

THE TRUTH against ERRORS

By

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The Faith That Saves

Many people “believe” in God. Filthy sinners “believe” in God. Filthy “Christians” “believe” in God. Even demons “believe” in God. From the scriptures, we know that anyone who believes in the Son of God will be saved (John 3.16-18). At the same time, from the same scriptures, we know that not everyone who calls Jesus Christ, LORD, will be saved (Mathew 7.21). Some “believe” but they will not be saved while others believe, and they will be saved. There is a faith that is dead faith. There is another faith that is true faith. Dead faith does not give salvation. True faith gives salvation. What is the true faith?

True faith in God is living and active. Living faith bears fruit. Faith in God is not only felt and spoken but is action oriented. True faith in God is evidenced by obedience and love. Faith without works of love is dead. Faith in God means to believe with your entire being that the LORD Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world, the Way to the Heavenly Father, the true Shepherd and, the King of kings and LORD of Lords (Romans 10.9-10, Rev 19.20, John 10.11,36).

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world

Jesus Christ saves mankind from sin and death (Mathew 1.21). Those who believe in Him as Savior go to Him in repentance for the forgiveness of their sins and, power to stop sinning. During the time of the LORD’s earthly life, the people of Israel “believed” in God, but their kind of faith could not save them. John the Baptist challenged the people to believe in God by bearing fruit of repentance. John the Baptist preached the faith of repentance (Mathew 3.2, Acts 13.24, 19.4). The LORD Jesus preached the faith of repentance (Mathew 4.17). Repentance for the forgiveness of sins is the gospel that leads one into the kingdom of God (Luke 24.47). A true believer bears the fruit of

repentance (Mathew 3.8, Acts 26.20). The one who has truly believed is the one who has repented from his sinful way of life.

Repentance is the faith that saves.

Any other faith that does not produce the fruit of repentance is dead faith. Faith that does not cause one to stop sinning is dead faith. If you believe in God and are still sinning, or having the tendency to sin, then you have not believed at all.

It is only on the grounds of the faith of repentance that one really becomes part of the church of Christ. It is only on the base of the faith of repentance that one can be given water baptism (Mathew 3.11, Acts 2.38 ISV). Without repentance, there is no water baptism. John the Baptist preached repentance unto baptism. A repentant sinner receives forgiveness from God and cleansing in the blood of Christ (Acts 3.19).

Jesus is the way, the truth, and life

Jesus is the only One that can lead man to the heavenly kingdom. No one can get to the Heavenly Father except through Him. Anyone who rejects Him has rejected the Heavenly Father. Those who believe in Him as the way to the Father follow Him. He is the reconciliation between men and the Heavenly Father (Romans 5.10-11). This reconciliation brings:

Peace and Joy: The believer finds a profound peace and joy after receiving forgiveness of his sins. He begins to offer praises to God for salvation.

Awakened conscience: The believer's conscience gets awakened. He is no longer comfortable with sin.

Hunger for God's word: The new believer starts to have a hunger for spiritual food (the word of God).

Desire to obey God: The new believer begins to obey God's word.

Those who believe in Him as truth and life lean on Him for knowledge and life.

Jesus Christ is LORD and king

He is the LORD and king over all. Those who believe that He is LORD of Lords and King of kings submit to Him and obey Him. Those who obey Him will inherit the kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ is the true Shepherd and only Master

Jesus Christ is the one who leads man to perfect restoration. He who seeks perfection must follow Him daily in total self-denial, obedience and trust. His disciples must keep their eyes on Him.

Jesus Christ is holy

He is the holy One. A true believer must deny sin and pursue holiness. Only those who live after righteousness and holiness belong to Him. He died to save us from our sins so that we can be holy as He is. To believe in Him means to take after His righteousness and holiness. To believe in Him means to change ones' mind, deeds, and desires to His.

Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of our Faith

The LORD Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. Our faith is on a journey. The journey starts when we repent of our sins in faith that Jesus is the Way to the Heavenly Father and the Savior of the world. Our faith progresses when we deny ourselves and follow Him as the Master and Shepherd of our souls. Our faith reaches completion when in sufferings, we obey him perseveringly till the end even at the cost of our lives.

Salvation

What is Salvation?

Salvation means to save from sin/evil and its consequences. Salvation is the process of saving man from sin and death (consequence of sin). The salvation process begins with the forgiveness of sins, to attaining holiness and, ends with overcoming the second death at the last judgement. Salvation is in two stages:

- 1) Salvation from Sin
- 2) Salvation from Death

Salvation from Sin

Salvation from sin is the justification and sanctification of man.

Justification: This is the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation of man to God by faith in the LORD Jesus. The man who has been reconciled to God is called righteous. The LORD Jesus was punished for the sin of the world. He is the reconciliation between man and God. Man was separated from God and was doomed to die because of sin. For man to reunite with God, sin must be taken away. The LORD received the punishment for us all. In His name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins is preached to all mankind.

Sanctification: Sanctification is the complete restoration of man from sin & the sinful nature. It is the process of changing man's sinful nature to God's holy nature. The sinful nature is not taken away at once when we first believe (when we obtain justification), only our past sins are washed away. Our sinful nature is taken off gradually as we walk with Christ and follow Him daily. Those who follow Him receive power to deal away with

the sinful nature (Romans 6.12-14). The purpose of sanctification is to make man perfectly holy. The man who has been sanctified is called holy.

Salvation from second death

The unrighteous and filthy will be punished by death in the lake of fire after the white throne judgement. Only those whose names are found in the book of life will be saved from the second death in the lake of fire. Those whose names are in the book of life are holy and righteous people. Sin leads unto death. To be saved from death, man needs to be saved from sin. The LORD will resurrect to life, the righteous people true to Him. The sinners will die.

By His grace, every believer must fearfully work out his salvation and dominate sin and be victorious over death (Phil 2.12). Believers must put off the old sinful nature and put on the new holy nature. Salvation is guaranteed to the holy.

Is salvation from the second death guaranteed once we believe?

Believing in the LORD Jesus at one point in your life does not guarantee salvation from death. It is believing in the LORD Jesus till the end that guarantees salvation from death (Mat 11.22).

He who believes in the LORD Jesus has stopped sinning and lives to obey God. If a believer at any time in his life stops believing, that is, he goes back to sinning, he may lose his salvation because his name will be removed from the book of life (Rev 3.7). Yes, God removes names from the book of life. The LORD Jesus will give eternal salvation only to those who obey Him till the end (Hebrews 5.9). We repent from our sins unto holiness that leads to eternal life.

Will all righteous people be saved from the second death?

Not all righteous people will be saved but all holy people will be saved.

For it is time for judgement to begin with God's household, and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And if it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner? (1 Peter 4.17-18NIV)

Every act of disobedience is a sin. Yet, it is not all sins that lead unto death (1 John 5.15-17). The sins that leads unto death (Rev 21.6-8, 22.15) include:

Refusal to believe in the LORD Jesus (for those who heard of Him)

Sorcery/witchcraft

Murder

Hypocrisy and being untruthful

All sexual sins

Idolatry (includes greed – Col 3.5)

Not all righteous people will inherit salvation, but all holy people will. A believer who has not has not yet attained perfection in holiness can still be saved by the LORD from death if he does not remain in the above deadly sins. A believer who still engages in these filthy practices will die with the unrighteous (Romans 8.12-13). The LORD Jesus will fetch out of His kingdom all righteous people who are bad (Mathew 1.47-50). Yes, a believer can be bad.

A sick believer who has not committed any of these deadly sins can call for the elders of the church to pray for his healing. The LORD God will hear their prayer and he will be well again. However, if a believer has committed a deadly sin, he will not be restored to health no matter the number of petitions made to the LORD except the sinful believer confesses and repents of His sin and is cleansed by the blood of Christ.

The sole purpose of the death of the LORD Jesus was to take away sins. We must be careful to avoid the deadly sins, as well as, pursue complete restoration from sin through obedience. Only those who are completely restored (perfect in holiness) will become the bride of Christ (Eph 5.27).

Believers who continue in filthy sins will have their names removed from the book of life (Rev 3.2-5, Heb 10.26-29).

Being Born Again

To be born again means to become a new man. To become a new man means to become like Christ. Being born again is a process. It begins when a man first believes in the LORD Jesus Christ and ends when he becomes like Christ in nature and works. A believer who still commits sinful acts or behaves/thinks in a way that is not Christlike is not yet fully born again. As Christ is, in nature (holy, faithful and loving, etc.), so are we to be in this world. To be born again means to be born of both water and spirit. Some may have been born of water, but they are still to be born of spirit.

*Jesus replied, "Truly, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again from above." Nicodemus said, "How can there be rebirth for a grown man? Who could go back to his mother's womb and be born again?" Jesus replied, "Truly, I say to you: **No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit** (John 3.3-6).*

Born of Water

A man becomes born of water when he first believes in Jesus Christ and is reconciled to God. The man receives the life of the eternal God into his Spirit and, his dead spirit comes alive. This living spirit though not yet changed in nature begins to sense a closeness to God. This living spirit, though not yet new, begins to desire spiritual things. Such a man is a living man, but he is not yet a new man because his sinful nature still dominates.

The word of God is water. It cleanses the human heart when received in faith (Acts 15.9). A person who hears the word of God and does not believe with his heart cannot experience this cleansing. It is the word of God received in faith that causes a man to be

born of water (1 Peter 1.23, Eph 5.26). A person who is born of water receives the life of the eternal God into his heart (Titus 3.5). This life is like a well, welling up to eternal life (John 4.14). Water baptism is an outward symbol of cleansing that has taken place within. It is also public declaration of the faith within.

We are born of water when we receive the word of God with faith (Ephesians 5.26). The living water washes us within and brings life inside of us (Acts 15.9). It is by this washing of water for rebirth that we become righteous (right standing with God). One who is born of water has received the first purification attained by obeying God's first command: to believe in His son, Jesus Christ (1 John 3.23). This is the first work that God requires of all men to do to be saved (John 6.28).

Born of Spirit

To be born of spirit means to put on God's nature. The old sinful nature goes away, and a believer puts on a new nature – the nature of Christ Jesus. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, a believer can become a new spirit with a new personality and character (God's character).

To be born of Spirit means a man has put off the old man (the old spirit) with his deeds and has put on the new man Christ Jesus with His deeds (Romans 13.14, Gal 3.27). To be born of Spirit means to be perfected in holiness (2 Corinthians 7.1 KJV). One who is born of Spirit has been transformed into the image of Christ and his spirit becomes like Christ's. He is completely different from his old self. His new spirit is Christlike. He no longer commits sin because he is now like Christ - the sinless one. He bears the full testimony of 2 Corinthians 5.17: *Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.*

Those who carry the cross of self-denial and discipleship are the ones on the path that leads to the perfection in spirit. Not every believer gets to be a disciple because not every believer is willing to pay the price. It is by obedience that we purify ourselves into being born of spirit. We are changed daily in our spirits as we follow the LORD daily till, we attain perfection.

We must die in order to become truly born again. *“Truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it produces much fruit”*. It is by carrying the cross of self-denial that a believer will be born of spirit. The new man (born of Spirit) no longer has the tendency to sin because he has put on the loving nature of Christ (1 John 4.7). To be born of water can be instantaneous but becoming born of spirit takes some time and it demands total cooperation with the Holy Spirit.

The seed of life implanted in our hearts at conversion makes us connected to God, but the seed needs to grow and bear fruits to make us sons of God. When the seed of human life (male sperm) is deposited in a woman’s womb, she becomes pregnant. That seed needs to undergo a nine months transformation to become fully human and be born on the earth. Receiving the word of God (the seed) in faith will makes a man to be born of water, but he must undergo a transformation process for a change of nature in spirit.

To be born of Spirit means to become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5.21). We become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus when God’s righteousness is revealed through our new Christlike person. When we have put on Christ Jesus and His works, we become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus because God’s righteous nature is seen through our new nature.

The Grace of God

The grace of God does not mean that salvation is guaranteed once we “believe” irrespective of our deeds. On the day of judgement, all men shall be judged by their deeds (Rev 20.11-15). The grace of God does not mean that God will not punish the righteous who commit willful and filthy sins. The wrath of God hangs on all ungodliness (Romans 1.18, Romans 2.5-8).

The grace of God is the love and strength of God enabling man to believe and obey the righteous demands of the Law of God in Christ Jesus and eventually save himself from sin and death unto eternal life.

The Grace of God is the death of His Son for the pardon of the sin of the world and the reconciliation of the world to God.

The more a man grows in grace (divine enablement), the closer he gets to perfection.

The Grace of God leads man unto repentance. God is willing to forgive all men in Christ Jesus, but man is forgiven only when he repents of his sinful living (Mark 1.4, Luke 5.32, Luke 24.47, Acts 2.38, Acts 3.19, Acts 5.31, Acts 8.28, Acts 11.18, Acts 26.20). The fruit of repentance is man turning away from sinful deeds. Repentance and receiving forgiveness from God are inseparable. Only those who have received forgiveness will be saved from his wrath. The LORD Jesus is going to punish sinful believers (Mathew 13.41, Mathew 13.24-30, Mathew 7.22-23). The LORD will send out His angels to weed out of His kingdom, the scandalous and evil (Mathew 13.41).

The Grace of God leads man to perfection. A man who is full of the grace of God is a man who no longer commits sins and has put on God’s holy nature and works.

The Law

God does not set people free for them to live lawlessly. Grace is not lawlessness. The new covenant does not mean no laws.

Are the New Covenant People free from the law of God?

Certainly Not!

Christians are not under the old Mosaic Law (the laws of the Old Covenant), but they are under the law of Christ. The lawless or lawbreakers have no part in the kingdom of God (Mathew 7.23, 2 Peter 3.17, 1 John 3.4).

To those not having the law, I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law (1 Corinthians 9.21NIV).

Do we, then, deny the value of the Law because of what we say of faith? Of course not, rather we place the Law in its proper place (Romans 3.31)

God hated sin in the past and He still hates sin today. God often chastised Israel for disobeying His laws.

The LORD warned all lawbreakers and all people who teach others to sin (Mathew 5.17-19). The LORD Jesus did not come to destroy but to fulfill the law. Jesus Christ did not fulfill the law by obeying its letter. He fulfilled the law by obeying the spirit of the law – the law of love. By His death on the cross, the love of God was poured on mankind.

The LORD Jesus taught the people the spirit of the law and not just the letter. He renewed the law on murder, marriage, the law of eye for an eye, love etc.

In the old law, killing someone was a sin of murder. The LORD renewed the law on murder: anyone who is angry with his brother for no just cause or anyone who humiliates his brother and insult him is a murderer and such a one is in danger of being brought before trial and sent to hell (Mathew 5.21-24).

In the old law, divorce was granted for any reason by simply giving the divorcee a writ of divorce. The LORD renewed the law on divorce: anyone who divorces his wife for any other reason than sexual immorality or illicit marriage, is guilty of adultery and any man who marries a divorced woman is guilty of adultery. If a married man looks at a woman with lust in his heart, he has committed adultery (Mathew 5.27-28, 31-32).

In the old law, it was okay to hate your enemy and love those who love you. The LORD renewed the law on love: love your enemy, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who mistreat you, give to all who ask, lend without expecting any returns, strive not with the wicked, etc. Let the light of your love shine so that you can become children of God (Mathew 5.38-48).

The letter cannot cover every aspect of the spirit. The letter cannot deal with the things of the heart such as lust, anger, and hatred. Only the law of the spirit can cover things such as these because the spirit searches the deep things of a man's heart.

God's law was never taken away from man rather it was brought to its proper footing – the spirit of the law. The LORD Jesus summarized all the requirements of the law into one law (John 15.12, 17, Romans 13, 1 John 3.23, John 2.1-11).

"Now I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13.34).

The law of love is very deep and profound, and it cannot be completely broken down detailly into acts and written down. Love fulfills the law of Christ. It demands integrity in keeping your words rather than from swearing an oath. It refuses tooth for tooth or eye for eye rather it repays evil with good. It demands mercy and not judgement. The law of love covers the entire law of God and it can only be fulfilled in spirit and not in letter. Each circumstance we encounter in life demands us to operate in love. We cannot write

down every situation. It is by following the Spirit of Christ that we can walk in love in every circumstance and thus fulfill the law of God. The **fruit** of the Spirit is love (Galatians 5.22). The believer who bears this fruit satisfies the law of God.

Believers in Christ Jesus have been freed from the Old Covenant law system (written laws obeyed in human strength). Believers have been transferred to a new covenant law system, a living way, the way of the spirit.

*The time is coming - it is Yahweh who speaks - when I will forge a new covenant with the people of Israel and the people of Judah. It will not be like the one I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. For they broke my covenant although I was their LORD. This is the covenant I shall make with Israel after that time: **I will put my Law within them and write it on their hearts, I will be their God and they will be my people.** And they will not have to teach each other, neighbor or brother, saying: 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the greatest to the lowliest, for I will forgive their wrongdoing and no longer remember their sin." This is the word of Yahweh (Jeremiah 31.31-35).*

How do Christians fulfill the righteous demands of the law of Christ?

The new covenant operates in spirit and not tablets of stone or paper. It checks out the lust in a man's heart and not just the outward act of adultery. The righteous demands of the law are fulfilled in believers who walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. If a believer does not walk after the Spirit of Christ, they cannot fulfill the requirements of the law because the flesh is too weak to obey God. If we do not operate in the power of the Holy Spirit, we cannot perfectly obey God even if we are willing.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 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 (Romans 8.13)

Man cannot obey God perfectly in human strength. In the human nature, the law of sin operates and thus, it will stop man from obeying God (Romans 7.18-25).

The only way man can perfectly obey God is the divine power of Christ Jesus. We must be led by Him (His Spirit) and not by our human nature and tendencies. We must abide in Him and draw life from Him. It is His life that strengthens us to obey God. We must give up trying to obey God in our natural strength and look to His life deposited inside of us.

If a man continues to walk after the flesh and do its works and satisfy its desires, he shall surely die. We are set free (made righteous) to fight for our salvation by putting on holiness attained through the way of love (1 Peter 1.22, 1 Peter 4.8). We are set free to obey God and obtain the crown of life (James 1.11-12).

Good Works

Dead faith does not save. Faith not evidenced by good deeds (love) does not save.

Faith and works of love are inseparable. Good deeds are the evidence of true faith. A righteous man who does bad things will not be saved from his sinful nature or death. An unrighteous man who heard of Jesus Christ and denied Him will not be saved even if he does some good, because none is without sin and all is need of salvation.

"What good is it, my brothers and sisters, to profess faith without showing works? Such faith has no power to save you" (James 2.14).

The apostolic epistles are filled with exhortations unto good works:

"Do not neglect good works and common life, for these are sacrifices pleasing to God" (Hebrews 13.16).

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works (Hebrews 10.24)

This is the truth. I want you to insist on these things, for those who believe in God must excel in good deeds, that is what matters and is profitable to us (Titus 3.8).

Did the cross of Christ free us from the obligation of doing good works?

Certainly Not!

We were created by God in Christ Jesus for the purpose of good works.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesian 2.8-10).*

We are saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus to do good. We obtain salvation by believing in the Son of God for the purpose of good works. God saves man so that man can do good (kind acts and kingdom works). Believers who do good truly belong to God because they are walking according to His purpose.

It is the will of God that we do good. Not all who calls Him LORD shall be saved but only those who do the will of the Father.

Not everyone who says to me: LORD! LORD! will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my heavenly Father. Many will say to me on that day, "LORD, LORD, did we not speak in your name? Did we not cast out devils and perform many miracles in your name?" Then I will tell them openly: I have never known you, away from me, you evil people! (Mathew 7.22-23).

So, you see, doing good is salvation. It is evidence of our faith in Him and seal of our salvation. There is no point believing if we will not do good. The coming world is for those who do good. It is not for evil people. On the judgement day, everyone will be judged by his works.

After that I saw a great and splendid throne and the one seated upon it. At once heaven and earth disappeared, leaving no trace. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before the throne while books were opened. Another book, the Book of Life, was also opened. Then the dead were judged according to the records of these books, that is, each one according to his works. The sea gave up the dead it had kept, as did death and the netherworld, so that all might be judged according to their works. Then death and the netherworld were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. All who were not recorded in the Book of Life were thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20.11-15)

Salvation is this: Man must accept that he has sinned against God. Then believe in Jesus Christ as Savior for the remissions of his sins. After reconciling with God, he must not go on sinning but do good. He must overcome evil with good. If he continues sinning, the reconciliation becomes void because the element of sin that caused the initial separation from God is still present. The LORD Jesus died to take away sins and to destroy the works of evil. So, those who believe in Him follow His footsteps. The

works of darkness give way to the appearance of light. The LORD is holy and good. To believe in Him means to take after His righteousness.

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, to profess faith without showing works (works of love)? Such faith has no power to save you. If a brother or sister is in need of clothes or food and one of you says, "May things go well for you, be warm and satisfied," without attending to their material needs, what good is that? So it is for faith without deeds: it is totally dead. Say to whoever challenges you, "You have faith and I have good deeds, show me your faith apart from actions and I, for my part, will show you my faith in the way I act." Do you believe there is one God? Well enough, but do not forget that the demons also believe and tremble with fear! You foolish one, do you have to be convinced that faith without deeds is useless? Think of our father Abraham. Was he not justified by the act of offering his son Isaac on the altar? So you see, his faith was active along with his deeds and became perfect by what he did. The word of Scripture was thus fulfilled, Abraham believed in God so he was considered a righteous person and he was called the friend of God. So you see, a person is acknowledged by works and not by faith alone. Likewise, we read of Rahab, the prostitute, that she was acknowledged and saved because she welcomed the spies and showed them another way to leave. So, just as the body is dead without its spirit, so faith without deeds is also dead James 2.14-26).

The good works of the children of God is light to the world. It is by doing good that we overcome the evil one. Do good and continue to do good no matter the magnitude of evil. For you see, the battle is between light and darkness, good and evil, the obedient and the disobedient, the LORD God and the devil. It is your works that shows whose you are. The people of the dark do not love. They do not know God. Mankind can only see God through the light of God's children. No one light a lamp and puts it under the table. The righteous nature of God must become our nature so that the people of the dark will see our good deeds and glorify the heavenly Father. The Heavenly Father wants all His children to shine very brightly so that the world will know Him through them.

Our works is what the LORD wants to see. Our works reveals the measure of faith in our hearts. What we say or feel in our hearts will not save us. Good works done in faith seals our redemption. In the LORD's letter to the seven churches, He made mention to all of them about their works. The church of Ephesus has left her first works. The church of Smyrna was rich in works. The church of Thyatira's second works was greater than the first. The church in Sardis had dead works (no works). The church of Laodicea was lukewarm (Rev 1-3).

Great works can be done only in the power of the Holy Spirit. True believers are not naked. They are clothed in white garment of good deeds. The bride of Christ will be dressed in the white linen of good works. Your good deeds will be your white garment. No good deeds, no white wedding garment.

*"This is the time to celebrate the wedding of the Lamb, his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, is given her to wear. **This linen stands for the good works of the holy ones**" (Rev 19.7-8).*

Sin and the Cross

Sin is breaking God's commandment. Anyone who rejects God's commandment makes himself God's enemy. If you say that you know God and you still sin, then you do not know Him.

Anyone who commits a sin acts as an enemy of the law of God, any sin is a rejection of his law. You know that he came to take away our sins, and that there is no sin in him. Whoever remains in him has no sin, whoever sins has not seen or known him. My little children, do not be led astray, those who do what is right are upright, just as Jesus Christ is upright. But those who sin belong to the devil, for the devil sins from the beginning. This is why the Son of God was shown to us, he was to undo the works of the devil (1 John 3.4-8).

The Power of Sin

None was found perfect in Israel because none could keep the whole law (Romans 3.13-19). Many were willing to obey but failed to obey because of the weakness of the human strength. The Old Covenant law was holy. The Old Covenant was meant to give life to those who obey it. However, it brought death to many because many could not keep it. Should we then say that the Old Covenant law was unholy? Certainly Not! Sin, because it is sin, used a holy thing to prove itself. Sin used the holy law to gain power. Human strength was too weak to obey the law. Thus, man became a slave to sin. Man is unable to do the good thing that he wills to do, instead he does the bad things he does not want to do. Sin gained dominion over man. The old law though holy, became a law of sin and death. If there is no sin, there is no death. The prize of sin is death.

The Victory of the Cross

Those born of God do not sin, for the seed of God remains in them, they cannot sin because they are born of God. What is the way to recognize the children of God and those of the devil? The one who does not do what is right is not of God, so, too, the one who does not love his brother or sister (1 John 3.10 & 1 John 2.11-3).

Sin is sin, be it a believers' or an unbelievers'. Some believers are yet to be born of spirit (perfected in holiness), so they still sin. Some believers have been born of Spirit (they have put on God's holy nature), so they no longer sin. One who is born of God (water and spirit) no longer sins because he is in control of his sinful human nature and tendencies. Such a believer has experienced the full victory of the cross.

The cross of Christ wrought for man the forgiveness of sins and the power to stop sinning.

The LORD Jesus went to the cross solely to take away sins. He died to bring man to complete restoration from sin. He bore our sin in his body and by his wounds we are healed in our spirit. Before the LORD Jesus healed in the land of Israel, he first forgave sins. If sin is not forgiven (especially deadly sin), healing cannot be administered. Bodily health is a by-product of the cross. The LORD went to the cross to defeat sin so that we can be empowered to walk in uprightness. Man can live a sinless life.

The power of the cross is greater than the power of sin.

Sin can no longer overpower believers because the LORD Jesus on the cross freed man from the power of sin. Sin can no longer compel believers to sin. Before the cross, no one could win the fight over sin. But now, we can fight in faith and win. We must believe the work of the cross. Without faith in the LORD, the cross will be of no effect. Fight the good fight of faith and sin will give way.

The proof of the victory of the cross over sin is the remission of sins and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The blood of Christ and the Holy Spirit is the power of the believer over sin. The blood cleanses all sin. The Holy Spirit brings believers to holiness.

Dominion over sin is not instantaneous when a man first believes. Dominion over sin is guaranteed if a man follows the LORD Jesus daily. Jesus Christ defeated sin on the cross and those who follow Him in faith will eventually experience this victory in their lives. If a man wants to claim his dominion over sin:

1. He must first know that the cross of Christ freed him from the power of sin.
2. He must refuse to go on sinning and receive forgiveness and cleansing from sin.
3. He must be led by the Holy Spirit. Only those who are led by the Spirit can be born of spirit. We can deal away with all unrighteousness only in the power of the Holy Spirit. Gradually sin will lose its grip on us. Then we shall become dead to sin (Romans 6.11). Those who walk after the spirit cannot gratify fleshly and sinful desires.

The power of the Holy Spirit over sin

A believer can live a sinless life. It is wrong to believe that perfection is impossible. God wants man to be perfect (Mathew 5.48)

The power of the Holy Spirit is stronger than the power of sin.

When a man first believes, he receives from the LORD forgiveness and cleansing from his sins. When he is filled with the Holy Spirit, he receives power to put away with his sinful nature.

If you are not filled with the Spirit of Christ, you will continue to live after the flesh even if you are a believer. The Holy Spirit is the power of the believer to have dominion over sin.

The believer who is not spirit filled can easily return to his sinful way of life. Such a believer must be careful not to commit deadly sins. If he commits and remains in those deadly sins, he may lose his salvation.

We must do all we can to be filled with the Holy Spirit and not settle for any fake baptism. We must copy the example of the five wise virgins who gave up their all to buy as much oil as they could. We must not copy the example of the rich young ruler who could not sell his all to buy treasure in heaven (Mathew 19.16-30). We must not be like

the crowd who followed the LORD Jesus but were not ready to pay the price of discipleship (Luke 14.25-33). If we want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we must liberate our hearts and set our hearts on spiritual things. If we walk after the Holy Spirit, we will be born of spirit. Those who walk according to the spirit do not give in to sinful desires (Galatians 5.18-24).

By our own strength, we can never win. If we try to walk under the Old Covenant system, we fall from grace.

The Old Covenant relied solely on the strength of man while the new covenant relies on the power of the Holy Spirit.

Under the new covenant, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus operates but under the Old Covenant, is the law of sin and death. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has sets man free from the law of sin and death. You may have believed in the LORD Jesus but if you do not operate under the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, you will not gain victory over sin. Only those who follow the Holy Spirit are on the path to victory. You cannot walk after the spirit except you are filled with the Holy Spirit.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.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 (Romans 8.1-13).

Righteousness & Holiness

Some believe that none can be perfect. Some believe that only God is perfect. Some Christians believe that once they believe in Jesus Christ, they are instantaneously made perfectly holy. What do you believe?

Does Righteousness & Holiness mean the same?

Righteousness is the beginning of living a holy life. A righteous man is a justified man. A justified man is a man who is reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. A man is made righteous when he believes in the LORD Jesus and receives forgiveness and cleansing of his sins.

Holiness means to live a sinless life. A holy man is a man who no longer sins. Living a holy life begins with washing away of past sins. In other words, to be holy, you must begin with righteousness. Holy living is a process that begins with righteousness.

The blood of Jesus Christ made perfect in righteousness all those who believe in him. The power of the Holy Spirit makes perfect in holiness all those who walk after the Spirit.

Through justification at repentance, man is made perfectly righteous. Through sanctification, man is made perfectly holy (Hebrews 10.14).

We were reconciled to God by the blood of Christ but we are made holy by His life through the sanctification work of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5.8-9). In Romans 6.19, Apostle Paul briefed on the Christian's journey to salvation.

1) Freed from sin (Made righteous)

2) Make yourself a slave of righteousness (unconditional obedience to the demands of righteousness)

3) Bear the fruit of holiness from being a slave to righteousness

4) Reap eternal life from holiness

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of righteousness, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life (Romans 6.22NIV).

We must seek to be perfect in holiness.

Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (2 Corinthians 7.1).

What is God's standard of Holiness for Man?

- Be perfect as He is perfect (Mathew 5.48).
- Be fashioned according to the pattern of the first-born Son who is an example for us all (Rom 8.29, Eph. 1.5).
- Be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1.15-16, 1 Titus 4.3).

If sin abounds, grace abounds much more (Romans 5.20). If the power of sin is strong, then the power of the Holy Spirit is much greater to redeem us from the power of sin. We must not continue sinning but receive the abounding grace of God through the power of the Holy Spirit to subdue sinful human nature and its deeds. Man can attain God's standard of holiness. The Father in Heaven is calling believers to be holy as He is holy. His abounding grace is available to help man meet up with His standard. He is a Holy God and his children must be holy. Anyone who still sins is not born of God (1 John 3.9).

Through obedience, we should put off the old fallen man and his deeds and put on the new man, Christ Jesus, and his deeds. We should make ourselves slaves of

righteousness by obeying unconditionally the law of Christ Jesus. The good soil bears fruit to perfection by keeping the word of God word perseveringly.

Do all you can to have a clean break with sin. Courageously bear the sufferings of obedience. It is very difficult to obey God without suffering any lose. You may lose your property, freedom, friends, and even your life for choosing to obey God. Be ready to loss. Stand strong in faith and do not be afraid to lose. For you see, it is only when a man has lost his life, that he will win it back. But if he tries to keep his life, he will lose it (Mathew 10.39).

Only those who stand firm to end will be saved (Mathew 10.22). The crown is not for the swift, rather it for he who endures to the end (James 1.12). Not all righteous people will be saved (1 Peter 4.17-18NIV). The righteous and the holy do not receive the same reward (Rev 22.11-12). We grow up in our salvation as we grow in holiness (1 Peter 2.2).

The believer is no longer condemned to die if he no longer walks after the flesh (Romans 8.1-14). The believer who walks after the flesh will die. If by the Holy Spirit, a believer puts to death, the works of the flesh, he shall surely live (Romans 8.13).

We must keep pursuing perfection till we pass out of our earthly bodies.

I do not believe I have already reached the goal, nor do I consider myself perfect, but I press on till I conquer Christ Jesus, as I have already been conquered by him. No, brothers and sisters, I do not claim to have claimed the prize yet. I say only this: forgetting what is behind me, I race forward and run towards the goal, my eyes on the prize to which God has called us from above in Christ Jesus. Let all of us who claim to be perfect have the same way of thinking, but if there is something on which you differ, God will make it clear to you (Phil 3.12-15)

The apostolic epistles are filled with the exhortations to live holy before God:

Since we have such promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from all defilement of body and spirit, and complete the work of sanctification in the fear of God (2 Corinthians 7.1 Catholic Bible)

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the LORD: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness

springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled, Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright (Hebrews 12.14-16).

We must not deaden our consciences by ignoring its call to sanctification. The guilt of sin is meant to bring man to repentance. Sin must be confessed and not covered because it is the fruit of darkness. When we sin, our conscience pricks us, we feel guilty and then we confess and repent of that sin before the LORD. He then washes us in his blood and empowers us not to sin again. Without the sense of guilt, there is no true repentance. If there is no repentance, there is no fruitful change. We must not rely on self-strength but live by grace through faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you are holy, just and fair in all your ways. Direct me on how to walk by your Spirit. I give up my pride, self-righteousness and self-confidence. I need your grace to transform my life to the image of your son. I want to be holy and perfect as you are. I want to be a true child to you. My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes see you, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. You are a Holy God and your name will forever be held holy. Glorify your name in me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

The Kingdom of God

A kingdom is a king and his people. If there are no people, there is no kingdom. Also, if there is no king, there is no kingdom.

God is Building His Kingdom.

The kingdom of God is God and His people. He appointed the Son of Man to build this kingdom and rule over it. God had spoken through the OT prophets of His coming kingdom. John the Baptist was God's last messenger sent to announce the soon arrival of the kingdom and to prepare the way for the Son of Man. The Son of Man, the LORD Jesus Christ, is God's appointed king. He will be crowned king when the kingdom is completely built. The LORD Jesus Christ came to the earth from heaven. He went all around Israel preaching the good news of the Kingdom and displaying the powers of the kingdom. He performed many signs: he healed the sick, raised the dead, freed the bound, commanded nature, changed water into wine, multiplied two loaves and five fishes to feed over 5000 men excluding women and children etc.

God is calling people from all nations of the earth to become His people. John the Baptist, the LORD Jesus Christ, and the disciples preached the gospel of the kingdom. Since the time of John the Baptist, many are forcing their way into the kingdom (Mat. 24.14).

The LORD Jesus laid the foundation stone on which other stones are being built. By His death on the cross, He opened the way for man to enter His great kingdom. The kingdom started as a small mustard seed and continues to grow into the largest tree (Mathew 13.31). It started as a small stone and keeps growing to fill the whole earth. The kingdom of God must pass through two phases: the spiritual reign and then the earthly reign.

The Spiritual Kingdom

Now, God rules in the hearts of men individually (believers). He leads believers personally by his Holy Spirit. There must be a personal relationship between God and the individual – a relationship of trust and obedience. The believer must submit to His leadership by obeying his rules. The heart of man must be devoted entirely to God. Man must worship God in spirit and truth. These believers will be part of God's kingdom in the world to come.

The Earthly Kingdom

In the future, God will reign over the whole earth. In the world to come, there will be only one government and kingdom, the kingdom of Heaven. The kingdom of the Son of Man will swallow up all other kingdoms (Daniel 2.44). A foretaste of this earthly reign will be the millennial reign of Christ (Rev. 20.1-10). During the millennial reign, God's rules will be implemented into all the systems and nations of the earth. Presently, most governments are keeping ungodly rules but during the millennial reign of Christ, all governments will keep godly rules. After the millennial reign, the unrighteous will be cut off and a new world of righteous people will begin. The righteous will be saved from the second death and will inherit God's kingdom.

How to enter God's Earthly Kingdom

To enter the kingdom of God, a person must believe in the Son of God. To believe means to:

1. Believe with the whole heart in the son of God as Savior of the world. He died to take away the sin of the world to reconcile man to God. There is no other name under heaven given unto men by which man can be saved except the name of Jesus Christ.
2. Repent from all sins. Sin separated man from God. Those who want to remain in Him must no longer sin. The LORD Jesus went to the cross take away sins, so those who

believe in Him must not continue sinning. Those who continue in their sins will not inherit God's Kingdom.

a) Obey His commandments. Only those who do the will of the Father will inherit the kingdom (Mathew 7.21-22). Only those who obey the king can be His people.

How to Enter God's Heavenly kingdom

The LORD Jesus is the way to the kingdom of Heaven. If we want to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must follow Him.

In Luke 14.25-33, and Luke 9.23-26, the LORD revealed the conditions that must be met by anyone who wants to follow Him:

1) Deny Self (Luke 14.27, Luke 9.23)

2) Love God more than any man (Luke 14.28)

3) Give away your material wealth to the poor (Luke 14.33, Luke 12.33, Acts 2.45, Mat 19.21)

4) Become a child (Mark 10.15)

In Mathew 19.16-30, even though the rich young ruler had kept the 10 commandments, he was still incomplete. To qualify to follow Jesus unto perfection, he had to deny himself by selling his earthly riches and give the proceeds to the poor. The rich man was unable to deny himself and so forfeited the kingdom of Heaven. Both rich and poor, young and grown must empty their hearts to God. However, it is easier for the poor to enter God's great kingdom than it is for the rich. It is a child that enters the kingdom of heaven, and not the adult. It is in childlike faith and humility that we can enter the kingdom of Heaven (Mathew 18.3-4). Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God (Luke 6.20).

Those who follow Him unto perfection become born again of Spirit.

To know more about how to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, please check out my other books, "The Way to the Kingdom of Heaven" and "In Christ to Become Like Christ"

The rich young ruler can enter God's earthly Kingdom, but he cannot enter God's heavenly Kingdom unless he gives away his earthly wealth to the poor. The Kingdom of Heaven is God's government over His earthly Kingdom. The Kingdom of Heaven are a line of priests and kings in service unto God. They will rule the earth with Christ during the millennial reign and after the final judgement.

Will all Righteous people inherit God's Earthly kingdom?

If a man repents and believes in the LORD Jesus with all heart and confesses with his mouth, then he is made righteous. All righteous people are rightful heirs of God's earthly kingdom but not all will inherit.

"If it is hard for a righteous man to be saved, what will happen to the ungodly sinner?" (1 Peter 4.18)

"Not everyone who keeps saying to me, 'LORD, LORD,' will get into the kingdom from heaven, but only the person who keeps doing the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'LORD, LORD, we prophesied in your name, drove out demons in your name, and performed many miracles in your name, didn't we?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who practice evil!' (Mathew 7.21-23)."

The Parable of the Weeds

He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom from heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While people were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. When the crop came up and bore grain, the weeds appeared, too. The owner's servants came and asked him, 'Master, you sowed good seed in your field, didn't you? Then where did these weeds come from?' He told them, 'An enemy did this!' The servants asked him, 'Then do you want us to go and pull them out?' He said, 'No! If you pull out the weeds, you might pull out the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and at

harvest time I will tell the reapers, "Gather the weeds first and tie them in bundles for burning, but bring the wheat into my barn (Mathew 13.24-30)."

Then Jesus left the crowds and went into the house. His disciples came to him and asked, "Explain to us the parable about the weeds in the field." He answered, "The person who sowed good seed is the Son of Man, while the field is the world. The good seed are those who belong to the kingdom, while the weeds are those who belong to the evil one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Just as weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so it will be at end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather from his kingdom everything that causes others to sin and those who practice lawlessness and they will throw them into a blazing furnace. In that place there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom. Let the person who has ears listen! (Mathew 13.36-43)."

The wheat and the weeds are all righteous people. The wheat is sown by God (true Bible preachers) while the weed is sown by the devil (false teachers and fake Bible Preachers). Both the wheat and the weed believe in God and the LORD Jesus. The wheat are believers who obey God's commandments and teaches others same. The Weeds are believers who disobey God, practice lawlessness, and teach others to do same. Both the wheat and the weeds are on the earth growing together. But at the end of age, the wheat will be gathered to eternal life while the weeds will be burnt. The weeds may seem to belong to the kingdom of God, but they do not. They belong to the devil. Only the wheat belongs to God's kingdom.

The Parable of the Net

"Again, the kingdom from heaven is like a large net thrown into the sea that gathered all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen hauled it ashore. Then they sat down, sorted the good fish into containers, and threw the bad ones away. That is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out, cull out the evil people from among the righteous ones, and will throw them into a blazing furnace. In that place there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Mathew 13.47-50)".

The fishes in the net are all the righteous people. The good fishes are believers who obey God while the bad fishes are believers who disobey God. At the end of age, the LORD will separate the good fishes from the bad fishes. He will keep the righteous people who do good and throw away the righteous people who do evil.

The Parable of the Sower

Then he began to tell them many things in parables. He said, "Listen! A farmer went out to sow. As he was sowing, some seeds fell along the path, and birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on stony ground, where they did not have a lot of soil. They sprouted at once because the soil wasn't deep. But when the sun came up, they were scorched. Since they did not have any roots, they dried up. Other seeds fell among thorn bushes, and the thorn bushes grew higher and choked them out. But other seeds fell on good soil and produced a crop, some 100, some 60, and some 30 times what was sown. Let the person who has ears listen! (Mathew 13.3-9) "

"Listen, then, to the parable about the farmer. When anyone hears the word about the kingdom yet doesn't understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on the stony ground, this is the person who hears the word and accepts it joyfully at once, but since he doesn't have any root in himself, he lasts for only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes along because of the word, he immediately falls away. As for what was sown among the thorn bushes, this is the person who hears the word, but the worries of life and the deceitful pleasures of wealth choke the word so that it can't produce a crop. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the person who hears the word, understands it, and produces a crop that yields 100, 60, or 30 times what was sown (Mathew 13.18-23)."

The seeds that fell among thorns and grew to maturity but produced no fruit to perfection are believers who are bad. They care much for money, the riches and the pleasures of this life.

The seed that fell by the wayside and on rock are the unbelievers.

The seed that fell on good soil are the righteous people who are good. They obey God enduringly and in due season, they produce fruit to perfection. The fruit from the good soil will be gathered to eternal life while the fruitless tree will be dug out of the ground and burnt.

The rewards of all Mankind

When the LORD returns, he will repay everyone according to his deeds.

Let the one who does what is evil continue to do what is evil. Let the filthy person continue to be filthy. Let the righteous person continue to do what is right. And let the holy person continue to be holy. "See! I am coming soon! My reward is with me to repay everyone according to his action" (Rev. 22.11-12).

The righteous man (believer) who is holy will be saved to inherit God's kingdom. The righteous man who is not yet perfect in holiness can still be saved if he does not commit deadly sins (see chap. 2).

The holy and some righteous people will inherit God's kingdom and eternal life. When the righteous and holy people shed off their earthly bodies, they remain with the LORD in Paradise. The Holy people will receive the first resurrection. The righteous will receive the second resurrection.

The filthy and unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom. They will never be resurrected. They will only be awakened for judgement only to go to death. They will perish in the lake of fire and brimstone.

Tithes

The early church did not keep the tithe law, but Christians of today are trying to keep it. Did the LORD Jesus command Christians to keep the tithe law? If He did, why did the early church not practice it? What was the tithe law?

The law on tithe

The law on tithes was one of the many laws that God gave the Israelites. The books of Deuteronomy and Leviticus record the various laws that were given to the Israelites. In these books we can find the law on tithes as it was given them by God through Moses.

“Every year, you must take a tithe of what your fields produce from what you have sown and, in the presence of Yahweh your God, in the place where he chooses to give his name a home, you must eat the tithe of your wheat, of your new wine and of your oil, and the first-born of your herd and flock: and by so doing, you will learn always to fear Yahweh your God.

If the road is too long for you, if you cannot bring your tithe because the place in which Yahweh chooses to make a home for his name is too far away, when Yahweh your God has blessed you, you must convert into money, and with the money clasped in your hand, you must go to the place chosen by Yahweh your God, there you may spend the money on whatever you like, oxen, sheep, wine, fermented liquor, anything you please. There you must eat in the presence of Yahweh your God and rejoice, you and your household. Do not neglect the Levite living in your community, since he has no share of his own among you” (Deut. 14.22-27)

‘In the third year, the tithing year, when you have finished taking the tithe of your whole income and have given it to the Levite, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow so that,

in your towns, they may eat to their heart's content, in the presence of Yahweh your God, you must say: I have cleared my house of what was consecrated... (Deut. 26:12).

In the tithe law, the LORD God instructed his people to tithe in two ways: yearly and every third year.

Every year, they were to present themselves before God with a tithe of their wheat, new wine, oil, & flock. In His presence, they were to eat their tithe produce together with the Levites. If the LORD's temple was far away, making it difficult to transport the goods, they would convert the goods into money, and then come to the presence of Yahweh and spend the money on whatever their heart desires.

Every third year, the tither is not allowed to eat his tithe. The tither will give his tithe to the Levite, the foreigner, the orphan, and the widow. The receivers of the tithe will present themselves before Yahweh and eat the tithe produce in His presence. The tither will then present himself before the LORD God and say that he has cleared his house of what was consecrated.

The Purpose of the Tithe Law

The whole purpose of the regular tithing was for them to learn to fear the name of Yahweh always.

The tithe law was given to the Israelites in the desert. They settled in the promised land of Canaan. Some years after they had settled in Canaan, they forsook the laws of God and were taken captive by the Assyrians and the Babylonians. After 70 years of captivity, they returned from the Babylonian exile and rebuilt the destroyed temple but most of them had lost the significance of their customs and laws. Ezra and Nehemiah re-educated the people on God's laws. The people resumed worship in the temple of God, but they still neglected some of the temple practices. One of these temple practices which they neglected was the practice of bringing their tithe before God. God spoke through his prophet Malachi calling on them to bring in their tithes as they did before, because the orphans, the strangers, the Levites who were God's people were suffering from the neglect.

“When I came to you to do justice I shall demand the immediate punishment of the sorcerers and the adulterers, of those who swear false oaths, who oppress the wage-earner, the widow and the orphan, who do not respect the rights of the foreigner. They do all this and have no fear of me, says Yahweh. No, I Yahweh do not change, and you have not ceased to be children of Jacob. Ever since the days of your ancestors, you have evaded my statutes and not observed them. Return to me and I will return to you, says Yahweh Sabaoth. You ask, ‘‘How do we cheat you?’’ Over tithes and contributions. A curse lies on you because you, this whole nation, try to cheat me. Bring the tithes in full to the treasury, so that there is food in my house, put me to the test now like this, says Yahweh Sabaoth, and see if I do not open the floodgates of Heaven for you and pour out an abundant blessing for you” (Malachi 3:5-12)

The poor, the stranger, the widow and the Levites were God’s own possession. God identified Himself with them. They are the ones on whom the third-year tithes was spent on. If they were cheated, it means God was cheated.

The letter of the Holy Spirit and the apostles, sent to the gentiles, as regards keeping the Old Testament laws.

In the days of Apostle Paul, some of the Hebrew Christians were forcing the gentile Christians to practice circumcision. When Peter and the other Apostles heard of this, they held a meeting to decide the status of the gentile Christians as regards the Law of Moses. In response, the apostles and the Holy Spirit wrote a letter to the gentile believers.

ACTS 15.1-35

The Jerusalem Council

Then some men came down from Judea and started to teach the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Law of Moses, you can't be saved." Paul and Barnabas had quite a dispute and argument with them.

So Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles and elders about this question.

They were sent on their way by the church, and as they were going through Phoenicia and Samaria they told of the conversion of the gentiles and brought great joy to all the brothers.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the elders, and they reported everything that God had done through them.

But some believers from the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The gentiles must be circumcised and ordered to keep the Law of Moses."

So the apostles and the elders met to look into this claim.

After a lengthy debate, Peter stood up and told them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God chose me to be the one among you through whom the gentiles would hear the message of the gospel and believe.

God, who knows everyone's heart, showed them he approved by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us.

He made no distinction between them and us, because of their faith-cleansed hearts.

So why do you test God by putting on the disciples' neck a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we could carry?

We certainly believe that it is through the grace of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, that we are saved, just as they are."

The whole crowd was silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul tell about all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the gentiles.

After Paul and Barnabas had finished speaking, James responded, "Brothers, listen to me:

Simeon has explained how God first showed his concern for the gentiles by taking from among them a people for his name.

This agrees with the words of the prophets. As it is written,

"After this, I will come back and set up David's fallen tent again. I will restore its ruined places and set it up again

so that the rest of the people may search for the Lord, including all the gentiles who are called by my name," declares the Lord. 'He is the one who has been doing these things that have been known from long ago.'

Therefore, I have decided that we should not trouble these gentiles who are turning to God.

Instead, we should write to them to keep away from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from anything strangled, and from blood.

After all, Moses has had people to proclaim him in every city for generations, and on every Sabbath his books are read aloud in the synagogues."

The Council's Letter to Gentile Believers

Then the apostles, the elders, and the whole church decided to choose some of their men to send with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. These were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, who were leaders among the brothers.

They wrote this letter for them to deliver: "From: The apostles and the elders, your brothers To: Their gentile brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Greetings.

We have heard that some men, coming from us without instructions from us, have said things to trouble you and have unsettled you.

So we have unanimously decided to choose men and send them to you with our dear Barnabas and Paul,

who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah.

We have therefore sent Judas and Silas to tell you the same things by word of mouth.

For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to place on you any burden but these essential requirements:

to keep away from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from anything strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you avoid these things, you will do well. Goodbye."

So the men were sent on their way and arrived in Antioch. They gathered the congregation together and delivered the letter.

When the people read it, they were pleased with how the letter encouraged them.

Then Judas and Silas, who were also prophets, said a lot to encourage and strengthen the brothers.

After staying there for some time, they were sent back with a greeting from the brothers to those who had sent them.

Both Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch to teach and proclaim the word of the Lord, as did many others.

Are Christians Obligated to Tithe?

The controversial issue of keeping some of the old laws, be it circumcision or tithes or any other law did not arise just today. This issue was neatly addressed by the Holy Spirit and the apostles. Gentile Christians are not supposed to obey the Law of Moses except for three: to keep away from food sacrificed to idols, to abstain from blood from the meat of strangled animals and from prohibited marriages (as stipulated in Lev 18). The Holy Spirit wrote a letter to Non-Jewish Christians many years ago, addressing this matter.

When you give tithe just because you want to receive back, are you not selfish? If you give all your property away without love you give in vain (1 Corinthians 13.3). All must be done in the spirit of love. Your obedience to the law of Christ is more valuable than any sacrificial offering (1 Samuel 15.22-23).

Even if anyone must follow the law today, there must strict and complete compliance to the law. Modifying the law for whatever reason defeats the purpose of the law.

God no longer dwells in temples made by hands. He now dwells in believers. More so, the tithes were not used to maintain the tabernacle of God rather the tithe was eaten by the tither and the less privileged in the clan. Can the churches practice the tithe law exactly as it was written?

Even if we tithe today, then it should a choice made out of love and generosity (in obedience to the law of Christ), and not because we want to obtain the blessing of keeping the Old Covenant. If we choose to tithe today out of love, then the poor

Christians in the house should be the receiver. The pastors and general overseers are not Levites. Under the new covenant, all Christians are called to serve as priests unto God, with Christ Jesus as the High Priest (1 Peter 2.9).

Christians are not under the Old Covenant law. The Old Covenant is obsolete (Hebrews 8.13). Christians are under the new covenant law. Under the new covenant, the letter does not apply, rather the spirit. The tithe law was not the only law that was given to the Israelites. Other laws were given: burnt offering, the cereal offering, the communion sacrifice, the sacrifice for sin, the sacrifice of reparation, voluntary sacrifices, offerings for the purification from contagious skin diseases, the feast of shelters, the feast of weeks, the Sabbath, the feast of the Passover, the first sheaf, the sabbatical year and the year of jubilee, the circumcision etc. The Old Covenant also had many rules: the washing of hands before eating, bathing after a sexual activity, menstruation, etc. If we must follow the tithe law, then we must follow the rest of the laws to be found righteous. If we choose to follow all the OT laws but fail in one, we are guilty of breaking all (James 2.10). If you follow the old law, then you have fallen from the grace of the new covenant. Those who operate under the Old Covenant law are under a curse.

On the other hand, all those who depend on the works of the law are under a curse, since scriptures says: Accursed be he who does not make what is written in the book of the law effective, by putting it into practice.' Now it is obvious that nobody is reckoned as upright in God's sight by the law, since the upright will live through faith, and the law is based not on faith, but on the principle, 'whoever complies with it will find life in it.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by being cursed for our sake since the scriptures says, Anyone hanged is accursed, so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the gentiles in Christ Jesus and that we might receive the promised spirit through faith (Galatians 3:10-14).

The law brings people under slavery (Galatians 4). The burden of tithing is not of Christ. The burden of circumcision in the days of Apostle Paul was not of Christ (Galatians 5.1-6). Christ freed us from the slavery of the old law (Galatians 5.1). We are freed to belong to another master. The Lord Jesus has given us an easy yoke. It is the debt of

love that we owe one another (Romans 13.8). By loving one another, we fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6.2).

Christians ask many unnecessary questions about tithe: "how to tithe correctly", "what should tithe money be used for", "who does tithe money belong to", etc. These questions are baseless. The right question should be: Are Christians obligated to tithe?

How God Provides for His Children

When Christ fulfilled the righteous demands of the old law on the cross, He gave us a new law (Matthew 5.17). A new law was given to replace the old ones. It is obeying this new law that guarantees us provision for our earthly needs (Mathew 6.33-34) and inheriting the kingdom of God. A Christian does not receive God's supply of provision by keeping the tithe law. He receives God's supply when he enters God's kingdom and obeys his words and righteous commandment in Christ. His new commandment is this:

And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment (1 John 3.23).

When God's kingdom and rules is the sole purpose of our hearts, all the other needs will be provided for. Many Christians are still to empty their hearts for God. You must love God and serve him only. Your career, your spouse, your children, your dreams, your plans, your purposes, your possessions must not overtake your hearts. You must obey /and fear God always. Serving and obeying only God is what guarantees heaven's provision. Tithing does not give you any security in the new covenant.

The early church did not practice tithing, rather they practiced total renunciation. God does not want 10%. God wants your all (Luke 14. 26-33). The early church sold their possessions and distributed among themselves as each other needed.

The whole community of believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but rather they shared all things in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, for all of them were living in an exceptional time of grace. There was no needy person among them, for those who owned land or houses, sold them and brought the proceeds of the sale.

And they laid it at the feet of the apostles who distributed it according to each one's need (Acts 4.32-35).

The disciples sold their properties to meet the need of the poor. The sales proceeds were never used to build any synagogue. The only way to eradicate poverty is for the rich to give to the poor (Deuteronomy 15.4). The receiver is blessed by receiving and the giver is blessed by God.

Earthly Riches

Is it the will of God for his children to be wealthy in earthly goods? Are Christians ready to hold fast to the words of Christ on earthly wealth? It is by stern obedience to the words of Christ, that we overcome the devil.

The Sermon on the Mount was a long and rich sermon from the LORD. In this sermon the LORD addressed many issues including the subject of earthly riches. His words are plain and clear.

Do Not Store Earthly Treasures

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Mathew 6.19-21).

“Lay not up treasures for yourself upon the earth” means do not store up earthly riches. To store means to gather more than you need. Rich people live in luxury beyond the need level. One who does not store up cannot become rich. A giver can never become rich because there are so many poor people.

The LORD does not want us to store up. He is angry with those who store earthly goods.

And Jesus continued with this story, "There was a rich man and his land had produced a good harvest. He thought: 'What shall I do? For I am short of room to store my

harvest.' So this is what he planned: 'I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones to store all this grain, which is my wealth. Then I may say to myself: My friend, you have a lot of good things put by for many years. Rest, eat, drink and enjoy yourself.' But God said to him: 'You fool! This very night your life will be taken from you, tell me who shall get all you have put aside?' This is the lot of the one who stores up riches instead of amassing for God (Luke 12.16-21)."

God does not want believers to store goods, but He wants believers to store treasures in heaven.

The light of our love shines when we give to the poor. The LORD God commanded us to love one another and give to the poor. God cares for the poor. Nothing but souls of men will go into eternity. Every other thing will be destroyed (2 Peter 3.7, Rev 21.1).

When we do not store earthly wealth, our hearts are freed from the spirit of mammon. Where your treasure is, there also your heart will be. The heart of the rich man is on his earthly wealth. If you have plenty money in the bank, then your heart is in the bank. You can't put plenty money in the bank and try to set your heart on God. You deceive yourself. This is the truth which the rich may never acknowledge. A rich man cannot enter the kingdom of God except he gives up his earthly treasures.

In the old covenant, earthly wealth was a promised blessing to the righteous. But in the new covenant, heavenly wealth is the promised blessing to the righteous. The way to the kingdom of Heaven was not yet open in the old covenant, so the requirement of not storing earthly wealth was not part of the old covenant.

Anyone attempting to serve both God and mammon cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven. We must love God with all our hearts.

When we do not store earthly wealth, our eyes are focused on God alone. The human eyes can have only a single focus at a time. The eyes that look at two directions at a time are evil eyes. The eyes that look to God and money are evil eyes. Such eyes can never see the light. If your eyes are evil, then your whole life will be given up to darkness. We must look at God only. We must not set our eyes on the riches of the earth.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon (Mathew 6.22-24).

Selling our earthly wealth and giving the money to the poor is a requirement for those who want to enter the kingdom of Heaven. By giving up our all, we qualify for discipleship unto perfection. The LORD commands anyone who wants to follow Him to sell his possessions, give to the poor, obtain purses in heaven, and follow Him (Luke14.33, Luke 12.33, Acts2.45, Mat 19.21).

The condition to sell ones' wealth was not meant only for the rich young ruler. It is meant for all following crowd who are yet to become following disciples.

One day, when large crowds were walking along with Jesus, he turned and said to them,

"If you come to me, without being ready to give up your love for your father and mother, your spouse and children, your brothers and sisters, and indeed yourself, you cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not follow me carrying his own cross cannot be my disciple.

Do you build a house without first sitting down to count the cost to see whether you have enough to complete it? Otherwise, if you have laid the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone will make fun of you: 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' And when a king wages war against another king, does he go to fight without first sitting down to consider whether his ten thousand can stand against the twenty thousand of his opponent? And if not, while the other is still a long way off he sends messengers for peace talks.

In the same way, none of you may become my disciple if he doesn't give up everything he has.

Sell what you have and give alms. Get yourselves purses that do not wear out, and make safe investments with God, where no thief comes and no moth destroys (Luke 12.33).

In Mathew 19.16-30, the LORD told the rich young ruler,

"If you wish to be perfect, go and sell all that you possess and give the money to the poor and you will become the owner of a treasure in heaven. Then come back and follow me."

On hearing this answer, the young man went away sad for he was a man of great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I say to you: it will be hard for one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yes, believe me: it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the one who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven."

The disciples had left everything to follow the LORD.

Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?

It is difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God because it is difficult for him to give away his all. He serves another god (his riches). You can only know how much something controls you when you are asked to give it up.

It is easier for a poor man to free his heart from mammon than it is for the rich man because the poor man has little. Very few rich men like Zacchaeus could pass through the needle's eye. Zacchaeus on hearing the gospel of the kingdom said to Christ, *'Look Sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him four times the amount'. And Jesus said, 'Today, salvation has come to this house... (Luke 19.8-10).*

After the Lord's departure, the church continued to sell their possessions and give away the proceeds to the poor among them. (Acts 4.32-35).

Yes, one must give up everything to follow Jesus.

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. The one who finds it buries it again, and so happy is he, that he goes and sells everything he has, in order to buy that field" (Mathew 13.44)

“Again the kingdom of heaven is like a trader who is looking for fine pearls. Once he has found a pearl of exceptional quality, he goes away, sells everything he has and buys it” (Mathew 13.45-46).

Money is unrighteous in its nature (Luke 16.1-15). The earth and all its substance were created by God, but money was never God’s invention. Men today give their entire lives to make money rather than to God. If you are not faithful in your dealings with money (cheating, defrauding, dishonesty, stealing etc.), who will give the true treasures of heaven.

Do Not Be Anxious

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Mathew 6.25-34).

To live in anxiety means to worry or think about tomorrow’s needs. The sinners live in anxiety. They worry about earthly things. The Children of the kingdom must not be anxious. The heavenly Father provides daily for all his children. We should do all we can to keep the rules of the Kingdom, then our needs will be met. Know God. Love the

truth. Obey God and keep the truth. It is not by worrying that our needs will be met. Worrying about earthly things takes your mind away from spiritual things. We must trust God and pray to God daily for each day's need. We must pray, "Give us today our daily bread" (Mathew 6.11). This is the way of the kingdom – the way of simplicity. One of the devil's lies is that earthly wealth is God's blessing. In the Old Covenant, God blessed his people with earthly riches but in the new covenant, God has blessed his children with spiritual riches (Eph.1.3). The way to the kingdom of God was opened only through the death of Christ – the blood of the new covenant.

The way to the kingdom of Heaven is narrow and hard. There are very few that walk that road. Abandoning earthly riches or desire for earthly riches is a difficult and almost impossible task to do. But with God, it is very possible.

The LORD does not want us poor but at the same time he does not want us to store up. The rich should give to the poor and the poor should not desire to store up. All believers including the poor should learn to give and share their resources (Mark 12.41-44). The poor people are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of God (Luke 6.20, Luke 14.18, James 2.5). There should be no limit to our giving (Luke 16.9).

Christians are pilgrims on the earth. We must lay aside every weight on the journey (Hebrews 12.1-2). God led the Israelites into the wilderness to teach them humility and trust. He gave them manna from heaven everyday but instructed them to collect according to their daily needs. Some Israelites collected more than they needed, and Moses was angry with them because they did not trust God to provide the next day as he did "today". The left-over manna stank and bred worms.

Apostle Paul's testimony after renouncing everything:

But once I found Christ, all those things that I might have considered as profit, I reckoned as loss. Still more, everything seems to me as nothing compared with the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my LORD. For his sake I have let everything fall away and I now consider all as garbage, if instead I may gain Christ. May I be found in him, without merit or holiness of my own for having fulfilled the Law, but with the holiness which

comes through faith in Christ, the holiness given by God which depends on faith in Christ Jesus. May I know him and experience the power of his resurrection and share in his sufferings and become like him in his death, and attain through this, God willing, the resurrection from the dead! (Philippians 3.7-11)

The Sin of Greed

Believers must watch out against the spirit of greed and all its kind.

The Parable of the Rich Fool

Then someone in the crowd told him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But Jesus asked him, "Mister, who appointed me to be a judge or arbitrator over you people?" Then he told them, "Be careful to guard yourselves against every kind of greed, because a person's life doesn't consist of the amount of possessions he has."

Then he told them a parable. He said, "The land of a certain rich man produced good crops. So he began to think to himself, 'What should I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and I'll store all my grain and goods in them. Then I'll say to myself, "You've stored up plenty of good things for many years. Take it easy, eat, drink, and enjoy yourself." But God told him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded back from you. Now who will get the things you've accumulated?' That's how it is with the person who stores up treasures for himself rather than with God."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "That's why I'm telling you to stop worrying about your life—what you will eat—or about your body—what you will wear, because life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the crows. They don't plant or harvest, they don't even have a storeroom or barn, yet God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than birds! Can any of you add an hour to the length of your life by worrying? So if you can't do a small thing like that, why worry about other things? Consider how the lilies grow. They don't work or spin yarn, but I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. Now if that's the way God

clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and thrown into an oven tomorrow, how much more will he clothe you—you who have little faith? "So stop concerning yourselves about what you will eat or what you will drink, and stop being distressed, because it is the gentiles who are concerned about all these things. Surely your Father knows that you need them! Instead, be concerned about his kingdom, and these things will be provided for you as well. Stop being afraid, little flock, because your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom.

"Sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor. Make yourselves wallets that don't wear out—a dependable treasure in heaven, where no thief can get close and no moth can destroy anything. Because where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Luke 12.13-34)."

The LORD Jesus warns his disciples to stay away from greed of every kind. Greed manifests itself in various ways:

- Fighting for property or inheritance
- Storing more than you need
- Covetousness
- Anxiety or worrying about your needs of tomorrow
- Refusal to share your goods with others
- Refusal to give or lend to others
- Lack of contentment with the basic things you have
- Craving for all the material things of these world
- Desire for plenty
- Stinginess or giving away only an insignificant portion of your wealth
- Possessing earthly riches
- Cheating, defrauding, stealing, dishonesty

We are to trust God daily (not yearly/monthly) for sustenance. Today, fighting for inheritance or storing lots of money or living your life to become rich is accepted as legitimate. These things are highly valued by men, but it is loathsome in the eyes of God.

The sin of Greed is the sin of idolatry and it is punishable by death.

So put to death your worldly impulses: sexual sin, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). It is because of these things that the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient (col. 3.5-6).

Do not let sexual sin, impurity of any kind, or greed even be mentioned among you, as is proper for saints. Obscene, flippant, or vulgar talk is totally inappropriate. Instead, let there be thanksgiving. For you know very well that no immoral or impure person, or anyone who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has an inheritance in the kingdom of the Messiah and of God. Do not let anyone deceive you with meaningless words, for it is because of these things that God becomes angry with those who disobey. So do not be partners with (Eph. 5.3-7)

Riches is a master (god). Many people serve money.

"No one can serve two masters, because either he will hate one and love the other, or be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and riches! (Mathew 6.24)"

The sin of idolatry is punishable by death.

But people who are cowardly, unfaithful, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars will find themselves in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur. This is the second death (Rev. 21.8)."

Many Christians may have already repented of other deadly sins such sexual sins, sorcery, murder but they are still to repent from greed (idolatry). Sexual sins are sins against the body. Greed is filth of the spirit. It is as deadly as sexual sins. Believers must thoroughly repent of this sin. Many believers have not been filled with the Holy Spirit because they have not yet dealt away with the spirit of greed. If they do not repent, they will not inherit the kingdom of Heaven. There are any false teachers today (wolves in sheep clothing). They are eating from the flock and are teaching same to their followers. Both they and their followers will land in death.

We are called to righteousness and not to comfort and luxury. Those who live in luxury now have already received their comfort. They will not receive the comfort of the Kingdom of Heaven (Luke 6.24, Luke 16.25-26).

The Gift of Tongues

The gift of tongues is a sign that follows believers in Christ Jesus.

“And these signs shall follow them that believe, In my name shall they cast out devils, they shall speak with new tongues, They shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them, they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:17).

Some Christians believe that the gift of tongues is a heavenly language and not an earthly language. Others believe that Christians can prophesy and preach in tongues. What are tongues? Must all speak in tongues? Is there just a gift or many gifts of tongues?

The Greek word translated tongues literally means “languages”. To understand the gift of tongues, we must understand its manifestations in the early church. In the Bible, the manifestation of the gift of tongues is recorded in the book of Acts. Its first manifestation was on the day of Pentecost. Another manifestation of the gift of tongues was in the house of Cornelius.

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which

...speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, these men are full of new wine (Acts 2:1-12).

Peter was still speaking when the Holy Spirit came upon all who listened to the Word. And the believers of Jewish origin who had come with Peter were amazed, "Why! God gives and pours the Holy Spirit on foreigners also!" For indeed this happened: they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God (Acts 10.46).

1. **“Tongues” means languages:** The disciples spoke with “other tongues”. Native Jews from every nation on the earth (expatriates) were at Jerusalem and heard them speak in their respective overseas languages.
2. **Tongues are earthly languages:** Other native Jews (nonemigrants) did not understand the languages of the disciples but the native Jewish expatriates from all nations understood them. To the nonemigrant Jews, the language/tongue is unknown (a mystery) since they do not understand. A mystery is something that is difficult or impossible to understand or explain. The native Jewish expatriates “were amazed” that the disciples spoke in languages that they had never learned. The nonemigrant native Jews who could not understand, considered the disciples drunk. The tongues were not an unintelligible babble/heavenly language rather it was an intelligible earthly language.
3. **The tongues were words of praise:** On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were magnifying God and declaring His wondrous works. In the house Cornelius, the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages offering words of praise to God.
4. **The tongues were spoken to God:** Their words were directed to God and not to men. They were loud in their praises, such that it pulled a crowd including the native speakers of the various languages (native Jewish expatriates).

The writings of Apostle Paul to the Corinthians do not contradict the manifestation of the gift on Pentecost or Cornelius' house.

The tongues were different earthly languages of men

- **Pentecost:** The native Jewish expatriates of each country under heaven understood their respective languages.
- **Apostle Paul:** *"I give thanks to God because I speak in tongues more than all of you"* (1 Corinthians 14.18).

Tongues are spoken unto God and is not for prophesy or preaching

- **Pentecost:** The disciples were praising God and declaring His wondrous works. Praises are made unto God and not unto men.
- **Apostle Paul:** *"The one who speaks in tongues does not speak to people, but to God"* (1 Corinthians 14.2).

An unknown tongue is a mystery

- **Pentecost:** The native nonemigrant Jews did not understand the words spoken and considered the apostles drunk. A foreign language is unknown to its hearers except it is interpreted
- **Apostle Paul:** *"...For no one understands him, the spirit makes him say things that are not understandable"* (1 Corinthians 14.2). *There are many languages in the world, and each of them has meaning, but if I cannot find any meaning in what is said, I become a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker to me...* (1 Corinthians 14.17).

The gift of tongues is just a sign to the unbeliever and not for prophecy or preaching.

- **Pentecost:** The faith of the unbelieving expatriate Jews was stirred when they heard the strangers speak in their overseas languages. Not only did the disciples speak in the languages of the foreign Jews, they were also glorying God before the unbelieving Jews. This was a sign that God was with the disciples. There was no prophesying or preaching in tongues.

- **Apostle Paul:** *"God says in the Law: 'I will speak to this people through those talking other tongues and through lips of foreigners, but even so they will not listen to me. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not'" (1 Corinthians 14.21-22).* The gift of tongues is different from the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14.4, 1 Cor.14.5).

There are many tongues but there is just one gift of tongues & one gift of interpretation

- **Pentecost:** The disciples spoke in many tongues (languages). The manifestation of the gift of tongues on Pentecost was same with that in Cornelius house. The same manifestation means it is the same gift. It is just one gift.

- **Apostle Paul:** *"To one it is given from the spirit..... the gift of different tongues and to another the interpretation of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12.10).* In a gathering of native nonemigrant believers, there must be someone with the gift of interpretation before anyone can speak in tongues (a foreign language). Only then will the church be edified. When the church hears and understands the words of praise, they can say Amen to it (1 Corinthians 14.13-17). If there are no native expatriate unbelievers in the meeting, there is really no need to speak in a foreign language except there is interpretation. With no interpretation, it will deter the native nonemigrant unbeliever (1 Cor.14.23) Tongues are a sign to an audience who are native expatriate or foreign unbelievers.

What is the gift of tongues?

The gift of tongues is the divine ability for a foreigner (non-native) to speak a foreign earthly language which he has never learned. The non-native speaker speaks unto God in words of prayer, praise and thanksgiving and not unto men. A language/tongue should be spoken audibly as a sign only in the audience of an unbelieving native speaker(s) or expatriates of the tongue. Believers do not need the sign, but they can receive edification if they understand. If the audience are native speakers of the foreign language, they will understand, but if the audience non-native speakers of the foreign language, then there must be an interpreter.

Praying in an unknown tongue

Praying in tongues is prayer that is made by the Holy Spirit with the human spirit unto God by word of mouth in a foreign earthly language (1 Corinthians 14.13-17). When we pray in tongues, our minds remain idle for we do not understand what we speak.

Praying in a native language

Praying in a native language is prayer that is made by me unto God. I understand every word because it is my native tongue. When I pray in my own language, my mind is fruitful.

The Holy Spirit's Prayer

The Holy Spirit can pray to God on our behalf. When He prays, the prayer is without words. Only a groaning sound may be heard The Holy Spirit intercedes for us. He makes perfect prayer for us because He prays according to the will of God.

"We are weak, but the Spirit comes to help us. How to ask? And what shall we ask for? We do not know, but the spirit intercedes for us without words, as if with groans. And He

who sees inner secrets knows the desires of the Spirit, for he asks for the holy ones what is pleasing to God" (Romans 8.26-27).

The Gift of Tongues Today

In the early church, not all those who were baptized in the Holy Spirit could speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12.30). All spirit-filled believers must not speak in tongues. There may be some in our time who may be operating in the true gift of tongues. If so, they must regulate the use of the gift to avoid confusion and disorderliness. The purpose of the gift is mainly to activate the faith of unbelievers. Any manifestation that defeats this purpose should be avoided. Today, there are many fake tongues and crazy manifestations which scares away the unbelievers. Some babble, others use repetitive syllables. Everyone can babble. Everyone can repeat some syllables, and everyone can fake moods. We must be careful that what we speak is indeed an existing identifiable earthly language. We must be careful not to enter evil spiritual manifestations. We need to be sure that the tongues are truly of the Holy Spirit.

The true gift of tongues may have gone silent. *"Prophecies may cease, tongues be silent and knowledge disappear" (1 Corinthians 13.8).* We must not be tempted to fill the vacuum by faking some tongues.

God had spoken through the O.T prophets that He would speak to the Jewish people through the sign of other tongues spoken by native Jewish foreign speakers (1 Corinthians 14.21). So, we really do not know if the LORD intended for the gift to be seasonal only during the era of the early church in Israel. God used the signs of tongues to speak to the unbelieving Jews. Many signs and wonders were done by the Holy Spirit through the early church. The Jews would not accept the messiah except they see signs. Most of them repented only when they saw the signs that were performed by the LORD and His disciples (John 2.23, John 4.48, John 6.2, John 6.30, John 7.31, Acts 1.3, Acts 8.6). The gentiles are not really moved by signs. They readily accept the gospel once they see the truth even if they do not see a sign or miracle. *"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1.22).* Most of the Jewish people believed because of signs. Signs were given them to activate their faith.

False Teachers

False teachers are people who teach errors to the people of God. They abound in our time. Believers who follow their erroneous teaching will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1. False teachers will not come out from the world. They will come out from among the righteous.

Little children, it is the last hour. Just as you heard that an antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. This is how we know it is the last hour. They left us, but they were not part of us, for if they had been part of us, they would have stayed with us. Their leaving made it clear that none of them was really part of us (1 John 2.18-19).

2. They will preach about the messiah, Jesus Christ.

"At that time, if anyone says to you, 'Look! Here is the Messiah!', or, 'Look! There he is!', don't believe it, because false messiahs and false prophets will appear (Mark 13.21).

3. They will come in the name of the LORD Jesus

"See to it that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name and say, 'I AM,' (Mark 13.5-6).

4. They will perform signs and wonders in the name of the LORD Jesus

...produce signs and omens to deceive, if possible, the elect. So be on your guard! I've told you everything before it happens" (Mark 13.22-23).

5. They will deceive many

...and they will deceive many people (Mark 13.5-6).

False teachers are not known by the signs they perform (healing, miracles etc.). They are not known by their preaching about the LORD Jesus. False teachers are known by their fruits – their nature or character.

Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are savage wolves. You will know them by their fruit. Grapes aren't gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles, are they? In the same way, every good tree produces good fruit, but a rotten tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into a fire. So by their fruit you will know them (Mathew 7.15-20).

Greed is the principal mark/fruit of a false teacher. In their greed, they will teach errors just to make financial gain from the house of God. Sexual immorality and other deadly sins are other marks of a false teacher.

“Now there were false prophets among the people, just as there also will be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies and even deny the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many people will follow their immoral ways, and because of them the way of truth will be maligned. In their greed they will exploit you with deceptive words. The ancient verdict against them is still in force, and their destruction is not delayed (2Pe. 2.1-3).

The evil spirit of the false prophet is going about performing signs and confirming the erroneous teachings of the false teachers who deceive people not to follow the way of truth (Rev. 16.13-14). They perform signs in the LORD's name to make people believe in the wrong gospel.

The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the power of Satan. He will use every kind of power, including miraculous signs, lying wonders, and every type of evil to deceive those who are dying, those who refused to love the truth that would save them (2 Th 2.9-10)

Only an evil generation seeks after signs. The word of the LORD is enough for us to believe in Him. Christians must not follow signs. They should not follow eloquence of speech nor biblical knowledge. They should follow the LORD Jesus while they fellowship with Christians who obey the word of God.

Beware of preachers with bottomless purses! Beware of rich preachers! Do not listen to their deceitful words lest you become entrapped. We shall overcome the evil one if only

we obey completely the words of the LORD Jesus. It is only in keeping the words of the LORD that we shall overcome the devil.

The LORD will reject all false teachers in His Day even if they preached His name and did signs in His name. False teachers do not belong to the LORD. They belong to the devil. If the devil gets everyone to believe the false gospel, then there will be no room for the true gospel. Be careful with those who reject the plain words of Christ.

"Not everyone who keeps saying to me, 'LORD, LORD,' will get into the kingdom from heaven, but only the person who keeps doing the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'LORD, LORD, we prophesied in your name, drove out demons in your name, and performed many miracles in your name, didn't we? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who practice evil!' (Mathew 7.21-23).

Refute Errors, Remain in the Truth

Christians may not always know that they are being deceived. Peter in expressing his love for Christ, was deceived by Satan in trying to stop Christ from going to the cross (Mathew 16.21-23). Jesus looked past Peter's love and saw Satan leading Peter away from the will of God.

The goal of the Christian life is to remain Spirit filled. The believer should submit to the Holy Spirit who is the authority of the church and not to men who call themselves "spiritual fathers". The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of knowledge and sound mind. Christians do not need anyone to teach them. If the Holy Spirit resides in them, He will teach them all truth. The truth sanctifies (John 17:17) and sets free. The LORD Jesus is the light of the world. He who follows Him will not walk in the dark but have the light of life. Believers must submit to the true and one head, the LORD Jesus Christ. They should stop following blind leaders who do not understand the scriptures or the difficult words of Apostle Paul. We must be careful not to follow the Spirit of Error who leads unto death. Love the truth and hate error.

Therefore, beloved, as you wait in expectation of this, strive that God may find you rooted in peace, without blemish or fault. And consider that God's patience is for our salvation, as our beloved brother Paul wrote to you, with the wisdom given him.

He speaks of these things in all his letters. There are, however, some points in them that are difficult to understand, which people who are ignorant and immature in their faith twist, as they do with the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. So then, dearly beloved, as you have been warned, be careful lest those people who have gone astray deceive you in turn and drag you along, making you stumble and finally fall away. Grow in the grace and knowledge of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ: to him be glory, now and to the day of eternity. Amen (2 Peter 3.14-18).

Other books by Author:

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Life in the Spirit of Christ Jesus

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Short Sermons

After the Earthly Life

True Riches

False Teachers in the Church of God