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- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

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Finally, brethren
WHATEVER THINGS are true
 are noble
 are just
 are pure
 are lovely
 are of good report
 IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

Question From Sierra Leone about a Commentary

Question

Recently a man of God donated/borrow a bible commentary to our men bible study groups and claim that the bible commentary contains the undiluted word of God and God will be very honored when we use it for bible study!

So, I am copying the first two introductory pages from this bible commentary for you to help us look through if carefully, if truly this bible commentary contains God's word and if it in line with the Bible?????

So please kindly help us go through it and give us a feedback on what is written there ??????

You'll never know what a blessing you will be to the people of God if you can help us out with ANSWERS to this very important questions seekign answers

Thankful to you. God bless you"

Answer

I am honored I am honored that you sent your question to me. I will try to provide a true, scriptural answer.

No commentary written by uninspired men is infallibly true. Only the Scriptures, the Bible, are inspired, "God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Commentaries written by scholars may help us understand the Bible,

or they may lead us astray. Be as the Bereans, Search the Scriptures daily to find out if these things are so (Acts 17:10-12).

If I could know who published and who wrote the commentary, it will tell something about their perspective or bias. Denominations and sects use commentaries to promote false doctrine.

I am not impressed with what the commentary says about the Bible and Science. Some of it is true; some is very questionable. No, the Bible is not a science book, but what it says about natural things, the realm of science, is true. The same God, who speaks only truth (John 17:17), and who gave us the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17), also created the universe (Genesis 1:1).

There is absolutely no doubt Moses wrote the Pentateuch, the Law, the first five books of the Bible. The Son of God repeatedly attributed the Law to Moses (Matthew 8:4; 19:8; Mark 1:44; 7:10; 12:26; Luke 5:14; 20:37; 24:44; John 5:45-46; 7:19, 23).

What You Need To Know About Baptism

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

"Baptize" in its various forms is an important Bible word, as it is used some 60 times. While the Bible is clear as to its meaning and practice, there is much confusion in the denominational world as to its form and intent. Since the Bible is God's revealed Word, and thus is not a book of confusion, let us examine what God's Word says about baptism, that we may know and follow God's instructions, rather than the confusing and contradicting doctrines of men. "for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." (1 Corinthians 14:33)

First, consider briefly the conflicting teachings of various denominations.

1. The Baptist church baptizes only those who are able to understand what is happening, but Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, etc. baptize babies, who have no idea of what's happening. And I am told that some baptize those who are dead.
2. Some denominations baptize with a view to forgiveness of sins and church membership. Others, such as Baptists, take a vote to receive members into the church, as stated in Hiscox **Standard Manual for Baptist Churches** (page 16). Other churches obviously just "shake hands" to receive converts, as they neither baptize nor vote.
3. Baptism is administered in different ways. One church baptizes by sprinkling rose petals, while other churches practice baptism by sprinkling water on the head, pouring water on the head, and some baptize by an immersion in water.
4. Then there are those that do not practice baptism in any form. These would include the Salvation Army and the Christian Science Church.

So, do you agree that the foregoing information is confusing? Is this what God wants? Obviously not, as we noted in Paul's letter to the church at Corinth—"God is not a God of confusion..."

Now let's consider what the Bible, God's Word, says about baptism.

1. **It is for those old enough to understand.** "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). In the church's beginning, the crowd was told to "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Note also that when the Ethiopian eunuch asked to be baptized, "And Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.'" And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). Have you ever heard a baby ask about being baptized?

Question: How does a baby believe and repent? And how does a dead person do this?

2. **How does one become united with Christ, a member of His body?** The apostle Paul answers this. Consider Galatians 3:27; “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” Then in Colossians 1:24: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions.”

Question: If we are “baptized into Christ” how can those who are members of denominations that do not practice baptism claim that they are “in Christ?”

3. **The New Testament was written in the language of the day.** Any Greek dictionary will give the definition of the word baptizo—“from a derivative of 911; to immerse, submerge; to make whelmed (i.e. fully wet); used only (in the New Testament) of ceremonial ablution, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian baptism.” (Strong’s Greek Dictionary)

Question: Where is the Biblical authority for churches to practice sprinkling, pouring, or sprinkling rose petals, as I have heard practiced by a church in Oklahoma? If we can change the form, why not be able to change the motion? It was hundreds of years after the church was established in the first century (Acts 2) that the Church of England took a vote to rule out “the devil of immersion, because it was so inconvenient.” So they sprinkled.

4. When Satan was tempting Christ, after one of the temptations, Christ replied, “But He answered and said, “It is written, **‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God’**” (Matthew 4:4).

What does “every word” mean? That means we are not free to pick and choose what we want to obey and what we want to disregard. What a presumption for anyone to think that he can decide which of God’s commands are insignificant, and therefore we do not need to obey them.

Note what the Scriptures say about the Day of Judgment which is coming:

“And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds” (Revelation 20:12).

Now note the closing words of the book of Revelation:

“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19).

Question: When you stand before God on the Judgment Day, and you are asked, “Why did you not follow the Word I left to guide you,” what will your answer be?

The best answer you can honestly give would be, “Satan deceived me.”

Consider the words of the song “What Will Your Answer Be?”

*“Someday you’ll stand at the bar on high,
Someday your record you’ll see;
Someday you’ll answer the question of life,
What will your answer be?*

*Sadly you’ll stand if you’re unprepared,
Trembling you’ll fall on your knee;
Facing the sentence of life or of death,*

What will that sentence be?

*Now is the time to prepare, my friend,
Make you soul spotless and free.
Washed in the blood of the crucified One,
He will your answer be.*

*What will it be? What will it be?
Where will you spend your eternity?
What will it be? What will it be?
What will your answer be? (Tiillit S. Teddlie)*

Did Deuteronomy 24:1ff Really Allow Divorce? (which translation gets it right?)

Patrick Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

The **KJV** of Deuteronomy 24:1-2 says,

“When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement. (Matthew 5:31 obviously quotes this last part, ptd), and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.”

The way that reads, it sounds like the Old Testament gave a man permission to divorce his wife for “some uncleanness,” and permission for that put away woman to remarry. But the **NASB** translation of such doesn't necessarily imply the same. Here's how that version reads:

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife.”

That doesn't sound so much like permission is being granted, but just - what if such and such happens? - without actually giving permission.

Which translation gets it right? Is there a way to tell? Thankfully there is, because Jesus refers to this passage and makes it clear permission for the divorce was being granted therein. The Pharisees asked Jesus in Matthew 19:7 “Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?” Jesus responded in the next verse “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.” So Jesus, when commenting upon Deuteronomy 24:1, said (the law of) Moses was allowing divorce – which fits the **KJV** way of translating the verse (not the **NASB** way). And Jesus calls this same allowance a written “precept” of Moses in Mark 10:4-5.

Repeating in a more concise way: Some gospel preachers say Deuteronomy 24:1ff did not allow a man to divorce his wife for uncleanness, but Jesus says it did. Notice how Jesus asserted such in Matthew 19:8 – “Moses ... permitted (allowed, **ESV**) you to divorce your wives” (**NKJV**). And Jesus declared the same thing in Mark 10:5 when he said Moses “wrote you this precept,” the precept that “Moses suffered (permitted, **NKJV**) to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away” (verse 4).

What is the point Jesus is making in Matthew 19:8-9 (and in Matthew 5:31-32)? That the law of Moses allowed divorce for uncleanness (something short of fornication), but from the beginning it was not so. And Jesus is putting it back to the way it was in the beginning in His New Testament law – no divorce “except it be for fornication.”

A Saint

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

MSN had an article, which at the time was my home page on my computer, with this quote:

"During an event Thursday to mark his 79th birthday, Pope Francis attributed a second miracle to Mother Teresa, the late Roman Catholic missionary who has become an international icon for her charitable work. It's an important move, effectively paving the way for the nun to become a saint, the highest honor bestowed by the Roman Catholic Church."

For a Catholic to become a saint they must first of all be dead, must have two miracles attributed to them, and then the pope must consider the evidence and render his decision if such is true, etc. Yet what does the Bible teach about being a saint?

The word "saint" is used approximately 97 times in the Scriptures. W.E. Vine, in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, defines the word as:

"fundamentally signifies separated (among the Greeks, dedicated to the gods), and hence, in Scripture in its moral and spiritual significance, separated from sin and therefore consecrated to God, sacred" (p. 566).

He further says, "In the plural, as used of believers, it designates all such and is not applied merely to persons of exceptional holiness, or to those who, having died, were characterized by exceptional acts of saintliness" (ibid, p. 997).

Paul said, in writing his first epistle to the Corinthians:

"To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2).

Obviously, those to whom this great apostle wrote were not dead and yet they were said to be saints. In Acts 18:8, information is provided to us of exactly how they became sanctified or set apart for the Lord. Notice what Luke says by inspiration, "Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized." Nothing is said about performing even one miracle much less two. No such requirement is stated anywhere in the pages of the Bible.

Want to be a saint? You don't need to be dead (physically), nor are you required to perform some miracle, and certainly you don't have to receive approval of some man. Believe the good news about Jesus Christ (the gospel), repent of your sins, confess your faith in the Lord, and be baptized in water for the remission of your sins (John 8:24; Luke 13:3,5; Romans 10:9-10; Mark 16:16). By obeying the truth, you will become sanctified in Christ Jesus (John 17:17).

Standing Before Balaam & Joshua

CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

William Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

STANDING BEFORE BALAAM

In Numbers 22, Balak (king of Moab) sent messengers to Balaam (a prophet of God) asking him to curse the people of Israel, for they had settled near him and were too mighty for him (v 5-6). Balaam inquired of the LORD and was told that he should not go with Balak's men, nor should he curse the people, for they were blessed (Numbers 22:12; cf. Genesis 12:3).

Balak sent men a second time to ask Balaam to come (Numbers 22:15). Again, Balaam said he would inquire of the LORD. God had already given an answer! We should learn from Balaam to accept what God has said and not to seek something new or different. This second time, the LORD told Balaam to go,

however the events that followed reveal His answer was still "No." God would use this as an opportunity to teach Balaam.

On his journey to Moab, Balaam's donkey seemed ornery - she wandered off the road, crushed his foot against a wall, and eventually just laid down under him. She saw what the prophet did not - the Angel of the LORD stood in the way with His sword drawn (Numbers 22:21-27). She saved his life, but he was oblivious. He struck her in anger, and even after she spoke to him (v 28), the clueless prophet said if he had a sword he'd kill her. It was at this point Balaam's eyes were opened and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing before him with His sword drawn (Numbers 22:31). The LORD rebuked Balaam (v 32) and revealed his donkey had saved his life (v 33). Balaam offered to turn back, if it pleased the LORD, but rather, the LORD told him to go, "...but only the word that I speak to you, that you shall speak" (v 35). Balaam would go to Balak, and each time he was asked to curse the people of Israel, he would listen to the LORD and bless them.

We have seen references to the Angel of the LORD previously which indicate this is not merely "an angel," but is the LORD Himself coming to interact with mankind (with Hagar in Genesis 16; with Abraham in Genesis 22; with Moses in Exodus 3).

STANDING BEFORE JOSHUA

After the death of Moses, Joshua became the leader of Israel. He would take them to the land promised by God. Several times, Joshua was told to "be strong and of good courage" (Deuteronomy 31:7, 23; Joshua 1:6-9, 18).

After Joshua had circumcised all the people and the final preparations were being made for them to go into the land to conquer it, on a given day, Joshua was by Jericho, and saw a Man standing opposite him. Notice the text:

And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, 'Are You for us or for our adversaries?' So He said, 'No, but as Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.' And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, 'What does my Lord say to His servant?' Then the Commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, 'Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.' And Joshua did so. (Joshua 5:13-15)

Though Joshua was the commander of the armies of Israel, he acknowledged the position truly belonged to the One who stood before him. This was not just a Man, this was the LORD. In response to this wonderful event, Joshua bowed to the ground and worshiped. If this were just an angel or a man, he would have surely been corrected. But, he wasn't. It was appropriate to worship the Commander of the army of the LORD, for it was the LORD.

The statement, "...the place where you stand is holy..." is like that which was said to Moses when the LORD appeared to him in the midst of a burning bush. Moses was told, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). What made the ground before Moses and afterward before Joshua holy? They both stood before the LORD God.

We have yet another case of the LORD appearing to a man. It was not the Father nor was it the Spirit of God - this was the pre-incarnate Christ; worthy of worship and with authority to command all Israel.

TAKEAWAY POINTS

Balaam saw the Angel of the LORD who had authority to execute the renegade prophet, but also authority to send him on his way to Moab and to instruct him on what he should say. This was not just an angel - this was the Angel of the LORD - the pre-incarnate Christ.

Joshua was ready to engage the Canaanite people in battle as the new leader of Israel. The appearance of

the Commander of the Army of Israel was a reminder that God was in charge, not Joshua. The battle is the LORD's, not man's. What a comforting thought!

That Joshua worshipped the One who appeared to him (without being corrected) reveals this could not be a man or an angel, but was the LORD, for only God is worthy of worship.

How Can They Hear Without a Preacher?

Chizuru Lowell Odoemelam | Umuahia, Abia State, Nigeria

God wants to reach everyone in the world. And how is He going to reach all those people to hear about His love, about Jesus' life, death and resurrection, if no one went and preached to them? "How then are they to call on Him in whom they have not believed? How are they to believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14)

Preaching of the Word of God to is the most important function of the church. Preaching the truth of the Word of God is imperative in building a church and a congregation. We are all sinners according to the Scriptures. There is a penalty for our sins, which is eternal damnation in the fires of Hell. But God in His great love and mercy sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ into the world, to go to the cross and suffer, bleed and die for our sins. Jesus paid it all! Christ died, He was buried and He raised up miraculously three days later. That is **the gospel** by which we are saved, if we believe. If any person will acknowledge their debt of sin, and receive Christ's sacrifice as full payment for their sins, by giving themselves to water baptism, salvation is realized.

First Corinthians 1:21 says, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." The truth is that the preaching of the Gospel is as foolishness to this sinful world. God's chosen method for bringing lost sinners to Jesus Christ to be saved is through the foolishness of preaching.

Many Christians will one day in the presence of God have the blood of many countless lost sinners on their hands, because they never shared the saving gospel of Jesus Christ with them.... It is very important for the gospel of Christ to be preached. Paul in the book of 2nd Corinthians 4:3 and 1st Corinthians 9:16 stated:

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost ... For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

In Romans 10:15 God calls the feet of those that preaches the gospel of Christ "beautiful." Do you know why God said "feet" and not lips or tongue? It's because the most eloquent tongue and greatest words of wisdom are totally worthless if the feet are too lazy to go and preach as the Bible commands in Matthew 28:19, "**Go Ye ...**"

The Gospel Message

First Corinthians 15:1-4 plainly defines **the gospel** as Jesus' **Death, Burial and Resurrection** three days later. Leave out those elements and you have a false plan of salvation. The cross upon which Christ died must be included, where Jesus' precious blood was shed for our sins. The Bible teaches that God chose preaching as the vehicle by which to bring men to Jesus Christ to get people saved.

Men have devised many means of preaching Christ which is not in accordance with the pattern of God - playing mechanical instruments of music, dancing, etc., but the question is will the end justify the means? Of course, No Dancing is not what God chose! Converts is not what God chose! Crusades are not what God chose! God chose Preaching the Gospel Message! If there's no preaching, there's no conversions.

God does **not** save people through music. He cannot, for it is the seed of the Word of God by which men are born-again. First Peter 1:23: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Without the seed of the Word of God there can be no new birth.

The Word of God must be preached, which is God's choice! Please understand this!

Proverb 11:30, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Jesus plainly taught that except a man be born-again, he CANNOT enter into the kingdom of God. So we need to go and preach in order to bring souls to Christ and save their souls eternally.

From Godly Fear to Protestant Error

(A Review of **From Fear to Faith**) Part 1

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Brother Matthew Allen has authored a work book/study for Christians entitled **From Fear to Faith**. I am prejudiced in favor of Brother Allen because "He is a native of Malvern, Arkansas and an avid Razorback fan" (back cover). Woo, Pig! Sooi!

Brother Allen is a lucid writer and deals with Scripture rather than entertaining stories. He has done comprehensive biblical research and has extensive endnotes at the conclusion.

Agreements

Near the beginning of the book he specifically disavows Calvinism, "primarily because it denies the freewill of mankind" (5). That is very good (Joshua 24:15; Revelation 22:17, **KJV, ASV**).

He states, "In **From Fear to Faith**, it is my desire to conduct an in-depth study on the assurance of our salvation" (9). That is indeed a vital topic

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" (cf. 1 John 5:13).

He has given me incentive to preach more on this than I have in recent years.

I particularly like his statement, "Grace is not licence to sin! It is our motivation not to sin!" (8) Amen! (cf. Titus 2:11-12).

Is Sin Inevitable?

Brother Allen states: "We can resolve never to sin again. This mentality is a setup for failure. Even though we must try, avoiding sin completely is impossible. See 1 John 1:8." First John 1:8 states, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). John does not mean we are presently guilty of sin, for he writes, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Nor does he teach future sin is inevitable, for he then declares, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). The future in regard to sin don't but if.

So what does the apostle mean when he writes that we have sin? "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us" (1 John 1 :10). Sin is an undeniable part of our past. Just as the apostle Paul declared, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Your past and mind contain sin, thus, on the basis of sinless perfection, we will always "fall short of the (moral - KS) glory of God." We will never earn heaven. When brethren invent a problem unknown to Scripture, they have to manufacture unscriptural solutions.

Salvation without Repentance?

The author writes:

"Looking back at your life you may see shortcomings and sins that you committed previously that you only now have come to recognize with growth and maturity in Christ. Does this mean you were not saved then?"

First, not all shortcomings are sin. We need to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" so we don't "fall from" our "own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked" (2 Peter 3:17-18). But no Scripture promises that Christians are forgiven of sins of ignorance without coming to a knowledge of them, repenting of them, and praying for forgiveness. Simon was a babe in Christ who sinned one time through ignorance and weakness (Acts 8:5-24). Peter rebuked him, "thou art in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:23, **KJV**), and commanded him, "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you" (Acts 8:22).

Time to see our sins and repent is a blessing from God. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

My confidence in my salvation is not based on automatic cleansing devoid of true repentance but on faith in the promises of God. "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matthew 7:7-8). "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Help from the Spirit?

Brother Allen writes: "Through the Spirit, He constantly offers His help as we navigate through life - and learn more about Him." I would like to know how the Spirit operates toward us in any way except through the Word He revealed (1 Corinthians 2:9-13; cf. Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16).

Forgive Ourselves?

The author states, "When God forgives us, we must forgive ourselves." He gave no Scripture, and I don't know what it means. I didn't sin against myself unless I committed fornication, which is the only sin against the body (1 Corinthians 6:18), and, thanks be to God, I haven't done that. I can't forgive myself, if I haven't sinned against myself. That's nonsensical, unscriptural language. I can and should have the faith to accept the divine promise that God has forgiven me (1 John 1:9). We should rejoice that God has forgiven us (Psalm 32) and use the memory of our guilt as motivation to zealously, sacrificially serve the Lord (1 Timothy 1:12-15; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

Justification and Law Keeping

"Brother Allen emphatically states: "Justification is not found by law keeping... No person is ever justified by works of **any** law, **Old** or **New**" (40). It is absolutely true that we cannot earn our salvation by obeying the law of Christ, perfectly or otherwise. Once we have sinned, and we all have, we have earned death, eternal separation from God (Romans 6:23). No amount of good works can earn us heaven. No amount of community service can offset the guilt that draws the death penalty. But the gospel is also the law of Christ (1 Corinthians 9:21), i.e. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:2). We must obey this law to be saved (Matthew 7:21; Galatians 5:6; Philippians 2:12; Hebrews 5:8-9). The gospel is preached to lead the lost to obey it (Romans 1:5; 16:25-27). The "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" (the gospel) "made me free from the law of sin and death" (the rule of sin in my life leading to death), when I "obeyed from the heart" (Romans 6:17-18, 3-4). From that point on, we must "work out" our "own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). "God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love" (Hebrews 6:10). He judges "according to each one's work" (1 Peter 1:17). Yes, indeed, works of obedience to the law of Christ are essential to our justification.

Sinless Life of Jesus

According to Brother Allen, "God pronounces us to be justified based on the sinless life and sacrifice of Christ" (40). Christ did indeed lead a sinless life (Hebrews 4:15), and that qualified him to be our perfect sacrifice (1 Peter 1:18-19). But His death not His life is the basis for our justification (Romans 3:24-25). The doctrine that the life of Christ is imputed to us for our justification is Calvinism and denies the necessity of obedience. "When our position depends upon Christ's merits instead of our own, we have no

need to fear” (Gordon Clark, **What Do Presbyterians Believe?**. 125).

Sinless?

Brother Allen claims 1 John 1:8 “gives a strong warning against claiming to be sinless while we walk in the light” (42). Our walk in the light is “as He is in the light” (1 John 1:7). There is no darkness in God (1 John 1:5). No sin is part of walking in the light. Yes, we have all sinned (1 John 1:8), but that is not part of walking in the light.

The Bible doesn’t tell us to do our best “to steer clear of habitual and deliberate sin” (42). The apostle commands, “Awake to righteousness, and do not sin” (1 Corinthians 15:34). “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

Brother Allen is very inconsistent. He puts in bold, “**Sin is something we can avoid**” (42-43). Also, “**We don’t have to sin**” (43). Amen again. But then he adds, “As we grow in Christ, there should be decreasing frequency of sin in our lives” (43). And later, “Paul still commands, “Awake to righteousness, and do not sin.”

Continuous Cleansing

Brother Allen plainly teaches the false doctrine of continuous cleansing. In a brief discussion of 1 John 1:7 he asserts:

“Any controversy from this passage should not revolve around whether or not the cleansing is *continual* (because the word clearly suggests continuous action, i.e., the blood of Jesus **keeps on cleansing**), but whether or not continual cleansing is *conditional*” (43).

“Cleansing” in verse 7 is the same verb tense as “confess” in verse 9. The cleansing takes place when the confessing takes place. John doesn’t say, confess our sinfulness. He says, “confess our sins.”

Brother Allen tries to slip around this difficulty by asserting of confession, “it involves an **attitude** where we continually engage in the process” (44). The apostle said no such thing. He plainly stated, “confess our sins,” and that’s just what he meant. That’s not a continual process or an attitude, it’s what we must do if we sin.

Sinless or Responsible?

He then asserts, “No person can be sinlessly perfect, but **every person can be responsible** (44). That’s quite a stretch from “confess our sins.” I don’t know what he does with “do not sin.” And I haven’t a clue why he repeatedly, truthfully stated we don’t have to sin.

His position is, “we remain justified in God’s sight as long as we direct our lives away from our past and move toward God” (45). What does that even mean? If we keep on sinning, are we moving toward God? (1 John 3:8) He offers no proof. My Bible states, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Walking in Darkness

In a section titled “**Propitiation Was Not Made So We Can Choose to Walk in Darkness**,” Brother Allen asks about the Christian “who engages in premeditated sin” (53). He then explains, “What I am describing is a situation where a Christian knows the will of God, understands the consequences, and still chooses to act on the temptation” (54) Brother Allen is right that intentional, premeditated sin is worse in God’s sight than sins of ignorance and weakness. David committed terrible sins through weakness (not ignorance), and God forgave him when he repented, confessed, and prayed (2 Samuel 11:1 - 12:13; Psalm 51:1-14, 17; 38:1-14, 18). Saul rebelliously committed a sin that doesn’t seem nearly as bad to us and lost both the kingdom and his soul (1 Samuel 15:1-23). But David had to repent of that sin, confess that sin, and pray for forgiveness of that sin.

Brother Allen states, "When we deliberately choose to sin, we are rejecting the need to see sin the way God sees it" (54). When we deliberately choose to go on sinning, we are rejecting the sacrifice of Christ, and must look forward in terror to the righteous judgment of God (Hebrews 10:26-31, **NASB**).

He then states, "**The mark of a Christian is not sinlessness, but sin consciousness**" (54). No proof given. Certainly, we have all sinned (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). But what about the future? "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame" (1 Corinthians 15:34). "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Another Heading is: **Propitiation Is Continually Made for Those Who Walk in the Light** (55). "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Are Works Necessary?

In the chapter titled, "**Living By Trust in Jesus, Not Ourselves**," Brother Allen writes, "God has never saved any person by works.... **of any law**" (60). The Lord didn't know that. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Neither did Paul. "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). James was profoundly ignorant of Brother Allen's principle: "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24), as was Peter, "And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear (1 Peter 1:17), and John, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:12). Maybe Brother Allen needs to rethink that sweeping statement.

But he adds in bold, "**No relationship with God is produced through any form of obedient behavior.**" I can't help but wonder if Brother Allen had thought that through. The Apostle Paul enquires"

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-4).

By being buried in the waters of baptism we receive the benefits of the death of Christ, the forgiveness of sins, and are raised to a new life in Christ. Looking back to this baptism, the apostle observes:

"But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).

Baptism is obedience from the heart, it frees us from the guilt of sin, puts us into Christ, and obligates us to righteous lives.

Brother Allen asserts, "we are saved by faith, not by the keeping of any law" (62). Intentionally (I hope not) or not, he is here teaching salvation by faith alone, which of course is Protestant theology and specifically, forcefully denied by James (James 2:14-24).

Whether he uses the article "the" before law or not, throughout Romans the apostle denies justification by the Law of Moses (Romans 2:17-20; 3:21-28). It is certainly true that any law which demands sinless perfection for salvation is also excluded (Romans 3:21-28), but the gospel is the law of faith (Romans 3:27), and by it we are justified before God when we believe and obey.

Abraham

He writes, "**Abraham was justified by grace not law, 4.9-17**" (63). In Romans 4, Paul presents Abraham as the ultimate proof to a Jew that justification is by faith not by the law. The Jewish disciples first thought the gospel was for Jews only (Acts 11:19). The conversion of Cornelius convinced them otherwise (Acts

11:18). But many still thought it was necessary to keep the law of Moses and to be circumcised (Acts 15:1, 5). Had they been correct in binding the law, perfect obedience would have been required; thus salvation would have to be earned, a matter of boasting (Galatians 3:10; Hebrews 10:4). These judaizers laid great stress on their physical relationship to Abraham (Luke 3:8; John 8:33). Paul showed that salvation was by the faith of Christ rather than the law of Moses (or any other law that demands sinless obedience) (Romans 3:27-28; cf. 2:17-23). Abraham, the Father of the Jews, was Paul's case in point of righteousness without the law of Moses or circumcision (Genesis 15:6).

What kind of faith was Paul here talking about? "Not faith alone (James 2:14-26), but obedient faith (Romans 1:5; 16:26).

Works

What kind of works was he talking about? There are different kinds of works: (a) good works (Romans 13:3), (b) obedience to the gospel (James 1:25), (c) miracles (Matthew 11:2), (d) sinful works (Romans 13:12), (e) hypocritical works (Matthew 23:3), (f) works of the law (Romans 2:15), and (g) boastful works (Ephesians 2:9). We will be judged by our works (Romans 2:5-10; Revelation 20:12-13). In Romans 3-4, Paul is talking about sinless law keeping as a basis of justification (Romans 3:27-28; 4:2,4).

Brother Allen announces, "**Salvation is never based solely on law keeping**" (63). Of course not! It's based on "obedience to the faith" (Romans 1:5; 16:25-27). That faith is in what Christ did for us on the cross (Romans 5:8-10), and our response to it (Romans 6:3-4, 17-18). "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6).

Perfection

Brother Allen inquires, "Is a human being capable of perfection? What law of God has any human being ever kept perfectly?" (64) Funny you should ask. The importance of the life of Jesus springs from the fact His was the only absolutely perfect life any man ever lived. Jesus Himself claimed absolute innocence (John 8:29,46). Mark records four accusations Jesus' enemies made against Him (Mark 2:1-3:6). But their charges were demonstrated to be utterly false (cf. Mark 14:55-56). Even His enemies grudgingly testified to the innocence of the Galilean. Judas, His betrayer, lamented, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (Matthew. 27:4). When the mob screamed, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" Pilate responded: "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him" (Luke 23:21-22). His apostles knew Him best (1 John 1:1-3; Acts 1:21-22), and they bore witness to His sinless life (1 Peter 2:22; cf. 1:19). Paul wrote by inspiration of His life, "Who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21)

In the most significant passage of all about the sinless life of Christ, the Hebrew writer asserted He "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (4:15). Why is this passage so important? It reveals that Jesus lived this sinless life as man, enduring the same kinds of temptations we face (1 Corinthians 10:13; James 1:13-15) and without using divine powers to overcome them. This does not deny His deity. Jesus most certainly was divine! But, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), He became a man (Hebrews 2:5-9). He shared our humanity (Hebrews 2:10-18) to the point that "in all things He had to be made like His brethren" (verse 17). When Jesus of Nazareth endured temptation, it was as a man. When He lived a sinlessly perfect life, it was as a man. He exercised no power to overcome temptation not available to us (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). What does this mean for us? First, it means God is just in condemning us for our sins. We cannot plead that we can't help but sin. Jesus "condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans 8:3; cf. Matthew 12:41-42; Hebrews 11:7). He gave a living demonstration that man does have the ability to live without sin. Since none of us so live (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8-10), God is shown to be just in condemning us for our sins (Romans 6:23).

(to be continued)



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