scriptures do not teach either "sinless perfection" or a modified "Christian perfectionism" (1 Jn. 1:8–10). See Question 88. Such teachings fail to take into account the heinousness of sin in its true nature, the principle of remaining sin and inner corruption in the believer, the reality of spiritual warfare and the subtlety of the devil (Eph. 6:10–18), and the use of the terms "perfect" and "perfection" in the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor. 2:6; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 3:12–15; Col. 1:28). These terms are used in the sense of "mature" or being made "complete," "brought to conclusion," or "entire." Inevitably, any idea of perfectionism must be modified to accommodate the reality of remaining sin and corruption or put the Moral Law of God on a sliding scale to make it relative to one's ability—or one must hold to the idea that a true believer may finally apostatize.

Second, the believer in this present life, although saved in soul and mind, is still in the same body which possesses a principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption [not an "old nature" or "the old man"] (Rom. 7:13–8:4). This will plague every believer until death and his resurrection in glory (Rom. 8:17–23; Phil. 3:20–21). Sin is no longer his master, and he is under no compelling obligation to its solicitations, but it comprises his "infirmity" or weakness toward sin (Rom. 6:11–14, 17–19; 8:26).

Third, before regeneration and faith, he was "free" [disengaged] from the principle of righteousness, but now, as a believer, he is "freed" [disengaged] from the reigning principle of sin (Rom. 6:20, 22).

Fourth, although the reigning power of sin has been broken, a principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption manifests itself in various acts of sin, in which the believer acts out of character as a Christian. Note that the language of Rom. 6:15 and 1 Jn. 2:1 [aorist tense] refers to *acts* of sin, i.e., "…shall we [lightly commit acts of] sin…?" "…these things I write unto you that you do not [commit an act of] sin, and if anyone does [commit an act of] sin…" In this life every believer retains a principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption which haunts and taunts him, and at times seduces him to sin. Such manifestations must be mortified by the Spirit and grace of God (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5).

Fifth, there is no excuse for sin in the life of the believer. That we sin is a sad reality; that we mortify all known manifestations of indwelling sin and remaining corruption is our duty; that we repent from all sin committed is imperative; that we are chastened by God in his loving kindness is a necessity; that God forgives us is an unfathomable and unspeakable blessing. That he does so through the Lord Jesus is the glory of grace.

A believer, though he yet sins, will neither fully nor finally apostatize from God or return to an overt life of sin. He may sin for a time, until convicted or confronted with his fault, but, when so confronted by the Word, the Spirit or through preaching or personal confrontation, he will be brought to repentance. The great preventatives against apostasy are the infallibility of the Divine redemptive purpose, his union with Christ, the reality of Divine chastening and the providential dealings of both God and fellow–believers through the Spirit and the Word. Should a believer continue to grieve the Spirit of God by constant overt sinning, it is possible that God might take his life to preserve his soul (1 Cor. 5:1–5; 11:30–32;1 Jn. 5:16–17). Do we take even acts of sin lightly? Are we quick to mortify the manifestations of indwelling sin and remaining corruption?

Quest. 116: Can the believer gain victory over any given sin?

Ans: There is no one sin that must continue to dominate the believer.

Rom. 6:14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Rom. 6:15. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?

1 Jn. 2:1. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

See also: Rom. 3:9; 6:1–23; 7:13–8:16; Gal. 5:16–17; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–10; 1 Jn. 1:8–9; 2:1; 1 Jn. 3:4–10.

COMMENTARY

By virtue of the believer's union with Christ, the reigning power of sin has been broken, although the believer now commits *acts* of sin. He must therefore

deal with these *acts* of sin as manifestations of the principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption. See Questions 95 and 115.

The very words of Scripture reveal that he is no longer under sin's dominion, and so no sin presents an insurmountable impossibility or can nullify the enabling grace of God. Note in Rom. 6:11–14 that the believer is to be wholly unresponsive to the solicitation of sin, his former master. The very words "reckon" and "Let not..." presuppose that the reigning power of sin has been broken by the grace of God. Rom. 6:14 settles the issue. The believer is no longer under a mere principle of outward command, but under the dynamic of inward grace. There is no sin that cannot be overcome by the grace of God—unless the person is himself in a graceless state.

A further explanation may be necessary concerning the words of Rom. 6:14, "for ye are not under the law but under grace." The definite article before "law" should be omitted, as it is not in the original language. This is not a contrast between dispensations, as though individuals were once "under the law" but now are "under grace." What is denoted is a principle of law, i.e., mere outward commandment. The contrast is between a principle of mere outward command which could only direct, but impart no ability to comply, and an inward principle of grace which provides the dynamic of compliance. This explains why no sin can continue to dominate the true believer.

The Lord Jesus Christ has not gained believers a hollow victory over sin, but an actual victory which is realized through the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit. He makes our union with Christ and the mortification of sin effectual in our experience (Rom. 8:13; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–10). Our relation to sin should not be thought of in terms of defeat or victory, which is in the context of our Lord's redemptive work, bur rather in terms of obedience or disobedience. He has gained the victory; we are to live in obedience. Do we need more grace to mortify sin? Let us pray for it!

Quest. 117: How is the believer to deal with sin in his life?

Ans: The believer is to deal with sin in his life by confessing it, repenting of it, forsaking it and mortifying it according to the Scriptures.

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

Isa. 55:7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Rom. 8:13. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Col. 3:5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth…

See also: Rom. 6:1–23; 8:1–16; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–11; 1 Jn. 1:8–10.

COMMENTARY

Although the following might be seem to be a dangerous statement, it is yet true, if we are to be scriptural. Before we can scripturally deal with sin, we must call "sin" what the Bible calls sin, and we must also stop calling "sin" what the Bible does not call sin. Unless we attempt to be consistent with Scripture, we may allow some sins because of tradition, culture, personal pride or prejudice, or suffer from too sensitive a conscience and lean toward a legalistic mentality, calling things "sin" which the Scripture does not.

Sin must be confessed, repented of and forsaken in order to have forgiveness (1 Jn. 1:8–10). To confess sin is to take sides with God against our sin. The word "confess" means "to say the same thing." Unless we confess our faults and transgressions to God as sin, we will never take righteous, aggressive action against them. We must repent. Being repentant concerning sin is a constant attitude we must have when our sins are made known to us. Forsaking sin is the culminative action of a repentant mind and heart.

How is the believer to deal with sin in his life? Some teach that he has the option to live in a state of sin as a "Carnal Christian." Others teach that he must "rededicate his life" to God. Still others teach that he can continue to excuse it as being the sin of the "old man" or "old nature," and that the "new man" or "new nature" does not sin. None of these, however, squares with Scripture, which expressly declares how the believer is to deal with sin in his life. He is to take positive action against it and mortify it. See Questions 95 and 96. Carefully note that such mortification is a debt and a duty owed to God by virtue of our union with Christ (Rom. 6:1–14; 8:11–14; Col. 3:1–10), and that this union is the basis for the mortification of sin. Note further, that it is not the body, but rather the *deeds* of the body that are to be mortified (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5–11). Mortification is neither asceticism nor legalism. Finally, note carefully that mortification is possible only through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11–14; Gal. 5:16–18). Do we practice a constant mortification by God's grace and Spirit?

Quest. 118: What is meant by "Christian liberty"?

Ans: Christian liberty pertains to the believer's indulgence in matters of diet, drink and other things, activities and observances, which are scripturally neutral, but may cause a weaker brother to stumble.

Rom. 14:13. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

1 Cor. 10:31–32. [31]Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. [32]Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.

See also: Rom. 14:1–23; 1 Cor. 6:12–13; 10:12–33; Gal. 5:13–14, 22–3; 6:14; 1 Pet. 1:13–16, 22; 2:9–17; 2 Pet. 3:13–14.

COMMENTARY

Christian liberty is not concerned with those matters which are clearly delineated in Scripture as either right or wrong, righteous or unrighteous, godly or sinful. It is rather concerned with matters which are of a neutral nature, and usually concern those matters which include religious observances, food and drink, and associations or issues which may vary from culture to culture.

The issue of Christian liberty or the freedom of conscience in neutral matters must be governed by several principles: first, the objective standard for all behavior is the inscripturated Word of God. No believer has the option or liberty to be unscriptural. Questions or issues arise when men, for various reasons, seek to either make the Scripture broader or narrower to include and decide in neutral matters. Although we must call "sin" what the Bible calls sin, and not call "sin" what it does not, various interpretations, differences and prejudices still exist among sincere believers. Second, God alone is the Lord of the conscience. Religious human nature has the innate tendency to force itself on the conscience of others, whether right or wrong. This may violate another's conscience as being or not being submissive to God and his Word. Third, the supreme motive for all things is the glory of God—and this is inclusive of all actions (1 Cor. 10:31). Those actions which cannot be done to the glory of God become sinful. Finally, the conscience of the weaker brother must always be considered and not violated. His weaker conscience is to guide and govern the actions of the stronger brother (Rom. 14:1–23; 1 Cor. 10:14–33).

Who are the "weaker brother" and the "stronger brother"? Some think that the weaker brother is one who indulges in certain actions or practices, often equating such with loose living or a lack of spirituality. The stronger brother, by contrast, is often thought to be the one who is very strict in his limitations. Scripturally, the reverse comes nearer the truth. The weaker brother is the one whose conscience is overly sensitive in neutral matters. The stronger brother is the one whose conscience is not so sensitive in such matters. This, however, presupposes that the matters in question are neutral, and that both believe that each is being biblical in his faith, attitude and actions.

What tendencies must be avoided in the matter of Christian liberty? Any tendency toward legalism, antinomianism, hypocrisy, or flaunting one's alleged Christian liberty is inconsistent with the Scriptures. So is an over–sensitive conscience which may be constantly used to promote legalistic tendencies or dominate the consciences and actions of others.

Consideration ought to be given to the terms "offense," "offend" and "stumble." The words "offense" or "offend" do not mean to hurt one's feelings, but rather to cause another to stumble. To "stumble" is to be led into a situation or action by another in such a way as to violate one's conscience. A weaker brother is offended or caused to stumble when he is led to act in a given matter against his conscience by another who is allegedly stronger in faith. Personal "hurt feelings" or transgressions have nothing to do with a biblical offense. Do we understand Christian liberty? Do we manifest a loving compassion and understanding toward those whom we believe are our weaker brethren?

Quest. 119: May not true believers, by reason of their imperfec–tions, the temptations and sins which overtake them, fall from the state of grace?

Ans: True believers, by reason of the immutable love and eternal redemptive purpose of God, by virtue of their inseparable union with Christ and the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit, can neither wholly nor finally fall from the state of grace.

Jn. 10:27–29. [27]My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: [28]And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. [29]My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Phil. 1:6. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

1 Pet. 1:5. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

See also: Jer. 31:3; Lk. 22:32; Jn. 14:16–17; 17:24; Rom. 5:5; 6:1–14; 8:1–4, 28–39; 1 Cor. 1:8–9; Eph. 1:3–14; 2:4–10; 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–10; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 7:25; 9:11–12; 1 Pet. 1:3–5; 1 Jn. 3:1–3, 9.

COMMENTARY

The class of persons to whom this question is addressed are true believers. Not included are "mere professing Christians" whose religion consists solely in outward ceremonies, mere irrational feelings or a single subjective religious experience. For true believers to ultimately perish would nullify the immutability of the Divine love and purpose [See Questions 64, 66, 68, 69 and 78], their union with Christ [See Question 77], his intercessory work for them and the Holy Spirit's work in them [See Questions 84, 94–96]. It would further nullify all the promises of God's Word to them. Thus, believers could not trust the Word of God and would be left without any objective comfort or hope in God or his Word. See Question 9.

Even the holiest and godliest of believers, if left to themselves, apart from the enabling and sustaining grace of God, would fall away through the force of temptation, indwelling sin and remaining corruption. True believers are kept by the power of God so that they neither wholly nor finally fall from the state of grace (Jn. 10:27–29; Phil. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:3–5), although they may fall to temptation, commit acts of sin, experience the chastening hand of God, and may even for a time lose a sense of their assurance. Divine grace infallibly saves us and also necessarily keeps us. "For by grace are you saved [have been saved and are kept in that state, perf. tense] through faith…" (Eph. 2:8).

As believers in our present experience, we are the raw products of saving grace, still far from the finished work which God has ordained (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Eph. 2:8–10; 1 Jn. 3:1–3). We are, as it were, brought to Christ as raw ore, put into the furnace of temptation and affliction, the crucible of trial and chastisement, and the smelting pot of spiritual warfare until the dross of

self–righteousness, self–trust, pride and conceit is burned away. Through such adversities we are brought to a fuller understanding of the Divine purpose and love. More and more grace is mixed into our lives as coke is added to iron in the crucible to make steel. More and more emptied of self, we undergo our first steps in the process of being conformed to the image of God's Son. We learn of grace. We learn to pray, to trust and to live more and more as consistent believers. We are heated, forged, tempered and then drawn so that by the grace of God we may bend but not break. The end of this gracious process in God's purpose is that we shall be like the Lord Jesus (Jn. 3:30; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 1 Jn. 3:1–3).

But what of certain statements in Scripture which seem to teach that true believers may backslide, fall from grace or apostatize? What of backsliding? Although it is common for many to speak of the "backslidden Christian," the following must be noted: first, the terms "backslider," "backslidden" and "backslidings" occur seventeen times in Scripture, and all in three books of the Old Testament (Proverbs, Jeremiah and Hosea). It is thus a designation peculiar to the Old Testament. Second, sixteen of these references are to Israel. Third, there are four different Heb. terms used, and these are all synonymous with open rebellion, throwing off God's yoke, or apostasy. The idea of "sliding or slipping back" into a state of sin is foreign to the meaning of the Heb. terms used in the various texts. The traditional teaching and terminology concerning "backsliding," if imported into the New Testament, could only describe apostasy.

What of "falling from grace"? This terminology is taken from Gal. 5:4. It does not have reference to the loss of one's salvation, but rather to returning to the bondage of the law for justification, including circumcision, and turning back from the principle of grace and faith (Gal. 5:1–5).

What of the possibility of apostasy? Many may turn back from a defective and temporary profession of faith (Matt. 13:5–6, 20–21; Jn. 6:66). There are stringent warnings against apostatizing from one's profession of faith through returning to the Mosaic legislation and Judaism through fear of persecution. This was the case of the Jewish professing converts in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Mark the strong warnings against apostasy: "Do not drift!" (Heb. 2:1–4). "Do not Disbelieve! (Heb. 3:6b–4:13). "Do not Degenerate!" (Heb. 5:11–6:20). "Do not Despise!" (Heb. 10:26–31) and "Do not Defile!" (Heb. 12:12–17). Although a true believer will not apostatize for reasons previously stated, one who merely has an outward profession of religion may do so. Such sad realities enforce the necessity for clarity in the gospel proclamation and for strong and consistent Bible doctrine and soundness in the faith (Acts 20:26–27; 2 Cor. 13:5; 2 Tim. 1:13).

Quest. 120: What is a world–and–life view?

Ans: A world–and–life view is a philosophy of life, the sum–total of one's presuppositions or what he assumes to be true and

therefore believes without question, and thus what ultimately determines how he thinks and acts.

Gen. 1:1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Matt. 4:4. …It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

2 Tim. 3:16–17. [16]All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17]That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Rev. 4:11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

See also: Acts 14:8–18; 17:22–31; Rom. 1:18–25; 8:28–31; 11:33–36; 1 Cor. 8:4–6.

COMMENTARY

It is erroneous to think that Christianity may be truncated into a few cardinal doctrines which characterize orthodoxy and form the basis for the Christian experience and life. Biblical Christianity embraces all of Scripture for all of life. When properly and consistently interpreted, Scripture speaks with absolute authority to every possible life–situation and circumstance. We must understand biblical Christianity in terms of a world–and–life view.

Everyone, consciously or not, has a philosophy of life, a framework or set of presuppositions from which he thinks and acts—a world–and–life view. It is an individual's perception of reality and how he relates to it, his convictions and presuppositions [unquestioned assumptions, axioms, first–principles] which represent his total outlook on life, the world about him and ultimate reality. Our world–and–life view determines literally everything in our perception of and relationship to reality.

The following contrast in world–and–life views demonstrates their significance: the atheist, if consistent, must presuppose that there is no God, nothing transcendent or supernatural, a random evolutionary process, no absolutes; no certainty except fatalism, no hope except in chance, fate or luck; no basis for morality except by human consensus; no ultimate meaning except that which man gives to things, and no future beyond this present life. Thus, the atheist, if at all consistent, must face ultimate meaninglessness and futility—a necessarily nihilistic outlook.

The Christian, if consistent with the Scriptures, presupposes that the God of Scripture is the all–encompassing, living Reality, that he sovereignly rules this universe and everything in it, and is infallibly bringing his eternal purpose to completion for his own glory and the good of his elect. He presupposes that God has created all things and has given them meaning, that obedience to God begins by giving the same meaning to everything that God has given to it. He thus believes that man was created in the image of God to live by God's Word

and to "think God's thoughts after him," and that the moral character of God determines human morality. The Christian further looks to the future with hope and rejoicing because his faith is founded upon the Word of the eternal, immutable God, who has revealed his redemptive purpose, enlightened this through prophecy and encourages through the promises of his infallible Word. Have you seriously thought about your own, personal world–and–life view? Have you aligned it consistently to the Scriptures?

Quest. 121: What is a Biblical or Christian Theistic World–and–Life View?

Ans: A Biblical or Christian Theistic World–and–Life View is a God–given philosophy of life which derives from the coherent and inclusive interpretation and application of biblical truth.

Matt. 4:4. …It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

2 Tim. 3:16–17. [16]All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17]That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

See also: Psa. 19:1–6; 139:1–18; Acts 17:22–31; Rom. 8:28–39; 11:33–36; 1 Cor. 8:6; 10:31; 2 Pet. 3:1–18.

COMMENTARY

Every religion by its very nature possesses a "meta–narrative" or world–view, an over–arching idea of meaning, purpose and destiny. It is in this given context that the individual finds meaning in a deity or deities, for himself and for the world about him. It is from this point–of–reference that he views the past, the present and the future. See Question 35. The biblical world–view is called the Christian Theistic World–and–Life View because it expresses the truth and reality of the self–revealing, triune God of Scripture and his eternal purpose, which is being worked out in and through his creation. This concept of God and reality is derived from special revelation [the Scriptures] and is witnessed in natural revelation [creation, time and history]. Such a concept is theocentric [God–centered] and focuses on the redemption of not only fallen mankind (Jn. 3:16; Rev. 5:9), but ultimately of all creation. It will be realized in the final redemption of God's beloved people, the final consummation of history in the Lord Jesus Christ and the "new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness" (1 Cor. 15:21–28; Eph. 1:3–11; 2 Pet. 3:7–14). See Question 172.

The Christian Theistic World–and–Life View gives the proper meaning to creation in general and the creation of man as the image–bearer of God in particular. It sets the Fall of man, the providential character of human history; the incarnation, the active and passive obedience, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the present gospel economy all in their proper significance. It gives meaning to the individual and his place in time and

history. In its widest scope, the Christian Theistic World–and–Life View encompasses virtually everything without exception, leaving no place for fate, luck, chance or fortune. God is not only the Sovereign of this universe, he is also the God of the minute and intimate, ruling from the stars, galaxies and planets to the elements of each individual atom. Nothing is hidden from him, nothing is out of his control, and everything is moving toward its glorious culmination according to his decree. The blessed truth of Rom. 8:28 is necessarily to be seen in this context (Rom. 8:17–39).

The address of the Apostle Paul to the philosophical council at Athens (Acts 17:16–34), the first recorded intellectual confrontation between biblical Christianity and Greek philosophy, was an apologetic [defense of the faith] in terms of a Christian Theistic World–and–Life View. See Question 136. It is the *locus classicus* of apologetics in Scripture (Cf. Rom. 1:18–25; 1 Cor. 10:3–5; Phil. 1:7, 17; 1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3). His words were the most profound ever uttered in that ancient center of pagan philosophy. To adequately comprehend this statement, it must be noted that this address was the culmination of several weeks of daily preaching Christ in the agora, which explains the necessary doctrinal background of his final defense, and why he need not specifically name our Lord (Acts 17:16–18).

His theme was the nature and character of God (Acts 17:22–24), his intimate relation with and his sovereign rule over all creation (Acts 17:24–25), the unity of the human race (Acts 17:26), the rise and fall of succeeding civilizations (Acts 17:26), the nature of man as God's image–bearer (Acts 17:26–28), his fallen condition (Acts 17:27, 30), the willful ignorance and culpability of idolatry (Acts 17:28), and impending judgment based upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 17:30–31). Although he quoted no Scripture, every statement was a declaration which was firmly grounded in Divine revelation. The Apostle's apologetic was thoroughly presuppositional.

Quest. 122: How does the believer's world–and–life view differ from that of the unbeliever?

Ans: The believer's world–and–life view is God–given, scriptural, and therefore self–consistent and transcendent, in contrast to that of the unbeliever, which is self–appropriated, unscriptural, and therefore inconsistent and inadequate.

Prov. 14:12. There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.

Matt. 4:4. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

2 Tim. 3:16–17. [16]All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17]That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

See also: Gen. 1:1; Psa. 139:1–18; Prov. 16:25; Acts 17:22–31; Rom. 11:33–36; Rev. 4:11.

COMMENTARY

Individuals usually develop or choose their own philosophy of life or world–view. It may be through religious teaching, speculative philosophical education, or empirically through the process of science or life experiences. Many are quite unaware of their world–view and its implications until they are forced to come to terms with both it and themselves. Most approaches to life and meaning in our day are existential [wholly subjective] or postmodern [relativistic, pluralistic and meaningless in objective communication], and so are fragmented [lacking a coherent unity], and therefore inadequate or contradictory and often entirely subjective or irrational. This results from the lack of any metaphysical basis, absolutes or adequate religious foundation for morality and ethics. Such people are adrift on a sea of contingency and uncertainty. These learn little or nothing from the past, live only for the present, and have at the most an irrational hope for the future.

The believer, by contrast, is given his world–and–life view from God in the Scriptures. The Bible is to form his *pou sto* [lit: "[a place] where I may stand"] or point–of–reference. The Scriptures are to him, through the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration (Jn. 3:3, 5), conversion (1 Thess. 2:13) and illumination (1 Jn. 2:20, 27), the very Word of God. By virtue of his new spiritual state of grace, he is given a new point–of–reference, and so a set of scriptural absolutes, a new morality, ethic, meaning and purpose for the present, and hope for the future (Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16–17). His world–and–life view is then inclusive and harmonious, and both self–consistent and transcendent [prophetically reaches into the future] (1 Thess. 4:13–18; 2 Pet. 3:7–14; 1 Jn. 3:1–3). This is the ideal. His Christian experience is fitted to bring him more and more into conformity with it. The key, then, to such conformity and consistency is faith––faith in the triune, self–disclosing God of Scripture, and thus faith in his infallible Word. It is all of Scripture [consistently interpreted] for all of life.

Quest. 123: Why is a Biblical World–and–Life View necessary for a consistent Christianity?

Ans: Biblical Christianity is necessarily consistent and inclusive, as the Scriptures authoritatively speak to all of life, bringing every aspect under the authority of the Word of God, and thus under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Matt. 4:4. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Rom. 11:36. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

2 Tim. 3:16–17. [16]All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: [17]That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

See Also: Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9–10; 1 Cor. 8:6; 10:31; 2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 1:12–17; Heb. 1:1–4; Rev. 4:11.

COMMENTARY

Much of modern Christianity tends to be truncated into a few major doctrines, or leans toward subjective experience, and thus tends to reflect the fragmentation of the unbelieving world's approach to life and reality. Many professing Christians separate their religion from certain moral issues, from various ethical and economic problems, and often from social, political and environmental issues, as though these were outside the realm of the Christian religion and concern. When Christianity is approached biblically, however, one begins to see its full implications. There is no area of life and reality where the Word of God does not speak with final authority or give positive direction. If the Scriptures are studied consistently and inclusively, it will be discovered that every area of life is touched. By precept, principle and example, guidance may be intelligently and consistently obtained for every issue through the use of good and necessary consequences. It is the burden of the believer to bring every area and aspect of life and reality under the dominion of the Lordship of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures.

What is the relationship between the Bible and the practical issues of life? The Bible is the very Word of God inscripturated. It is fully and finally authoritative because it is God's very Word. God has given us his Word to be both understood and obeyed. It comes to us as Divine mandate, not merely for information or debate. The end of Bible study is the arrival at doctrinal truth. It is this doctrinal truth which is then applied to the life. First, there must be diligent, prayerful study, then an understanding of what the text says and what it means, and then legitimate and consistent application. Regeneration, conversion, spiritual illumination and obedience are thus inherently related. See Questions 7–19. Are our faith and outlook inclusive of all of life?

Quest. 124: What is the moral standard for the believer's life?

Ans: The Moral Law of God is the moral standard for the believer's life.

Psa. 119:97. O how love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day.

Rom. 7:12. Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

Rom. 8:4. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

See also: Ex. 20:1–17; Deut. 6:4–5; Matt. 5:17–18; 22:37–40. Jn. 13:34–35; Gal. 3:24; 1 Tim. 1:5–11; Heb. 4:9; 1 Jn. 2:3–5; 5:1–3.

COMMENTARY

The nature and relevance of the Moral Law are set forth in Questions 39–42. An exposition of the Moral Law as epitomized in the Decalogue is set forth in Questions 43–63. In summary, several issues can be noted: first, the prologue

to the Decalogue reveals that the Law was given, not as a means of salvation, but so a redeemed covenant people might reflect the moral character of their God and Redeemer. Legislation always accompanies redemption. This remains true in both the Old and the New or Gospel Covenants (Matt. 22:36–40; Rom. 7:12; 8:1–4; 13:8–10; 1 Tim. 1:8–11; 1 Jn. 2:3–5).

Second, the Moral Law is not limited to the Decalogue or Ten Commandments, but is inclusive of all the moral commands of Scripture. This is exemplified in the coherence or non–contradictory nature of Scripture itself. The various summaries of the Moral Law (Ex. 20:1–17; Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:36–40; Rom. 13:8–10; 1 Tim. 1:5–11) epitomize what is expanded in its fullness in both the Old and New Testaments. Indeed, the Moral Law is unfolded or amplified and interpreted explicitly and implicitly in and by the New Testament.

Third, the Decalogue as the epitome of the Moral Law is a series of case laws which may be expanded coherently to cover every moral issue (e.g., Matt. 5:27–28; 1 Jn. 3:15). In the Decalogue, as the epitome of the Moral Law, God legislated morality. He has not changed in these precepts. The Moral Law of God is the Law of Christ.

Fourth, sin must be viewed in terms of God's law. All and every sin is heinous in God's sight. It is a transgression of his law or lawlessness (1 Jn. 3:4). See Question 36. The Moral Law keeps us from misrepresenting and misinterpreting sin or excusing it. Remember, the absence or opposite of law is not grace; it is lawlessness.

Fifth, There is necessarily a moral Law for God's moral creatures. The law is internalized or written in the believer's heart in the operations of Divine grace, answering to the law ontologically embedded in man's heart at creation as the image–bearer of God, and is now renewed with a regenerate mind–set (Rom. 8:1–9; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10). God's grace through the work of the Spirit leads to a love and desire to conform to God's moral character and commandments (Psa. 1:1–3; 119:159; Rom. 6:14; 8:1–9; 1 Jn. 2:3–5).

Sixth, the very work of salvation, especially sanctification, is to produce a holy people. This holiness reflects that of God's own moral character (Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9). God's grace produces "a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). It is not God's purpose that his people be unholy or unrighteous. Any subjective or indefinite standard would be out of keeping with the objective simplicity of God's Moral Law and character, as would the absence of any moral standard!

Seventh, the weakness of the Old Covenant was that the heart remained unchanged and religion was merely external, except for an elect remnant of true believers. Under the New or Gospel Covenant, the heart or inner being is transformed through regeneration [the impartation of Divine life, the re–creation of the image of God in righteousness, holiness of the truth and knowledge, the breaking of the reigning power of sin and the removal of the natural heart–enmity to the Law of God] to conform in principle to the Moral

Law. Grace conforms us in principle to love and obey the precepts of God. Thus, the Law is not merely external, but also internal as to its content and motivation (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 11:19–20; 36:25–27; Rom. 2:11–16; 6:14; 2 Cor. 3:3, 17–18; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:1–10; Heb. 8:8–11).

It must be noted in Rom. 6:14 that the definite article ["the"] does *not* occur before the word "law" in the Greek. Thus, it refers to a principle of law, i.e., a principle of mere outward command, as contrasted with the inward principle and dynamic of grace. Legalism is not spirituality; it is external. It is of works [human ability], not of grace. Divine grace sanctifies inwardly; it reflects God's righteous character. Any denial of this reality is a denial of Divine grace in regeneration, conversion and sanctification—and this strikes at the very heart of antinomianism. Although the Moral Law can neither justify nor sanctify, it remains the Divine standard.

Eighth, most of the errors in Christianity can be traced to either a neglect or denial of the relevance of the Moral Law—Wesleyan perfectionism, mysticism [Quakerism], self–righteousness [mere legalism], the defective view of depravity inherent in Socinianism and Arminianism, antinomianism and the modern errors of the "carnal Christian" heresy and "decisionism." Extreme Dispensationalism is inherently antinomian, as it erroneously replaces Law with grace and fails to see the grace of law.

Ninth, as the law is fulfilled in love, so is love defined by the Law (Rom. 13:8–10). If we do not unlawfully take our neighbor's life, steal from him, act immorally toward him, diminish him in any way, or seek his harm in thought, word or deed, or lie about him or to him and do not covet what he has, and when we seek his good—then we are biblically loving our neighbor. Only in the context of biblical law and love—an objective, obedient, intelligent love—can we consistently love others, even our enemies. See Question 164.

Tenth, faith does not render the Law of God void, but rather establishes it (Rom. 3:21–31). As believers, we "died to the law" as an instrument of condemnation. By virtue of our union with Christ and faith in him the Law is established, not abrogated (Rom. 3:21–31; 7:4; Gal. 2:16–21). See Question 41.

Finally, there are three uses of the law: a rod, a rule, and a cane: first, it is the God–ordained medium for the conviction of sin as the transcript of the Divine character—a "rod" to drive us to Christ, as it were (Gal. 3:24). Care should be taken to note the Gk. tense used in this statement, "The law was [*gegonen*, perf. tense, "was and continues to be"] our school master to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." Our Lord used the Moral Law to reveal the heart of the rich, young ruler (Matt. 19:16–22). The first preachers used the Law implicitly in their preaching, especially that of the Sixth Commandment concerning murder (e.g., Acts 2:22–23; 3:15; 7:51–52).

The Apostle Paul, although suddenly and dramatically converted on the road to Damascus, gives an insight into the "pricks" [goads] he experienced prior to his conversion, as a working of the Law on his conscience, stripping him of his self–righteousness and bringing upon him a sense of utter

condemnation (Phil. 3:4–6; Acts 9:5; Rom. 7:7–14). Paul evidently made use of the Law when dealing with the Roman Governor Felix (Acts 24:24–25). He speaks of the Moral Law as being in full force and including the whole human race within its jurisdiction as it forcefully and strictly defines sin (Rom. 3:19–20). In modern evangelical Christianity, however, love has replaced righteousness—a love stripped of its necessary moral character. Hence, the defective view of conversion and sanctification in modern, evangelical Christianity.

Second, It is the "rule" or transcript of the moral character of God, which is to be reflected in the believer's life from a principle of loving obedience and in the context of enabling grace through the power of the Spirit (Rom. 6:14, 20, 22; 8:3–4; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9).

Third, the Law is, as it were, a "cane" to assist us in our walk. "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:14). While the law itself can neither justify nor sanctify, it yet reveals the standard of absolute righteousness—and sin as God sees it—for the believer. The law delivers from all religious relativism, and obedience to its precepts is to be from a heart of love by God's enabling grace, never from a mere formal, external or legalistic principle.

Has God's grace brought you to a loving conformity to God's Law? Can you say with David, "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psa. 119:97)? Does the absolute standard of righteousness in the Law cause you to magnify the grace of God as its in Jesus Christ, who has delivered you from its condemning power?

Quest. 125: What has God infallibly ordained as the common spiritual goal for each and every believer?

Ans: God has ordained that each and every believer is to be brought toward spiritual maturity through growth in grace and knowledge, and ultimately conformed to the image of Christ.

Rom. 8:29. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

2 Cor. 3:17–18. 17Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. 18But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.

See Also: Rom. 8:3–4, 18–23; Gal. 5:16–17, 22–25; Eph. 3:14–19; 4:22–24; Phil. 1:6; 2:12–13; 3:10–17; Col. 3:1–10; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 2 Pet. 3:18.

COMMENTARY

The state of grace into which every believer is brought is not static. There is to be growth toward spiritual maturity within this state (Rom. 8:29; 2 Pet. 3:18). Salvation does not begin and end with a religious "decision" or single

subjective experience. Everything in the Christian's experience either tends toward spiritual maturity and conformity to the Lord Jesus, or becomes the reverse of it (Heb. 5:11–14). The ultimate goal of redemption in general and sanctification in particular is our conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. This infallible process, though begun in this life, will only be perfected in eternity with the resurrection unto glory. See Question 94. He is not only our example; he is also the great and glorious prototype of redeemed humanity as the "Last Adam" and the "Second Man" (Rom. 5:12–18; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45–49).

This is the Divine purpose for our salvation—the redemption and restoration of the image of God in man. The triune God of Scripture has purposed to restore his entire creation (Isa. 65:17; 66:22; 1 Cor. 15:23–28; 2 Pet. 3:7–13; Rev. 21:1). As to our personal redemption, it began in the eternal counsel with Divine election (Eph. 1:3–11). See Question 68. This principle of sovereign grace flows down through time, history, and personal experience, being expressed through all the aspects of saving grace from our calling and regeneration to our sanctification. See Questions 66 and 78. This process will be brought to ultimate consummation in our resurrection unto glory (Rom. 8:18–23). See Question 169.

Growth in grace and any degree of conformity to the image of God's Son is effected in our Christian experience through the ministry of the Word (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 3:18) and the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God graciously works such grace to us, within us and for us (Rom. 6:14; 2 Cor. 3:17–18). He reveals the deep truths of God to us (1 Cor. 2:9–13), enables us to pray spiritually (Eph. 6:18), intercedes for us according to the will of God in our prayers (Rom. 8:26–27), reveals the truths and glories of the Lord Jesus to us (Eph. 1:15–20; 3:14–19), enables us to mortify sin (Rom. 8:11–13), witnesses with our spirits that we are God's children (Rom. 8:14–16) and empowers us in our Christian walk (Rom. 6:14; Eph. 1:17–18; Gal. 5:16–18).

The "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22–23) is the manifestation or evidence of the Spirit's indwelling presence and enabling, transforming power. This is a spiritual work conforming us into the image of God's Son as to our character, attitude and spiritual walk (Gal. 5:16–18).

It is in this context that we must understand our union with Christ, and also every trial, testing, spiritual opposition and season of Divine chastening (1 Cor. 3:21–23; Heb. 12:4–13; Jas. 1:2–4). See Question 77. Whatever God does, he does in the context of his eternal purpose. Nothing is ever out of his control or contrary to his counsel. Although many things, situations and circumstances may seem quite contrary to our desires, expectations and even to our prayers, the Divine purpose is infallibly being brought to pass. It is exactly because this is true that we can and must by faith rest ourselves in the providence and love of God (Hab. 3:17–19; Rom. 5:1–5; 8:28–39; Eph. 3:14–19). See Questions 35 and 69. This includes even the very worst that we might experience (Rom. 8:35–39). Thus, everything in the Christian experience becomes a test of faith––a faith which stands on the infallible Word of the living God. Do you see your

whole life and Christian experience in terms of being conformed to the image of God's Son?

Quest. 126: What are the private means of grace which God has ordained for the spiritual welfare, growth and maturity of believers?

Ans: The private means of grace are the diligent study of the Scriptures and prayer.

Jn. 17:17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

2 Tim. 2:15. Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

1 Thess. 5:17. Pray without ceasing.

See also: Matt. 6:5–15; Mk. 14:38; Eph. 1:15–20; 3:14–19; 6:18–20; Phil.1:9–11; Col. 1:3, 9–12; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2 Pet. 1:5–11.

COMMENTARY

Every believer, although in the state of grace, must attend unto the means of grace, which ought to be marks of grace. See Questions 78 and 112. Such means are rendered effectual through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. A graceless person may be religious, but he is not a Christian. Little or no grace is evidenced by a self–righteous and proud attitude. Sufficient grace is evidenced by a humble and contrite spirit, which is easily entreated. In the true believer, grace tempers the personality, and faith rises to rest in God in the face of assaults and opposition. A vindictive spirit is a graceless spirit, as is a proud, unkind or angry spirit. An irrational spirit is not a gracious spirit, but one which is graceless, for the fruit of the Spirit is "temperance" [self–control] (Gal. 5:23). Common grace, that grace which God gives to preserve and benefit mankind in general, is not saving grace. Common grace may be tempered by religion and refined by culture, but it cannot be equated with true, saving grace.

Divine grace in the life is not static. Although every believer is in the state of grace, the given degree of grace within the believer may be relatively great or small, and may wax or wane (Heb. 5:11–14; 2 Pet. 3:18). Do we, as Christians, have little grace? If so, then let us go to God and humbly beg for more. Grace is everything. It brings us to and keeps us in Christ; it tempers the personality, mitigates the natural impulses, gives courage, enables us to pray, to serve and to suffer and fixes the mind on eternal realities. Whatever the trouble, situation or circumstances, we stand or act faithfully in relation to our measure of Divine grace—and this grace, God has declared, is always sufficient (Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 12:9).

The believer is to develop Christian graces within his own personality through his growth in grace. His faith is not to stand alone, but is to be joined to a host of other graces which rise to a chorus of full assurance in his profession of faith and Christian character (2 Pet. 1:4–11). [The word "add" in v. 5 is the source of our word "Choreography." Faith is not to sing a solo]!

Because Divine grace is not static in the believer's experience, God has ordained certain means of grace, both private and public, for the sustenance, edification and maturation of his people. The principal private means of grace are prayer and the study of the Scriptures.

Prayer is the vital spiritual link between the believer and the God of his salvation. A "prayerless Christian" would be a contradiction in terms. See Question 112. Prayer is the first sign of spiritual life, analogous to the cry of a new–born infant (Acts 9:11). It is natural to a state of grace. Prayer is the single intertwined thread which runs throughout the panorama of Christian experience. It is the unmitigated expression of the redeemed soul in all its varied circumstances, reaching out to a sovereign, yet loving and gracious Heavenly Father (Matt. 6:9–13; Lk. 11:2–4, 11–13). Through prayer we worship God in faith and are brought into living fellowship with him through the intercession of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 4:14–16; 7:25; 1 Jn. 2:1) and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26–27). It is in prayer that we offer up our praise and petitions, and maintain the intimacy of true spiritual communion. See Questions 98–107.

The inscripturated Word of God provides the second private means of grace. Through reading, study and meditation on the Scriptures we discern God's will and are graciously brought into conformity to it, at least in principle, led to confess and repent of our sins, and are renewed in the spirit of our minds (Rom. 12:1–2; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 1 Jn. 1:8–9). It is through the Scriptures that we are edified and brought to a discernable growth in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jas. 1:21–25; 2 Pet. 3:18).

As grace is not irrational, so its means are intelligent. Both prayer and the study of the Word are intelligent exercises which rise to communion with God. True spirituality is not irrational, but primarily intellectual, i.e., the emotions rise from a right comprehension of Divine truth and the application of that truth to both practical living and praying. As the Puritan John Flavel wrote in verse several centuries ago:

Feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving,
Our warrant is the Word of God,
Naught else is worth believing.

To neglect these means of grace means certain spiritual declension. Do you daily make use of these means of grace?

Quest. 127: What are the public means of grace which God has ordained for the spiritual welfare, growth and maturity of believers?

Ans: The public means of grace include corporate worship, the ministry of the Word, the ordinances, corporate prayer and the sanctified fellowship of other believers.

Heb. 10:25. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Acts 2:42. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 4:31. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Rom. 1:12. That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Col. 4:6. Let your speech *be* alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.

See also: Psa. 42:1–5, 11; Jn. 13:34–35; Acts 4:23–31; Rom. 12:3–13; 14:19; Eph. 4:11–16, 29; 5:29–32; 6:17–18; Col. 3:12–17; 1 Thess. 5:11; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2; Heb. 13:7, 17; Jas. 1:19–27; 2:1–5; 3:1–18; 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:8–9; 5:1–11; 1 Jn. 3:13–19.

COMMENTARY

The primary public means of grace include, but are not necessarily limited to the corporate worship of God's people, the ministry of the Word, the observance of the ordinances, corporate prayer and the edifying fellowship of God's people. Each of these means has a peculiar ministry in the believer's experience.

Corporate worship brings us into that ministry of the Spirit which sanctifies the local assembly together as a corporate body (Eph. 4:11–16; Phil. 1:27). Such ought to include the singing of "Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," and also public prayer and the exposition of the Scriptures (Eph. 5:16–21). True believers have an affinity for the people of God (1 Jn. 3:14).

It is in this corporate context of true worship that the ministry of the Word is exercised in power in the prescribed atmosphere (Rom. 10:14–15; 16:25; 1 Cor. 2:4–5; 14:24–25; Eph. 6:18–20). Preaching is the primary ordinance which our Lord has ordained for the edification of his people as well as for the evangelization of the unconverted. The ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, both of which signify the believer's union or identification with the Lord Jesus Christ, are to edify by means of the truths symbolized.

Corporate prayer meetings edify as various believers articulate their praises and heart–longings. How often we broaden or intensify our own hearts, minds, petitions and praise by praying with others! The corporate prayer meeting

before Pentecost was historically and spiritually transforming (Acts 1:14). Corporate prayer meetings are often noted in Scripture (Josh. 7:6–9; Ezra 8:21; Psa. 62:8; Acts 1:24–26; 2:42; 4:23–31; 6:6; 13:2–3; 14:23; 16:25; 20:36; 21:5–6; Jas. 5:14–16).

Godly fellowship and conversation seek both explicitly and implicitly to edify others (Eph. 4:15, 29–32; 5:1–4, 19–21; Phil. 1:27; Col. 3:8–10, 12–17; 4:6; Titus 2:7–8). The godly fellowship and conversation of mature, experienced believers ought to constitute a major means of grace to others, especially younger believers or those who are experiencing great personal trials. How little we seem to have of this last corporate means of grace in our day! How often we fail to rise to the level of godly fellowship and conversation! Is it not because there is a neglect of the private means of grace which ought to underlie the public means? How often gossip and unkindness or self–righteousness characterize conversations between professing Christians (Eph. 4:29–32; 5:1–4)! And is anyone completely innocent in this? When the prevalent sins of believers are listed in the New Testament, they always emphasize the sins of attitude and speech. May we seek to be biblical and gracious in our conversation in both intent and content! Do you love and are you faithful in public worship? Do you have a true affinity for God's people?

Quest. 128: Is the believer, as a child of God and a citizen of his heavenly kingdom, exempt from the troubles and ills common to man?

Ans: No. The believer, although a child of God and a citizen of his heavenly kingdom, is yet subject to the troubles and ills common to man.

Jn. 16:33. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Rom. 8:35–36. [35]Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? [36]As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Phil. 1:27. Only let your conversation [conduct as a citizen] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ…

Phil. 1:29–30. [29]For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; [30]Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

2 Tim. 3:12. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

See also: Psa. 103:1–5; Matt. 5:10–13, 43–48; 13:21; Mk. 10:30; Jn. 3:3, 5; 15:20; Acts 8:1–4; 14:22; Rom. 5:3–5; 14:17; 2 Cor. 12:10; Eph. 3:13; 6:10–18; Phil. 3:20–21; 2 Thess. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:18–19; 2 Tim. 3:11.

COMMENTARY

As Christians, we suffer, experience great trials and may often stumble or fail in our spiritual pilgrimage. As creatures living in a fallen, sin–cursed world, we are subject to all the common ills and sufferings of mankind. We have been ordained by God to experience adversity in our spiritual pilgrimage, both as members of a fallen race and also as Christians.

There are at least six issues pertaining to the Christian's suffering which ought to be addressed: first, believers are not exempt from the common ills which befall other members of our fallen human race. We will suffer losses, reverses, disappointments, sickness, disease and death as believers. See Question 167. Sometimes marriages and families will be dysfunctional and become divided (Matt. 10:34–36; 1 Cor. 7:1–6, 10–16). Churches will suffer defections and divisions from both legitimate and illegitimate causes (1 Cor. 11:18–19; 1 Jn. 2:19). Pastors and other laborers in God's work will be misunderstood, maligned and maltreated (2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Thess. 2:2, 14–16). Some professing Christians will scandalize the faith (Matt. 13:20–21; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 1 Jn. 2:19). We will inevitably have our enemies (Matt. 5:10–13, 44; Rom. 12:14, 17–21). The righteous usually suffer along with the wicked in times of war, turmoil, plagues and natural disasters or national calamities. This is amply illustrated in both the Old and New Testaments (e.g., 1 Kgs. 17:1–16; Lam. 1:1–5:22; Acts 11:27–30). In all such contrary circumstances, we are called upon to live by faith and suffer the common ills of all men. We are to trust in Divine providence and look forward to eternal glory, and are not expected to find lasting satisfaction in our present lives (Rom. 8:17–23, 38–39; 2 Cor. 4:8–18; 1 Jn. 3:1–3).

Second, believers will suffer unjustly because of misunderstanding, prejudice or outright hatred simply because they are Christians (Lk. 21:16–17; Jn. 15:18–21; Rom. 8:35–36; 1 Thess. 2:2, 14–16; 1 Pet. 2:11–12, 19–20). The history of true, faithful Christianity is a history written in suffering and blood. We are not only subject to the same ills which are common to unbelievers, we must also suffer for the sake of Christ, his gospel and his kingdom (Matt. 5:10–13; Jn. 15:18–20; Rom. 12:14, 17–21; Phil. 1:29–30; 2 Tim. 2:8–10; 3:12). It is the God–ordained lot of God's people to suffer for him and his cause in this world. Some will suffer government persecution; others will suffer at the hands of society in more subtle ways, some from the religious establishment, and some even at the hands of fellow professing–Christians (Phil. 1:14–18). There will be false Christians who are in reality the enemies of the cross of Christ (Eph. 4:29–32; Phil. 3:17–21). Such maltreatment ought not to come upon us as utterly unexpected, but as consonant with our identification with our Lord and faithfulness to his truth.

Third, believers must necessarily and unavoidably engage in spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10–18; 1 Tim. 6:11–12; 2 Tim. 2:3; 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8–9). Just as our Lord was tempted (Matt. 4:1–13), so are we in this world (Matt. 6:13; 1 Cor. 10:1–13; Jas. 1:13–16; 1 Jn. 4:17). Every spiritual reality and stand for God and his truth must be challenged by the evil one, either directly or through

his emissaries (Lk. 22:31–32). We must understand who our real enemies are: "…we wrestle not against flesh and blood..." Our enemies must not be other human beings, whether Christian or non–Christian. This would be mere sectarianism or simple animosity. We must see our spiritual warfare for what it is. Our enemies are great evil or wicked spiritual powers—the devil and his demons—never those fellow human beings who might be unwittingly used as such (Matt. 5:44; 16:21–23; Lk. 9:55; Rom. 12:18–21; Eph. 6:10–18).

Fourth, God has ordained that our faith be tried. Not all suffering or adversity is because of sin. Some trials are for our increase of faith; other trials are for our testimony to others (1 Sam. 30:6; Psa. 73; Hab. 2:4; 3:17–19). An untested faith is but theoretical at the least and weak at most. A tested faith is a strong faith, and the stronger the faith, the greater the testimony to the grace of God (1 Pet. 1:6–9; 4:12–13). See Question 89.

Fifth, material, monetary and physical prosperity, unless truly sanctified and held in its proper place, must become harmful to the believer (1 Tim. 6:6–10; 3 Jn. 2). The modern misunderstanding and misapplication of the so–called "Health and Wealth Gospel" ["God wants you prosperous and healthy. Any sickness, want or suffering is not of God, but derives from a lack of faith"] has mislead some (Josh. 1:7–9; Matt. 13:7, 22; Mk. 4:7, 18–19; Lk. 8:7, 14). Many of God's most eminent servants have suffered sickness, disease, adversity and poverty, imprisonment, torture and death (Rom. 8:35–37; 2 Cor. 4:7–18; 11:22–33; 12:7–10; Phil. 4:11–13; Heb. 11:35–40).

Sixth, we must consider the reality of Divine chastisement (1 Cor. 11:32; 2 Cor. 6:9; Heb. 12:4–13; Rev. 3:19). There is not one believer who is not chastened by the Lord. Some suffering, trial, sorrow, reverses and adversity derive from God's gracious hand in correcting his beloved children. Whether we suffer because we are merely human beings, suffer as believers, or suffer because of our sin as believers, must be discerned. God neither chastens us without cause nor does he long hide the reason. When we fall into grievous circumstances, we must first inquire as to their origin by the Scriptures and prayer. If it is because of sin, we must repent; if not, then we have a clear conscience to pray for deliverance and for perseverance by the grace of God. We must remember that whatever our Heavenly Father does, he does in love and for our good, although the experience may be very grievous. The common goal of all believers is our conformity to the image of God's Son. See Question 125.

We are called to a life of faith, holiness, obedience and humble submission to God and his sovereign will. Our reward is in heaven, not on this earth (Matt. 5:11–12). Whether our lot is to suffer physically, spiritually or mentally, therein is our testimony and our faithfulness. Whether it be those ills common to all, or suffering for the cause of Christ, we are to remain faithful (Rev. 2:10). Our Heavenly Father will be merciful and his grace will be sufficient (Psa.136; 2 Cor. 12:7–10). He knows our weaknesses and infirmities, and will never test us above or beyond his gracious enablement (Psa. 103:1–5, 13–14; 1 Cor. 10:1–

13). Do we primarily trust God for what he does or for who he is? Do dark providences cause us to distrust him?

Quest. 129: Can the believer, still subject to the ills, troubles and sorrows common to man, yet expect to find contentment, fulfillment, and joy in this present life?

Ans: The believer, though beset by the common ills, troubles and sorrows characteristic of this present life, is to find contentment, fulfillment and joy in God.

Rom. 5:3–5. 3And not only *so*, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Rom. 14:17. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Gal. 5:22–23. 22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

1 Tim. 6:17. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.

See also: Psa. 103:1–5; Eccl. 9:7–10; Hab. 3:17–19; Matt. 5:10–13, 43–48; 13:21; Mk. 10:30; Jn. 3:3, 5; 15:20; Acts 8:1–4; 14:22; Rom. 5:3–5; 14:17; 2 Cor. 4:17–18; 12:10; Eph. 3:13; 6:10–18; Phil. 3:20–21; 2 Thess. 1:4; 1 Tim. 1:18–19; 2:1–2; 2 Tim. 3:11–12.

COMMENTARY

Our only true satisfaction and lasting joy is to be found in God alone (Psa. 73:23–26). Four issues need to be considered: first, believers, together with unbelievers, experience much of God's common grace with its attendant blessings in the legitimate comforts, enjoyments and pleasures of this earthly life (Psa. 103:1–5; Acts 14:15–17). These may be enjoyed, so long as they do not become an end in themselves [which is idolatry. See Question 45 and 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:5] as they do with unbelievers, or seduce us from Christ (3 Jn. 2). Worldly advantages, affluence and cares have a tendency to seduce the heart and mind away from faithfulness and devotion to the Lord Jesus (Matt. 13:22; 19:21–24; Lk. 12:15; Col. 3:5; 1 Tim. 6:6–10; Heb. 13:5; 1 Jn. 2:15–17). Thus, some worldly advantages, wealth, affluence or advancement may be kept from some of God's people.

Second, believers must understand that such earthly advantages and comforts are never an end in themselves, but simply things to be enjoyed in their respective place, and as a means by which they are to bring glory to God, and so to be received in faith with thanksgiving (1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Tim. 4:1–5; 6:17). Everything given to the believer by Divine providence becomes a matter

of faithful stewardship to be sanctified for the cause of Christ and the glory of God. This includes one's health, wealth, abilities, energy and time (Deut. 8:18; 1 Cor. 4:7; 6:20).

Third, believers need to know from the Scriptures that true fulfillment, contentment and joy are spiritual realities which may even exist in one's experience regardless of outward circumstances (Hab. 3:17–19). The truly godly person is to find his great delight in the Word of his God (Psa. 1:2). Contentment can be a state of mind or heart which is fixed upon God, his providence and his purpose (Phil. 4:6–7, 11–13). Joy in the Lord is not necessarily happiness. God can give joy even in a time of great affliction (Job 35:10; Acts 5:40–41; 16:23–25).

Fourth, believers are to understand from the Scriptures that the Christian life is to be one of faith, not happiness. This faith is often to be tested, matured and purified through trial, opposition and suffering (2 Tim. 3:10–12; 1 Pet. 1:3–9). This perspective ought to become one of acceptance and resignation, and even one of joy and the anticipation of that which is eternal (Rom. 8:17–23; 2 Cor. 4:17–18; Gal. 6:7–10; 2 Pet. 3:9–14). There is no comparison between the transient happiness of the world and the true joy of the Christian. O Lord, increase our faith! Do we find our fulfillment or joy in God and his blessings, or do we need the world to find our satisfaction? (Psa. 1:1–3).

Quest. 130: What are the principle enemies of the believer in this life?

Ans: The principle enemies of the believer in this life are the world, the flesh and the devil.

1 Jn. 2:15–17. 15Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Gal. 6:7–8. 7Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

1 Pet. 5:8–9. 8Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

See also: Gen. 3:1–19; Job. 1:6–12; 2:1–7; Matt. 16:18, 21–23; Lk. 9:51–56; Eph. 6:10–18; Phil. 1:27; 3:20–21; 1 Pet. 2:11–12; 1 Jn. 4:4.

COMMENTARY

Although Christians may legitimately enjoy the positive things of this life (Psa. 103:1–5; 3 Jn. 2), they are truly "strangers and pilgrims on the earth"

(Heb. 11:13). There is at every perceivable juncture a difference between the true child of God and the unconverted. The true believer must not and cannot be completely at home in this world—among the fallen, sinful sons of Adam's race. Should this happen, then Divine providence and chastening move to wean such an one from the seduction and temporary or false comforts which the world holds forth (Rom. 12:1–2; Heb. 12:4–13). The believer's destiny is to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:28–31; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 1 Jn. 3:1–3). Therefore, he is to remain separate from the world in his world–and–life view, his motivation and inclination, his activities, and his ultimate goals (1 Jn. 2:15–17; 1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 12:11–13). Those who accommodate themselves to the world and find in it their satisfaction are questionable at the very least and possibly in a graceless state. If believers, these are subject to Divine chastening (Matt. 13:22; Mk. 4:18–19; Lk. 8:14; Heb. 12:14–17; 1 Jn. 2:15–17).

The great enemies of the true believer are: first, the world, with its empty hopes, dreams and promises, which seeks to seduce from Christ, his Lordship and his commands. A boat is meant to be in the water; the trouble begins when the water gets into the boat. So it is with the Christian and the world. We are meant to be in the world, but we are not to be of the world, nor is the world to get into us (Matt. 5:13–16). There exists a principle of animosity between the believer and the world by virtue of his belonging to and being identified with the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 15:18–22). The world seeks to conquer the Christian by seducing him away from his faithfulness to the Lord or neutralizing him (1 Jn. 2:15–17). This is vividly described as spiritual adultery (Jas. 4:1–6). The strategy against this enemy is to stop loving the world and to flee from its snares (1 Cor. 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:22).

Second, the flesh, that sinful principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption within the believer which expresses itself through the body and its appetites, desires and infirmities (Rom. 6:12–13; Jas. 1:13–17). We, as it were, have a traitor in our midst. Not the body, but a principle of sin which expresses itself through the body and its peculiarities. This is why the mortification of sin largely deals with sins which utilize the body with its infirmities and functions (Rom. 8:11–13; Col. 3:5–10). The mind is to be constantly renewed, realigned to the truth of God, but it is subject to sinful thoughts (Rom. 12:1–2; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10). The tongue, given to praise God and declare his truth, may be used for gossip, deceit and destructive purposes (Ex. 20:16; Eph. 4:25; Jas. 3:2–13). The ears hear what they ought not. The eyes look upon things which become sinful in mental perception (Matt. 5:27–30; 2 Pet. 2:14). The feet carry the body to places where they ought not (Rom. 3:12, 15; Heb. 12:12–13). The groin is ruled by natural appetite rather than the truth of God with its moral boundaries (Ex. 20:14; 1 Thess. 4:3–5). The strategy against this enemy is either mortification or flight (Rom. 8:12–13; 1 Cor. 6:18; Col. 3:1–10; 2 Tim. 2:22).

Third, the devil, who is the arch–deceiver, the adversary, the one who stands behind all evil in this world and is the avowed enemy of all righteousness (Jn. 8:44). He stalks believers, seeking to completely undo and devastate them (1

Pet. 5:8–9). The strategy against this enemy is not only to seek deliverance, but also to resist or fight (Matt. 6:13; Eph. 6:10–17; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8–9). See Question 131.

We might well add a fourth enemy: our own native unbelief. Unbelief, it is said, is the mother–sin, as it underlies all others, and masquerades with a thousand false faces. Unbelief slackens our use of the constituted means of grace. See Questions 126 and 127. It weakens our prayers, undermines our faithfulness, dampens our zeal, paralyzes our efforts to evangelize, and nullifies any boldness or courage we would have for the cause of Christ (Lk. 24:25). The strategy against this enemy is to ask for more faith (Mk. 9:23–24; Lk. 17:5; 22:32; Rom. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:13). Unbelief and impatience undo the strength and persistence of our prayers. May God enable us to believe, to be patient and to persevere! Do we take such enemies seriously, or have we made friends of those awful realities which would seduce us?

Quest. 131: Who is the great adversary of the believer?

Ans: The great adversary of the believer is the devil, who opposes the gospel, and works as a spiritual deceiver to discourage, defeat and overwhelm him.

Eph. 6:10–11. [10]Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. [11]Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

1 Pet. 5:8–9. [8]Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: [9]Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

See also: Judg. 9:23; 1 Kgs. 22:19–23; 2 Kgs. 6:13–16; Job. 1:6–12; 2:1–7; Dan.10:12–14; Matt. 4:1–11; 13: 49, 18–19; 16:18, 21–23; Mk. 5:2–13; Lk. 9:51–56; 22:31–32; Lk. 11:18–23; Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:3–4; 12:7; Eph. 2:2–3; 6:10–18; Heb. 2:14–15; 1 Pet. 5:7–9; 1 Jn. 5:18–19; Jude 9; Rev. 2:10; 9:11; 12:3–9; 20:7–12.

COMMENTARY

The Scriptures reveal that there is a spirit world, the abode of spirit beings, which greatly affects the material world of sense in which we live (e.g., Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7; Eph. 2:2–3; 1 Jn. 5:19). In this spirit world there are both angels and demons, and it is a scene of conflict which reaches far into our world (Matt. 4:1–11; 6:13; 16:22–23; Lk. 22:31–32; Eph. 6:10–16; 1 Tim. 3:6–7; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7–10). Within this spirit world there is a kingdom of darkness ruled by the devil and his demons (Col. 1:12–13), a hierarchy of evil spirits who do what they can to oppose righteousness, the people of God, the cause of Christ in this world (2 Kgs. 6:13–16; Dan. 10:12–14; 2 Cor. 4:3–4; Eph. 6:12) and blind the unbeliever to the truth of the gospel (Matt. 13:19; Mk. 4:15; Lk. 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:3–6).

God is Spirit (Jn. 4:24). See Question 22. He is infinite, omnipresent and imminent. He rules over both the sensual and spiritual realms in absolute sovereignty, infallibly governing everything in the process of time to its consummation in his infallible redemptive purpose (Eph. 1:3–11). The devil by contrast is an evil, finite spirit being, a creature with delegated power under Divine permission (Job 1:6–19; 2:1–7; Lk. 4:5–6; 2 Cor. 12:7; Heb. 2:14), who seeks to disrupt, defeat and destroy the work of God which is carried on through believers in this world (Eph. 6:10–18; 1 Pet. 5:8–9).

What delegated power do the devil and his demons possess? At times, and under Divine permission, these evil spirits have the power over human governments (Matt. 4:8–9; Lk. 4:5–6); power to inflict physical sickness and death (Job. 2:1–7; Mk. 5:2–13; Lk. 13:11–16; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 12:7; Heb. 2:14), power to possess unbelievers and oppress believers (Mk. 5:1ff; Lk. 22:31–32; Acts 5:3), power to motivate, deceive and sway marauders, leaders, armies, nations and governments (1 Kgs. 22:19–23; 2 Kgs. 6:13–17; 1 Chron. 21:1–14; Job 1:6–17; Lk. 4:5–6; Rev. 2:10; 13:7; 20:2–3), power to cause natural calamities (Job 1:18–19), power to perform deceptive miracles (Matt. 7:21–23; 2 Thess. 2:8–10; Rev. 13:13–15), power to deceive and devour believers (Eph. 6:10–11; 1 Pet. 5:8–9); and power to blind unbelievers to the truth of the gospel and nullify gospel efforts (Matt. 13:19; Mk. 4:15; Lk. 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:3–6).

As believers seeking to make a stand for God, testifying to his truth and grace, and gaining a hearing for the gospel, we must expect satanic opposition, seduction and deceit (Eph. 6:10–18). This may be very subtle and very powerful (1 Pet. 5:8–9). We may even be attacked through our highest motives, greatest concerns or presumed strength of faith (Matt. 16:21–23; Lk. 9:53–56; 22:31–32)!

There are two realities which are of the utmost importance and greatest comfort to the believer: first, Satan [Heb. "adversary"] or the devil [Gk. "slanderer"] is a created being. He is not omnipresent and possesses only a delegated power. He is under God's control and, for all his rage, he cannot defeat the Divine purpose. Second, beginning with his wilderness temptation, his work on the cross, and his resurrection and ascension into glory, the Lord Jesus Christ has begun to destroy [lit: dismantle] the works of the devil and will ultimately destroy the entire kingdom of darkness with all its powers (Gen. 3:15; Matt. 4:1–11; 16:18; Lk. 11:18–23; Jn. 12:27–31; 1 Cor. 15:20–26; Col. 2:14–15; Heb. 1:1–4; 1 Jn. 3:8). Although the devil's "craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate, on earth is not his equal," yet "greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 Jn. 4:4. Cf. Matt. 28:18; Col. 1:12–17; Heb. 1:3). Our strength is "in the Lord and in the power of his might," not in ourselves. Let us then, believe, trust, pray, love our Lord and serve with faithfulness, being armed with the panoply of God (Eph. 6:10–18).

Quest. 132: What is the believer's comfort throughout life, upon his deathbed, and in his dying hour?

Ans: The believer's comfort throughout his life, upon his deathbed and in his dying hour is in the free and sovereign grace and covenant love of God manifest in his eternal, infallible, redemptive purpose through the Lord Jesus Christ. This gives one a certain anticipation of the resurrection unto glory.

Rom. 8:28–31. [28]And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. [29]For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. [30]Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. [31]What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?

See also: Jn. 5:24; 6:37, 44; Rom. 8:18–23, 28–39; 2 Cor. 1:9–10; 4:17–18; 5:1–8; Eph. 1:3–14; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 5:23–24; 2 Tim. 2:19; 4:18; 1 Jn. 3:1–3; Jude 23–25.

COMMENTARY

The believer's true and lasting comfort must not ultimately rest in his subjective religious experience, but in the objective truth of Divine revelation. Dementia, serious injuries, disease and mental sickness may rob the believer of his past religious experience or service, and his subjective assurance. The promises of God stand sure, despite what the varied experience of the believer might be. The ultimate hope and comfort of the child of God is the free and sovereign grace and covenant love of Almighty God for his own. The eternal Covenant of Redemption and Grace is as immutable as its gracious and loving Author, and is as infallible as the remainder of his Holy Word. See Question 66. Our union with Christ is indissoluble. See Question 77. Its fullness and finality will be our resurrection unto glory. The broken power of reigning sin in our present experience will give place to eternal bliss and freedom from all and every sin, and even its very presence. See Question 169. The covenant love of the Lord Jesus, which now sustains us, will be consummated in the fullness of glory.

This is not to say that God does not at times give to dying believers an unusual fullness of faith, a foretaste of heaven, a blessed premonition and expectation of coming glory and going to be with Christ which is "much more better" (Phil. 1:23). But even ecstatic experiences may be deceiving if not the extension of a godly, holy life (Psa. 73:3–4; Matt. 7:21–23).

The full reality of salvation by free grace alone will never become so fully evident or glorious as when we stand before our God, and the state of grace gives way to the state of glory (Rom. 8:18–23; 2 Cor. 5:1–2, 8; 1 Jn. 3:1–3).

We are destined for eternal glory, but in the meantime, we must endure afflictions, trials, and adversities in our present experience—and we remain

ignorant as to how we ought to pray in these circumstances. But God, in Romans chapter eight, has given us a seven–fold ground or basis for our faith for our present encouragement in such afflictions and trials: first, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit as the dynamic of our lives (8:1–11). Second, the power and witness of the Holy Spirit in the mortification of sin, access to the Father and a knowledge of our spiritual identity (v. 12–17). Third, the truth that our future glory will be disproportionate to our present afflictions (v. 18–25). Fourth, the reality of the Holy Spirit's help in prayer to overcome our ignorance of our present circumstances. (v. 26–27). Fifth, the confidence that God is working all things together for our good (v. 28–30). Sixth, the triune God changes not in His covenant love and work (v. 31–34). Seventh, the very worst that can happen to us in this life, even at the hands of men, cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (v. 35–39) Saving faith lays hold of such truth and sustains us through the trials and adversities of our present experience.

The glory of sovereign grace ought to humble us exceedingly and fill our hearts and souls with continual love and thankfulness (Rom. 5:5; 1 Jn. 4:19). Whatever comes to pass in our present experience cannot nullify the infallibility of Divine love. Believers may contract debilitating diseases, may lose their minds and memories through mishaps, strokes or dementia, or may suffer much from the hands of men for their faith before God calls them home to himself, yet his promises are ever sure, his gracious purpose is unalterable and his love is immutable (Rom. 8:28–39). May our faith lay hold of such truth!

Quest. 133: Do all believers die with full assurance, comfort and the blessed expectation of glory?

Ans: Some may die suddenly and without immediate preparation, others may have time to sufficiently prepare. Some may die in weakness of faith or mentally incapacitated, others may die with great faith and expectation of glory. But all that die resting by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, regardless of their dying experience, are destined for eternal glory.

Psa. 73:24. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

Psa. 90:12. So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.

Rom. 8:29–30. [29]For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. [30]Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

See aslo: Job 19:23–27; 2 Cor. 4:17–18; 13:5; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 2 Tim. 1:7–10; 4:6–8; Heb. 2:9–15; 1 Pet. 1:3–9; 2 Pet. 3:10–14.

COMMENTARY

We simply do not know the immediate future. But we do by faith, through the Word of God, know the ultimate future, and we know that our Heavenly Father holds our destiny in his hands. We know not the day, hour or circumstances of our death; but we do know that all things, including this last enemy, are under the sovereign control of the Lord Jesus (Rev. 1:10–18). Some believers will never die (1 Thess. 4:13–18). In our present experience, we are to live by faith (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 2:20), serving God according to his Word and trusting him according to his promises (Rom. 8:28). This means having faith in and under all circumstances, trusting ourselves to God, his loving purpose and his providential care.

We are to be governed and guided by faith, not by our fears. Yet everyone, even the most godly, at times becomes fearful, and faith is not always a constant in our experience (Acts 18:9–10; 2 Cor. 4:8–18; 7:5). Unbelief is native to our hearts and expresses itself in all manner of subtleties. The cure for unbelief is ever the same—prayer for faith and resting in the promises of God's Holy Word. True, saving faith is Christian faith, and this faith is the gift of God's grace (Acts 18:27; Eph. 2:4–10). This faith feeds upon the Word of God (Rom. 10:17).

The Patriarchs, although "dead" to this world, are alive in the presence of God (Matt. 22:23–32). The believer will experience dying, but will never experience death. Death in all its reality and finality is ultimate separation from God, and this has already passed for the true believer in Jesus (Jn. 5:24; 2 Tim. 1:8–9). Our Lord died and has come forth victorious from the grave. So shall we because we have been brought into vital, living union with him. See Question 165. Let us rejoice in God's free and sovereign grace!

VIII
EVANGELISM AND THE GOSPEL MINISTRY

These subjects are usually treated in the realm of Practical Theology under the heading of "Evangelistics" [Gk. *euaggelion*, "Gospel"]. Biblical Christianity is by necessity and mandate a missionary religion. It is thus evangelistic by its very nature. Biblically, evangelism takes two basic forms: public preaching and personal witness. Preaching the gospel and evangelizing where we live may be termed home missions; foreign evangelism is termed foreign missions. Every believer is called upon to be a faithful witness to the truth of the gospel by lip and by life. Apologetics, or an intelligent defense of the faith, is an integral part of evangelism.

Quest. 134: What is the gospel?

Ans: The gospel is the good news of deliverance from self, from sin, and from Divine wrath and condemnation through faith in the Person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Rom. 1:16–17. [16]For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. [17]For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

2 Cor. 4:3–4. [3]But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: [4]In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Gal. 1:6–7. [6]I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: [7]Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

1 Thess. 1:4–5. [4]Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. [5]For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

See also: Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mk. 1:14–15; 16:15; Acts 20:24; Rom. 1:1–4; 2:11–16; 1 Cor. 1:17–18; 9:12–18; 1 Cor. 15:1–4; 2 Cor. 4:3–6; Gal. 1:6–9; 3:8; Eph. 1:13–14; Phil. 1:7, 12, 16–17, 27; Col. 1:19–23; 1 Thess. 2:1–4; 2 Thess. 1:7–8; 2:13–14; 1 Tim. 1:1–11; 1 Pet. 1:12, 23–25; 4:17–18.

COMMENTARY

The English word "gospel" is derived from the Anglo–Saxon word "god–spell," i.e., "God–story," i.e., the story concerning God. The New Testament Gk. term is *to euaggelion*, or "the good news." This realization of the good news of salvation was aptly stated by William Tyndale, the English Reformer and martyr, who first translated the New Testament from Greek into English. In the introduction to this great work, Tyndale wrote that the gospel signifies

"good, mery, glad and joyfull tydinge, that maketh a mannes hert glad, and maketh him synge, daunce, and leepe for joye!" The word "gospel" occurs 101 times in the KJV of the English Bible, all in the New Testament. There are several terms for preaching the gospel, one of which is *euaggelizo*, the verb form, hence, "evangelize" [to preach the gospel] "evangelism" [the act of preaching the gospel] and "evangelist" [one who preaches the gospel].

Scripturally, the "gospel" is the record of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, the whole of his teachings concerning salvation, his miracles as credentialing his Person and message, the salvific significance of his Person and redemptive work [incarnation, life, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven], and the resultant message proclaimed by the Apostles concerning forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God through him. All this truth, gathered together as saving truth comprises the gospel message. The emphasis of the gospel message in the New Testament is on the vicarious life, death [active and passive obedience] and the resurrection and ascension of Christ as final proof of his Person and message. It is the message of reconciliation to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The New Testament contains references to the gospel with various designations: "the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mk. 1:14), "the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24), "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. 1:11), "the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7, etc.), "the gospel of his son" (Rom. 1:9), "the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 1:16; 15:19, 29; 1 Cor. 9:12, etc.), "the gospel of peace" (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15), "Christ's gospel" (2 Cor. 2:12), "the glorious gospel of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4), "the gospel of your salvation" (Eph. 1:13), "the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1:8) and "the everlasting gospel" (Rev. 14:6). These all refer to one and the same gospel. There is also "another gospel" (Gal. 1:6), "the gospel of the circumcision…the gospel of the uncircumcision" (Gal. 2:7).

Is there, then, more than one gospel? The "gospel of the circumcision" and "uncircumcision" is figurative language referring to the respective gospel ministries of Peter to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles. Their ministries differed; their message was the same. The reference to "another gospel [of a different kind] which is not another [of the same kind]" is to the perversion of the gospel by the Judaizers who had seduced the Galatian Christians into a form of Judaism which substituted works, especially circumcision, for grace (Gal. 1:6–9; Acts 15:1). There has always been "another gospel" which either omits or perverts the truth of God and seduces sinners into a false security through either denying God's grace or mixing it with works.

The gospel, in its full theological sense, is the good news of deliverance from self, from the reigning power of sin, and from Divine wrath and condemnation, through faith in the Person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the gospel, when considered in its full biblical and theological context, is inclusive of all the doctrines associated with salvation, and necessarily set in the context of God's moral self–consistency [his Moral Law], immutability and Divine sovereignty; the fallen, sinful state of mankind,

the impending doom of eternal condemnation and punishment, the essence and nature of Divine grace, and the centrality of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The need for the gospel arises out of three great realities: the moral self–consistency of the triune God [who is absolutely and perfectly righteous, just and holy]; the fallen, depraved nature of sinful man and the immutability of the eternal redemptive purpose.

If the sinner is to be reconciled to God, i.e., his sins forgiven, and he is to be justified [declared righteous before God] through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, it must be through a principle of grace [unmerited favor in the stead of merited wrath]. See Question 92. This grace must be both free [without a cause found in the sinner] and sovereign [God grants this grace to whom he will]. It must be free grace, because of the sinner's spiritual, moral and intellectual state. Free grace comes to the sinner as a spiritual principle of power, quickening, illuminating, enabling and liberating him to freely and willingly flee to Christ by faith (Jn. 5:40; 6:37, 44; Rom. 9:16). Free grace saves sinners who cannot and will not save themselves. Sovereign grace saves specific individuals who are the objects of God's infinite, eternal love (Eph. 1:3–5). See Questions 66 and 78. Sovereign grace never fails; it is effectual. See Question 78. In the context of the gospel, through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, God can consistently be both just [righteous] and the justifier [the one who declares righteous] of the one who believes in Jesus (Rom. 3:21–26).

Neither the principle nor the content of the gospel originated in the mind or heart of fallen, sinful mankind. When left to himself, being inescapably and incurably religious as the image–bearer of God, man by nature conjures his own religion. Paganism has always been inherently and often intensely religious. It is only in the modern secularized society that man has sought to disguise religion by forming it into a materialistic, statist, psychological, educational or environmentalist shape. Paganism was polytheistic and overtly idolatrous (Rom. 1:23); modern secularism worships man, materialism, education, science, the state and the environment. *Homo mensura* ["man the measure (of all things)"] as manifest by modern Secular Humanism, is idolatry as surely as bowing down to sticks, stones and graven metal. In principle, anthropogenic [man–originated] religion has historically been a religion of self–righteousness and human ability, and manifested in a legalistic works–mentality. History reveals that the principle of grace is alien to sinful man. Even the true religion derived from Divine revelation was perverted by the Jews into the Judaistic religious system of self–righteousness and works (Acts 15:1; Rom. 9:32–10:3). Mere traditional Christianity, although the culmination of revealed religion [Christian theistic belief] has suffered the same, rapidly degenerating into a mere outward sacerdotal religious system of rites, rituals and ceremonies which are idolatrous. Modern Christianity largely tends toward either the ceremonial or the irrational. Neither seems to comprehend the grace of God in principle or in practice.

God took several thousand years to prepare the world for the fullness and finality of the gospel (Gal. 4:4–5). He first promised it in the *Protevangelium* of Gen. 3:15; the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent. The principle of blood–sacrifice and vicarious atonement was established by God himself in the animal skins he provided for our first parents (Gen. 3:21). Abel offered a firstling of the flock, the first sacrificial lamb, which would culminate in the "Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (Gen. 4:4; Jn. 1:29). In Cain we find the first instance of self–determination [free will] in religion. He impudently offered to God what he himself had produced by his own efforts (Gen. 4:3–7; 1 Jn. 3:11–12). Free will ever stands opposed to free grace (Jn. 1:12–13; 6:44; Titus 3:5).

God sovereignly chose and revealed himself savingly to Abraham (Acts 7:2–3), and, in Abraham, the Hebrew nation, the physical "seed of Abraham," and in that nation his true "Seed of Abraham" ["Seed" sing.], the Messiah—and in the Messiah, he chose a spiritual "seed," all true believers. He promised to Abraham that in him all families of the earth would be blessed, a gospel promise centering in The Lord Jesus, the true "Seed of Abraham" (Gen. 12:1–3; Gal. 3:6–9).

Under Moses that nation was delivered from Egypt by blood [the Passover lamb] and power [the plagues, the dividing of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's army] (Ex. 20:1–2). The Book of Leviticus details the Levitical system of offerings and sacrifices ordained by God. Each of these anticipates, or is a type of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Later, Israel demanded a king, and after Saul, the Davidic dynasty was established. Thus, through promise, covenant, government and the religious system of Israel, God established the principles for the priestly, prophetic and kingly [Lordship] offices of the Lord Jesus Christ. See Questions 72–75. The nation of Israel was, then, an incubator for the preparation of the gospel. From Moses to Malachi, the Word of God was given and inscripturated. Israel would remain the repository for the inscripturated Word of God until the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4–5). Through the Incarnation, Virgin Birth, perfect, sinless life, vicarious suffering and death, and the glorious resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, the historical facts of the gospel were bound together as saving truth (1 Cor. 15:1–4). At Pentecost, the church, already formed and commissioned as the God–ordained institution for this gospel economy, was empowered by the Holy Spirit to publish the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8; 2:1ff).

The essential elements of the gospel have all been anticipated or explained in the previous sections. If placed together in summary fashion, they may be considered as a compact entity, a unified, interrelated whole for our understanding. These may be summarized in six statements concerning God, sin, man, grace, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the message and methodology of the gospel:

First, the nature and character of God, or the Divine element. The triune, self–revealing God of Scripture is absolutely and infinitely perfect and non–

contradictory in all his Divine attributes. Because of this, his loving kindness, grace and mercy cannot contradict his holiness, righteousness and justice. Because he is immutable and morally self–consistent, he cannot arbitrarily set aside sin. Sin has fractured the universe, polluted creation, devastated the human race and twisted the image of God in man. Creation, ravaged in time and history, must be restored. The image of God in man must be redeemed. Every Divine attribute calls for exoneration: Justice must be satisfied, righteousness vindicated, and holiness preserved. Divine love, grace and mercy must rise to answer these demands in the self–consistency of the Divine attributes. To fully reveal and exonerate Divine love, grace and mercy, and to redeem the image of God in man, some men are to be redeemed. To vindicate Divine righteousness, some men are to be sentenced to an eternal condemnation and hell for their sins. The creation itself is to be destroyed and then re–created, and there shall be "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (Isa. 65:12; 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:7–13). Thus, the gospel finds its deepest roots—its ultimate motivation, cause and essence—in the moral–self consistency of the triune, self–revealing God of Scripture.

Second, the nature and character of sin, or the disruptive element. See Question 36. Sin is a ruling, reigning principle of evil which sets itself against the Most High. It is entrenched in the heart of man and empowered by Satan. Each and every sin is against God. Sin has corrupted all of creation. Sin has corrupted and rules over every human being. All creation must be destroyed and re–created—such is the evil, the pervading pollution and the wickedness of sin. And fallen, sinful man? Some will be damned for their sins. Others are to be delivered through the free grace of God. Either work is on the most enormous scale because of the horrendous nature and consequent effects of sin. The saved must be utterly transformed in mind, soul and body. In short, these must be as necessarily transformed as the new heavens and the new earth for sin to be eradicated from God's creation.

Third, the nature and character of fallen man, or the human element. Fallen man has defaced the image of God. The presuppositional intellect which ruled man's personality in his primitive and originally–righteous state has become horribly crippled by the noetic effects of sin—he is epistemologically bankrupt (Rom. 1:18–32; Eph. 4:17–19). See Questions 4, 13 and 31. The affections and volition have become horribly corrupt. The body, once subservient to the intellect, has risen, with its sinful appetites and desires, to dominate the personality (Rom. 6:6, 12, 17–18). See Question 95. Sickness, disease, physical and eternal death hang over every member of the fallen human race. See Question 165. Every human being is a sinner by imputation, by inheritance and by personal transgression. See Question 38. Adam's transgression is ours by imputation—original sin. We have inherited his depraved nature. To this must be added the countless personal transgressions of each individual. See Question 36. Fallen, sinful man is in such a depraved state that his condition is irreparable if left to himself. He cannot save others; he cannot deliver himself. He is further a willing and obedient subject of Satan's wicked kingdom. See Question 131. The Law of God cries out for his utter condemnation. See Questions 39 and 40.

Yet he is called upon to believe in—utterly commit himself without reservation to—the Lord Jesus Christ in saving faith, repent of his sin, and rest himself upon the imputed righteousness of the Son of God. See Questions 89 and 90. Forgiveness of sin, the imputation of righteousness and reconciliation with God are found only in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. See Question 92. What man could not and would not do, God has done. See Question 66.

Fourth, the nature and character of Divine grace, or the effective element. Sin is unspeakably horrendous—a seemingly infinite unrighteousness, evil, pollution, power and wickedness, which has set itself against God, his creation and his purpose. God must punish sin. Divine grace reigns from election to glorification. See Question 78. Its glorious nature and power oversee the redemption of sinners from their translation out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of God's love (Col. 1:12–13), their calling from darkness to light, the complete transformation of their personalities in righteousness, holiness of the truth and knowledge (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10), the gracious work of regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption and sanctification. See Questions 83, 86, 92, 93 and 94. This glorious, gracious, sovereign work of God will not end until every redeemed sinner stands before God glorified in body, completely redeemed in every sense. See Question 169. Salvation will then be complete from the penalty, guilt, pollution, power and even the presence of sin.

Fifth, the significance of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the redemptive element. There is no salvation or reconciliation with God apart from him (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5). The Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ stand at the very center of the eternal, redemptive purpose. He is himself the very personification of grace. All grace is mediated through him. See Question 78. In his incarnation, active and passive obedience, and glorious resurrection, he accomplished a full and final redemption for everyone for whom he lived, suffered and died. This glorious, full and final redemption is applied in time, history and experience to individual sinners through the effectual work of the Holy Spirit, according to the eternal redemptive purpose. See Question 81.

Sixth, the message and methodology of the gospel, or the instrumental element. God has ordained that the message of salvation be declared through preaching. See Questions 135 and 138. This ought to be considered as to the message and its methodology. The message of the "good news" of the gospel is declared against the dark background of the awfulness of sin and its consequences. Only sinners in desperate need of deliverance need or want "good news." Only those whom God awakens, quickens and enables respond to this message of salvation; all others either reject it outright, are seduced by a false message, or at best, become fellow–travelers for a time, still unregenerate and content with mere, outward religion (Matt. 13:18–22). See Question 108.

This gospel message must contain several necessary characteristics: first, sinners must be awakened to their need. The nature and character of God must be declared. Men must be faced with their utter inability to stand before the holy, righteous God of Scripture. The demands of the Moral Law must often

be brought to bear to convince men of their guilt and their utter condemnation before God. The Law describes sin in God's terms, not man's. See Question 40.

Second, salvation must be freely offered to all without exception or distinction. The Lord Jesus Christ is their only hope of salvation. Sinners must be shut up to Christ alone and to faith alone. See Question 139.

Third, the necessity of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and repentance from sin must be faithfully proclaimed. Faith rests itself in the imputed righteousness wrought by our Lord in his active and passive obedience. Both faith and repentance are absolute necessities. Repentance is not simply from certain sins, but sin as the ruling entity of the life. See Question 90. It is from a believing heart and mind that saving repentance issues forth. Faith without repentance is deception; repentance without faith is merely remorse.

The God–ordained methodology for spreading the gospel is through preaching and personal witness (Acts 1:8; 8:1, 4; Rom. 10:14–17; 1 Thess. 2:13). God calls and gifts men to carry this "good news" to others. This very seemingly weak and precarious means which God has ordained glorifies the power of his grace.

The focal–point of the gospel is the righteousness of God (Rom. 1:16–17). That righteousness which God demands in his moral self–consistency is provided in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the very core of the gospel message in the context of the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God. Saving faith lays hold of and appropriates the very righteousness of Christ. This is the very heart of the gospel—"justification by faith." See Question 92.

The gospel message carries with it no intrinsic or inherent power. The mere preaching of the gospel does not in itself guarantee conversions. The power of the gospel is external to itself. Its power is found in the saving grace of God (1 Cor. 2:2–5). It is the "power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The gospel in power is the only hope for this sin–cursed, confused, war–torn, alienated world in which we live. It is the only power which can transform human nature in the context of Divine grace. See Question 140.

Have you savingly by faith laid hold of the Lord Jesus Christ as presented in the gospel for your right standing before God? In him alone is forgiveness of sin, the imputation of righteousness and reconciliation with God!

Quest. 135: What is evangelism?

Ans: Evangelism is declaring the message of the gospel.

1 Cor. 2:2. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Acts 8:4. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.

See also: Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:45–47; Acts 8:25; 13:2–5; 14:1, 4–7; 15:7; 16:10, 17–18, 21; 17:1–3; Rom. 10:9–15; 15:18–20; 1 Cor. 1:17–31; Eph. 6:18–20; Phil. 1:7; 1 Thess. 1:3–5; 2:2; 1 Tim. 1:9–11; 1 Pet. 1:25; 4:17; Rev. 14:6.

COMMENTARY

Biblically, evangelism is simply preaching or proclaiming the truth of the gospel. Evangelism is inherent to Christianity. Any concept of Christianity which is not evangelistic is unbiblical. Evangelism can assume many forms, such as personal witness to the truth of the gospel in conversation, public preaching, the distribution of Bibles, tracts and religious literature, and both home and foreign missions. Although God specifically and personally calls some men to the gospel ministry to serve either at home or on a foreign field, every believer is called to be a witness to the truth of the gospel by both lip and by life.

There are three issues of vital importance concerning evangelism: first, the witness of the believer is that of the entire life (Acts 1:8). The life lived and the doctrine professed must not be contradictory if one is to possess credibility before men and experience the blessing of God (2 Tim. 2:19–21; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9–12). Second, there ought to be a thankful fervency born of the greatness and glory of saving grace and the reality of one's own experience of the grace and love of God (Acts 9:1–31; Rom. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:15–16). Without such devotion and conviction, a natural tendency toward either complacency or indolence may set in. Third, it is God who saves sinners (Jn. 1:12–13; 6:37, 44; 1 Tim. 1:15). Thus, we need his blessing and the power of his Spirit upon our witness (Jn. 15:5; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:2–5; Eph. 2:4–10; 1 Thess. 2:13).

While the Scriptures emphasize the proclamation of the doctrine of the gospel, modern evangelism gives its emphasis to methodology. The New Testament gives the primacy to public preaching and personal witness. Modern Christianity tends to get entangled in various methodologies geared to make evangelism effective. Why this shift from the message to the methodology? The causes seem to be three in number: first, a shift in theology from the free grace of God to the free will of man. If the sinner possesses the power of contrary choice, then the distinction between free moral agency and free will becomes blurred, and the whole approach to evangelism is changed. Second, the idea of man–centered evangelism tends to bring the evangelistic methodology from the spiritual down to the mere psychological or emotional level. Third, rather than viewing evangelism as being a faithful witness to the message of the gospel, the emphasis tends to be on obtaining a "decision" from the sinner. The message thus becomes secondary to the methodology employed. Pragmatism then becomes the rule to effective evangelism, and success is gauged by the number of religious "decisions" rather than faithfulness to the biblical message and biblical conversions. See Question 88. Are we evangelistic?

Quest. 136: What is Apologetics?

Ans: Apologetics is an intelligent defense of the faith.

1 Pet. 3:15. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

2 Cor. 10:3–5. 3For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: 4(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Jude 3. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

See also: Acts 17:18, 22–34; Rom. 1:18–32; Phil. 1:7, 17.

COMMENTARY

There are rational and irrational attempts at defending one's faith. Irrational, subjective or emotional attempts are usually focused on one's religious feelings, experience or personal beliefs. There are times when rehearsing one's conversion experience may be profitable for others (Acts 22:1–21; 26:1–18). Declaring the objective truth of salvation, however, is properly and technically evangelism.

An intelligent or rational defense is concerned with the objective or doctrinal content of the faith. Apologetics is the technical term for this objective, rational or intelligent defense of the Christian faith. This term derives from the Gk. *apo*, "from," and *legō* or *logia*, "speak a word," and so speaking from a given position so as to defend it, hence the Eng. "apology." Evangelism and Apologetics are inseparable. The Apostle understood this when he stated that he was set for "the defense and confirmation of the gospel" (Phil. 1:7, 17). The evangelist and personal witness are called upon to defend the faith as objections are made to the Scripture with its message of salvation. The apologist must also be evangelistic. Apologetics without evangelism reduces such to mere intellectual or religious debate, which is alien to the Scriptures. The issue is not to win arguments, but souls (Prov. 11:30; Acts 26:26), i.e., to intelligently, clearly and convincingly present the truth of salvation, and, in the process, to intelligently answer what objections may be raised.

What are the essential issues in defending the faith? First, every Christian ought to be able to defend not only the validity of his personal conversion experience, but also the doctrinal content of the Christian religion (1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3). Second, he ought to be able by the grace and Spirit of God to dismantle the logical arguments of his opponents by the Word of God through the Spirit. [In 2 Cor. 10:3–5 the words "casting down imaginations" are lit: "logical arguments dismantling"]. Third, the deciding issue in our approach to

apologetics is this: are we to argue *to* or *from* the Scriptures? In other words, are we to begin outside Divine revelation with various scientific, historical, archeological facts or philosophical arguments and psychological persuasion in order to credential the Scriptures as a basis for defending the faith; or are we to presuppose the Divine authority and self–attesting nature of Scripture and reason from it as our point–of–reference? See Question 10. The former approach is termed Classical or Evidential Apologetics, the latter is termed Presuppositional Apologetics. The first can be summarized as "I understand and therefore believe;" the second may be summarized as "I believe and understand." The former gives the priority to understanding; the latter gives the priority to faith. It is sometimes objected that presuppositionalism resorts to circular reasoning. All ultimate issues resort to circular reasoning. See Question 10.

The deciding questions are: first, what approach is found in the doctrinal teaching of Scripture and in its evangelistic and apologetic examples? Second, what methodology is coherent with the fallen nature of man? Evidentialism fails throughout Scripture. No miracle witnessed by national Israel throughout their long history brought them to true and lasting faith. The mere repetition of miracles, even on a daily basis, largely proved ineffectual to stem their unbelief. Our Lord's miracles, performed on a constant basis, and given to credential his identity and message, failed to either convince or convert the religious leaders of his day. Even his own disciples were left in doubt until their faith was revived when they saw the risen Lord (Lk. 24:1–11, 13–26; Jn. 20:24–25). What men need in salvation is not more evidence or knowledge, or even miracles [They suppress what evidence they do know and see (Rom. 1:18–20)], but saving grace in Divine power—a change of heart and mind. The Divine order is "through faith we understand…" (Heb. 11:3). The words of Abraham are also to the point, that if men do not hear the Word of God ["Moses and the Prophets"], they will not be persuaded by the greatest of miracles or evidences (Lk. 16:29–31).

The classic passage is the address of the Apostle Paul at Athens (Acts 17:22–34). See Question 121. This address was preceded by several weeks of daily gospel preaching in the marketplace, which explains its abbreviated form and why he did not directly mention our Lord. This address was the conclusion and summary of this lengthy evangelistic ministry (Acts 17:16–18). He was simply putting "Jesus and the resurrection" into their historical–redemptive context. Although he did not quote Scripture, every statement presupposed the truth and authority of Scripture. At every point he and his hearers basically disagreed, yet he declared the truth of God's nature, character, sovereignty and imminence; of man being the image–bearer of God, of his sinful inability to savingly seek out God, the futility and culpability of idolatry, and finally of the appointed Day of Judgment by virtue of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead.

These examples and others are clearly presuppositional. Indeed the Bible itself, as clearly revealed in Genesis 1:1, begins with a presuppositional statement. The opening declaration of Scripture presupposes the existence of

God, the Creator–creature distinction, and the reality that every fact is a created fact—and does not seek to prove any of these. Evidences may be important to illustrate Divinely–revealed truth (Acts 14:8–18), but they can never credential it. The greater cannot be credentialed by the lesser, i.e., any evidence which may be used to credential the Bible must have greater credibility than the Bible. Christian Apologetics must deal with absolute truth, not merely with plausibility or possibility from an empirical approach. God gives the greatest authority to his own Word. The witness of the Holy Spirit confirms the self–attestation of Scripture. See Question 10.

If sinners must be intelligently, authoritatively, sincerely and lovingly confronted with the doctrinal truth of the faith, rather than mere scientific and historical facts, is there any common ground? If every fact is a created fact (Gen. 1:1), and all facts are interpreted by one's presuppositions, then there is no viable common ground or agreement between the believer and unbeliever apart from the triune, self–disclosing God of Scripture and his Word. Then what basis is there for a meaningful exchange between the believer and unbeliever, if regenerating grace is the primary need?

There is a point–of–contact which is three–fold: first, man is the image–bearer of God, rendering him a rational, morally–responsible being. He possesses an innate sense of God from which he cannot escape (Gen. 1:26; Acts 17:28–29; Jas. 3:9). He is also Divinely preconditioned to recognize the witness of God in both creation and Scripture. See Question 10. Second, the law of God is indelibly inscribed upon his inner being (Rom. 2:11–16). These witnesses and realities he constantly seeks to suppress as he views the creation [evidence] which surrounds him. This evidence is sufficient to render him inexcusable (Rom. 1:18–20). Third, although he professes to be autonomous in his thinking, he still unconsciously acts upon certain presuppositions which he takes for granted while suppressing the truth. In other words, he must assume God–created facts and laws which enable him to be consistent, logical and scientific. These three areas provide a point–of–contact for an evangelistic apologetic. Are we willing and able to defend the faith?

Quest. 137: What are the evangelistic and apologetic responsi–bilities incumbent upon every believer?

Ans: Every believer is a witness to the truth of Christianity by his lifestyle and conversation. This witness includes both propagating and defending the faith.

Acts 1:8. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Phil. 1:7. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

See also: Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:46–47; Acts 2:36–42; 8:4; 13:1–4; 14:8–18; 17:2–3, 16–18, 22–31; 20:26–27; 1 Tim. 1:11–12; 2:7.

COMMENTARY

Every believer is called upon to be a faithful witness to the truth of the gospel, and also to defend its claims. Therefore, every believer ought to prepare himself by becoming a consistent Christian and a serious, prayerful student of the Scriptures, seeking to thoroughly understand the doctrine of the gospel and learning to answer the most common objections raised against it.

A consistent Christian is one who orders his life according to the Word of God (Psa. 1:1–3; 19:7–13; 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Jn. 2:3–5). It is from such a life that one can expect the blessing of God upon his witness and testimony. An unholy or inconsistent life will discredit one's testimony before men and preclude the blessing of God. The force of one's witness is through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:3–5). Becoming a serious student of the Scriptures necessarily includes both a spiritual insight into the truths of Scripture and also a firm grasp of their doctrinal teaching. Being an apologist for the faith means being able to scripturally answer objections raised against the truth of Scripture in general and the gospel in particular. One's witness must not only be under girt with study, but also with earnest and fervent prayer. Every effort put forth in Christian service must be sanctified by prayer to be effective and receive Divine blessing. See Question 98.

We are not merely to witness [a verb] for the truth as it is in Jesus, but to be witnesses [a noun] to the truth (Acts 1:8). This necessitates not only an activity, but a life!

Quest. 138: What is preaching?

Ans: Preaching is the authoritative delivery of a God–given message, intelligently impressed upon the minds and hearts of the hearers with passion and the unction of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 14:1. And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.

1 Cor. 2:3–5. 3And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. 4And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

1 Thess. 2:13. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

See also: Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:45–47; Acts 17:1–4, 11–12; 15–34; 18:4–11; 1 Cor. 2:1–5; 2 Cor. 2:14–17; Col. 1:28–29; 1 Thess. 1:3–10; 2:2–4; 1 Tim. 1:8–16.

COMMENTARY

Gospel preaching is the first order of Christianity (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Rom. 10:9–15). The New Testament gives the primary place to Gospel preaching. Why? The answer lies in the nature of true preaching: What is true preaching? It is the authoritative proclamation of a God–given message for a particular occasion, a message which is intelligently delivered with human passion, and also with the unction of the Holy Spirit. This message is impressed upon the minds and hearts of the hearers with conviction and power. True preaching presupposes that God has given the preacher a distinct and specific message, and that the Holy Spirit empowers him to deliver it.

The unique nature of preaching is noted in the following: first, it is biblical. God has ordained preaching as the primary means to convert the unsaved (Rom. 10:17). The New Testament era was characterized by great and effective gospel preaching. The Apostolic era from Pentecost to the first government persecution under Nero was an era of constant revival [c. 33–68 AD]. Christianity spread across the Roman Empire from Jerusalem to Antioch, and from Babylon in the East to the British Isles in the West—and it was spread through preaching. Evangelistic and missionary preaching usually precedes personal witness, which is the work of those converted under the preaching.

Second, preaching is authoritative. Personal witness is usually not authoritative, but conversational; true preaching carries an authentic, authoritative note which is unique and unmistakable. True preaching not only draws the attention, it demands the attention.

Third, true preaching expresses itself in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. There is often a consciousness on the part of both the preacher and the hearers that a power greater than the preacher himself is present and at work. This is not and cannot be mere public speaking. True preaching is a prophetic utterance, a word given with Divine authority and unction. Personal witness by contrast usually occurs within the context of a mutual exchange.

Finally, gospel preaching enables the preacher to deliver a complete message which makes a definite impression upon the mind and heart. Personal witness is often incomplete or inadequate because of the given conversational context.

These glorious realities of preaching have sadly declined in our day. Why? The reasons are varied: first, the shift in theology, postmodernism and church growth or modern success, with its "user–friendly" approach have created a trend away from any biblical authority in the pulpit. Second, the focus is more on programs or psychology than doctrine; more on mere human persuasion than Divine power. The spiritual has largely given way to the psychological, social or emotional. Third, doctrinal preaching, which God has ordained, is seen as either needless, too intellectual, too unpopular or too authoritative for

modern pluralism. Finally, mere emotionalism tends to replace the unction of the Holy Spirit.

Does it seem strange that God would ordain the spread of the gospel through such a seemingly feeble or variable means as preaching—oral communication through fallible men? Yet it is so. Why? Preaching is used by God to bring glory to himself (Isa. 54:17; Jer. 1:4–10, 17–18; 1 Cor. 2:1–5; 15:8–11; 2 Cor. 4:1–7; Eph. 6:18–20).

Preaching holds a unique and primary position in the Divine purpose. We need to pray for preaching and for God to raise up preachers (Matt. 9:37–38; Rom. 10:14–15). Further, we need to find and sit under true preaching ourselves—the very best in biblical preaching—and urge others to do the same. Pray that we might always have true preaching!

Quest. 139: What is meant by "the free offer of the gospel"?

Ans: "The free offer of the gospel" means that the truth of the gospel is to be offered to all men without discrimination or distinction.

Mk. 16:15. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

1 Tim. 2:1–4. [1]I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks, be made for all men; [2]For kings, and *for* all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. [3]For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; [4]Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

See also: Matt. 7:6; 28:18–20; Lk. 24:45–47; Rev. 5:9; 14:6.

COMMENTARY

The Scriptures are clear that no restrictions are to be placed upon the gospel invitation to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and reconciliation to God. Indeed, the gospel invitation is in reality a Divine mandate which reaches to all men without exception: "…God commandeth all men everywhere to repent…!" (Acts 17:30).

There are several vital issues concerning the free offer of the gospel: first, the message of the gospel is the only message of salvation and hope for this lost world. Apart from the preaching of the Person and redemptive work of our Lord, there is absolutely no deliverance for sinners (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). Second, Every generation needs regeneration. Every human being is born a sinner, and so under its reigning power, Divine wrath and condemnation (Jn. 3:18–21, 36). The universal offer of the gospel meets the universal need of lost and condemned mankind (Acts 4:12). Third, there is an innate note of urgency within the message of the gospel. Sinners are urged to repent and believe immediately, and not to delay. Gospel entreaties are always strong and urgent imperatives (Mk. 1:14–15; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9–10, 13; 1 Cor. 6:1–2).

There are two views which need mention: first, the universalist schemes which teach either that all men will eventually be saved, or that the heathen who have never heard the gospel will be saved apart from it. The first is based on the idea of a universal atonement; the second derives from the idea that men may achieve "sinless perfection" by their own legal efforts on a sliding scale in which they are accepted by God when they have done their best according to their individual ability. Both views are unbiblical and cut the nerve of evangelism and gospel urgency. Second, some hold that the elect of God will be regenerated apart from the gospel and so will be redeemed, though not converted in this life ["Conditional time salvation"]. See Questions 83–84 and 87. Both views are counter to the Scriptures. What is held as theory eventually manifests itself in practicality. Human nature tends toward indolence. Grace gives a burden for the souls of men and an urgency to gain a hearing for the gospel. Nothing must be allowed to set aside the clear teaching of Scripture and the mandate to evangelize all men (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:46–47). Do we possess this impulse and burden to evangelize?

Quest. 140: What is the relation of effectual calling and regeneration to the preaching of the gospel?

Ans: Effectual calling and regeneration cleanse, enable and renew the faculties of the sinner, break the dominating power of sin, renew the image of God in principle, and through granting faith and repentance, motivate and enable the sinner to savingly respond to the gospel.

Jn. 1:12–13. 12But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: 13Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jn. 6:44. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Acts 13:48. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

2 Thess. 2:13–14. 13But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: 14Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

See also: Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 11:19–20; 36:25–27; Matt. 19:28; 28:18–20; Jn. 3:3–8; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 1:12–13; 3:9–10; 1 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5.

COMMENTARY

See Questions 81, 83–84 and 87. The state of the sinner by nature is such that he is utterly unable to save himself. He is both unable and unwilling. His inability is spiritual, moral, intellectual and satanic. He is spiritually "dead," i.e., a "spiritual corpse" in a state of spiritual death (Eph.

2:1–4; Col. 2:13)—wholly, utterly unable and unwilling to savingly respond to the free offer of the gospel. Further, he is morally unable, being under the reigning power of sin as the controlling and motivating principle of his existence (Rom. 6:17–18, 20). His sinful moral state is emphasized in his innate animosity for God and his truth (Rom. 8:5–8). He is also intellectually crippled to such an extent that he cannot discern the truth of the gospel so as to comprehend it savingly. What gospel truth he does know, he suppresses (Rom. 1:18–25; 3:11; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17–19). The image of God has been devastated within him. Finally, he is under the control of the devil who has blinded him to the truth of the gospel so he will not believe, and further takes away any truth that might be impressed upon his heart (Matt. 13:4, 19; 2 Cor. 4:3–6).

The sinner is also unwilling to respond to the free offer of the gospel. His will, as a free moral agent, is the unrestricted expression of his fallen, sinful nature (Jn. 5:40). Therefore, if this individual is to be saved from the reigning power of sin, converted, and reconciled to God, salvation must come from without, from above, from a superior spiritual source and with a superior spiritual force—externally and supernaturally. This is nothing less than the free and sovereign grace of God in effecting salvation. It is salvation by grace in the fullest sense of the term! Thus, faith and repentance are the gifts of God freely bestowed (Eph. 2:8–10; Acts 11:18), the immediate consequences of regenerating grace, and the saving response to the free offer of the gospel.

The free and sovereign grace of God in effecting the salvation of the sinner is not one of coercion, i.e., of externally, forcibly causing one to believe, as it were, against his will. Rather, it is a work of drawing, re–creating, freeing, liberating, enabling and removing the natural bent and inclination of the human heart and mind (Cf. Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Jn. 1:12–13; 6:37, 44; Rom. 6:1–14, 17–18, 22; 2 Cor. 4:3–6; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10). Through the glorious working of effectual calling and regeneration, the sinner is enabled to freely and willingly flee to Christ for deliverance, and find forgiveness of sins, an imputed righteousness and reconciliation with God. See Questions 81, 83 and 92. He is awakened to his lost estate. He is convicted of sin. He believes. He comprehends. He repents. He willingly embraces the Lord Jesus Christ as all he is in the free offer of the gospel. His subjective experience is one of great conviction of sin, of coming to Christ in faith, repenting, receiving forgiveness, of being reconciled to God and finding peace through faith in his Son. See Question 79.

We must not confuse the logical order of salvation with a chronological order. In experience, some of these spiritual realities occur simultaneously. It must be remembered and emphasized that the calling and new birth of the sinner occur in the context of gospel preaching. The Word of God declared, preached, read or inculcated through teaching is the instrumentality through which calling, regeneration and conversion are effected and the context in which they occur. Any doctrinal teaching which

lessens evangelistic fervor or causes indolence in seeking the salvation of sinners is an unbalanced and disobedient view of scriptural evangelism. See Questions 135 and 139.

Quest. 141: Is every believer called to Christian service?

Ans: Every believer is called to serve the Lord Jesus Christ without reserve.

Gal. 2:20. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

1 Cor. 10:31. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

See Also: Matt. 22:36–40; Rom. 1:1; 6:11–14, 17–18; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; Eph. 4:1; 2 Tim. 2:24–26; 2 Pet. 3:18.

COMMENTARY

There is often a dichotomy between "full–time Christian service" and the calling of the nominal believer. This dichotomy is unscriptural. All believers are called to be full–time Christians, to be "willing bondslaves" of the Lord Jesus Christ and righteousness (Rom. 6:17–18) and to be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10)! We are those whom our Lord has purchased with his own suffering and life's blood, redeemed us from among condemned humanity, and made us his own dear children. Who we are, what we are and what we have all belongs to him (Rom. 6:17–18). Every thought, word and action is to be made subservient to his service and glory (1 Cor. 10:31).

While some are called by God to the gospel ministry or foreign missionary service, every believer is called by God to be a witness to the truth of the gospel by lip and by life (Acts 1:8). See Question 142. We are also called to be faithful to the ministry of a local church. Christians in the New Testament are never considered as isolated entities apart from the ministry, discipline and fellowship of a local assembly; they are assumed to be in such a fellowship. Serving, giving, growing and fellowshipping all imply participation in a local church (Matt. 28:18–20; 1 Cor. 12:27; Phlm. 2; Heb. 10:25).

What can the individual, nominal Christian do? First, he must give himself up to the Lord without reservation; and thus be a biblical Christian in whatever he does, in wherever he goes and in whatever he says (Rom. 1:1; 6:17–18; 12:1–2). This is the very basis for a consistent gospel witness. Second, he must seek to grow in grace and the knowledge of his Lord and Savior (2 Pet. 3:18). Thus, he must faithfully attend to the private and public means of grace. See Questions 126 and 127. Third, he ought to find a place of service within the fellowship and ministry of his local church. Fourth, he should seek to evangelize through personal witness and group efforts to spread the gospel. Many preachers and missionaries have found their Divine calling while engaged in such dedicated, practical service. What are we doing for the sake of the gospel?

Quest. 142: Who are to give themselves to the public ministry of the Word?

Ans: Those who are to give themselves to the public ministry of the Word are faithful and qualified men whom God has called and gifted for such work.

Acts 20:28. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

1 Tim. 1:12. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

See also: Rom. 10:14–15; Gal. 1:15–16; 1 Cor. 1:17; 2 Cor. 4:1–2; Eph. 4:11–12; Col. 1:28–29; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 5:1, 17–20; 2 Tim. 1:6–8, 11, 15; 2:24–26; 4:1–8; Titus 1:4–9.

COMMENTARY

God calls men to the gospel ministry. Some are engaged in evangelistic work, others preach in the context of the pastorate, or preach in the arena of either domestic or foreign missionary work.

While any man may stand and speak for Christ in public, true preaching is the sphere of labor left to those who have been Divinely–called and gifted for such work. This recognition or focus is essential because of the nature of preaching itself, and because of the rigors and trials of the gospel ministry. See Question 138.

The Divine call to the gospel ministry normally comes through a relationship to a church which is intimately acquainted with the man, knows his moral character, strengths and weaknesses and recognizes his God–given gifts. The spiritual discernment of the church thus stands behind the man in setting him apart for the gospel ministry, believing that it has the necessary corporate discernment (1 Tim. 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9), and knows the will of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2–4; 20:28; Rom. 10:15).

The truly God–called man must be a true man of God. He must be a man of strong convictions, honesty and great moral courage, yet also gentle, kind, patient and reasonable. The gospel ministry is no place for an ill–tempered or pugilistic man (2 Cor. 4:1–2; Gal. 5:22–23; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 2 Tim. 2:24–26; Tit. 1:4–9). It should be marked that the emphasis upon the qualifications for the gospel ministry and pastorate are more given to the man's moral and personal character and family relationships than to preaching or ministerial gifts. The gospel ministry may and probably will cost the man everything—if he is faithful—even, perhaps, his friends and family. Both the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament preachers had to face great opposition and endure great trials and persecution from their enemies and often from their own people. The lives and ministries of Moses, Samuel, Elijah, our Lord himself, Stephen, the Apostle Paul and many others all testify that a God–called man must endure much. The ministry must be his very life, and he must be

committed to it without reserve (2 Tim. 4:1–5). He must be prepared to face opposition, adversity and persecution both from within and without the church. He must give of himself without reserve, regardless of the consequences (2 Cor. 12:15; 2 Tim. 4:2). His preaching must bear the marks of Divine authority and must be characterized by Divine power (1 Cor. 2:3–5; 15:10). Unless he is Divinely–called, he will ultimately falter, lose heart and fail or tend to compromise the truth.

Although the emphasis in the qualifications are on a man's moral and personal character, he must be gifted and given to study to adequately and spiritually progress himself, and also to feed and bring his congregation to a given degree of spiritual maturity (Jn. 21:15–17; Col. 1:28–29; 1 Tim. 3:2; 4:6, 11–16; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:2, 15; 3:16–17; Titus 1:9–11).

No uninspired language has so gloriously and idealistically portrayed the gospel minister as the words of John Bunyan in *Pilgrim's Progress*, when he describes the scene in the House of the Interpreter and the portrait of a gospel minister:

> …Christian saw the picture of a very grave person hang up against the wall; and this was the fashion of it. It had its eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back. It stood as if it pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over its head.

What is our primary responsibility? **"**The harvest truly *is* great, but the labourers *are* few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." (Lk. 10:2). Should the call come to us, we must respond!

Quest. 143: What is a revival or spiritual awakening?

Ans: A revival or spiritual awakening is an extra–ordinary work of the Spirit of God upon the people of God in bringing them to renewed spiritual life and also resulting in a spiritual awakening among the unconverted.

Acts 2:41–42. [41]Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. [42]And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 3:19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Acts 4:31. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

See also: Acts 2:47; 4:4, 31; 6:7; 8:5–6; 9:35, 42; 10:44; 11:21; 13:2–4, 44; 14:1; 17:4, 11–12; 18:8–11; 19:10, 20; Phil. 1:13–14.

COMMENTARY

"Revival" is a general term for an unusual work of the Spirit of God enlivening a church, a group of churches or believers in a given geographical area, and also for a spiritual awakening among the unconverted. There are several interrelated terms: "reformation," "revival," "spiritual awakening" and "revivalism."

Reformation. (Lat: *reformare*, a correction, a removing of faults and defects). Individual Christians and churches should be in a constant state of reformation or an increasing conformity and alignment to the Scriptures. Scripturally, logically and historically, there is a direct correspondence between reformation and revival. Reformation may bring revival; revival will bring reformation. Logically and historically, a return and conformity to the Scriptures coincides with a revival of God's people.

Revival. (Lat: *revivere*, to come back to a vigorous state after a decline) is technically a term that points to an individual or a collective revitalization of spirituality or experimental religion. Revival presupposes a state of spiritual declension and lethargy. In a given individual, church or churches, or generally among the people of God, a revival is an out–pouring of God's Spirit bringing a heightened degree of spiritual life, an earnestness in spiritual things and a renewed purity in life and worship. Such revitalizing and gospel urgency, fomented by the Spirit of God, usually extends to the unconverted within and without the church in a spiritual awakening. The term "revival," however, is often used in a very general sense to describe reformation, revival, spiritual awakening and revivalism.

Revivals can be very generally divided into two types: revivals which are more experience–oriented and those which are grounded in biblical preaching and doctrine. The former, while true revivals, are usually short–lived and their influence quickly wanes. The latter are more substantial and their effects may last for a generation or more. Most of the revivals in the twentieth century were more experience–oriented.

There is a great difference between a revival and a religious crusade. True revivals of either type tend to change society. In addition to a revived Christian community and a multitude of conversions, there is a heightened moral force at work transforming society in general. The historical records witness to less crime, a lifting of the moral standard and less need for law enforcement and the courts! The depravity of man in the general population seems to be held at bay for an extended time.

The Old Testament revivals were essentially times of reformation. The greatest occurred during the reign of Hezekiah, which affected both the Northern and the Southern kingdoms (2 Chron. 29:1–31:21). There was a great revival in Nineveh through the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 1:1–2; 3:1–2, 4,–10). Revival characterized the first decades of Apostolic Christianity. The revival which began on the Day of Pentecost lasted until the Neronian Persecution (c. 33–64 AD).

Sadly, even among those who might believe in the principles of true, heaven–sent revival, many refer to special meetings as "revival meetings." This further disassociates revival from its true, necessary spiritual significance and roots as an unmistakable, sovereign work of God. Times of unusual spiritual blessings are often termed "Divine visitations," but fewer come up to the level of what is biblically and historically known as revival.

True revival comes from the skies! It is God–sent. It is a sovereign work of the Spirit of God. It is prayed down, not worked up. It comes, not with human–engendered means, but through God–ordained means: persevering prayer and biblical preaching. See Question 145.

Spiritual Awakening. This term refers to an out–pouring of the Spirit of God upon the preaching which results in an unusual number of conversions (Acts 2:36–42; 4:1–4; 14:1). As revival technically refers to a heightened degree or renewal of spiritual life among the people of God, such reviving inevitably spreads outside the true people of God to the unconverted within and those without institutionalized Christianity who are convicted, converted and brought into the fellowship and communion of God's people. These realities are usually combined as revival historically—renewed life to the spiritually lethargic and spiritual life to the spiritually dead.

Revivalism. This term refers to the application and use of certain methods or measures to produce religious excitement and promote religious decisions. See Question 88. Revivalism came into vogue in the early 1800s during the American "Kentucky Frontier Revivals," in eastern New York State and in the Ohio Valley. The "New Measures" of Charles G. Finney (1792–1875) proved to be the turning–point in American evangelism from revival to revivalism. By 1840 and the end of the "Second Great Awakening" (c. 1793–1840), revivalism had become established and accepted in American evangelical Christianity.

Revivalism continues to dominate the thinking of many Evangelicals, who confuse revival with evangelistic crusades and religious excitement. True revival and revivalism, however, must never be confused. While true revival derives from the sovereign power and prerogative of God, revivalism is simply the work and methodology of man. Revival and revivalism may be mixed together or may occur separately, as in religious crusades or scheduled religious meetings, i.e., revival may occur without revivalism, there may be an admixture of revival and revivalism, or revivalism may exist without revival. A study of the history of revival, both biblical and post–biblical, reveals that revival by its very nature is a mixed work.

The New Testament Era began with the great revival and spiritual awakening which began at Pentecost and lasted for several decades, spreading Christianity over the Roman Empire and beyond. This revival was, in principle, the great prototype of all true revivals which have occurred in history. Mark the following characteristics of true revival: first, revival does not occur in a vacuum. There is always a work of preparation or other necessary events—usually times of religious and spiritual decline giving rise to times of intense

intercessory prayer for God to look upon his work with favor and blessing. Pentecost was preceded by an intense, persevering prayer meeting for an out–pouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1–8, 13–14).

Second, there is always an out–pouring of the Spirit of God upon his people in answer to intercessory prayer. This is a sovereign work of the Spirit of God, "[set] times of refreshing [revival] from the presence of the Lord" upon both the converted and unconverted. The Jerusalem church prayed constantly until the anticipated blessing came (Acts 2:1–42, 47; 3:11–4:5). There were also succeeding times of renewed spiritual power and blessing (Acts 4:21–31; 9:32–42; 14:1; 17:1–4, 10–12; 19:11–20).

Third, there is always a marked return to the principles of biblical religion. This points to the necessary relationship between reformation and revival. Revivals are not the general rule—they are the exception, the unusual. The usual state of religion tends toward spiritual decline. Revival is a return to truth and spiritual power to such an extent that it transforms the life of the individual, the church, and often society itself. Spiritual life came at Pentecost. Judaism had given way to Christianity under the gospel ministry of our Lord and his Apostles.

Fourth, there is always a return to biblical preaching. God does not send true revival apart from the preaching of truth. The preaching of error may raise religious excitement, but any revival will be adversely affected and its purity marred. Apostolic preaching stood in stark contrast to Judaistic tradition. Mark the preaching of Peter on the Day of Pentecost and the subsequent preaching of the Apostles (Cf. Acts 2:14–42; 3:1–26; 6:8–10; 14:1; 17:1–5).

Fifth, there are always obstacles to revival. These come from within the ranks of professing Christianity in the form of false converts, wrong motives, departures in doctrine, practice and worldliness. Indeed, revival itself is always a mixed work. If the devil cannot stop revival he imitates it and corrupts it with false converts, erroneous doctrines, practices and extremes. Adherents to the revival are considered enthusiasts and upsetters of religious tradition. The first gospel revival which began at and followed Pentecost experienced all of these: e.g., trouble in the Jerusalem Church due to partiality and neglect of certain members (Acts 6:1–7), the sin and death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11), the false conversion of Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:9–13, 18–24) and the heresy of the Judaizers (Acts 15:1ff).

Sixth, there is always opposition to revival. Every true work of God has necessarily faced spiritual, religious, social and oftentimes political opposition. The first Christians experienced opposition from society (Acts 2:13; 13:44–50; 14:4–5, 19–20), religious leaders (Acts 4:1–22; 5:17–33; 9:1ff) and the government (Acts 12:1ff).

Seventh, there are necessary and unusual consequences to revival. Such consequences may be positive, negative or unusual. Situations have occurred in times of revival which do not occur in ordinary times, such as unusual spiritual experiences (Acts 8:26ff; 9:1–11; 10:1–20) or the conversion of

notorious profligates and even the gospel's major enemies. Saul of Tarsus was the great trophy of grace in the first revival, who in turn, as the Apostle Paul, became the major force of New Testament Christianity (Acts 9:1–18). During times of revival there is a renewed missionary emphasis and a great number who are called to the Christian ministry.

Although one must beware of historical arguments which may supplant or ignore Scripture, a study of the history of revivals reveals great movements of the Spirit of God in the early centuries of Christianity, the medieval Ages, the Reformation Era, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and into the twentieth century. Many revivals witness to the truth of the scriptural principles first evidenced at the great prototype of revival which began at Pentecost. See Question 144. If revival is a sovereign work of God, then it must be prayed down from the skies! Are we praying for revival? What kind of revival ought we to pray for?

Quest. 144: Are revivals of religion to be expected in this modern era of church history?

Ans: As the realities of Divine power, sin, prayer, the gospel and salvation remain the same, so revivals of religion may be expected as God is pleased to give such.

Acts 3:19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

See also: Acts 2:47; 4:4, 31; 6:7; 8:5–6; 9:35, 42; 10:44; 11:21; 13:2–4, 44; 14:1; 17:4, 11–12; 18:8–11; 19:10, 20.

COMMENTARY

The history of Christianity has echoed that of the Apostolic Age with eras of great revivals and spiritual awakenings. The promise of the Spirit through the preaching of Peter in Acts 3:19 anticipated such times of revival: **"**Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times [set times or seasons] of refreshing [reviving] shall come from the presence of the Lord."

Why no revival in our day? The reasons may include: first, the vast majority of professing Christians today *do not pray* for true revival. They seem to be afraid to put their prayers and lives on the line in complete submission and beseech God for an outpouring of his Spirit upon the ministry of the Word, upon churches and for an awakening among the unconverted. Why? Perhaps because they have never caught the truth and vision of biblical and historical revival—a truly biblical, holy, aggressive Christianity—so they limit themselves to "safe" prayers, or are afraid that God might disturb their relative ease.

Second, these *do not expect* true revival. Some hold that there was an "age of revivals" which lasted from the eighteenth into the early twentieth century, and that this "age of revivals" has since passed away. The times, we are told,

are too sinful, too secularized in our "post–Christian" society for revival. They fail to take into account the horrible state of affairs before historical times of revival and spiritual awakening. This was particularly true in the early centuries of Christianity under severe state persecution and also in the degenerate time before the First "Great Awakening" of the eighteenth century.

Third, these *do not believe* in true revival. They have been seduced by modern "revivalism," and see alleged progress in terms of church promotional programs and activities. Their idea of "revival" is a scheduled evangelistic meeting. We are often told that we are living in the final stage of apostasy before the Second Advent and therefore cannot expect revival.

Finally, many of these *do not want* true revival. Revival would transform their lives and churches, burden them with a stringent, holy, biblical Christianity. There might also be a great number of temporary believers. A greater number of false professors and scandals seem to occur during times of revival. Religion would seem to get out of hand, their position of power or influence in their churches might be threatened. The preaching might bring them into a state of awful conviction concerning sin and unscriptural practices. Many want the relative "safety" of the *status quo*—a nominal Christianity. Historically, in most revivals, salvation came largely to unconverted church members, and new converts were the most–used in the work.

The truth is, God sends revival and spiritual awakening through an out–pouring of his Spirit in answer to importunate prayer and the faithful preaching of the truth. Revivals have occurred in the very worst times of history—times of horrible spiritual and moral declension and social disintegration, in times of plague, famine and apostasy. God has not changed, sinners have not changed, the gospel has not changed, the spiritual needs of Christianity have not changed, prayer has not changed and faithful, biblical preaching remains God's ordained means of converting sinners.

What has changed? Institutionalized Christianity has changed. The trend of the past several decades has been a gradual departure from both biblical and historical Christianity. The spiritual and doctrinal have largely degenerated to the psychological. Reverent worship in many churches has been displaced by entertainment. Counseling has replaced authoritative preaching and godly discipline. True conversion has largely degenerated into a mere "decisionism" in the thinking and methodology of many. One may remain a "carnal Christian," living in sin, and yet be regarded as a true believer. Revivalism has replaced revival. Emotionalism [irrationalism] has replaced true spirituality in modern professing Christianity. Churches and ministers look to the world with its business principles of success and pragmatic or innovative approach and pattern their ministries accordingly. Why earnestly seek the face of God in prayer for that which can be produced by man in his own strength and innovation? See Questions 3 and 151.

Postmodernity characterizes both society and religion. Existentialism [extreme subjectivism], relativism [denial of biblical authority and absolutes],

pluralism [a denial of the absolute exclusiveness of biblical Christianity] and the deconstruction of language [the biblical text has no objective meaning, and hence, no authority. Meaning is found only within the interpretation of the hearer] and the questioning of all authority have gutted modern, evangelical religion.

A careful study of the history of revivals, however, reveals that "seasons of reviving from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19) have occurred throughout the history of Christianity, even during its darkest times. A brief sketch of some historical revivals and spiritual awakenings should prove both enlightening and encouraging:

In the Apostolic Era, revivals broke forth in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1ff, 3:1ff; 4:22–31; 6:7), in Samaria (Acts 8:1–6), at Lydda and Saron (Acts 9:32–35), in the Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:39–24), in the Pisidian Antioch and at Iconium (Acts 13:13–49; 14:1), at Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth (Acts 17:1–4, 10–12; 18:1–10) and at Ephesus (Acts 19:1–20).

Despite intense persecution from the Roman Empire, and later, ecclesiastical Rome, Christianity spread throughout the Roman World and beyond. By the end of the second century, Tertullian (c. 160–215) could write:

> We are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled every place belonging to you—cities, islands, castles, towns, assemblies, your very camp, your tribes, companies, palace, senate, forum. We leave you your temples only. We can count your armies; our numbers in a single province will be greater.

He further declared in his defense of Christianity the now famous saying, that the blood of the Christians is the seed of the church:

> Excellent governors, you may torment, afflict, and vex us; your wickedness puts our weakness to the test, but your cruelty is of no avail. It is but a stronger invitation to bring others to our persuasion. The more we are mowed down, the more we spring up again. The blood of the Christians is seed.

It was during this era that Patrick (c. 387–460) evangelized Ireland and won thousands of converts. His ministry was characterized by New Testament principles. He lived, ministered and died over a century before the first Romish missionary [Austin] was sent to the Britons by Pope Gregory the Great (c. 590).

The "Dark Ages" witnessed great movements of evangelical Christianity in opposition to the state church. Although specific records are lacking in certain areas, the records of the Church of Rome and the known facts of history are that millions of "heretics" or separatists existed up to the time of the Protestant Reformation. Among the groups that existed apart from Rome and maintained the essentials of the gospel, often under the generic name of "Anabaptist," were the Donatists, Paulicians, Vaudois, Paterines, the Albigenses of southern France [Pope Innocent III massacred over two million], Berengarians, Bogomili ["Friends of God." Most of the nation in the Balkan Peninsula were converted by the ninth century], Cathari ["Puritans"], Gezari, Arnoldists,

Petrobrusians, Poor Men of Lyons [Leonists], Henricians, Waldenses [who existed as a separate religious group from the third to the sixteenth century], Lollards, Wycliffites, Bohemian Brethren, Hussites, etc. These groups were considered heretical by the papists and were both slandered and rigorously persecuted. It was against such that the Romish "Holy Inquisition" was first established and many European Romish crusades were raised. Their names varied, but their doctrine was generally the same and there often existed among them throughout this long, dark era, a spiritual commerce and mutual protection. Some Waldenses joined with Calvin in the Reformation and became the persecuted Huguenots of France.

The Protestant Reformation of the Sixteenth Century, despite its political and military actions, was also a time of revival and spiritual awakening. A series of spiritual awakenings, especially through the work of Baptist and Mennonite reformers occurred in Holland in the sixteenth century. Thousands were converted and many were martyred.

The revival in Northern Ireland in 1625 has been described as "one of the most remarkable outpourings of the Spirit upon record." It helped make Northern Ireland a Protestant stronghold wrested from the Church of Rome. Preachers came from Scotland to preach the gospel and evangelize. The entire society was transformed by the effects of the gospel. This spiritual awakening was stated by a contemporary to "have been one of the largest manifestations of the Spirit, and of the most solemn times of the down–pouring thereof, that almost since the days of the Apostles hath been seen."

A Scottish revival, derogatorily termed the "Stewarton Sickness," continued for several years during the times of persecution under the reign of Charles I. The Kirk O'Shotts revival in Scotland in 1630 saw over five hundred converted under a single sermon preached by John Livingston.

The Kidderminster revival extended from about 1641 to 1660, bridging the time of Reformation into the end of the Puritan–dominated era. This revival occurred under the pastoral ministry of Richard Baxter. Records are scarce, but an evident work of God took place among some native American tribes during the time of John Eliot (c. 1674), a New England minister and missionary, and also on Martha's Vineyard under the ministries of the Mayhews.

1662–1688 saw the beginning of the Pietistic Movement in Germany under Jacob Spener and August Herman Francke at the University of Halle among the students. This revival spread throughout Europe, and gave impetus to the later Moravians. These revivals were characterized by a great emphasis upon practical Christianity and godly living.

The "Great Ejection" of 1662 had left most English churches bereft of godly and faithful ministers. In the year 1665, London and the surrounding area were devastated with a great plague. Many fled the city, including the conformist clergy. Many non–conformist pastors and preachers re–entered London despite the ban and ministered to the sick and dying and preached to the multitudes. A

general spiritual awakening occurred in that year of extremity when multitudes were stricken and dying, thousands were converted.

The Moravian revival under Count von Zinzindorf (c. 1724) led to a spiritual awakening which spread throughout Germany to the British Isles and eventually to the Americas.

Before the First "Great Awakening" under the preaching of Edwards and Whitefield, there occurred a series of awakenings or revivals in New England as precursors of that great work which was to follow. Such a revival occurred in 1705 through the prayer and fasting of several religious societies. Jonathan Edwards mentions early revivals in 1712, 1718 and 1721 in both Massachusetts and New Jersey. Another revival occurred about 1727. The greatest series of revivals or spiritual awakenings took place under the ministry of Theodore Freylinghuysen, a Dutch Reformed pastor and evangelist, in area of New Jersey in the 1720s.

This "Great Awakening" first began under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards in Northhampton, Massachsetts, in 1734. Although only some three hundred were converted in the first year, the whole religious and moral tenor of the town was transformed. Coupled with the preaching of George Whitefield, who traveled throughout the colonies, and such men as William and Gilbert Tennent, all the Colonies witnessed times of revival and spiritual awakening. There was a spiritual awakening among the Native Americans under the seraphic ministry of David Brainerd in the years 1743–1747. Revival was also occurring in Great Britain under the preaching of Whitefield (c. 1738–), Howell Harris, John Cennick, the Wesleys and a host of other men. The very climate and character of the English–speaking world was changed and society uplifted spiritually, morally and socially, as a result of this great spiritual upheaval. A great revival broke out before Whitefield arrived in Scotland, at Cambuslang, under the preaching of William M'Culloch and others, who had been spurred on by the accounts of revival in America written by Jonathan Edwards. The Baptists were greatly involved in the Great Awakening, and in the many revivals of this era.

The Second "Great Awakening" (c. 1793–1840) occurred in New England through a variety of God–sent ministers and evangelists, such as Asahel Nettleton. By 1832, America could almost be truly called a "Christian Nation," due to the vast numbers of converts and churches.

In the years 1854–1855 C. .H. Spurgeon, a Calvinistic Baptist, and his congregation at New Park Street in London witnessed a mighty out–pouring of the Spirit, which continued on more or less throughout his entire thirty–year ministry.

The 1857–1858 Fulton Street Revival, known as "The Great Prayer Revival," which began in New York City, spread across the United States in a matter of months. This spiritual awakening later spread to Northern Ireland and then across to Scotland and down into England and Wales as the "Great Evangelical Revival of 1859." There was a series of great revivals during the

War between the States (1861–1865), especially among the Southern Armies. Indeed, during the nineteenth century, revivals and spiritual awakenings took place in most countries of the world. Some revivals, such as the Welsh Revival of 1904, encircled the globe within a decade, affecting the continent of Africa and later most of Asia.

The 1920s witnessed the Fisher Folk Revival and the East Anglian Revival in Scotland and Northern England. From 1949 to 1952 a series of revivals came to the Isle of Lewis off the Scottish coast.

Localized revivals have occurred in various countries up to our present day. There are some records of revivals in: Madagascar (c. 1927–1936), Hungary, the Baltic Countries and Scandinavia (1930s). Awakenings have occurred in Canada, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and South Africa (1930s). Revival in China (1935). Revival in Madagascar (1946). Revival in Korea (1949). Revival in the Congo (1950). Revival in several American Colleges (1949, 1970, 1995). Revival in India (1951). An awakening in Brazil (1952).

This is but a brief and very incomplete sketch of what the Lord has been pleased to do in sending such seasons of revival. It is unbelief, a man–centered approach in revivalism, a lack of fervent, persevering prayer and a turning away from biblical, fervent, faithful gospel preaching (Acts 14:1; 1 Cor. 2:4–5; 1 Thess. 2:13), which are the crux of the problem. If we believe that "revival comes from the skies," and we seek God in prayer until he sends his Spirit to enliven and convert, then we have reason to expect revival. Indeed, will not this gospel age end in a time of spiritual awakening with the conversion of the Jews? (Rom. 11). Let us pray until God answers in power and blessing!

Quest. 145: What are the two biblical and historical precursors to revival and spiritual awakening?

Ans: The two biblical and historical precursors to revival and spiritual awakening are earnest and importunate prayer and faithful biblical preaching.

Acts 1:14. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication…

Acts 2:41–42. 41Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. 42And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 4:31. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

1 Cor. 2:4–5. 4And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: 5That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

See also: Lk. 11:1–13; Acts 1:4–5, 8; 3:19; 9:31–35; 13:42–49; 14:1; 17:1–4, 10–12; 18:8–11; 19:8–20; 1 Thess. 5:17; Heb. 4:14–16; Jas. 5:16–18.

COMMENTARY

Scripturally and historically, God has used two things in revival: importunate prayer and biblical preaching (Acts 1–2). Every recorded revival has been preceded by earnest, fervent and persevering prayer and faithful biblical preaching.

Such prayer reveals an utter dependence upon God, and he is glorified in answering such prayer. We ought to pray for times of revival and spiritual seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19). We need to pray that God will empower the preaching of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:4–5). The great need of our day is not more money, programs, pragmatic or innovative approaches to God's work, which use the world's methods and seek the world's acclamation. We need an out–pouring of the Spirit of God empowering the preaching, sanctifying God's people, and an utter dependence upon God for his intervention. This brings glory to him. May the Lord impress his people to earnestly pray until the desired blessing is granted. The witness of Scripture and the echo of ecclesiastical history throughout the ages bear ample testimony to such "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

In our modern day, man sees himself as capable, autonomous and possessed of the necessary abilities to produce religious effects and success without being either wholly committed to God and his Word or godly in lifestyle. The very idea of praying for a sovereign work of God in an out–pouring of his Spirit is foreign to the modern religious mind. May the Lord of all power and grace send upon us a spirit of prayer and an insatiable yearning for that revival blessing which only he can bestow!

Biblical, uncompromising, authoritative, compassionate preaching has seemingly fallen upon evil days. The trend is toward programs, entertainment, psychology and contemporary music rather than God–honoring hymns of worship. Ideally, true preaching needs a reverent atmosphere, and the congregation needs to be bowed down with a conscious sense of God's presence or lifted up in true praise. Nonetheless, when God sends an out–pouring of his Spirit, he will raise up men who are God–called, God–honoring, men who will proclaim God's Word without compromise (Mk. 9:37–38; Lk. 10:2). This will be a time of revival and spiritual awakening! Are you burdened for revival? Pray for God to pour out his Spirit upon his people and churches!

IX
THE CHURCH AND THE ORDINANCES

The doctrine of the church is called *Ecclesiology*, the Latinized form of the Gk. *ekklēsia*, which means a gathered assembly. This area of truth includes the nature, government and distinctives of the church and its ordinances. Sadly, many consider the doctrine of the church to be nebulous, and have become very pragmatic and innovative with regard to the church, its identity, nature and function. This area of doctrine should never be considered as less important than other aspects of biblical truth. The inspired pattern as set forth in the New Testament is to be binding upon all believers. As with the other areas of biblical truth, we are either obedient or disobedient to the Scriptures. There are a great variety of views, even among allegedly biblical Christians, concerning every aspect of this subject. Thus, it behooves the believer to be scripturally circumspect in this doctrine.

Quest. 146: What does the word "church" signify?

Ans: The word "church" signifies a gathered assembly.

> **Acts 11:26.** And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.
>
> **Eph. 3:21.** Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.
>
> **See also:** Matt. 18:15–17; Acts 7:38; Acts 19:32, 37, 39, 41; 1 Cor. 1:2; 11:18–20; Col. 4:15; Phlm. 2.

The Gk. term *ekklēsia* occurs 114–115 times in the New Testament and is translated as "church" or "assembly." In Acts 7:38 it refers to the congregation of Israel in the desert, and in Acts 19:37, the proper word is "robbers of temples" [*hierosulous*] not "churches." *Ekklēsia* denotes an assembly, a congregation of people. It never denotes a building. In the Septuagint [Greek Old Testament, c. 246 BC], the word is the translation of the Heb. *qahal*, which also denotes a congregation or assembly. This concept of an assembly is reflected in such terms as the Spanish *Iglesia* and the French *l'Eglise*. The English word "church" was derived from a Gk. term [*kuriakou* or *kuriakon*] which denoted a building "of or belonging to the Lord [*Kurios*]," used when the first Christian meeting houses existed in the late third century AD. This later use is recognizable in the Scottish *Kirk* and the German *Kirche*. Thus, there is some confusion about the English term "church," which has traditionally and variously signified a congregation, a building, a denomination, an ecclesiastical system, the aggregate of all true believers in mystical union with Christ or the whole of Christianity throughout history.

Some hold to the concept of a "universal, invisible church" comprised of all the elect of all ages, or at the least of all living believers world–wide at any given time. This concept of the church confuses it with the kingdom of God. Such an entity, of course, has never assembled, is not properly an assembly,

does not possess any of the attributes of a church, and thus cannot truly be termed a "church" [*ekklēsia*, or gathered assembly]. It is rather a spiritual and comprehensive concept of the mystical [spiritual] union of all true believers with the Lord Jesus Christ, and finds no concrete expression ecclesiastically, except in a local or gathered assembly (1 Cor. 12:27. The def. article "the" before the word "body" is to be omitted). The idea of a "universal, invisible church," however, is wide–spread in Christian thought, and is axiomatic to both Reformed and Dispensational thinking. The Sixteenth Century Reformers, reacting against the Romish idea of a "universal visible church," establishing their own state churches with a similar pattern, and understanding that not all who professed Christ were truly converted, developed the idea of both a "visible" and an "invisible" church. The former was composed of believers and unbelievers; the latter of only the true believers. Some hold that this theory derived from Gnostic, Neoplatonic philosophy which saw the visible world as the imperfect reflection of the perfect invisible world, i.e., the world of the Platonic "ideas."

But what of those passages where "the church" is referred to in an abstract sense (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:32; Eph. 3:10–21; Col. 1:18)? Does this not refer to the aggregate of all true believers who are in union with Christ as his "mystical body"? "The One True Church"? We prefer another interpretation, which is consonant with all the uses of the term "church" in the New Testament: first, the local or concrete use of "church," referring to any given assembly of scripturally baptized believers. Second, the abstract, generic or institutional use of the term. A common illustration is that of "the jury," referring not to any particular jury, but to the institution of this legal entity in the judicial system. When such usage finds concrete expression, it is a local, visible jury. This same principle would hold true for those statements which are often used to refer to the "universal, invisible church." We prefer to classify these as the "institutional" use of the word "church," which finds concrete expression in the local assembly. Third, the eschatological use of the term "church," referring to "the general assembly [*panēguris*, the festal gathering of a whole group, nation or country] and church [*ekklēsia*] of the firstborn" which is in the process of being assembled in heaven. When all the elect are gathered together from all ages, they will comprise the church [*panēguris*] in glory, fully assembled for the first time (Eph. 5:27; Heb. 12:22–23; Rev. 21:2). This three–fold usage coherently answers to every use of the term "church" in the New Testament without violating either grammar or doctrine—or the meaning and biblical usage of the Old Testament *qahal* and the New Testament *ekklēsia*.

The meaning and history of the church are not self–interpreting. The New Testament is the standard, and thus the meaning and history of the church are to be interpreted in the light of the New Testament.

Quest. 147: What is a New Testament or gospel church?

Ans: A New Testament or gospel church is a church characterized by the distinctives of the New Testament and the gospel.

Acts 2:41–42, 47. [41]Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. [42]And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers….. [47]…And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

See also: Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 2:36–47; 13:1; 20:17; 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 3:3–10; Col. 4:15; 1 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:15; Phlm. 2; Rev. 2:1.

COMMENTARY

The church is a New Testament institution. It was a "mystery" hidden in the redemptive purpose of God until the gospel economy and the inclusion of the Gentiles (Eph. 2:11–22; 3:1–10). The churches of the New Testament were gospel churches, i.e., they were gathered, bound and characterized by the gospel, and so composed of baptized believers (Matt. 28:18–20). Although some churches had excesses, inconsistencies or deviations from the truth, if these did not become permanent disfigurements or departures, these churches remained New Testament churches in doctrine and practice. The governing principle must be: to the extent that a church holds to the truth of the New Testament—to that extent it is a New Testament church. Conversely, to the extent that a church departs from the truth of the New Testament—to that extent it ceases to be a New Testament church. In other words, every New Testament church has an immediate relation to the New Testament as to doctrine and practice.

There are several views concerning the identity and nature of the church. Roman Catholicism teaches that the church is comprised of her faithful adherents world–wide from the beginning to the end of time. This "universal, visible church" finds concrete expression through its ecclesiastical hierarchy of popes, cardinals, bishops and priests. Its sacerdotalism [priestly function] is expressed through the seven sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Order and Matrimony.

Many others hold that the church must be seen in a denominational or national sense. These usually have the dichotomy of a "visible" and "invisible" church by necessity. These and others usually hold that the church existed in the Old Testament. This they term "the Jewish Church." The only relevant reference is Acts 7:38, which refers to Israel as an assembly [congregation] gathered in the wilderness sojourn. The idea of an "Old Testament Church" is essential for those who would pattern the New Testament church after the Old Testament, and see the New Testament Church as a continuation of the "Old Testament Church." This would be foundational to the argument that the Abrahamic Covenant is identical to the Covenant of Grace, that baptism has replaced circumcision, and the Lord's Supper has replaced the Passover.

Others hold that the church was formed on the Day of Pentecost, and term it "The Birthday of the Church." A close study of the New Testament reveals that the church as an institution, which had its concrete expression in the Jerusalem assembly, existed as a distinct entity before Pentecost (Acts 1) during the earthly ministry of our Lord. Our Lord and his disciples possessed all the essentials of a church prior to Pentecost: they had the Gospel (Mk. 16:15; Matt. 28:18–20). They had been converted (Jn. 6:67–69). They were baptized (Matt. 3:6; Acts 1:22). [It has been objected on the ground of Acts 19:1–7 that John's baptism was not Christian baptism. It should be noted that John baptized only repentant (and in this context of his mission, converted) individuals. His baptism was the only baptism that the Lord or his disciples ever received. With reference to Acts 19:1–7 it should be remembered that every recorded message of John emphasized the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (See Matt. 3:1–3. 7–12; Mk. 1:1–8; Lk. 3:2–18; Jn. 1:32–33). Further John's ministry was the marked entrance into the New Testament or gospel dispensation (Acts 1:21–22). If these men at Ephesus had been under John's ministry long enough to have heard his message and become his converts, they would have been taught concerning the Holy Spirit. It is a valid conclusion that John did not baptize them]. They were functional (Acts 1:12–26).

Further, they had the Lord Jesus Christ for their Head (Matt. 23:8). They had church discipline (Matt. 18:15–17). They were ordained (Matt. 10:1–5; Jn. 15:16). They had their commission (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15). They were organized sufficient for their needs. Christ was their Head and Teacher. They had a treasurer (Jn. 12:4–6; 13:27–29). They were missionary in commission and character (Matt. 10:1–5; 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:46–47). They had a teaching ministry (Matt. 28:18–20; Jn. 21:15–17). They had Divine authority (Matt. 28:18–20; Jn. 20:21–22). They possessed the essentials of church life (Matt. 28:19–20). They had qualified pastors (Jn. 15:16; Jn. 21:15–17). They observed the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26–28). They possessed the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:22). They held prayer meetings (Acts 1:12–14). They had a definite church membership (Acts 1:15) [The wording implies a definite membership roll, an organized church membership]. They held a business meeting (Acts 1:15–26), which was the will of God, as subsequent statements reveal, i.e., the Spirit ordained that Matthias was numbered with the original Twelve (Acts 2:14; 6:2).

What, then, was the significance of Pentecost? At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit visibly and audibly credentialed the already–existent church as the God–ordained institution for this gospel economy (Acts 2:1–21) just as the Tabernacle (Ex. 40) and Solomon's Temple (2 Kgs. 8) had been credentialed for their respective eras by the *Shekinah* or visible presence and power of God. With this credentialing and empowerment, the church as an institution was equipped and ready to evangelize the world (Acts 1:4–5, 8; 4:8, 31; 7:55; 9:17; 10:44–45; 11:24; 13:2–4). See Question 84 for a thorough discussion of both the baptism of the Spirit and Pentecost.

Are we faithful to the biblical concept of the gathered assembly? Are we in fellowship with and faithful to God through a local church?

Quest. 148: What is the distinction between the church and the kingdom?

Ans: The church and kingdom are neither synonymous nor co–extensive. The church is an institution within the greater entity of the kingdom.

Jn. 3:3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

1 Cor. 12:27. Now ye are the [a] body of Christ, and members in particular.

Note: Matthew uses the term "kingdom of heaven" nineteen times. These references also all occur in parallel passages in the other gospel records. In each case, the term is changed in these parallel passages to the "kingdom of God," which makes these two synonymous.

COMMENTARY

Both Roman and Protestant theology confuse "the Church," either visible or invisible, with the "kingdom of God" or the "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of Christ." A thorough study will reveal that these final three are ultimately synonymous terms. Romanism errs in viewing the church as a universal, visible entity, co–extensive with the State and its spiritual counterpart. If "the church" and "the kingdom" are synonymous and coextensive, then if one is not in the "true church" he is excluded from the kingdom and thus unsaved.

Protestantism errs in believing the church to be composed of both saved and unsaved in its "visible" aspect, thus either identifying it with the parables of the kingdom (which emphasize the mixed nature of the kingdom into the good and the bad), or retreating to a "universal, invisible church" synonymous with a spiritual kingdom composed only of the truly regenerate. The essence of all such error is found in a radical departure from the New Testament usage of the term "church" [*ekklēsia*]. See Question 146.

The New Testament church and the kingdom of God are closely related, yet distinct. A thorough study will reveal that the kingdom of God is a comprehensive term for the sovereign rule of God and the realm over which this rule extends. Scripturally, the kingdom has past (prophetical), present (historical) and future (eschatological) aspects. Thus, the kingdom of God is universal and includes all believers. It also includes a realm in which the power of Divine rule is experienced. These qualities have led some to confuse the kingdom with the church.

The distinctions between the kingdom of God and the New Testament church may be seen by contrast. Men "see" and "enter into" the kingdom of God by regeneration. This is quite apart from any direct connection with a church, but is concerned with the sovereign grace and power of God alone in its realization (Jn. 3:3, 5). Entrance into a New Testament church is upon the scriptural prerequisites of conversion, baptism and the vote of the church (Acts

2:41). The kingdom is universal; the church is necessarily local [i.e., a body, assembly, congregation. Such language would be utterly foreign in reference to the kingdom of God]. The kingdom is a monarchy; the church is a democracy under the headship of Jesus Christ and the rule of his Word. There is a gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 9:35), but never a gospel of the church. The kingdom is an indistinct, unobservable entity (Lk. 17:20–21); the church is observable and quite distinct in all its characteristics (e.g., membership, leadership, ordinances, ministry, etc.). See Question 147.

The kingdom of God is the inclusive, comprehensive, sovereign and redemptive work of God in the world; the church is an organism within this kingdom, proclaiming its message and furthering its advancement as it has been commissioned (Matt. 16:18–19; Acts 19:8; 20:24–25; 28:23, 31; Col. 4:11; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:4–5). The kingdom of God will be progressively manifest until it is entirely comprehensive in its revealed or experimental scope, finding its ultimate conclusion in filling the world and in the "new heavens and earth" (Dan. 7:13–14; 1 Cor. 15:24–28; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 11:15; 19:6; 21:1). The New Testament church as an institution will end with this economy, finding its fulfillment in the church glorious (Eph. 3:20–21; Heb. 12:22–23). Thus, the church is contained within the kingdom, but the kingdom is neither contained within the church nor equivalent to it. Such contrast manifestly distinguishes between the kingdom and the church, and affords no adequate foundation for a "universal, invisible church" theory.

It must be noted in church history that when the church and kingdom are considered synonymous, there are inevitable political, social and military implications. Both Romanism and Protestantism have historically resorted to political power and even to the sword to enforce their dictums and defend their causes (Cf. 2 Cor. 10:3–5).

Quest. 149: Have New Testament churches always existed from the earthly ministry of our Lord to the present day?

Ans: The promise of our Lord and the witness of history is that New Testament churches have had a continuous existence from the earthly ministry of our Lord to the present day.

Matt. 16:18. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Matt. 28:20. …and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Eph. 3:21. Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

COMMENTARY

One must beware of giving too much weight to historical arguments alone. The one authoritative standard is the Word of God. History, however, may add its witness to the truth of Scripture. It may be argued from such statements as

Matt. 16:18; 28:20 and Eph. 3:21 that scriptural, i.e., New Testament churches have had a continual existence from the days of the Apostles to the present time. Further, it may be historically demonstrated that throughout the history of Christianity evangelical churches have existed which believed in the two basic essentials of salvation by grace and believer's baptism. Some pre–Reformation groups maintained many New Testament distinctives. The idea that the Church of Rome was the "Mother Church," and that not until the Sixteenth Century Protestant Reformation did other churches begin to be established, is simply not true to the facts of history.

Consider the following: first, all the churches of the New Testament era were true New Testament or gospel churches, despite their errors. During the first centuries a general division became apparent between the *Katholikos* party, which was lax in its discipline of re–admitting those who had denied the faith under persecution [*traditores*] and those who demanded strict church discipline. The Catholic party eventually became the State Church under Constantine and subsequent Emperors [c. third to the Sixth century]. Churches which retained New Testament distinctives were considered schismatic and were persecuted. These persecuted churches were located from the Near East across the Bulkan Penninsula, throughout Europe, to the valleys of the Piedmont, to the Pyrenees Mountains between France and Spain, and into Great Britain.

Second, from the second century onward, evangelical groups such as the Waldenses ["of the valleys"] had a continued existence in the valleys of the Piedmont in northwestern Italy and beyond. These continued into the time of the Sixteenth Century Reformation. In Armenia, the Paulicians existed through many centuries. New Testament believers, continued to exist, apart from and contrary to the Romish Church throughout this entire era. These believers numbered in the many hundreds of thousands, had common social and religious intercourse, possessed similar doctrine and catechisms, and their preachers often traveled freely among the various groups. These were variously known as Montanists, Novatians, Donatists, Paulicians, Vaudois, Paterines, Albigenses, Berengarians, Bogomili, Cathari, Gezari, Arnoldists, Petrobrusians, Poor Men of Lyons [Leonists]; Henricians, Waldenses, Lollards, Wycliffites, Bohemian Brethren, Hussites, etc. The more common, generic name for many of these was the pejorative term "Anabaptist," as they were thought to "rebaptize" their adherents, denying the efficacy of Romish State Church "baptism." See Question 144.

Third, historical records and testimonies exist, and both reliable Romish and Protestant authors testify to the continued existence, great numbers of, and continual influence of these groups from antiquity to the time of the Protestant Reformation and beyond. It was against such that the Romish Inquisition was established, and many crusades were raised against them, resulting in the massacre of literally millions during the Middle Ages. They were defamed and charged with various crimes and heresies, but the facts of history have exonerated many of them. Though some of these groups may have been closely or more remotely New Testament in principle and practice, among them were

evidently New Testament Christians and churches. There is sufficient evidence throughout history to witness to the promise of our Lord that the institution of the New Testament church would not fail and its perpetuity and witness have been maintained. At the very least, there has never been a time when at least one New Testament church has not faithfully existed. Are you in fellowship with and faithful to the Lord through a scriptural New Testament church?

Quest. 150: Who is the foundation of the New Testament church?

Ans: The foundation of the New Testament church is the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

Matt. 16:18. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

1 Cor. 3:11. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

See also: Matt. 16:15–23; 1 Cor. 3:5–15; Eph. 2:19–22.

COMMENTARY

Romish teaching and tradition hold that the church is built upon Peter, the "first pope," and his successors through "Apostolic Succession." The facts of Scripture and the witness of history utterly discredit such a view. There is absolutely no foundation for any "Apostolic Succession" through a line of Romish bishops and the communication of the Holy Spirit. This follows the Romish tradition that Peter was given the keys of the kingdom and power to bind and loose things in heaven and on earth (Matt. 16:19). This statement, with two perfect passive periphrastic constructions, should read: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall have already been bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall have already been loosed in heaven." This is obedience, not papal prerogative. Our Lord later rebukes Peter for his admonition and attempted correction, stating that he was under the immediate influence of Satan (Matt. 16:21–23). See Question 131. Peter allegedly moved to Rome after the Jerusalem meeting (Acts 15) to become Bishop there for twenty–five years before his martyrdom. Strangely, Paul never mentions him in his Roman Epistle (Rom. 16). Peter was, in his later life, ministering at "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13), unless the location was figurative for Rome—an untenable admission for Romish doctrine and tradition (Rev. 17:1–7).

Others hold that the church is built upon Peter's confession of faith. Matt. 16:18 ought to be carefully noted: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter [*petros*, a pebble, rock or stone], and upon this rock [*petra*, a strata of solid rock, bed rock] I will build my church…" We hold that the reference is to our Lord himself (1 Cor. 3:11).

Because the Lord Jesus Christ is the head and foundation of his church, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This declaration means that the church is to be aggressive in its mission and empowered by Divine authority. A city

does not take its gates to war. Satan's kingdom is to be assaulted by the aggressive missionary mandate given to the church (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8).

Quest. 151: What is the purpose of a New Testament church?

Ans: The purpose of a New Testament church is to glorify God.

1 Cor. 10:31. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Eph. 3:21. Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

See also: Rom. 11:33–36; Phil. 1:27; 1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 4:11.

COMMENTARY

The church does not exist for the sake, interest or convenience of either its members or society at large. Rather its existence is for the glory of God in all things. God created all things for his own glory, including his church. Thus, the church is corporately to seek the glory of God in its worship, obedience, evangelism, fellowship, ministry, discipline and love of the truth.

The church is to glorify God by manifesting his wisdom. It is through the New Testament church that God has designed to reveal his infinite wisdom to the powers of the universe (Eph. 3:8–11; 1 Pet. 1:10–12). In this sinful, rebellious, blinded world of fallen humanity, God's ordained order has been maintained in the New Testament church alone (1 Cor. 11:1–16, esp. v. 2–10; Eph. 3:8–11). The eternal redemptive purpose of God, centering in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, is revealed through the institution and message of his church.

The church is to glorify God by reverence in her worship. She is to magnify his name and regulate her worship and public life according to his Word. The regulative principle of worship is that such worship is scriptural and reverent in principle, content and expression. The Lord is to be worshipped "in the beauty of holiness" (1 Chron. 16:29–30; Psa. 29:2; 96:9). That which is not scriptural in principle, or does not reflect the holy, righteous character of God, is not God–honoring worship. Much in contemporary Christianity is counter to the commands and spirit of biblical Christianity and is simply either entertainment or panders to the flesh. In corporate worship, preaching is to have the central place (Acts 2:42; Rom. 10:5–15; 1 Cor. 1:17–18; 2 Tim. 4:1–5). See Questions 3 and 144.

The church is to glorify God by upholding his truth. The New Testament church exists as "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Thus, she must be faithful to the doctrine vouchsafed to her by her Lord and so must "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The church is not at liberty to change, modify, neglect, substitute, retreat from or deny this truth, but to defend it. On the basis of a false, sentimental love, as contrasted with a scriptural love that reflects the moral character of God, some

disdain and avoid doctrinal controversy (Rom. 13:8–10; 1 Jn. 4:1; Jude 3). But God is not glorified in either a passive Christianity or a false peace; he is glorified in the truth. The Spirit of God that indwells and empowers the church is the Spirit of truth (Jn. 14:16–17; 15:26; 16:13; 1 Jn. 4:6; 5:6). The Word of God that is the substance and sole authority for the church is the Word of truth (Jn. 17:17; Eph. 1:13; Jas. 1:18). The very Head and Lord of the church, Jesus Christ, is himself truth (Jn. 14:6). The message of the Gospel is the very message of truth (Gal. 2:55; Eph. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:13). The worship acceptable to God is that which is in truth (Jn. 4:24). Even the attitude of Christian love which believers are to emulate and manifest is not a sentimental love, but rather a love characterized by the truth (1 Cor. 13:6; Phil. 1:9–11; 2 Thess. 2:10; 2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1, 4).

The church is to reverence the truth of God in her worship, declare the truth in her ministry, defend the truth in her witness, illustrate the truth in her ordinances, reflect the truth in her life and vindicate the truth in her discipline. A church cannot glorify God if she does not do so in, by, through and because of the truth (Jn. 17:17; Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Tim. 3:15).

The church is to glorify God in evangelism. It is a scriptural principle that the church glorifies God by obedience to his Word; disobedience brings dishonor (1 Cor. 10:31). The Lord Jesus Christ commissioned his church to be evangelistic by nature (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:4–8). Thus, any church dishonors the Lord when it modifies, neglects or repudiates this commission. God did not intend for his church to be one of many social agencies, but a spiritually vitalizing entity in society for the conversion of men and women. The New Testament church as an institution in society may have social ministries, but they are inherently within and never divorced from the essence of the gospel. Some dishonor God by repudiating this commission, considering it to be outdated, useless or needless in modern society [e.g., "modernism" with its social gospel]. When a church loses its spiritual distinctives, it ceases to be a New Testament church. Evangelism with the proper motive—the glory of God—is to express itself in every aspect of the church's life.

The church is to glorify God in edification. The word "edify" means to instruct, improve or build up spiritually. The New Testament teaches that God is glorified when his Word is obeyed in the edification of the church. (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 2:42, 46–47; 1 Cor. 10:31; 12:12–17; Eph. 4:7–16). The preaching and teaching ministry of the church is for edification, and so is fellowship within the assembly. The basis of church fellowship is not merely social, but spiritual and doctrinal. It is to be the Word of God and the Spirit of God which bind the assembly together. True fellowship, therefore, should be edifying; it should bring glory to God. Do we seek to glorify God in these matters?

Quest. 152: What is the power of a New Testament church?

Ans: The power of a New Testament church is spiritual, moral, ethical and social, not political, civil or military.

Acts 1:8. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

2 Cor. 10:3–5. [3]For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: [4](For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) [5]Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

See Also: Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 12:13–17; Jn. 18:36; Rom. 12:17–21; 1 Cor. 2:1–5; 1 Tim. 2:1–2; 1 Pet. 2:9–20.

COMMENTARY

The New Testament church possesses power or authority derived from the Lord Jesus Christ through his Word and communicated by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 16:18–19; 28:18–20; Acts 1:4–8; 2:1–4; 4:29–33; 5:12–16; Rom. 1:16–17; 1 Cor. 5:1–5; 6:1–8). Such power or authority is spiritual, moral, ethical and social; never civil, political or military. The church as an institution, through the preaching of the gospel, the power of the Spirit, the authority of the Scriptures, the conversion of sinners, and the lives of its members, is enabled to transform the lives of others and also bring a strong ethical and moral principle into society as the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13–14; 1 Cor. 2:4–5; 6:9–11).

The New Testament principle of a regenerate assembly in a composite society (i.e., a society composed of various religious and social elements as distinct from a monolithic or sacralist society held together by a common religious loyalty which demands total conformity) has been historically rejected or resisted by Romanism and traditional Protestantism. The main reason for the use of the state, the civil magistrate or military force for religious purposes has been the identification of the church with the kingdom, and the manifestation of that kingdom among men. See Question 148. It has always been too easy to substitute civil or military might for spiritual power. Religious zeal easily becomes coercive when the opportunity is presented and the safeguards of Scripture are ignored.

May the church involve herself in social affairs? Yes, but only if she does so with a gospel emphasis. God has not called the church to clean up unregenerate society, but to remain distinct from it. She exists as a spiritual sub–culture within a given society. The church's spiritual, moral and ethical power are what gives her the right and proper influence in society (1 Tim. 2:1–4). In times of revival, the moral climate of society has been greatly improved and heightened, and social institutions have been spawned through the efforts of godly people. See Question 144.

A distinction must necessarily be made between the church and the individual Christian. The individual believer functions not only as a Christian, but also as a citizen of a given country and a member within a given society. A Christian may be involved in civil issues, and in the government or the military as an upright person and citizen—if he can retain his personal Christianity and is enabled to procure a sphere of influence spiritually, morally and ethically. Christian individuals do not comprise "the church" in issues in which the secular forces term "the separation of church and state," a term often used to stifle Christian influence and morality in society. The Constitution and the Founding Fathers of these United States were concerned about a State Church [which had been a persecutor of Baptists and others], not political and social involvement by Christians individually or collectively. In fact, it was the strong influence and efforts of the Baptists throughout the Colonies which ultimately brought acceptance of the *Constitution of these United States* with *The Bill of Rights*, including the wording of the First Amendment that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof…"

Quest. 153: What form of church government is found to be the closest to the teaching of the New Testament?

Ans: The form of church government found to be the closest to the New Testament is a congregational rule under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to his Word.

Matt. 18:17. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Acts 6:2–3. 2Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

See Also: Matt. 18:15–17; Rom. 10:14–15; 1 Cor. 5:1–5; Eph. 1:17–23.

COMMENTARY

All three forms of ecclesiastical government claim to be derived from the New Testament: Episcopal, or rule by bishops; Presbyterian, or rule by an eldership; and congregational rule. Romanism and Anglicanism are forms of Episcopal government or rule by bishops. This implies both an "Apostolic Succession" of bishops through the communication of the Holy Spirit from one bishop to another, and also an ecclesiastical hierarchy of priests, bishops and archbishops, and, in the case of Rome, cardinals and popes. The Apostles in the New Testament had no successors. This office was unique to that era and the infancy of the church. The next generation had no Apostles, and no ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Presbyterianism and most Reformed groups hold to the idea of both teaching elders, or pastors, and ruling elders. A session of ruling elders governs the local church and beyond that, there are presbyteries composed of teaching elders from various churches. The final rule is that of a national assembly or synod. Most denominations thus have higher "church courts" which may judge church members, a given church or churches, and a national body which makes the final decisions or judgments on religious rulings. Baptists, by contrast, have made no distinction between a teaching and a ruling elder (1 Tim. 5:17), and have emphasized the autonomy of the local assembly under Christ.

Congregational rule may take various forms. The essential element is that the congregation itself is autonomous under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and in obedience to his Word. In most congregationally–governed assemblies, pastors and deacons take places of leadership, but the final judgment is left to the congregation as a whole. What sets pastors apart from others in the congregation and places them in leadership ought to be the recognition of the necessary character and gifts which reveal the call of God. See Question 142. In the New Testament the final court of appeal and the final judgment were evidently left to the congregation as a whole. This was true in matters of sending forth preachers, of choosing deacons, and in exercising discipline, etc. (Matt. 18:15–17; Acts 6:2–3; Rom. 10:14–15; 1 Cor. 5:4–5).

The New Testament, apart from the unique office and power of the Apostles, taught no ecclesiastical hierarchy, and there existed no authority over and above that of each local assembly under the immediate Lordship of Jesus Christ. In this day, many local, independent congregations, including many Baptists, identify with larger religious bodies such as "fellowships," "associations" and "conventions;" and some have given up a measure of their self–government in so doing, but such is not scriptural. There seems to be an inherent tendency, even among Baptists, toward collectivism.

Quest. 154: What are the offices in a New Testament church?

Ans: The offices in a New Testament church are those of pastors and deacons.

Phil. 1:1. Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.

See Also: Acts 6:1–7; 20:28–31; 1 Tim. 3:1–13; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:24–26; Titus 1:5–11; 1 Pet. 5:1–6.

COMMENTARY

The government of a New Testament church is very simple and its officers are but two: pastors and deacons.

There are several considerations: first, the various terms "pastor," "elder," "bishop," "servant," "minister" and "steward" all refer to the same office, not to any kind of ecclesiastical hierarchy (1 Pet. 5:1–5). "Pastor" [*poimēn*] means "shepherd," i.e., one who tends, cares for and feeds God's flock (Acts 20:28;

Eph. 4:11). A "bishop" [*episkopos*] is an overseer, or one who superintends the work of God (1 Tim. 3:1). "Elder" [*presbuteros*] emphasizes the dignity of the pastoral office (1 Tim. 5:17). "Servant" and "minister" refer to the pastor as God's servant. The usual term is *diakonos*, which is more often used of pastors as God's servants in the New Testament than deacons as the church's servants. "Steward" [*oikonomos*] denotes a manager, i.e., one who is faithful in managing the church in a spiritual sense (Titus 1:7).

Second, the term "rule" [*prohistēmi*, *hegeomai*], when used of pastors in the New Testament, does not connote the idea of ecclesiastical power or dominance [*arkōn*], but is a shepherding term for presiding, leading, guiding and caring for (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:1–5).

Third, because of the great strain, labor and liabilities of the pastorate, its high requirements (Col. 1:28–29; 1 Tim. 3:1–7; 2 Tim. 2:24–26), and the tendency to accuse and abuse pastors, several witnesses are necessary to bring any charge against a pastor (1 Tim. 5:17–21).

Fourth, The deacons are the servants of the church, and serve to take unnecessary burdens from the pastors (Acts 6:1–7; 1 Tim. 3:8–13). Deacons normally serve in the areas of finances, property and ministering to those within the assembly who stand in need of temporal things. What of such offices as church clerk or treasurer? These are offices which are included within the work of the deaconate, but may be delegated to others who are more skilled and qualified in such matters, and would conduct themselves under the administration of the deaconate. The modern idea that deacons form a "board," or act as a corporate body to rule the church and counterbalance the pastor is unscriptural. They are the church's servants, not her masters; they are to help the pastor, not seek to control or counterbalance him.

Finally, it is noteworthy for both pastors and deacons that the qualifications focus on personal blamelessness, moral purity, spiritual maturity, godly character, uprightness, faithfulness and marital and family suitability—not merely on gifts or abilities (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–11). How we need to pray for our churches and for their leadership!

Quest. 155: What are the two New Testament church ordinances?

Ans: The two New Testament church ordinances are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Matt. 28:19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost…

1 Cor. 10:16. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

COMMENTARY

The Church of Rome has seven sacraments—Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Order and Matrimony.

Protestantism holds to two, baptism and the Lord's Supper. These two Baptists and some Evangelicals call "ordinances," as these have been commanded by our Lord (Lat. *ordinare*, "to put in order"). A sacrament (Gk. *musterion*, "mystery;" Lat. *sacramentum*, "secret," and *sacer*, "holy") is a physical rite which posits something mysterious and beyond the physical elements in the communication of grace. Historically and theologically, therefore, the term "ordinance" distinguishes baptism and the Lord's Supper as being only symbolic and representative in nature, and considers them to be means of grace only insofar as they bring the mind and heart to fix themselves upon the spiritual realities thus symbolized. The term presupposes no mystical significance as means of grace.

Quest. 156: What is baptism?

Ans: Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ, to be unto the person baptized a symbol of and testimony to his union with his Lord in his death, burial and resurrection–life.

Matt. 28:19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost…

See also: Matt. 3:7–17; 28:18–20; Mk. 1:4; 16:16; Acts 1:21–22; 2:36–41; 19:1–4; Rom. 6:2–6; 1 Cor. 1:13–17; 1 Pet. 3:20–21.

COMMENTARY

The first and determining distinctive of Baptists is not that we immerse those who demonstrate a credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is rather that we consistently hold to the Scriptures in both doctrine and practice, and therefore baptize only believers, and that by immersion after the biblical teaching and example. *Sola scriptura* is, indeed, the primary Baptist distinctive from which all other distinctives scripturally and logically follow. See Question 13.

Baptism, if performed scripturally and upon a scriptural subject, is at once an act of obedience, identification and submission. It is first an act of obedience, the first outward testimony of the new believer corresponding to our Lord's word: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mk. 16:16). This statement reveals that one who is truly converted will desire to be outwardly identified with and obedient to the word of his Lord and Savior (Acts 2:36–42; 8:36–38; 9:17–19). It also refutes the idea that baptism is essential to salvation.

Second, it is an act of identification. The Gk. terms *baptizein* and *baptisma* derive from the root *baph*, which means "depth." These terms literally denote "to dip or wash by dipping." There is also a figurative use of the word "baptize," meaning to identify or a change of identity. John the Baptist was John the "Identifier," i.e., he not only immersed his converts, but was the one whose ministry it was to prepare a people for our Lord and to identify him for Israel (Matt. 3:13–17; Jn. 1:29–33). Our Lord himself used this term in a figurative

sense of his own identification with our sins in his sorrow and suffering (Matt. 20:22–23; Mk. 10:38–39; Lk. 12:50). No sense of identification, however, should replace the truth of baptism by immersion.

With what or with whom are believers then identified? The act of being "buried" in water baptism and then raised from the water is symbolic of the believer's union with Christ (Rom. 6:3–5). This spiritual union, which water baptism symbolizes, is a union in both his death and in his resurrection. See Question 77. Union in Christ's death necessarily means that the reigning power of sin has been broken. The true believer commits acts of sin (1 Jn. 2:1), but he no longer lives in sin as the reigning principle of his life (Rom. 6:6, 14; 1 Jn. 3:9). Union in his resurrection–life necessarily means that the same Spirit who raised our Lord from the dead now indwells and becomes the gracious dynamic of the believer's life. Thus Paul can categorically declare, "Sin shall not have dominion over you" (Cf. Rom. 6:1–14). Believers are no longer under a mere external principle of command, but an internal principle of enabling grace. See Question 95. We hold that Romans 6:3–5 refers to our union with Christ, and the term "baptized" is used figuratively. If this passage referred to literal water baptism, then a strong argument could be made for baptismal regeneration. To take the terminology figuratively both refutes the idea of baptismal regeneration, and also settles the significance and necessity of both the mode and the subjects of baptism, i.e., believer's baptism by immersion.

Third, baptism is an act of submission. Some passages state that the hearers were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (e.g., Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5). This does not contradict Mathew 28:18–20, which clearly teaches baptism in the name of the triune Godhead. These passages rather emphasize that believers publicly and willingly come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ—under the authority of his name (Acts 2:36; Rom. 10:9; 2 Cor. 4:5). This was greatly significant for Jews and proselytes who were converted from Judaism, and others from pagan backgrounds, who took the name of the Lord Jesus publicly in baptism. It meant a definitive break with their former life and religion, and often with families and all past relationships. It still should convey the same. Have you been scripturally baptized? Have you publicly identified with the Lord Jesus Christ and his people?

Quest. 157: What is the scriptural mode and who are the proper subjects for baptism?

Ans: The scriptural mode is by immersion and the only proper subjects are believers.

> **Acts 8:35–38.** 35Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

See also: Matt. 3:5–9; Mk. 1:5, 8; Mk. 16:16; Lk. 3:7–8; Acts 2:38–39, 41; 8:12; 9:17–18; 10:44–48; 16:14–15; 1 Cor. 1:13–16;

COMMENTARY

What of the mode of baptism? The Gk. term *rhantizein* denotes "to sprinkle;" the word *proschusis* denotes "pouring" or "affusion;" and the word *louō* denotes "wash" or "bathe." These are New Testament terms, and could have easily been used for "baptism" [*baptizein, baptisma*] had these designated the mode. However, both the mode and the subjects can be argued from the terms deriving from the root term *baph* [depth], the symbolism of water baptism, and its biblical relation to the believer's union with Christ. If, as Romans 6:1–14; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12 clearly teach, the believer's union with Christ is described under the figure of baptism, then both the mode and the subjects are settled. See Question 156. First, only submersion and immergence would properly be conveyed by the terminology used. Second, only these could adequately symbolize union in our Lord's death, burial and resurrection. Third, only believers have the right and privilege of identifying symbolically with our Lord in this spiritual union. Historically, immersion was the usual and normal mode of baptism, even in the Romish Church, until at least the twelfth century.

Why, then, the arguments for infant sprinkling? First, these derive from a sacramentarian mentality which early in church history replaced the symbol with the reality and resulted in the error of baptismal regeneration (c. 150 AD). Paedobaptism became entrenched through Imperial decree by the fifth century under Emperors Justin and Justinian. The Sixteenth Century Reformers retained this sacramentarian concept in a modified form. From the third century onward, "clinical baptism" by pouring or affusion was practiced by the State Church in cases of ill health or imminent death. The great transition from immersion to sprinkling, however, did not prevail, even in Protestantism, until the sixteenth century.

Second is the idea that baptism is allegedly that of washing or cleansing, rather than dipping, and the three–fold significance which the New Testament intimates. Several arguments have been advanced for sprinkling or pouring as a suitable mode for baptism. Such arguments are founded upon passages which figuratively speak of being washed in the blood of Christ, the washing of regeneration, or the washing away of one's sins (Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 20–21). As to the term *baptisma*, it is used of the "washing of 'tables,'" which, it is alleged, would and could not be immersed (Mk. 7:4). The term "table" [*klinōn*] however, refers to a sick bed, pad or mattress, which could be immersed. From the Gk. Old Testament [Septuagint], two passages have been used in the argument for sprinkling: the first is Isa. 52:15, "So shall he sprinkle many nations…" The word translated "sprinkle" [*thaumazein*] properly means "to startle," and this alone coherently fits the context of v. 13–15. The second text is Dan. 4:33, in which the term *ebaphē* must be taken as a hyperbole, "baptized," i.e., "drenched with the dew of heaven." None of these sets aside the scriptural mode of immersion, which alone stands in accord with biblical terminology and use. The clear New Testament teaching of the immersion of

believers cannot simply be set aside by another subject and another mode—without changing the entire significance of baptism. Such would be an utter contradiction of revealed truth.

Third, most Protestants tend to stand, as it were, in the Old Testament, and view the New Testament through Old Testament eyes; Baptists stand in the New Testament, and view the Old Testament through New Testament eyes, i.e., Protestants, never fully coming out from the shadow of Rome, have a predominantly Old Testament perspective, whereas Baptists have a decidedly New Testament perspective. Thus, both Romanism and much of Protestantism have a tendency toward an "Old Testament mentality" which views the New Testament as a mere continuation of the Old, denying, in essence, the full principle of progressive revelation in Scripture from the Old Testament "shadow" [dim outline, type] (Heb. 10:1) to the New Testament reality [fulfillment, antitype] fulfilled in Gospel realities. It is held that Old Testament rites and ceremonies have been merely succeeded by New Testament rites and ceremonies rather than full and final gospel truths, i.e., baptism has replaced circumcision as a sign of the covenant and the Lord's Supper has replaced the Passover. This is the source for such ideas as the Romish sacerdotal priesthood with its alleged mystical powers, vestments and rituals, and the idea that baptism has replaced circumcision. The argument that baptism has replaced circumcision as the sign or seal of the covenant was first used by Ulreich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger in their disputes with the Anabaptists in the early sixteenth century, and has been carried on to the present as the essential argument for Protestant paedobaptism.

It ought to be noted in Rom. 4:9–11, one of the major proof–texts for this argument, that Abraham was circumcised as a believer, and that circumcision was personally to him a seal of his faith—the faith he had *before* his circumcision! The New Testament gospel antitype of circumcision is regeneration, a "spiritual circumcision," not baptism—a spiritual operation performed by God alone in cutting off the flesh from having preeminence (Rom. 2:28–29; Rom. 6:1–14; Col. 2:11–13). If baptism is at all "the sign or seal of the [New or Gospel] covenant," then it necessarily pertains only to believers, i.e., those who are regenerate. Those in the Old Covenant were circumcised; those in the New or Gospel Covenant undergo a "spiritual circumcision," i.e., regeneration. Thus, we consistently and inescapably have believer's baptism. See Question 83.

[Note: The type never fully equals the antitype or fulfillment. We do take into account that the type, Old Testament sign or "shadow" was merely preparatory. Not all those circumcised were included in the covenant, e.g., Ishmael and many Israelites who were only nominally the covenant people. Regeneration, the antitype or fulfillment, gives the fullness and finality of truth. Everyone regenerated is included in the New or Gospel Covenant].

Further, the Passover has not been superceded by the Lord's Supper, but has been fulfilled in Christ himself (1 Cor. 5:7). Have you been scripturally baptized in obedience to, in identification with and in submission to our Lord?

Quest. 158: Are the infants of professing believers to be baptized?

Ans: The infants of professing believers are not to be baptized, because there is neither command nor example in the Scriptures for their baptism.

Acts 2:38–39. 38Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.

Acts 16:32–34. 32And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

See also: Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:41; 8:35–39; 18:8; 21:20–21; 22:13–16.

COMMENTARY

It is indisputable that the New Testament clearly teaches believer's baptism, and that the mode symbolizes the believer's union with Christ, i.e., a spiritual burial and resurrection. See Question 77. To hold otherwise would necessarily change the meaning, the mode and the subjects of baptism.

The arguments for infant or paedobaptism, as opposed to believer's baptism are: first, that baptism has replaced circumcision, and so the infant children of professing believers ought to be baptized. It has already been demonstrated that only to Abraham personally was circumcision a seal of the righteousness of the faith he already possessed, i.e., Abraham was circumcised as a believer (Rom. 4:9–11). See Question 157. The New Testament has no instance of the practice of paedobaptism. The argument that the transition from circumcision to baptism was so great and pervasive that it need not be mentioned is an argument from silence which contradicts the known facts and practice. Second, that the household baptisms in the New Testament must have included infants is also contrary to the known facts, as in each instance it is recorded that the entire household heard the gospel and believed. Third, one of the major proof–texts, Acts 2:39, extends the promise to "you and your children," but it also extends the gospel promise "to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Omitting the latter part of the verse does not strengthen the argument for paedobaptism.

There is an inherent danger in considering infants and little children as "covenant children" or "within the pale of the church," and in some way within the context of saving grace apart from the gospel and personal faith. Presumptive regeneration may prove in many cases to be an obstacle to the gospel and evangelism. Where is your trust and your hope of salvation? Is it placed in the Lord Jesus Christ by faith? Any place or anyone else will never save you!

Quest. 159: What is the Lord's Supper?

Ans: The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the New Testament instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, a memorial rite in which the church assembles to partake in a worthy manner the unleavened bread and wine which symbolize the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; a rite which both commemorates his death and anticipates his return.

1 Cor. 10:16. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

1 Cor. 11:23–26. [23]For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread: [24]And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. [25]After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me. [26]For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

See also: Matt. 26:26–30; 28:18–20; Mk. 14:17–29; Lk. 22:8–22; Jn. 13–17; 1 Cor. 10:16–17; 11:17–34.

COMMENTARY

This observance is symbolic and memorial, and is in no way a sacrament or "visible means of grace" in such a way that the church partakes of Christ either literally as in Romanism, or mystically as in Lutheranism and Reformed tradition. This rite is a "means of grace" in its symbolism as it fixes the mind and heart upon the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and thus brings one's thoughts to the truth and reality of the Gospel. As the term "sacrament" etymologically, historically and theologically implies something mysterious and sacerdotal, it is quite unsuitable terminology for a New Testament church. See Question 155. This is one reason for the use of the term "Lord's Supper" rather than "communion." This latter term is likewise misunderstood and associated with a mystical relationship between the individual and the Lord, usually by sacerdotal mediatorship (i.e., through a priest or church), although it is true that the local assembly as a body does commune with the Lord corporately and symbolically in the observance.

The Church of Rome holds to transubstantiation, i.e., that the elements are sacerdotally manipulated to become the literal body and blood of the Lord, and the communicants actually and literally partake of Christ in this manner. Lutheranism holds to consubstantiation, i.e., that the elements are at one and the same time both mystically and literally the body and blood of Christ, apprehended by faith. Such teaching has necessitated the doctrine of the "Ubiquity of the Body of Christ," i.e., that he can be physically in many places at one time. Reformed tradition holds that the elements confer grace where true faith is active in the participation. Baptists and others hold that participation

becomes a means of grace through contemplating the spiritual realities symbolized in the elements; the Supper is simply symbolic and memorial.

The Lord's Supper is both a gospel and a church ordinance, as is baptism. Both symbolize the realities of the Gospel as they center in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and both occur within the context of the local church; the first under its authority and the second under its discipline.

There are three aspects of the participants' consciousness in the observance of this rite: first, there is to be a "look backward" ("This do in remembrance of Me"). The church commemorates the death of her Lord with all its redemptive significance. Second, a "look inward" ("let a man examine himself"). This implies, in this context, a serious preparation before participation, a preparation that centers not necessarily on introspection, but on Christ (see 1 Cor. 11:27–32). Finally, there is to be a "look forward" ("till He come"). A note of glorious anticipation should rest upon the minds and hearts of the church members.

Quest 160: What are the proper elements to be used in the observance of the Lord's Supper?

Ans: The proper elements to be used in the observance of the Lord's Supper are unleavened bread and wine.

1 Cor. 11:26. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

See also: Matt. 26:26–30; Mk. 14:17–29; Lk. 22:8–22; Jn. 13–17; 1 Cor. 10:16–17; 11:17–34.

COMMENTARY

The elements of the Lord's Supper are two: unleavened bread and wine. These the Lord used at the completion of the Passover meal for the symbols of his Person and work to institute this gospel ordinance. The unleavened bread was not only used for its convenience at that Passover meal when the Lord instituted the Supper, but it possessed symbolic significance as well. Leaven is the usual symbol of evil in Scripture. [Note that the Old Testament sacrifices were not to be offered with leaven; see 1 Cor. 5:6–8]. The ultimate symbolism in the unleavened bread is the sinlessness of the Lord's humanity. This has a direct and vital bearing upon the redemptive significance of his work. Thus, unleavened bread is the only proper and scriptural symbol that should be used.

The Lord instituted the Supper from the remains of the Passover meal. He took the final cup of red wine to symbolize His blood that was to be shed in covenant–redemption for his people. It is strongly objected by some that "fermented wine" [a redundancy] should not be used for the Lord's Supper. Such objections are based upon a misinterpretation of Scripture, tradition, a misunderstanding of converting grace and a legalistic attitude derived ultimately from Gnostic influence (see Col. 3:16, 21; 1 Tim. 4:1–5).

Wine is the proper element and should be used. Consider the following: first, wine was used in the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. It is

noteworthy that Paul did not rebuke the Corinthian church for using wine, but rather for drunkenness (l Cor. 11:21). Wine was used until the late nineteenth century when the pasteurization process was invented.

Second, the drinking of wine *per se* is not condemned in Scriptures, but its abuse is. The various warnings associated with the drinking of wine in every instance imply the sins of drunkenness and those things associated with drunkenness (e.g., Gen. 9:20–27; Gen. 19:30–38; Prov. 20:1; 23:29–35; 31:1–5; Hab. 2:15). Temperance was necessarily a principle for the consideration of kings, judges or those in authority lest they pervert judgment. Total abstinence was demanded for the priests only when they were officiating (Lev. 10:5–10). The Rechabites were blessed by God and set forth as examples, not because they were total abstainers *per se*, but rather because they had obeyed the commandment of their father (Jer. 35:10–19). In Scripture, wine is a symbol of joy and of Divine blessing (See Deut. 14:22–29; Psa. 104:14–15; Prov. 3:10; Eccl. 9:7–9; Acts 2:13–16). The Nazarite was to abstain not only from wine, but from anything that derived from the vine because he was bearing a reproach for God during the time of his vow (Numb. 6:1–20). Wine was used medicinally, both externally and internally (see Lk. 10:34; 1 Tim. 5:23). It was also used to alleviate suffering and depression (Psa. 104:14–15; Prov. 31:6–7). Wine was included in the drink offerings made to the Lord (Ex. 29:40). Thus, the only prohibition in the Scriptures is against the abuse of wine or drunkenness.

Third, the Lord Jesus Christ himself both drank and made wine (Matt. 11:19; Lk. 7:34; Jn. 2:1–11). Had he been a total abstainer, the charge would have been meaningless, for he was evidently a man of good appetite and did imbibe. Those who would teach that total abstinence is absolutely essential and a requirement to godliness cast a shadow over both the ethics and the moral character of the Lord. Further, the wine that he made at the marriage feast was not only fermented, but aged to perfection, as acknowledged by the governor of the feast.

Fourth, all modern objections against the use of wine at the Lord's Table presuppose that wine is inherently evil or immoral; however, the issue of drinking wine is ethical, not moral. Morality is concerned with absolutes, things that are either right or wrong inherently as either reflecting or being opposed to the moral character of God. Ethics is concerned also with the subject of Christian liberty. Drinking wine is in itself neither right nor wrong, but a matter of Christian liberty. The principles of this liberty prevail in that it is the "weaker brother" who must abstain because of his tender conscience. It is the "stronger brother" who may enjoy his freedom—so long as he does not offend his weaker brother. The burden is upon the stronger brother to abstain from anything which might offend the weaker. See Question 118.

Fifth, the social and ceremonial uses of wine must be distinguished. The latter is not within the realm of Christian liberty, but must be governed by New Testament example.

Finally, the symbolism is lost to a great extent if grape juice is used. The "fruit of the vine" is ceremonial terminology and does not necessarily advocate the use of grape juice. This traditional Jewish terminology was used in the giving of thanks for wine at meals. Further, there is a natural leaven in the juice which is consumed in the process of fermentation. If it is necessary to use unleavened bread, it may be argued that it is likewise necessary to use wine.

Quest. 161: Should all Christians commune together at the Lord's Supper?

Ans: The observance of the Lord's Supper is for the members of the local assembly as a corporate body.

1 Cor. 11:20–22. [20]When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. [21]For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. [22]What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

See also: Matt. 26:26–30; Mk. 14:17–29; Lk. 22:8–22; Jn. 13–17; Acts 20:11; 1 Cor. 10:16–17; 11:17–34.

COMMENTARY

It is common in our day for religious groups to hold "communion" as a demonstration of ecumenical unity, have "communion" as part of a wedding ceremony, or take the elements to the sick or shut–ins who cannot attend corporate religious services. None of these has a scriptural precedent. The Apostles did not have "communion" at the alleged "First Church Council" in Acts 15, or at the troubled meeting at Antioch (Gal. 2:11ff) to affirm their unity. "Communion" in a wedding service echoes the Sacrament of Marriage in the Church of Rome. The New Testament pattern was observance when the local assembly met together, and only then (1 Cor. 11:17ff).

Who should partake of the Lord's Supper? Some churches open the Lord's Table to everyone without exception i.e., anyone who happens to be in attendance at the time of the observance is served the elements (i.e., "open" or "unrestricted" communion). Others restrict the participation. Some hold that the rite is only for believers ("restricted" communion); others, that it is for all believers of like faith and practice who are members in good standing of sister churches and have been "scripturally baptized" (i.e., "closed" communion). Still others admit only those in good standing who are members of that local assembly (i.e., "close" communion). This final view is simply that practiced in the New Testament. The only possible exception is that of the Apostle Paul, who "broke bread" with the believers at Troas (Acts 20:6–11). This probably referred to a common meal, not the Lord's Supper. But, if it were, Paul, as an Apostle, would have had an apostolic authority over all churches. This single, questionable instance would not set aside the universal practice of a close communion.

Consider the following four biblical principles: first, the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance, given to the church as an institution in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20). The New Testament reveals that it was only observed in the assembly (l Cor. 11:17). Thus, any other institution (i.e., para–church organization, family or informal fellowship of believers) is precluded from administering this ordinance. Second, this ordinance is for the gathered church or the church assembled together, not for those apart from the assembled believers (i.e., the sick and bed ridden or family members who are non–members; see 1 Cor. 11:17–34). Third, this rite is under the discipline of the local assembly. No person, therefore, is to be admitted who is not a member in good standing with the church (See Matt. 18:15–17; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 10:16; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14–15; Tit. 3:10–11). To do otherwise would be to disregard and disobey the Word of God. Without scriptural church discipline the proper observance of this ordinance is impossible. Fourth, according to the command of the Lord and the pattern of the apostolic churches, the Lord's Supper was observed in the context of the local assembly (Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 2:41–42).

It is thought and taught by some that Judas partook of the "Last Supper," and thus sinful professing Christians or even unbelievers should not be barred. Consider, however, the following: first, Judas and his situation remain unique. Our Lord Himself chose Judas as a disciple "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled" in the inscrutable purpose of God, knowing he was not only unregenerate, but an instrument of Satan (John 6:64; 6:70–71; 17:12). None but our Lord knew the mind and heart of Judas, and outwardly he was evidently above reproach as one of their number and their treasurer. None suspected him of being either a thief or the betrayer (John 12:6; Matt. 26:22). Now it is possible that someone may be admitted to the Lord's Table who is a secret sinner, unregenerate, or even a criminal—if no one knows of his state and he is numbered outwardly with the people of God and included within that local group as was Judas—But such cannot be the cognizant practice of a church! Our Lord alone knew and had to keep Judas until the appointed time "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled," then removed him immediately (John 13:21–31).

Second, as the situation of Judas remains unique, he cannot be used as an example of knowingly admitting an unregenerate or open sinner to the Lord's Table. Our Lord not only chose this man and called him as his disciple ["that the Scriptures might be fulfilled"], but empowered him to preach the Gospel, heal the sick and cast out demons (Matt. 10:1–4; Luke 9:1–2). Now, if it be argued that we must admit any or everyone without exception because Judas was allegedly there, then we must also allow an unregenerate ministry and countenance those who allegedly possess certain "gifts" without any regard to their doctrinal, ethical, or spiritual state and condition—as Judas demonstrated these also!

Third, Judas was not present at the institution of the Lord's Supper. It is evident that he had already left the upper room prior to its observance (Matt. 26:20–30; Mark 14:17–26; Luke 22:14–24; John 13:1–30; 18:1). The following should be noted for necessary clarification: first, Matthew, Mark and

John all place the announcement of betrayal at the beginning or during the Passover meal, which preceded the institution of the Lord's Supper. Second, in each case the institution of the Lord's Supper begins a new paragraph, denoting a change of subject and time. It is quite possible that Luke refers to the first cup of red wine during the Passover meal, rather than the final cup with which our Lord probably instituted the ordinance (Lk. 22:14–23). Third, John states that Judas left during the Passover meal immediately after receiving the sop (Note: John 13:1–2 should read, "supper having begun," "during supper" or "supper beginning," *not* "supper having ended." Cf. vv. 4, 12, 26). Thus, the testimony of Scripture is that Judas was not present at the institution of this ordinance. Are you in fellowship with a gathered assembly which scripturally partakes of the Lord's Supper?

Quest. 162: Who ought to partake of the Lord's Supper?

Ans: Those only who ought to partake of the Lord's Supper are such as are believers, have been baptized, are members of that local assembly and maintain an orderly walk.

Acts 2:41–42. [41]Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. [42]And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

1 Cor. 5:11. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

See also: 1 Cor. 11:17–34.

COMMENTARY

There are four prerequisites for partaking of the ordinance: first, conversion. As this rite is a gospel ordinance, it has no significance to an unsaved person. The New Testament teaches salvation before the Lord's Supper. Thus, infant church membership, family relationships or mere attendance do not qualify anyone to partake. Second, baptism. This ordinance is always antecedent to the Lord's Supper. It is unscriptural to admit to the Lord's Table anyone who has not been scripturally immersed as a believer. This excludes on the basis of Scripture any who have been baptized or sprinkled in infancy, before their conversion, or baptized for any other purpose than as a believer in obedience to the Word of God. Third, church membership. As the Supper is to be observed in the context of the local assembly, it is within its fellowship and under its discipline. To admit those from other assemblies would be to make an exception unknown in the New Testament. Fourth, an orderly walk. The Lord's Table is co–extensive with church discipline. It is impossible properly and scripturally to observe the Lord's Supper in the assembly if there is no scriptural discipline. (See Matt. 18:15–17; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1–13, 10:16; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14–15; Tit. 3:10–11). The local assembly is to be unified in the truth or it cannot properly observe the rite. If divisions or schisms exist, true participation

is precluded. (1 Cor. 10:16–18; 11:17–20). Thus, an orderly walk is a necessary prerequisite. Are you scripturally prepared to observe this ordinance in both heart and mind?

Quest. 163: What is church discipline?

Ans: Church discipline is the loving, but necessary action of the church toward any within its membership who openly sin and bring reproach upon the name of Christ and his church.

1 Cor. 5:11–13. 11But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. 12For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? 13But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

1 Cor. 11:30–32. 30For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 32But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Titus 3:10–11. 10A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; 11Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.

See also: Matt. 18:15–17; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1–13, 10:16; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14–15.

COMMENTARY

The New Testament church is to uphold or support the truth as vouchsafed to her by her Lord (1 Tim. 3:15). An essential element is vindicating that truth in the church's discipline. The principle of discipline is essential to the organization of the church, the growth or maturity of the members and the furtherance of the gospel. It is also necessary to maintain the purity of the assembly and its testimony according to the clear teaching of the Scriptures. Thus, church discipline is both formative and corrective.

The word "discipline" is derived from the Latin, *disco*, "I learn"—hence the terms "disciple" or "learner," and "discipline" or "teaching, training, submission." The New Testament views the church as a disciplined body. The various members are to grow toward spiritual maturity individually and collectively. There is to be an increasing principle of unity pervading the congregation that is the result of such formative discipline. (1 Cor. 12:1–28; Eph. 2:21–22; 4:1–3, 11–16; 5:1–2, 21; 6:10–18; Phil. 1:9–11, 27; 2:1–5, 12–16; 4:1–9; Col. 1:28–29; 2:6–7; 3:1–8; 2 Pet. 1:4–8; 3:18). This formative element is to manifest itself in what might be termed the "Christian Ethic" or "corporate sanctification" governing the relationship of believers to each other and to all within the assembly. (See Eph. 5:1–17; 6:5–9; Col. 3:22–25; Rom. 12, 17–21). See Question 94. Such formative discipline presupposes a church in which the Holy Spirit is actively at work in and through the proper ministry

of the Word, and a church in which there is likewise the practice of corrective discipline.

As church discipline possesses a pervading formative or positive element, so it has a corrective or negative aspect. It is usually this aspect which draws attention. Corrective discipline is concerned with erring and sinning members who must be dealt with in accordance with New Testament teaching. There are seven considerations concerning this corrective aspect.

First, there is a definite scriptural basis for discipline in the New Testament. Church discipline, therefore, must not rest upon tradition, any legalistic standard or denominational bias, but the clear teaching of the Word of God. There does exist a more personal or private type of discipline or confrontation, both positive and negative, that in itself does not approach church discipline. (Matt. 5:22–24; 18:21–22; Lk. 17:3–4; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12–13; Heb. 3:12–13; 10:23–25). These statements teach that it is primary to seek reconciliation with brothers or sisters in Christ who have been offended. It is further Christ–like to forgive in minor personal matters. There is also a principle of exhortation or encouragement that would be corrective, yet personal. However, matters that cannot be either forgiven or dismissed on a personal basis or become public knowledge, are subject to the discipline of the church. These matters may be major personal, though irreconcilable, situations (Matt. 18:15–17); immorality, manifest or characteristic greed or extortion (1 Cor. 5:1–13); known or public sins (Gal. 6:1); disorderly behavior (1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6; Tit. 3:10–11); or disruptive differences in doctrine (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:14–15; Tit. 3:10–11).

Second, it is the duty of the local assembly before the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, to exercise scriptural discipline. Church discipline is not optional. To refrain from disciplining a member according to the command of the Word of God is in itself a corporate sin for the entire church. See this principle and strong admonition in 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 11:30–32.

Third, there is a manifold purpose for church discipline. It is to be done with the motive of glorifying God through obedience to His Holy Word. Not to exercise discipline when the Scriptures demand it dishonors God by disobedience (l Cor. 5:1–8, 12–13; 10:31). God is never glorified in disobedience. A sentimental love [i.e., a love that derives from the emotions rather than reflecting the righteous and holy character of God in Scripture] is sinful if it causes a church to refrain from proper discipline. Church discipline is for the maintenance of the purity of the church in doctrine and practice (e.g., Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10–11; 2 Thess. 3:6) and is absolutely necessary when proper and demanded by circumstances and the Word of God in either grieving or quenching the ministry of the Holy Spirit within the assembly (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). Discipline is further necessary to maintain a godly, scriptural testimony and witness in the community for the glory of God. Any scandal or sinful situation that becomes known to society brings reproach upon the name and cause of Christ (1 Tim. 3:7). Finally, the purpose is to either restore or remove the offending member. If there is genuine repentance [i.e., a repentance

evidenced by suitable "fruits," Matt. 3:8; Lk. 17:3], then there may be restoration; but without repentance, there must be removal (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:13; Tit. 3:10–11).

Fourth, the attitude expressed by the church in corrective discipline is to be one of love, concern, meekness and faithfulness to Christ (Jn. 13:34–35; Rom. 12:19–21; Gal. 6:1). The church is to corporately remember its own liabilities to temptation and sin and not act in a vindictive, self–righteous or haughty manner. If the love of the membership is a righteous, holy, humble love [reflective of the moral character of God, as in Rom. 13:8–10] and not sentimental, there will be simple faithfulness to the Lord Jesus and His Word. When an erring member is excluded, the members of the assembly are to avoid all unnecessary contact with that individual, considering him or her only as a possible object of evangelism until he or she is restored in true repentance (Matt. 18:15–17; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14).

Fifth, the final authority in disciplinary matters rests with the assembly as a whole: "…tell it to the church…" (Matt. 18:17). The local assembly is the final court of appeal and alone possesses the authority to discipline one of its members. Corrective discipline is a local church matter and must include the entire church membership (i.e., the church acting as a body, and not merely through its representatives or spiritual leadership).

Sixth, the extent of church discipline is withdrawal of fellowship or exclusion from membership (synonymous terms). (See Matt 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:12–13; 2 Thess. 3:6). The nature and extent of discipline are determined by the nature of the church and the offense.

Seventh, what offenses are to be disciplined by the church? This vital question must be investigated both negatively and positively. Negatively, the church must abide by the clear teaching and abiding principles of the New Testament. The church cannot properly discipline anyone for an offense that is not at least treated in principle in the Scripture. Traditional prejudices or practices, cultural or social mores and areas within legitimate Christian liberty cannot be made suitable grounds for church discipline. The New Testament reveals a wide latitude for individual preferences and differences that are in themselves legitimate if observed within the proper Christian ethic. [See, for example, Rom. 12:1–2, 16; 14:1–23; 15:1–7; 1 Cor. 8:1–13; 9:4; Col. 2:16, 20–23]. The Scriptures must ever be the church's only and all–sufficient rule of faith and practice. Positively, there are several types of offense that are within the area of church discipline: first, offenses of a personal nature that cannot be settled personally and privately that become public and of such a nature that the assembly must act (Matt. 18:15–17). Second, there are sins of an overtly moral nature [e.g., drunkenness, covetousness, slander, theft and sexual immorality; see 1 Cor. 5:1–13; Eph. 5:3]. Third, there are general offenses of misconduct of such a nature that the unity and testimony of the church is threatened (2 Thess. 3:6, 11, 14–15). Finally, there are instances wherein serious doctrinal error or disagreement threaten the truth and doctrinal unity of the church (Rom. 16:17;

Gal. 1:6–9; Tit. 3:10–11). Such must be dealt with for the sake of the doctrinal purity of the assembly.

Church discipline may in itself be disruptive, but "we ought to obey God rather than men." (Acts 5:29). It is the Lord's church; faithlessness to him means more than offending those who will not abide by his Word.

X
FINAL THINGS

The doctrine of final things is termed "eschatology," from the Gk. word *eschatos*, denoting "last" or "final." This doctrinal area includes such realities as prophecies concerning the future, immortality, death, the intermediate state, the resurrection, the millennium, the final judgment and the final state of either condemnation or glory. General eschatology is often concerned with the various millennial views. Personal eschatology is more concerned with those realities which personally concern the individual with death, the intermediate state, the resurrection, heaven, hell and one's eternal state. One question is given to the millennium; the rest to those realities which are of a more personal nature.

Biblically, time progresses from the future into the present and from the present into the past, as all has been predestinated by God (Eph. 1:3–11). See Questions 35, 79 and 80. Thus, in the context of the Divine prophecies and promises, one's life is to be lived in the context of certain future expectation (Rom. 8:9–23; 2 Cor. 4:17–18; 5:1–11; 1 Thess. 4:18; 1 Pet. 1:3–9; 2 Pet. 3:11–14). May believers be led to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

Quest. 165: What are the various "deaths" described in Scripture?

Ans: The Scripture describes spiritual death, death to the reigning power of sin, physical death and the second death.

Gen. 2:17. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Rom. 5:12. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Rom. 6:11. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Rev. 20:14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

See also: spiritual death: Matt. 8:21–22; Eph. 2:1–3; physical death: Gen. 23:1–4; 25:7–10; 2 Sam. 14:14; Ezk. 18:4, 20; Jn. 8:21–24; Rom. 5:12–14, 17–18; 6:23; Heb. 9:27–28; death to the reigning power of sin: Rom. 6:2–14; 2 Cor. 5:14–15; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1–4; the second death: Matt. 10:28; Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 11–15; 21:8.

COMMENTARY

Death as a biblical concept connotes separation. The separation which occurred at spiritual death in the case of Adam and his posterity must be considered first. The very day that Adam ate of the forbidden fruit—a willful act of disobedience and rebellion against the righteous, benevolent government of God—he died spiritually (Gen. 2:16–17; 3:1–21), i.e., he became separated from his primeval relationship with God and those realities in his personality which maintained that relationship. The image of God within him became distorted; he became depraved [*de*, thoroughly, *pravus*, crooked], i.e., the effects of sin permeated his nature and personality (Rom. 1:18–32; 3:9–18). The spiritual part of his nature, which maintained his original righteousness died, and his personality, once governed by a righteous mind–set, became subject to the desires of his physical nature (See Rom. 6:6, 11). He had an enmity against God and his rule (Rom. 8:6–8). His mind became spiritually incapacitated [the noetic effects of sin] (Rom. 1:21–22; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17–19). He came under the ruling power of sin. What truth he did know, he sought to suppress (Rom. 1:18–20). Adam's sin was imputed to all his posterity; they also inherited his fallen or depraved nature and his twisted mind–set (Gen. 5:3; Rom. 3:23). See Questions 31–34.

Second, death to the reigning power of sin is included in the broader subject of salvation. Salvation is the reversal of the sentence and effects of spiritual death through the believer's union with Christ, which is a union in both his death and resurrection–life. See Question 77. Regeneration is the impartation of that spiritual life or nature which died at the Fall (Jn. 3:3–8; Eph. 2:4–5). The image of God is re–created in principle in a spiritual, moral and intellectual transformation (Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10). The reigning power of sin is broken (Rom. 6:1–14), the natural enmity of the heart is removed (Rom. 8:6–11) and the Satanic blindness which obscured the gospel is taken away (2 Cor. 4:3–6). See Question 83. In conversion, simultaneous with regeneration, saving faith and repentance are granted (Acts 11:18; 18:27; Eph. 2:8–10). See Questions 86–87, 90–91. Justification, the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, deals with the penalty and guilt of sin (Rom. 3:21–26). See Question 92. Adoption, simultaneous with regeneration, renews the Holy Spirit within the personality (Gal. 4:4–7). See Question 93. Through sanctification, or the impartation of righteousness, the individual is positionally, definitively and progressively [through the positive work of the Word and the Spirit, and negatively through trials and chastening] made holy in lifestyle and brought into essential conformity to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; Heb. 12:3–14). See Questions 94–96. Glorification at the resurrection completes the process of salvation with the redemption of the body, which remains unchanged in the Christian's present experience—although its dominating role has been broken through union with Christ (Rom. 6:6, 11–13; 8:11–23; 1 Cor. 15:49, 51–57; 2 Cor. 4:16–5:8). See Question 169.

Third, physical death, or the separation of the soul and body. Adam eventually died physically, and passed this sentence of physical death to the entire human race through his sin (Gen. 5:5; Rom. 5:12–14, 17; 1 Cor. 15:21–

22; Heb. 9:27). Physical death, then, the separation of the body and the soul, is not natural, but unnatural; it is penal, the judgment of God upon sin. The Scripture describes physical death as an enemy—the final enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). The Lord Jesus became incarnate, not merely as an individual, but as the "Second Man," the "Last Adam" to undo what the "First Adam" did, to dismantle the works of the devil and through death to conquer death (Rom. 5:17; 1 Cor. 15:21–26, 45–49; Heb. 2:5–15; 1 Jn. 3:8). See Question 66.

Fourth, the "second death" describes, not annihilation or cessation of being or existence, but an eternal state of separation from God. This is the destiny of the wicked or unrighteous after the final judgment, and settles forever their degree of everlasting torment and suffering (Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 11–15; 21:8). See Question 171. Have you been delivered from spiritual death? Will you escape the second death?

Quest. 166: What is physical death?

Ans: Physical death is the termination of this present, earthly life by the separation of the soul from the body.

Phil. 1:21. For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

Heb. 9:27. …it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

Rev. 14:13. …Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

See also: Gen. 2:7, 17–19; 3:19; Lev. 24:17; Num. 23:10; 35:16–19; Psa. 23:4; 55:4; 104:29; 116:15; Prov. 8:36; 14:12; 18:21; Eccl. 7:1–4; 12:5–7; Ezk. 18:32; Acts 25:11; Rom. 5:12–14, 21; 6:23; 8:35–39; 1 Cor. 3:21–23; 15:26, 54–58; Phil. 1:20–21; Col. 1:20–22; 2 Tim. 1:8–10; Heb. 2:9–15; 9:13–28; 1 Jn. 5:16–17; Rev. 12:11; 21:4.

COMMENTARY

Physical death is the cessation of this present, earthly life, the separation of the soul from the body. The soul, at the moment of death, leaves the body and continues its existence either conscious in the presence of God or in a conscious state of torment and suffering until the resurrection and final judgment. The body decays and eventually returns to its natural chemical elements—in biblical terms, it returns to the dust from whence it was taken (Gen. 2:7; 3:19; Job. 10:9; 34:15; Psa. 103:14; Eccl. 3:19–21).

The Bible describes physical death in a variety of terms: A returning to the dust (Eccl. 12:7). A going the way of all the earth, (Josh. 23:14). Being gathered to one's fathers, or to one's people (Judg. 2:10; Deut. 32:50). A sleeping with one's fathers (1 Kgs. 11:21; 22:50; 2 Chron. 26:23). Sleep, or a sleeping in Jesus (Jn. 11:11; 1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Thess. 4:13–15). A decease (Lk. 9:31; 2 Pet. 1:15). A departure, or a departure to be with Christ (Phil. 1:23; 2 Tim. 4:6). A giving up of the ghost (Gen. 25:8; Matt. 27:50; Acts 5:5). A being offered or a

pouring out as a libation (2 Tim. 4:6). A putting off of this tabernacle (2 Pet. 1:14). A dissolving of the earthly house of this tabernacle (2 Cor. 5:1). A being absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8).

The reality of physical death is a reminder that fallen, sinful mankind is still, in a very real sense, under that covenant of works which God made with Adam (Gen. 2:15–17). Adam broke that covenant through his disobedience as Representative Man, and mankind has had the universal sentence of death because of Adam's original sin (Rom. 5:12–14; 1 Cor. 15:21–22) and also because of its own added, individual transgressions (Ezk. 18:4; Rom. 3:9–12, 23; 6:23). Death, then, has an immediate and necessary relation to sin (Rom. 5:12; Jas. 1:15). Death is thus unnatural; it was not part of the created order, but is the result of sin. Scripture calls death an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). Because death is the final enemy to be conquered, it will continue as a reality until the resurrection for both believers and unbelievers (Jn. 5:29).

There have only been two exceptions to physical death: Enoch (Gen. 5:23–24) and Elijah (2 Kgs. 2:1, 11). Those who are alive and remain when the Lord returns will likewise be glorified without the experience of death (1 Thess. 4:15–18).

The believer, being in union with Christ, has the fear of death in its ultimate significance removed through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and the revelation of the gospel (Rom. 6:1–11; 2 Cor. 4:8–5:8; Phil. 1:21; 2 Tim. 1:8–10; Heb. 2:9–15; 1 Pet. 1:3–5).

Quest. 167: Why do believers die?

Ans: Death is the final result of living in a fallen world. Death for the believer is not penal, but completes the believer's process of sanctification. It is the last enemy, which will remain until the final resurrection unto life.

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

1 Cor. 15:26. The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.

See Also: Lk. 23:39–43; Acts 7:54–60; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:20–28, 51–58. 2 Cor. 4:17–5:8; Phil. 1:19–23; 3:10; 2 Tim. 4:6–8; Heb. 9:27–28; 12:1–13; 2 Pet. 1:13–15; 1 Jn. 5:16–17; Rev. 14:13.

COMMENTARY

Why do believers die? If all our sins have been laid upon the Lord Jesus, and there is no condemnation whatsoever upon any believer by virtue of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to him and the imputation of his sins to Christ, then the believer's death cannot be penal (Rom. 5:1–2, 8–11; 8:1). See Questions 77 and 92. The penitent thief crucified with our Lord, without any Christian experience but a few words and final hours, was assured that he would that day be with our Lord in paradise (Lk. 23:39–43).

[It may be asked how our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, the impeccable God–Man, the only one untainted by Adam's sin, could die? His death is a witness to the reality, not only of his true humanity, but to the imputation of our sins to him. He could die, had to die, and did die for those whose sins were imputed to him in purpose of God (Rom. 3:24–26; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18), and through death destroyed him that had the power of death, the devil (Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:4–5, 8)].

If physical death for believers is not penal, then what purpose does it serve? First, death is a necessary and essential part of living in a fallen world. As believers are not exempt from the grief, sorrows, sufferings, weaknesses, opposition and violence of this fallen world, or the realities of sickness, disease and old age, so they are not exempt from the experience of dying and death. Death will remain a reality until the final resurrection and judgment; it is the final enemy to be destroyed (1 Cor. 15:26). Until then, it is an ever–present reality for both unbelievers and believers.

Second, death brings to consummation the process and our earthly experience of sanctification, which began at regeneration and conversion. We are to be faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). At the separation of the body and soul, the body, as the seat and instrument of indwelling sin and remaining corruption, will be finally laid aside (Rom. 6:6–14; 7:13–8:4; Phil. 3:20–21; 2 Pet. 2:14). The Bible never considers the body to be inherently evil [Gnosticism], but it is the instrument through which a principle of sin expresses itself. The believer's expectation is not to escape the body, but to experience its glorification (Rom. 8:22–23, 29–30; 1 Cor. 15:49–58; 2 Cor. 5:1–4; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Jn. 3:1–3).

Third, death completes our experiential union with Christ. See Question 77. The adversities and sufferings of our Christian experience, culminating in death, fit us completely for our conformity to the image of our Lord (Rom. 8:11–18, 29–30; 2 Cor. 3:17–18). As he was perfected, and exemplified a perfect obedience through his earthly sufferings and death, so God has ordained that in our earthly experience we shall likewise experience suffering and possibly death for his sake (Heb. 5:5–10; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Pet. 4:1). We must carefully note that absolutely nothing, not even death with all its possible suffering and various forms, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35–39).

Fourth, physical death is the normal means whereby believers are brought into the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with him where he is that they may behold his glory (Jn. 17:24; Acts 2:30–33; 7:55–56; 2 Cor. 5:6–8; Phil. 1:23; Heb. 1:2–3). This is in answer to the desire of his High Priestly Prayer, and thus the death of every believer is within the confines of his sovereign and loving will (Rev. 1:17–18).

Fifth, in some cases the sickness, suffering or death of a believer may be disciplinary, though never penal. It is possible for a believer to commit a sin or crime for which he must suffer the consequences as a criminal before an earthly tribunal or as a disobedient child before his Heavenly Father. Divine chastening

may result in the sickness or even the death of such a believer (1 Cor. 5:1–5; 11:30; Heb. 12:1–13; 1 Jn. 5:16–17). Only God infallibly knows the heart, mind and motive of any believer, and no one should pronounce condemnation upon any believer by intimating that sickness, disease or death is in any way penal or even in some way disciplinary. Such matters must be left with our Heavenly Father, who ever acts in love toward his own, even in chastisement and discipline.

What should the attitude of the believer be toward death? The New Testament does not dwell on the physical aspect of what suffering may characterize the experience of dying, but emphasizes the anticipation of being absent from the body and being present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1–8), a state which is "much more better" (Gk. of Phil. 1:23). Thus, if to live is Christ, then to die is gain (Phil. 1:21). For our Lord Jesus, death was an "exodus," or a going out from his suffering and shame upon the completion of his redemptive work (Lk. 9:31, the word "decease" is the Gk. "exodus"). The Apostle Peter uses the same terminology of his own death (2 Pet. 1:15). The Apostle Paul uses the term "loosen," which could be paraphrased "to pull up stakes," or take up one's tent (Phil. 1:23; 2 Tim. 4:6). This life is to be seen as temporal; the after–life with the Lord Jesus is seen as eternal (Rom. 8:17–23; 2 Cor. 4:17–18; 5:1ff; 1 Thess. 4:17; Heb. 12:1–2).

Believers sorrow at the death of fellow–believers whom they know and love because of the breaking of earthly ties and a sense of personal loss, which is natural; but such sorrow is mitigated by the hope of the future reunion with the redeemed in glory (1 Thess. 4:13–18). Unbelievers by contrast have "no hope," and thus nothing to lessen their sorrow. May we live and die in the glorious anticipation of being "forever with the Lord"!

Quest. 168: What is the intermediate state?

Ans: The intermediate or disembodied state refers to that state of the conscious existence of the soul between physical death and the resurrection.

Lk. 23:42–43. 42And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

2 Cor. 5:2–4. 2For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Phil. 1:23. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.

See aslo: Ex. 3:6; Job. 19:26–27; Matt. 22:31–32; Lk. 16:22–25; Acts 7:59–60; Rom. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:8–10; Heb. 12:22–23; Jude 6–7.

COMMENTARY

The intermediate state is the conscious, disembodied state between death and the resurrection (Lk. 16:22–28; 2 Cor. 5:1–8). It is a temporary state which will end at the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust (1 Cor. 15:51–55; Rev. 20:12–13). For believers, it is a state of blessedness in the conscious enjoyment of being with Christ (2 Cor. 5:5, 8; Phil. 1:23). When our Lord stated that God was "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," he implied that these patriarchs were only "dead" to the world of men, but were consciously alive in the presence of God (Matt. 22:31–32), as were Moses and Elijah (Lk. 9:29–33), all awaiting the resurrection of the just. See Question 169. For the wicked, the intermediate state is one of suffering and torment before the final resurrection and judgment (Lk. 16:22–28; Rev. 20:11–15; 21:8). See Question 171.

The intermediate state between death and the resurrection also involves several other issues: immortality, purgatory, limbo, annihilation, probation and soul–sleep.

The Scriptures declare that God alone is inherently immortal. He has life within himself and is the source of all life (Acts 17:24–25, 28; 1 Tim. 6:16). Human beings have a derivative immortality as the image–bearers of God (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:7; Eccl. 12:7). The biblical doctrine is not simply that of the immorality of the soul [a pagan Greek concept], but of the whole person at the resurrection unto glory (Dan. 12:2; 1 Cor. 15:51–57) or the resurrection unto judgment (Dan. 12:2; Rev. 20:5, 11–15). Thus, death does not end human existence, but ushers in the intermediate or disembodied state until the resurrection of all men. The Old Testament anticipated the full revelation of immortality in the future resurrection of the dead (Job. 19:26–27; Psa. 16:9–11; 17:15; 73:24; Dan. 12:2). The full reality of the resurrection unto life and glory is revealed in the resurrection of our Lord and in the gospel (Matt. 8:11; Lk. 24:36–43; Jn. 20:19–20, 26–28; Acts 17:18; Rom. 8:17–23; 2 Tim. 1:8–10; 1 Pet. 1:3–9).

The Romish doctrine of Purgatory, a place where individuals allegedly remain for a given time after death to atone for their sins, is a denial of the finished work of Christ. The doctrine of justification has great eschatological as well as immediate salvific implications (Jn. 5:24; Rom. 3:21–31; 5:1–2). See Questions 82 and 92. Further, this teaching is based on non–canonical Apocryphal texts. Limbo [*limbus patrum*], the alleged place of the departed souls prior to our Lord's resurrection and ascension into heaven [and *limbus infantum* in Romish dogma the alleged place for unbaptized infants], is another Romish doctrine which is not substantiated by Scripture (Eccl. 12:7; Isa. 8:20).

Annihilation is the idea that at death both body and soul cease to exist; or that the soul ceases to exist after the final judgment [the denial of eternal punishment, the idea of conditional immortality]. The Scripture affirms the continued existence of the soul after death and also the reality of the resurrection of the dead—both righteous and wicked (2 Sam. 12:13–23; Job

19:26–27; Dan. 12:2; Matt. 22:31–32; Lk. 9:29–33; 16:22–25; Rom. 8:11–23, 29–31; 1 Cor. 15:51–57; 2 Cor. 5:1–8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 20:1–7, 11–15). The Heb. word *Sheol* (Deut. 32:22) and the Gk. word *Hades* (Matt. 16:23), referring to the unseen world of the dead or place of departed spirits, and often translated either "hell" or "grave" as a resting place for the body, have been erroneously used to teach annihilation, as though all comes to an end in the grave (1 Sam. 28:7–19; Hos. 13:14; Amos 9:2). The terms *Tophet* and *Gehenna* denote a literal place of fire in the valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem, which the Scripture figuratively portrays as a place of unending hell fire and torment (Isa. 30:33; Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mk. 9:43–49). The fallen angels, as spiritual beings, were cast into *Tartarus*, equivalent to *Gehenna* (2 Pet. 2:4). The coherence of Scripture stands against the idea of annihilation.

Some hold that the intermediate state is a time of probation and a "second chance" for those who die apart from the gospel and repentance, an erroneous interpretation of 1 Pet. 3:19. The Scriptures affirm that death seals the state of the individual forever; the actions of one's earthly life and spiritual state determine one's destiny (Lk. 13 4–5; 16:22–26; Jn. 8:21; Heb. 9:27–28; Rev. 22:11).

Soul–sleep is the idea that the soul is unconscious between physical death and the resurrection. While the death of the believer is often euphemized as "sleep" (1 Cor. 11:30; 1 Thess. 4:13–17), the Scriptures bear abundant testimony to the consciousness of believers and unbelievers in the intermediate state (Matt. 22:31–32; Lk. 16:22–25; 1 Cor. 15:51–57; 2 Cor. 5:1–8; Phil. 1:23).

Quest. 169: What is the resurrection of the righteous?

Ans: The resurrection of the righteous is the first resurrection or the resurrection unto life, at the second advent of our Lord, in which the redeemed shall be raised incorruptible with their glorified bodies.

Lk. 14:14. …thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Jn. 5:29. And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life…

Rom. 8:23. …ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

Rom. 8:30. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

Titus 2:13. Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Rev. 20:6. Blessed and holy *is* he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

See also: Dan. 12:2; Matt. 22:23–30; 27:50–53; Lk. 20:34–38; Jn. 5:28–29; 6:39, 44; Acts 2:24, 32; 13:33–34; 23:6; 24:15; Rom. 1:1–4; 8:11, 22–23, 29–30; 1 Cor. 15:12–26, 35–58; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Heb. 6:2; 1 Jn. 3:2; Rev. 20:5–6.

COMMENTARY

The resurrection of the righteous or just is termed the "first resurrection," and "the resurrection unto life." This resurrection will occur at the Second Advent of our Lord (Titus 2:13). The physical bodies of all believers will then be glorified, and made like that of our Lord (Dan. 12:2–3; Matt. 13:43; Rom. 8:11, 17–23; 1 Cor. 15:35–58; 2 Cor. 5:1–8; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 1 Jn. 3:2). The physical limitations, with the indwelling sin and remaining corruption, having passed away at death, will be forever gone. The bodies will be recognizable but "glorified," i.e., not limited, but raised to their highest potential as partaking of Christ's glory (See previous Scriptures, and also: Rom. 8:30; 1 Thess. 2:12; Heb. 2:10–11; 1 Pet. 5:1, 4). The conformity to our Lord's image will then be complete (Rom. 8:29).

Will believers face judgment? The Scripture declares that the regenerate and justified state of the believer has been forever settled. No believer shall be condemned or lose his justified standing before God (Jn. 5:24; Rom. 5:1–2; 8:1). At the Judgment Seat of Christ, he will evidently have to answer for sins committed as a believer and receive or lose his rewards for his faithfulness or unfaithfulness (Rom. 14:10–12; 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:9–10; Col. 3:23–25), but the joy of the presence of the Lord and the glorified state in eternity will not be mitigated.

If taken literally, this first resurrection will occur before the millennial reign of our Lord (Rev. 20:1–6). See Question 170. At the end of the millennium, there will be a second resurrection, that of the wicked, and then the final judgment of the wicked (Rev. 20:11–15; 21:8). See Question 171. The Old Testament anticipated the resurrection of all men, but did not distinguish the two resurrections as to time (Dan. 12:2). Much of the New Testament, mentioning the resurrections together does not distinguish any temporal distinction (e.g., Jn. 5:28–29; Acts 24:15). Rev. 20:1–7, however, distinguishes two resurrections as to both participants and time. This is certainly definitive if the "resurrection of the dead" [Gk. *ek nekrōn*] is to be translated as "from among [the] dead" (Acts 4:2, etc.).

This, then, is the glorious anticipation of true believers! We shall be fully transformed in body and soul, and our redemption will be complete, "and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:17–18). Will you be in the resurrection unto life?

Quest. 170: What are the three major views concerning the millennium?

Ans: The three major views of the millennium are Premillennialism, Postmillennialism and Amillennialism.

> **Rev. 20:1–3.** [1]And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. [2]And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, [3]And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.
>
> **See also:** 1 Cor. 15:20–28; 1 Thess. 4:13–5:4; Rev. 20:1–15.

COMMENTARY

The term "millennium" is the Latin for the Gk. *Chilia*, which means "thousand," and refers to the thousand years in which Satan is to be bound and the saints are to reign upon the earth, after which Satan is to be loosed for a short time before the final judgment (Rev. 20:1–15).

The differing views of the millennium are concerned with the *parousia* ["coming," Matt. 24:27, 37, 39], *epiphaneia* ["appearing," 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13], or visible return [Second Advent] of our Lord in relation to the thousand years, and also with the nature of the millennium itself. Premillennialism: our Lord will return *before* the millennium; Postmillennialism: our Lord will return *after* the millennium; Amillennialism: the millennium is to be *interpreted figuratively, symbolically or spiritually* as an indefinite period of time presently being fulfilled.

These various views depend upon one's *exegesis* [reading of the text] and *hermeneutic* [method of the interpretation or the meaning of the text], and pointedly, the interpretation of prophecy. This is especially determining of one's understanding of the Books of Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and Revelation as being, in their apocalyptic passages, either historical, prophetic or symbolic. The major issue in interpretation is, should the New Testament be brought into conformity to the literalism of the Old Testament, or should the Old Testament be interpreted and understood in the light of the New? Dispensational theology makes the Old Testament determinative in interpretation and non–Dispensational theology makes the New Testament determinative and explanatory of the Old. Further, non–Dispensational theology holds that Jesus Christ is presently reigning over the universe as Lord; Dispensational theology teaches that he will not reign as Lord and Messianic King until the millennial kingdom (Psa. 110:1ff; Acts 2:24–36; 1 Cor. 15:24–28; Phil. 2:5–11; Col. 1:13–17; Heb. 1:1–4; Rev. 3:21).

Each millennial view holds to a distinctly different kind of millennium. Dispensational Premillennialism holds to a cataclysmic series of events [a time of increasing apostasy, the Rapture, the first resurrection, the Judgment Seat of Christ, the Great Tribulation, the Second Advent, or Christ's visible coming in

glory] inaugurating an earthly millennium. Postmillennialism has traditionally envisioned either the gradual success of the gospel, or a Latter–Day Glory—a time of unparalleled revival just before the end of this gospel age. Amillennialism holds that the millennium is spiritual and refers to the present reign of Christ ordering all events until the final, general resurrection and judgment.

Premillennialism teaches that the time–frame and events of Rev. 20:1–7 are to be taken literally, and holds that the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth and personally reign for a thousand years, after which the final defeat of Satan and the final judgment will occur. There have been three diverse views within the premillennarian position: first, *Chiliasm*, an early form of premillennialism, which divided history into seven periods of one thousand years each, the final thousand years [the millennium] being the "Sabbath" of world history. This view was widely held in early Christianity. Second, historic premillennialism, which holds that the second advent will be attended by the first resurrection and usher in the millennial reign of our Lord. Historic premillennialism further teaches that there remains a distinction between national Israel and Christians, but that all the true people of God, whether Jewish or Gentile, comprise the true, spiritual Israel. Third, Dispensational Premillennialism. [It must be carefully noted that Dispensationalism is an inclusive hermeneutic and not simply an eschatological view. It is a hermeneutical approach to Scripture which is relatively recent]. It is this last view which is presently pervasive in Fundamentalist and Evangelical Christianity. Its hermeneutic is essentially a strict Old Testament literalism to which the New Testament is made to conform. The "Church" is thought to be a parenthesis in God's dealings with national Israel, and the two are considered distinct and separate throughout redemptive history. The millennium, although the personal reign of our Lord, will be characterized by an earthly kingdom centered in Jerusalem, a return to an Old Testament genre, including animal sacrifices and a Jewish Temple. Among Dispensational premillennarians there is further disagreement pertaining to a pre–Tribulation, mid–Tribulation or post–Tribulation Rapture, or the various "phases" of our Lord's Second Advent.

Postmillennialism generally holds that the Second Advent of our Lord will occur after the millennium. A literal thousand years is often relegated to a more indefinite length of time. Again, there are various divergent views within the postmillennial concept. Some have held that this is a general, pervasive advance of the kingdom of God among men throughout the world, culminating in the ultimate victory of the gospel in the present economy. Others have envisioned an age of the Spirit, when God will work mightily before the end of time. Some have held to a "Latter–Day Glory," or an unparalleled time of revival and spiritual awakening, usually coinciding with the conversion of national Israel (Rom. 11), which they keep generally distinct from Christians who comprise "spiritual Israel." A recent view is that of Reconstructional Postmillennialism, which anticipates the reconstruction of a Christianized society after the Tribulation. A final view, strangely associated with postmillennialism, is that of Secular Humanism, which posits the evolutionary advance of mankind

through science and sociological transformation—the philosophy of Social Darwinism and the "Social Gospel."

Amillennialism holds that the Book of Revelation is essentially symbolic and thus a book of figurative language and signs. In general, this view teaches that the millennium referred to in Revelation 20 is a symbolic number, and thus spiritual rather than literal, referring to either "The Age of the Church" or to the present reign of the Lord Jesus Christ over this world (1 Cor. 15:20–28; Col. 1:12–20). Satan is seen as having been bound at the cross, and the subsequent success of the gospel is seen as a manifestation that he no longer deceives the nations. The first resurrection is thought to be spiritual rather than literal. The Second Advent will usher in the general resurrection, the final judgment and the eternal state. In contrast to Dispensational Premillennialism, Amillennialism holds that "the Church" is now "spiritual Israel". The covenant promises and prophecies referring to national Israel are now fulfilled spiritually in the "Church," which is composed of both a continuing converted Jewish remnant and Gentile believers.

Great and godly men, even the greatest conservative and orthodox biblical scholars, have held to each of these eschatological positions and to divergences within these positions, and not all can be correct, either in general or as to specifics. No one human being, it seems, has all the truth. There is more divergence in eschatology than in any other area of biblical doctrine.

What should be learned from the previous discussion? First, we must be thoroughly and consistently biblical in our thinking. Our reading of the text must be careful and our interpretation of the text must be consistent with biblically self–consistent principles of interpretation. Cf. the "analogy of faith" [the total, self–consistent teaching of the Word of God as it bears upon any one given aspect of Divine truth; the perspicuity of Scripture, or "Scripture interprets Scripture"]. See Question 14. According to the principle of progressive revelation [that God progressively reveals more of himself and his redemptive purpose as Scripture progresses, especially from the Old Testament into the New], the Old Testament should be interpreted in the light and fuller revelation of the New (Cf. Heb. 10:1).

Second, we must interpret Scripture literally ["literal" may have broad application] unless there is a necessity to take things figuratively or symbolically. The Scriptures must have their primary place in our study and thinking, not the works of men. We ought to strive after a general and comprehensive knowledge of Scripture as a basis on which to deal with specifics, and seek the mind of the Spirit through prayer for understanding (1 Jn. 2:20, 27).

Third, we must always be ready and willing to learn and to modify our views if necessary. As spiritual maturity is not reached at once, so it is with our knowledge of the Scriptures and their doctrinal teaching (2 Pet. 3:18).

Fourth, we must live in the immediate context of our eschatological presuppositions and anticipation. The Lord may return at any moment—and

our eschatological thinking might be flawed. As creatures of time in the uncertainties of this present, earthly life, we have but today. No view of eschatology ought to lead to indolence or procrastination. We are to be zealous in the things of God and live in obedience to his Word.

Finally, we must take care not to be overly influenced by external and temporal issues. Every eschatological view has either waned or flourished in relation to the natural, theological, historical, political, social or religious situation. Times of great natural disasters, political upheavals and wars or times of great peace, theological disputes, and great eras of revivals or times of great spiritual decline and apostasy, have all had their strong influence on the views of many—but such have passed away, either to the disappointment or relief of their prognosticators. [The author, according to the previous principles mentioned, holds to a historic premillennial position].

Quest. 171: What is the resurrection unto judgment?

Ans: The resurrection unto judgment is the resurrection of the wicked to final judgment according to their works and eternal punishment for their sins.

Dan. 12:2. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

Jn. 5:28–29. [28]Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, [29]And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Rom. 2:5–6. [5]But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; [6]Who will render to every man according to his deeds.

Rev. 20:12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

See also: Psa. 9:16–17; Isa. 45:23; Matt. 5:22; 8:12; 12:36–37; 13:36–42, 49–50; 18:9; 22:13; 24:51; 25:31–46, 46; Lk. 12:4–5; Jn. 12:48; Acts 17:30–31; 24:24–25; Rom. 2:3, 8–9; Phil. 2:9–11; 1 Thess. 1:2–3; 2 Thess. 1:7–9; Heb. 6:2; 12:25–29; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 7, 13; Rev. 14:9–11; 20:11–15; 21:8.

COMMENTARY

Death does not end it all. The conscious torments of hell immediately follow the death of the ungodly as certainly as the conscious, blessed presence of the Lord follows the death of the believer (Matt. 22:31–32; Lk. 16:22–25; 2 Cor. 5:6–8). The "resurrection of damnation" and final judgment then necessarily follow (Jn. 5:28–29; Heb. 9:27). The unrighteous or unconverted

shall be raised from the dead to stand before the eternal Son of God to be finally and fully judged.

The justice of God and his righteous character necessitate a final Day of Judgment for the ungodly and impenitent (Gen. 18:25; Heb. 9:28). The nature of man as an intelligent, morally–responsible being, created in God's image, demands it (Eccl. 3:16–17). Evil is not always punished nor is good always rewarded in this life, and thus there is a sense of inequity about this reality inherent among mankind—although most men would not think in terms of a final Day of Judgment, and would fain believe themselves exempt! The very idea that the world is fraught with injustice and inequity, and that such a condition aggravates most mankind, ought to cause everyone to consider the awful reality of the final Day of Judgment!

This judgment will be according to the absolute justice of God; there will be no grace or mercy here—only Divine justice meted out to every unconverted person according to his or her works and just desserts (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:12–13). This will be a searching judgment by the omniscient Son of God, reaching into the analysis of every motive or inclination which has expressed itself in every word ever having been spoken (Psa. 139:1–4; Prov. 4:23; Eccl. 12:13–14; Matt. 12:36–37; 1 Jn. 3:15). Nothing shall be left undone. This will be a forensic, or absolutely righteous judgment according to law—the revealed will of God—the absolute standard of his righteousness, which shall condemn as guilty every unconverted human being according to his works (Rom. 2:11–16; 3:20–21; Rev. 20:12–13). The judge will be the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, to whom all power has been given (Matt. 25:31–32; 28:18; Jn. 5:22, 25–27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Phil. 2:9–11; 2 Tim. 4:1). He shall sit as the Mediator, the absolute sovereign Lord and King of this universe. It is in this office that he will be the final judge of men. See Question 75. There will be degrees of punishment for unbelievers, as there will be degrees of reward for believers (Matt. 11:21–26; Rom. 2:11–16). See Question 169. This will be the final judgment. There will be no "Court of Appeal." After this judgment, "death and hell shall be cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev. 20:14–15; 21:8).

Such a scene ought to fill every unconverted person with an awful sense of dread. The face of the Sovereign Judge, the glorified Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all judgment has been committed, will be so fearsome that "the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them" (Rev. 20:11). "The dead, small and great," those who remained impenitent and rebellious in their earthly lives, shall all be utterly and eternally condemned. Pilate, before whom our Lord once stood will stand before him condemned, as will the priests and leaders who gave him up to be crucified. Criminals of every type will be there. The lawless and profane will be there. Politicians, presidents, kings, conquerors, generals, dictators, philosophers, scientists, medical doctors, educators, philanthropists—the great men of the earth—will be there, raised from the dead and torments of hell, to stand in final judgment and be utterly condemned forever for their personal sins and according to their station in their earthly lives. Popes, priests, unconverted ministers and many religious leaders

will stand before the Son of God condemned (Matt. 7:21–23). So will stand before the awful face of the Sovereign Lord and Judge the little people of the earth, the insignificant, the poor, the heathen, the outcasts—all condemned by their own works and devoid of the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus received by faith. Such reality ought to lead believers to a renewed, intense sense of gratitude for the free and sovereign grace of God which saves them from themselves and their sin, to a renewed determination to live in obedience to God's inscripturated Word, and to a renewed sense of urgency in the promulgation of the gospel (1 Tim. 1:15). Why do you believe that you will *not* be at this awful judgment unto condemnation?

Quest. 172: What do the Scriptures teach about the eternal state?

Ans: The eternal state of the wicked will be one of everlasting punishment. The eternal state of the righteous will be one of everlasting joy, forever with the Lord in the new heavens and the new earth.

Rev. 20:14–15. 14And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

2 Pet. 3:13. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

See also: Psa. 102:25–27; Isa. 65:17; 66:22; Dan. 12:2–3; Matt. 3:12; 5:5; 8:11–12; 13:41–43, 49–50; 18:8–9; 19:27–30; 25:46; Mk. 9:42–49; Lk. 3:17; Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:19–21; 2 Thess. 1:7–10; Heb. 1:8–12; 12:26–28; Rev. 14:9–11; 20:11–5; 21:1–5, 8.

COMMENTARY

Some revealed truths are joyous; others are exceedingly solemn. The truth concerning the eternal state is both. The incapacity of our finite minds to comprehend the eternal state, either of judgment or of bliss, should never cause us to refrain from its contemplation. It is an essential part of Scripture in general and prophecy in particular.

The eternal state of the unsaved is a horrible reality. We should shudder when reading the scriptural truth concerning eternal punishment or even thinking about it! Sin against an infinite Being necessitates an infinite penalty. Herein resides the awful reality of an eternal hell. It is the place of exclusion from all that is holy, righteous, good, blessed, restful and joyful. It is a place of unmitigated torment and eternal suffering. In this place will be the devil, the fallen angels and all unbelievers who die in their sins. The reality of eternal bliss, by Divine revelation and by contrast, is inexpressibly glorious! Even the anticipation of such reality ought to fill the mind and soul with inexpressible glory. "Wherein ye greatly rejoice….with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls" (1 Pet. 6, 9).

The eternal state of renewed creation "wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13) will be the complete restoration of the universe from the curse, effects

and the very presence of sin. The righteous will be finally and fully conformed to the image of God's Son; their redemption will be complete. Creation itself shall be liberated from the burden placed upon it because of the reality and effects of the Fall. Redeemed mankind will be glorified forever (Rom. 8:18–23). The wicked will be excluded in eternal torment, and the righteous will inhabit the new creation (Rev. 21–22). "Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed *is* death" (1 Cor. 15:24–26). What is your anticipation? Do you have confidence through the Word of God that your hope of eternal salvation rests in the Lord Jesus Christ alone?