

# The Principle of Remnant Restoration

By David Lee Burris

SANCTIFICATION: PUNCTUATED PLUS PROCESS



## SANCTIFICATION

### The Three Tenses of Sanctification

- **PAST- Positional:** *have been saved* from the guilt and PENALTY of sin
- **PRESENT- Progressive:** *being saved* from the power of sin
- **FUTURE- Final:** *will be saved* from the presence of sin.

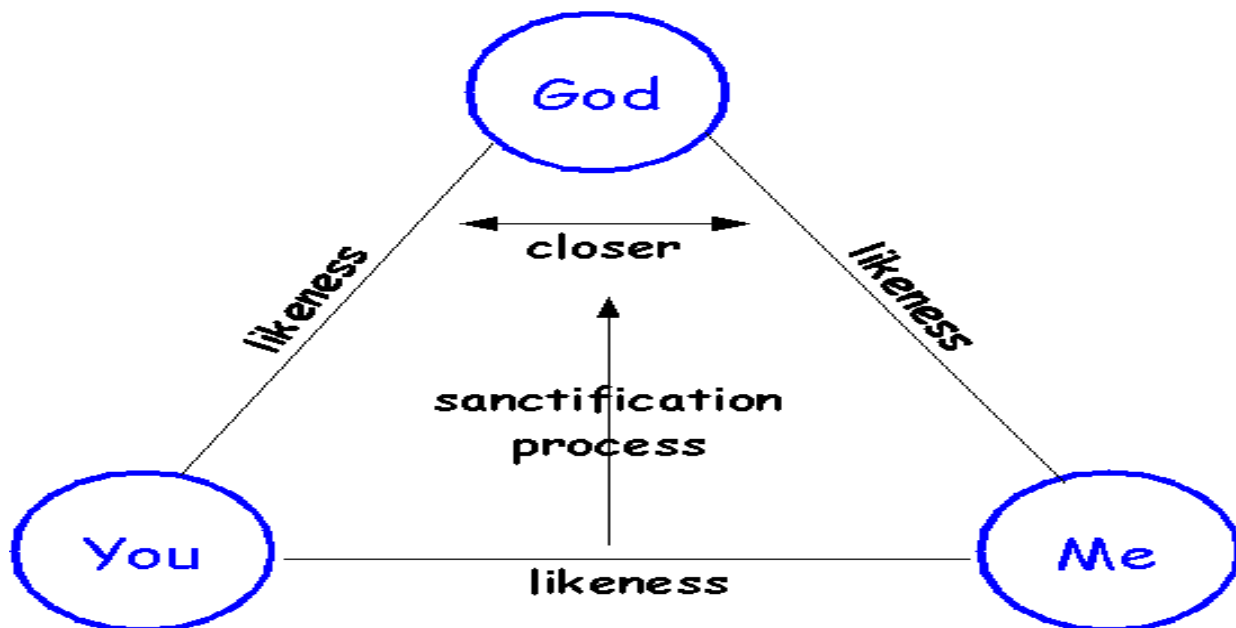


## THREE PHASES OF SANTIFICATION

<b>PAST (Positional)</b>	<b>PRESENT (Progressive)</b>	<b>FUTURE (Ultimate)</b>
<b>Salvation</b> (Heb. 10:10; 1 Cor. 1:2)	<b>Spiritual Growth</b> (1 Thes. 4:3-7; 1 Pet. 1:16)	<b>Glorification</b> (Eph. 5:26-27; Jude 24)

- **POSITIONAL SANCTIFICATION** - delivers from the penalty of sin at the moment of our salvation
- **PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION** - delivers from the power of sin when we are filled with the Holy Spirit in our daily walk
- **ULTIMATE SANCTIFICATION** - delivers from the presence of sin at the time of our death

- We have been declared holy.
- We are becoming holy.
- We will be made holy.



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## What is a Saint?

by [Kyle Butt, M.Div.](#)



One of our readers posed an excellent question. He asked: “Paul talks a lot about saints. He writes about, ‘to the saints at Ephesus, etc.’ Who are these saints? Do they know they are saints? Did Paul know he was a saint? I understand it that sainthood is a reward for later.”

The concept of a saint and sainthood is often misunderstood. Due to the teachings of certain religious groups, sainthood is supposedly only achieved by “super” Christians who lived an almost perfect life and did some type of verifiable miracle. After the person’s death, his or her life and actions are put through an extensive process of nominating, voting, and ultimately confirmation as a saint. When we look into the Bible, however, we see a completely different, and much simpler explanation of what a saint actually is.

The short answer to the sainthood question is that God refers to any person who becomes a Christian as a saint. The word “saint” is a form of the term “sanctify” and simply means one who is set apart in holy service to God. First Corinthians 1:2 gives us a clear example of this use of the term: “To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.” Notice that the letter is written to all the members of the church in Corinth. They are all said to be sanctified, or set apart. Furthermore, Paul insists that all the Christians were “called to be saints” with “**all** those....” The Bible declares that all Christians, everywhere, are saints.

To better understand this idea, consider the concept of being “sanctified.” What group of people is sanctified, or set apart for holy service to God? In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Paul reminded the Corinthian church about sins they had committed in the past. He then stated, “But you were washed, but you **sanctified**, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (vs. 11) Notice that all the Christians in Corinth were sanctified and set apart to God’s service, not just a chosen, elite group.

The beginning of Paul’s epistle to the Romans clarifies sainthood even further. Paul explains that He is a servant of Christ “separated,” or better translated “set apart,” to the Gospel of God (1:1). He then writes, “To **all** who are in Rome, beloved of God, **called to be saints.**” Again, take note of Paul’s use of the word “**all**” to refer to all the Christians in Rome who were “called” to be saints. How, then, is a person called to be a saint?

Paul hints at that with his statement about being set apart “to the gospel of God.” In 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, He more directly states that “God from the beginning chose you [the church of the Thessalonians—KB] for salvation through **sanctification** by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our **gospel**, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” God, through the inspired Paul, explains that any person who has become a Christian through belief and obedience to the Gospel (see 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8), has been sanctified and is considered a saint.

Depending on the translation you use, the terms saint or saints are used approximately 60 times in the New Testament. Even a brief look at those verses will show that the Bible contains no concept of a “Super Christian” being a saint. Paul concluded his letter to the Philippian church with these words: “Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you” (4:21). He wanted the Philippians to understand that all Christians are saints. These saints were alive and well. Their lives had not been granted sainthood after their deaths. Nor did they have to verify that they had performed a documented miracle to achieve a higher level of holiness. What had they done to become saints? They simply obeyed the Gospel of Christ when it was preached to them, just as the 3,000 did on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2.

It is sometimes tempting to compare our lives to others and view ourselves as “less holy.” We might even have stated in the past, when asked about our behavior, “Well, I’m no saint.” The fact is, however, that no one ever gained a level of holiness that could earn a place in heaven. Christians are holy, able to be called saints, not because they earned salvation or because they are super spiritual. On the contrary, God made “Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him [Christ—KB]” (2 Corinthians 5:21). All faithful Christians are holy saints, not because they are spiritual giants, but because of “the precious blood of Christ” which He shed “as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19).

# Sanctification

Wherefore Jesus also,  
that he might sanctify the people with his  
blood, suffered without the gate. Heb. 13:12.

By J. W. BYERS

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## WHAT IS SANCTIFICATION?

Scripturally, the word **sanctification** has three meanings: First, separation; second, dedication; third, spirit-filling. Webster's definition of it is as follows: "1. Sanctification is the act of God's grace by which the affections of man are purified, or alienated from sin and the world, and exalted to a supreme love of God; also, the state of being thus purified or sanctified. 2. The act of consecrating, or setting apart for a sacred purpose." "**Sanctifier**. One who sanctifies or makes holy; specifically, the Holy Ghost." "**Sanctify**. 1. To set apart to a holy or religious use. 2. To make holy or free from sin; to cleanse from moral corruption or pollution; to make holy by detaching the affections from the world and its defilements and exalting them to a supreme love of God." Scripturally and practically, the terms sanctification, holiness, purity, and perfection are synonymous. **Holiness**, Separation: setting apart; sacredness. **Purity**. Cleanness; chastity. **Perfection**. Completeness; wholeness. All this is comprehended in one word, **sanctification**. It is evident that this term signifies much more in the New Testament sense than it does in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament it meant but a dedication, a setting apart to a holy use, as in the example of the sanctification of the tabernacle and its contents—the altar and laver, and all the vessels belonging thereto—and Aaron and his sons and their garments. Lev. 8:10–30. In this dispensation of grace it means infinitely more; for in that dispensation it was but an outward and ceremonial work, but now it is an inwrought work, permeating and purifying the affections through and through by the cleansing blood and filling the dedicated temple, our body, as in the example of the early church at Pentecost.

## CONSECRATION AND DEDICATION

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

We find that in the old dispensation everything that was to be employed in the service of God necessarily had to be consecrated. In the tabernacle and temple service every vessel and article of furniture, even the smallest spoon, the tongs, and snuffers, together with the building itself, and all the priests and their garments, were consecrated wholly unto God, to be used for no other purpose than divine service. This setting apart for holy service was the Old Testament sanctification. The setting apart of these things, together with the ceremonial application of what God had ordained to be used in this dedication, was acceptable in his sight.

This consecration in the old dispensation is but a shadow of the new. It was God’s own way of sanctification—making things holy unto himself. The mere declaration on the part of Moses, in the consecration of these things, that they were now holy, would not have been sufficient without the careful observance of the application of the blood of animals and the holy anointing oil, which were typical of the blood of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Some of the articles of the tabernacles and temple were sanctified simply by a setting apart and sprinkling with oil (Lev. 8:10), while others required the application of oil and blood. Lev. 8:11, Lev. 8:15. In the consecration of Aaron and his sons the anointing oil and the blood were applied. Without this they would not have been sanctified. Lev. 8:30. The apostle speaks of this in his letter to the Hebrews—“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”—Heb. 9:13.

It is both scriptural and logical that we present our bodies a living sacrifice, not only for service but for actual sacrifice in a definite and absolute consecration. We would not be proper candidates for sanctification if we were clinging to anything sinful. Everything sinful must be forsaken and denounced by the guilty sinner when he comes to God for pardon. Otherwise he would never be forgiven of his sins. The world, the flesh, and the devil are forsaken in true repentance. “Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” Therefore, all sinful things are laid aside forever in repentance. This is the Bible signification of repentance: To give up all sinful things. But the Bible signification of consecration is to present to Jesus all the sacred treasures of our hearts—give up all our good things. It soon becomes a significant fact thoroughly understood that Jesus requires the undivided heart and every affection. You cannot refuse him. He has done too much for you. He suffered without the gate that he might sanctify you with his own blood.

**He gave himself for the church that he might sanctify and cleanse it;** and now how can you withhold anything from him? He has a just right to all your affections. He gave his all for you, and now it is right that you should give your all for him. He sacrificed his life for you; now you are brought to the sacrifice of your life for him—a living sacrifice. You see that this claim is right and just. It is a reasonable requirement on his part; a “reasonable service” on your part.

In the dedication of the tabernacle we have a beautiful type of the dedication of ourselves to this “reasonable service” of God. The erection of the tabernacle, the placing of all the furniture, and the arrangement of the entire structure had to be made in every respect “according to the pattern” shown to Moses on the mount. In the completion of all the work, we read in Ex. 40 that it was now all done “as the Lord commanded Moses.” He might have thought it did not matter much about some of these things, and that the Lord would not require every small thing to be done according to the pattern; but no matter what he might have thought, he knew that obedience to every requirement of the Lord was his only safety; so he made everything according to the pattern. In Ex. 40:33 the record says, “So Moses finished the work.”

## THE SUBTRACTION PROCESS

No mortal language can ever express how much of an addition it [sanctification] is; but there must necessarily precede and absolute subtraction, this marvelous grace, a definite a loss of all things for the excellency of Christ, a complete self-abnegation, which has been mentioned in a previous chapter upon consecration. Until this absolute loss of all things has been truly experienced, there cannot be obtained the gain of this additional experience. We cannot lay hold of the promised inheritance until we completely let go of everything else that has been called our own.

“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”—Rom. 6:6. It cannot be improved upon nor cultivated. It is not the yielding up of our old man, therefore, that seems such a loss to us; but when we see that our whole being, spirit, soul, and body, with every affection and its object, must be yielded up and truly laid upon the altar, we realize the subtraction process of sanctification—the loss of all things. Our old man cannot be crucified until everything is thus first yielded up. As long as any one object of our affection is withheld, the consecration is incomplete and the affections cannot be purified; hence the necessity of an absolute yielding up of everything, to obtain the excellency of this heavenly grace. In this condition we can assuredly experience the meaning of the words: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.” We gave everything, our all, for him. He purified our hearts and now gives everything, his all, to us. Without the subtraction of our all, first, we cannot obtain the addition, his all.



The apostle Paul expresses this crucifixion in his testimony in Gal. 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." There was something of the apostle that was crucified. It was the same as he speaks of in Rom. 6:6, "our old man." That carnal self, the proud, haughty Pharisee, the great Saul of Tarsus who considered himself of such importance among men. This was the I that was crucified; but there was an I who still lived. This was the humble, sanctified Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ, who now considered himself less than the least of all saints, and not worthy to be called an apostle. What a contrast between the two I's. The one, the big I; the other, the little I. They are exactly of opposite natures. The one was Paul's "old man," the other his humble individual self. Jesus and the big I cannot rule together in the same heart.

The language of the apostle in Gal. 6:14 also expresses the same experience: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The blood of the cross has destroyed that inward nature which was the point of contact with the world. As long as this exists within, the world has a strong claim upon us, which, so long as it exists within us, will assert its nature, and, if permitted, will communicate with the world, and cause defeat in our Christian life, so that we cannot conscientiously say we are dead to the world: for there is something within us yet that is actually alive in this respect. This is the point of inward contact with the world, which, when brought into crucifixion, changes our inward condition and enables us to truly say with the apostle, that the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world, by the blood of the cross of Christ, and the life we now live in this mortal body, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, we live by the faith of the Son of God, who has all power to keep us in the divine law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, which makes and keeps us free from the law of sin and death.

In Matt. 15:13 we have this same doctrine of cleansing expressed in the words of Jesus: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." While it is true that Jesus was speaking of the doctrines of the Pharisees in this instance, we can see beyond the simple doctrines and traditions of men, which are but the outgrowth of this root and so long as it remains, there cannot be a satisfactory Christian life. But the heavenly decree has been uttered by the Redeemer himself, that this plant shall be rooted up, which rooting up can be testified to by thousands of blood-washed saints today. Many plain scriptures teach us that this experience of heart purity was a recognized fact in the apostolic days. Jesus taught that it was attainable and told of its blessings when in Matt. 5:8 he speaks of the pure in heart. John writes: "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Paul says that "the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart" (1 Tim. 1:5), and in the same letter he writes "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." — 1 Tim. 3:9. Also in 1 Tim. 4:12, he writes: "Let no man despise thy youth: but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." In 1 Tim. 5:22, he says, "Keep thyself pure." In 2 Tim. 2:22 we are taught that many of the saints had this experience of cleansing: "Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."



# CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Definition of **perfection**: Unblemished, blameless, pure.

We are commanded to be perfect. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”—Matt. 5:48. “For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection. Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”—2 Cor. 13:9, 11. “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.”—Heb. 6:1.

**We must be perfect in love.** “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.”—Luke 10:27. “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”—Col. 3:14. “But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.”—1 John 2:5. “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us ... Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world.”—1 John 4:12, 17.

**Perfect in unity.** “For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”—Heb. 2:11. “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”—John 17:19–23.

**Perfect in Christ.** “Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.” “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”—Col. 1:28; Col. 2:10; Col. 4:12.

**Perfect in purity.** “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.”—1 John 3:2–3. “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”—2 Cor. 7:1. “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward YOU: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.”—1 Thess. 3:12–13.

**The difference between present and future perfection.** In his letter to the church at Philippi, the apostle speaks of a perfection in the future, which unless understood may confuse some minds upon this subject. In Phil. 3:12 he writes, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Here it sounds as though perfection is not attainable in this life, but if we notice the language of the context we can clearly see that he is speaking of the resurrection of the dead. Phil. 3:11. It is the resurrection perfection that he here has reference to, which cannot be attained in this life. We must wait with the apostle until this “mortality shall be swallowed up of life,” before we reach a state of absolute perfection, and with him, “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” But in Phil. 3:15 he says, “Let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded,” showing that there is a present perfection which he, with others, has already attained.

## HOLINESS

**Holiness an attribute of God.** “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”—Ex. 15:11. “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.”—Isa. 6:3. “And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”—Rev. 4:8.

**God must be worshiped in holiness.** “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”—1 Chron. 16:29. “Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.”—Psa. 30:4.

**God’s throne and dwelling-place.** “God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.”—Psa. 47:8. “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.”—Isa. 57:15. “Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.”—Zech. 2:13. “Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and thy glory.”—Isa. 63:15.

**Holiness becomes God’s house.** “Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever.”—Psa. 93:5. “The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness.”—Titus 2:3.

**The church of God is called a mountain of holiness.** “The Lord bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.”—Jer. 31:23. “Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain.”—Zech. 8:3. “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and the dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain saith the Lord.”—Isa. 65:25.

**God speaks in holiness.** “God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice.”—Psa. 60:6. “Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the Lord, and because of the words of his holiness.”—Jer. 23:9.

**The way of holiness.** “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those; the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”—Isa. 35:8–10.

**The courts of holiness.** “But they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the courts of my holiness.”—Isa. 62:9.

**The people of God are holy.** “The people of thy holiness have possessed but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down thy sanctuary.”—Isa. 63:18. “And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken.”—Isa. 62:12. “And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken.”—Deut. 26:18–19. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”—1 Pet. 2:9.

**We are called unto holiness.** “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”—Heb. 12:14. “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.”—1 Pet. 1:15–16. “For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.”—1 Thess. 4:7. “That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.”—Luke 1:74–75. “For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”—Heb. 12:10.

**A perfect holiness attainable.** “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”—2 Cor. 7:1.

**Fruit unto holiness.** “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”—Rom. 6:22.

The foregoing scriptures are but a few out of the many plain texts from the word of God teaching us the glorious doctrine of holiness. Some professing Christians look upon this doctrine as unscriptural and impracticable, but in the light of the gospel of Christ there is no other doctrine taught than holiness. The very fact that God, and Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the word of God, and heaven, and all the celestial hosts are holy, at once suggests to every reasonable mind the utter necessity of holiness in the heart and life of man. The apostle says (Eph. 2:10) that “we are his workmanship, created in Jesus Christ unto good works.”

No scriptural unity will ever be effected among the people of God outside the experience of sanctification. Men have repeatedly laid other foundations, but all to no avail. The holy people are one people, and all are willing to be measured by all of the word of God, which proves to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The apostle teaches us, in Heb. 12:10, that God imparts unto us his holiness: we are partakers of it. It is not an experience which we by our efforts can attain to, but upon the clearly defined conditions of his word we come into possession of his holiness. It is all wrought within us by himself. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Bible holiness is truly an imported article directly from God out of heaven. A definite, absolute consecration to the loss of all things will never fail to procure the genuine article of true Bible holiness, which will stand the wear of every trial of life and the test of the judgment.

## THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."—John 15:1–8.

This beautiful analogy teaches us an important lesson. The standard of sanctification is clearly exemplified in the relation between the vine and the branches. Christ is the vine, and every **individual Christian is an individual branch**; every branch is an individual member of the vine, and every Christian is an individual member of Christ. What a **clear view of the church**, and how plainly we can see that there is but one. Every soul is by one Spirit baptized into this one body. This vine is cared for and kept by God himself, who is the husbandman. Every branch must be a living, fruit-bearing one. It is placed into the vine by the hand which will care for it, and give it every necessary treatment to cause it to bring forth much fruit. If it bears fruit it will be kept in the vine; if it does not bear fruit it will be taken away. The same life which flows through the vine also flows into the branches. It is the branches that bear the fruit. It is the part of the vine to sustain the branches, and the part of the branches to bear fruit. The fruit is the production of the vine-life in the branches. The word of God teaches us that Christ is pure and holy, and in Rom. 11:16 we are taught that if the root be holy, so are the branches. The manner of the induction of the branches into the vine is illustrated by the process of grafting. We are not grown into Christ, but grafted into him.

A certain writer who advocates the **repression theory of sanctification** says: "But if I want a tree wholly made good I take it when young and, cutting the stem off on the ground, I graft just where it emerges from the soil; I watch over every bud which the old nature could possibly put forth until the flow of sap from the old roots into the new stem is so complete that the old life has, as it were, been entirely conquered and covered of the new. Now I have a tree entirely renewed—emblem of a Christian who has learned in entire consecration to surrender everything for Christ, and in a whole-hearted faith wholly to abide in him. If in this case the old tree were a reasonable being that could cooperate with the gardener, what would the gardener's language be to it? Would it not be this: 'Yield now thyself entirely to this new nature with which I have invested thee; repress every tendency of the old nature to give buds or sprouts; let all thy sap and all thy life-powers rise up into this graft from yonder beautiful tree which I have put on thee, so shalt thou bring forth sweet and much fruit.' And the language of the tree to the gardener would be: 'When thou graffest me, oh, spare not a single branch, let everything of the old self, even the smallest bud, be destroyed, that I may no longer live in my own, but in that other life that was cut off and brought and put upon me that I might be wholly new and good.' And once again, could you afterwards ask the renewed tree, as it was bearing abundant fruit, what it could say of itself, its answer would be this: 'In me (that is, my roots) there dwelleth no good thing; I am ever inclined to evil; the sap I collect from the soil is in its nature corrupt, and ready to show itself in bearing evil fruit. But just where the sap rises into the sunshine to ripen into fruit, the wise gardener hath clothed me with a new life through which my sap is purified and all my powers are renewed to the bringing forth of good fruit.'"

This author has entirely reversed the scriptural order of grafting in his application of the graft and root, and has illustrated the relation of Christ and the believer by the natural grafting process which can in no sense scripturally apply to this holy relation. Christ is the vine or root, and not the graft. The natural process of grafting is to graft the good graft into a poor root. The graft will grow into a tree and bear the same kind of fruit as the tree from which it was taken, and thus the gardener increases the production of good fruit. But the divine process of grafting is just the reverse. In Romans 11:24 the apostle says we are grafted into the olive tree (Christ) "contrary to nature." The husbandman takes the penitent sinner out of the kingdom of darkness and translates him into the kingdom of his dear Son. In this regeneration process the sinner (the graft) that was sinful and bore fruit is by God's own process grafted into Christ, the holy vine, and from thence to bear holy fruit. This is certainly a great mystery, like all the works of God's grace, and is indeed contrary to nature, but in perfect conformity with the plan of redemption.

Now, in this condition, there is a certain requirement of the graft necessary that it may bear the vine-fruit; it must **abide** in the vine. This abiding requires a careful watchfulness lest there might be some sprout of the old inward nature, which yet exists within the newly grafted branch, which would spring up and hinder the perfect fruit-bearing of the vine-life. And in this early life, in this new relation of the branch with the vine, it is an attested fact that in quantity this fruit production is more or less hindered by the presence of the old inward nature, in the branch, which if permitted to sprout and grow would certainly prevent the growth of the vine-fruit entirely, and thereby cause the branch to be cut off.

That the branch is in the vine there can be no question, for its environments are completely changed and it finds itself a stranger to all of its former associations, customs, and habits. That the vine-life is in the branch there can equally be no question, for the branch has the inward consciousness bearing witness that it belongs to the vine, and it enjoys the sweet fellowship of the vine and all its branches. Also, it bears the vine-fruit which brings upon itself the approval of the husbandman.

“Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” This purging is another process quite contrary to nature, for the term signifies an inward cleansing. A vine-dresser can prune or trim a branch and thereby practically make it clean outwardly from all unnecessary or harmful sprouts which would hinder it from bearing fruit, but there is no known natural process by which the grafted branch could have its inward conditions changed which would affect its nature.

**We can see clearly that the entire process of grafting the inferior branch into the good root, and the subsequent purging is wholly contrary to nature, for no man with an object of profit would do any such grafting, neither could anyone reasonably expect the inward conditions of such a graft to become changed.**

This purging is wrought within for the purpose of an increase of holy fruit. How beautifully it pictures the experience of sanctification, and subsequent work wrought in the soul of the justified fruit-bearing child of God. It is not a pruning of any unholy sprouts, for they are to be wholly kept from sprouting in the process of the life of bearing holy fruit in this justified relation. The branch is now bearing the very fruit of the holy root, but there is something to be done in it that it may bring forth more fruit; it must be purged its parent stock—its “old man ... that the body of sin might be destroyed.”

This purging is just what perfects the inward harmony of the branch with the vine. It could not continue very long in the abiding condition without a consciousness of the need of the purging process. This process becomes a necessity to every branch which abides. “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit,” which is equivalent to the text, “Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” It is purged that it may bring forth “more fruit,” and now the object of purging is realized, it brings forth “much fruit.” Thank God for the purging, the subsequent work in the heart!

Truly we have much reason to praise God for his wonderful grace in which he brings man, his fallen creature, into such a position that he may become a son of God. “If a man therefore purge himself, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”—2 Timothy 2:21.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Byers, J. W. (1902). [Sanctification](#). Guthrie, OK: Faith Publishing House.

# The Bible Doctrine of Sanctification

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

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The Greek terms that are rendered into English by “sanctification,” “holy,” and “saints” convey important biblical truths. Unfortunately, in the world of “Christendom” many erroneous ideas have grown up around these expressions. Some interpret “sanctified” as the equivalent of “saved.” Practically speaking, the saved and the sanctified represent the same class of people, but the terms have different points of emphasis.

Others allege that sanctification refers to the process by which the original “carnal nature with which every human is born” is purged (Earle 2000, 324). This is not true, for human beings are **not born** with a “carnal” nature (Jackson 2009, 67-68). Some believe “sanctification” is a state of absolute, sustained perfection which some Christians attain in this life. This theory is similarly void of truth; not even Paul had achieved perfection (Phil. 3:12; cf. Rom. 7:18ff; see Cottrell 1996, 442ff).

Catholicism contends that the “saints” are an exclusive group of deceased holy people who now abide in heaven, who have passed through a “canonization” process (with papal validation). Supposedly these “saints” make intercession for the people of God on earth. This dogma is wholly foreign to the New Testament. In the Bible, “saints” are holy people who live on earth (cf. Acts 9:13, 32, 41; 1 Cor. 1:2; Phil. 1:1, etc.). The term is never used in the New Testament of heavenly beings.

## The Word Family

In the New Testament words frequently appear in families. By this we mean that from an original root or stem various grammatical forms have developed. And though there is a common linguistic ancestry, different meanings in varying contexts are apparent. The careful student must note the grammatical differences along with their contexts, and thereby attempt to derive the correct meanings in diverse passages.



In this study we will examine the family of words that reflect the ideas of sanctification, holiness, and saints. This New Testament family of cognate forms is found in several grammatical modes more than 275 times. Consider the following breakdown which indicates renditions as found in the **King James Version**. Variations will be reflected in other English translations.

1. *Hagiazo* (a verb; found twenty-eight times) is rendered by such terms as “sanctify” (Eph. 5:26), “hallow” (Mt. 6:9), or “be holy” (Rev. 22:11).
2. *Hagiasmos* (noun; ten times) may be “holiness” (Rom. 6:19) or “sanctification” (Heb. 12:14, ASV).
3. *Hagios* (adjective; 233-234 times) may be rendered “holy” (Acts 2:38), “saints” (Phil. 1:1), “holy one” (Mk. 1:24), or “holy thing” (Lk. 1:35).
4. *Hagiotes* (noun; two times) is “holiness” (Heb. 12:10).
5. *Hagiosyne* (noun; three times) is found as “holiness” (Rom. 1:4).

In its historical development the basic word form passed through several stages. Initially *hagios* referred to that which elicited a sense of reverence or awe. Later it came to signify something cleansed of contamination. Eventually, the term connoted those who, as a result of their cleansing, have been set aside, as dedicated to the service of God. An appreciation of this latter connotation would drastically change the lives of some church members. Let us consider some basic Bible facts regarding sanctification.

## Sanctification

Since the Bible teaches that no accountable person can enter heaven without sanctification (Heb. 12:14), it is paramount that those desiring eternal life understand and appreciate the importance of this theme. Consider the following dimensions of this exalted topic.

### Divine Source

There is an **ultimate** sense in which only God sanctifies a person. On behalf of his disciples, Christ addressed his Father: “Sanctify them” (Jn. 17:17a). The verb is an imperative form, suggesting a strong petition. The sanctification of this text is not salvation; the disciples were saved already.

This request was that they be set apart and fortified for the rigorous work that would be required of them after their Master's departure.

The same in **principle**, however, is true of Christian sanctification. The process must originate with God (Rom. 1:7). Sanctification cannot be achieved apart from salvation, and forgiveness cannot occur by means of any plan or mode of operation that results from **human** genius.

Redemption is not "of" (*ek*—"out of") **ourselves** (Eph. 2:8b), nor by any "plan or course of action" involving a "good deed or noble action" **initiated** by men (Thayer 1958, 248, 526).

### **Basis of Sanctification**

Apart from the death of Jesus, there could be no sanctification. By means of the new covenant, "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). Those who seek pardon for their sins apart from the gospel of Christ search in vain. There is no other way (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12).

### **Mode of Sanctification**

The mode of sanctification is divine truth, embodied in God's written word (Jn. 17:17b). This sacred consecration is not some esoteric influence sent directly from heaven independent of an initial verbal revelation (now embodied in the Scriptures). Nor is sanctification (holiness) a unique bestowal upon the "elect," who supposedly were chosen by God before creation, as Calvin contended (1975, xxii.2). Instead, sanctification is a **choice** that human beings make. It is never forced upon them by some irresistible influence.

### **Human Responsibility**

The process of sanctification begins with an **attitude**. Peter forcefully charged: "[S]anctify in your hearts Christ as Lord" (1 Pet. 3:15a). The verb "sanctify" is an aorist, imperative form—a sacred **command** suggesting urgent attention. The command format demonstrates that man is not wholly passive in his sanctification. Though the apostle was addressing Christians, the principle applies to the lost as well.

The sense of Christian sanctification is a “setting apart” resolve, i.e., mentally submitting to Christ as the Master of one’s life. The “heart” is a person’s decision-making center. Jesus is to be the driving force in the exercise of a Christian’s volition. The phrase is somewhat analogous to that of the model prayer. “Hallowed *hagiazō* (imperative mood)] be your name” (Mt. 6:9). The obligation is to reverence God and “to glorify him by obedience to his commands” (Brown 1976, 229).

### **Accessing Sanctification**

In a text that explicitly has to do with salvation, Paul declares that Christ gave himself up for the church that he might “sanctify” it, “having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word” (Eph. 5:25-26). Several vital truths are here contained:

- Christ’s death was necessary for both the cleansing and sanctification processes.
- Cleansing is preparatory to sanctification.
- The cleansing is accomplished by the “washing of water with *en* (i.e., accompanied by; cf. Moule 1953, 78)] the word.”

The terms “word,” “water,” and “cleansing” are the doctrinal equivalents of “Spirit,” “water,” and “kingdom” (Jn. 3:5), complemented elsewhere with “Spirit,” “washing of regeneration,” and “saved” (Tit. 3:5; cf. 1 Cor. 6:11). The references to “water” and the “washing of regeneration” are virtually conceded to be references to water baptism. No one who has neglected to obey the gospel of Christ can be sanctified (2 Thes. 1:8-9).

### **Sustaining Sanctification**

“Follow [eagerly seek; a present imperative] after peace with all, and the sanctification, without which no one shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). Here sanctification is the consecrated life of holiness. Sanctification is not an irrevocable done deal; it’s an abiding obligation (cf. Rom. 6:19, 22; 1 Thes. 4:7; 1 Tim. 2:15).

## Forfeiting Sanctification

Is it possible to forfeit one's sanctification and be lost? Calvinists contend it is not; inspiration argues otherwise. Scripture warns if the Christian regresses into a life of willful, unrestrained sin (Heb. 10:26), he can expect a fierce judgment of fire that devours God's adversaries. It will be a punishment worse than any merciless death, because he "has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant by which he was **sanctified** as an unholy thing" (v. 29). The apostate will fall into the hands of a judging God who will render well-deserved vengeance (vv. 30-31).

## Conclusion

Sanctification (holiness) is a crucial Bible theme. Unfortunately it often has been neglected—both in study and application. One must constantly remind himself of the ancient, inspired admonition. "I am Jehovah your God: sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44; cf. 1 Pet. 1:16).

## **The Work of the Holy Spirit in Sanctification**

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Vine's Expository Dictionary says the word "sanctification" is used of "(a) separation to God, 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; (b) the course of life befitting those so separated, 1 Thess. 4:34,7; Rom. 6:19,22; 1 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 12:14." He also says, "The Holy Spirit is the Agent in sanctification, Rom. 15:16; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 6: 11."

The verb form "sanctify" means "to set apart" or "to make holy." In Old Testament Scripture, days, houses, fields, feasts, altars, people, and many other things were sanctified. Today, all Christians are to be sanctified. This means that they are to be set apart for the Lord and consecrated for his uses and purposes. As our subject affirms, the Holy Spirit has a work in this sanctification. This writer agrees with Z.T. Sweeney when he wrote, "It has been aptly and truthfully said that 'no importance can be attached to a religion that is not begun, carried on and completed by the Spirit of God'" (The Spirit and the Word, 117). The apostle Paul said, "And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). In speaking of his work among the Gentiles, he said, "Ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be made acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16).

### **The Continuing Work of Sanctification**

The continuing work of sanctification, by the Holy Spirit, of one who has been initially set apart as a Christian is the primary focus of our discussion. When one believes that Jesus is the Christ, repents of his sins, and is baptized unto the remission of his sins, he is washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor. 6:11). In this obedience one puts on Christ and begins to live a life that is consecrated and set apart for Christ. This, however, is not the end of the process.

Sanctification is not a one-time matter. To the Roman Christians Paul said, "For as ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness unto sanctification." Peter admonishes Christians, "As children of obedience, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in the time of your ignorance" (1 Pet. 1:13-15). He goes on to say, "Be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living." To be holy is to be sanctified. Paul said, "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service" (Rom. 12: 1).

### **The Holy Spirit Works Through the Word**

The Bible teaches, as set forth in another article in this issue, that the Holy Spirit works through the Word in the conviction and conversion of the alien. We affirm that he continues his work of sanctifying the Christian through the same means. Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (Jn. 17:17).

Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth. He said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth" (Jn. 16:13). If Jesus did what he promised, the inspired New Testament writers received, by the Holy Spirit, everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). All was revealed, including all that pertains to our sanctification. He has given complete instructions and guidance in the inspired written revelation. The Holy Spirit is God's agent in the work of sanctification but the means used by the Spirit is the word of truth.

Christians have a responsibility in their own sanctification. Peter said, "Be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living" (1 Pet. 1:15). Sanctification is not something imposed by the Holy Spirit apart from the obedient will and action of the Christian. In speaking of unequal yokes with sinful people in sinful practices, Paul said, "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord" (2 Cor. 6:17). The individual must act in separating himself from sin and he must act in being holy. The Holy Spirit in the written Word has told us how it is to be done. Our part is to give diligence to present ourselves approved unto God (2 Tim. 2:15), and to be doers of the word, and not hearers only (Jas. 1:22).

We are to put away filthiness and malice and with meekness receive the implanted word, which is able to save our souls (Jas. 1:21). Wherein we fall short and fail we receive forgiveness by God's grace and in Christ as we meet the conditions for forgiveness. In none of these passages are we told that the Holy Spirit does any of his work of sanctification through a direct intervention or indwelling. He sanctifies us by leading and directing us through the word.

## **False Ideas About Sanctifications**

The 1960 Church of the Nazarene Manual says the following: "We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect." False ideas beget false doctrines. The idea that man is depraved and guilty of Adam's sin causes those with a Calvinist influence to teach that the Holy Spirit must operate directly to overcome the depraved nature and provide entire sanctification by which the person is brought into holy obedience. Both the depravity doctrine, and the doctrine of sanctification by a direct operation and personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit are false.

The Manual goes on to speak of "the abiding indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service." The author apparently believes that the Holy Spirit personally indwells and provides, apart from the written word, protection against involvement in sin, and keeps the Christian's life on tract, sanctified and consecrated . The Philadelphia Confession of Faith says, "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated" (Article VI). Calvinism teaches that man is totally depraved to the extent that he cannot think so much as one good thought. Calvinists, therefore, teach that a direct operation of the Holy Spirit is essential to initial conversion. They also teach the necessity of a continued indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit, apart from the word, because of the alleged remaining "corruption of nature."



Some members of the church of Christ seem to believe the same thing. It is understood that one stated that those who do not believe in the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit are more likely to be immoral. The inference is that the Spirit personally indwells the body and acts, apart from the Word, as a deterrent to sin. Z.T. Sweeney, in his before mentioned book, lists a large number of things the Spirit might do for man in initial and continuing sanctification. He says the Holy Spirit might provide the following: Faith, the new birth, wisdom, conversion, understanding, quickening, salvation, sanctification, purification, cleansing, freedom from sin, a divine nature, and strengthening (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Tim. 3:14,15; Psa. 19:7,8; 119:28, 50,104; Jas. 1:21; Jn. 17:17; 1 Pet. 1:22; Jn. 15:3; Rom. 6:17,18; 2 Pet. 1:4). He then shows by the Scriptures cited that all of this is spoken of as being done for us through the Word. The conclusion being that the Holy Spirit does all these things by means of the written Word of God.

The doctrine of a personal indwelling and work by the Holy Spirit apart from the word to keep one from sin is dangerous in that it tends to make one's subjective feelings a guide and rule for conduct rather than the written word. Many of the popular "devotional" and "comfort" books written by denominationalists and bought by multitudes of Christians are dangerous for the very same reason. They are filled with false concepts about the indwelling, guidance, and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

There is general agreement that the Holy Spirit works in the sanctification of the Christian. There is a difference over how, or by what means, the Spirit works. In 1 Peter, the apostle Peter speaks of the beginning of the consecrated life when he says, "Ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth" (1 Pet. 1:22). The apostle continues to show in the rest of the book that for the Christian to continue to be consecrated he must continue to be obedient to the truth. He instructs the Christian as follows: "Put (ing) away therefore all wickedness" (2:1); "Abstain from fleshly lusts" (2:11); "Be subject to every ordinance of man" (2:13); "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (2:17); "Servants be in subjection to your masters" (2:18); "Wives be in subjection to your own husbands" (3:1); "Husbands, . . . dwell with your wives according to knowledge" (3:7); "Be . . . like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded" (3:8).

The Holy Spirit empowers, directs, and leads the Christian unto sanctification through this teaching by the apostle Peter along with other such instruction found in the New Testament. Let us submit ourselves to his guidance in order for our lives to be sanctified.

(Author's Note: Part H in the book *The Indwelling of Deity*, by Maurice M. Lusk, III, discusses "Questions of Where' and 'How' in the Indwelling Issue." Chapters discuss the Spirit dwelling within the heart and mind of the believer. There is also a chapter on "The Human Spirit and the Spirit of God. " This is the best material on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that I have seen. The chapter on "The Spirit and Christians, " by Z. T. Sweeney in *The Spirit and the Word* is outstanding. Every Christian needs both of these books They are inexpensive and may be ordered from Guardian of Truth Bookstore or CEI Bookstore.)

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## LIVING IN THE WORLD WITHOUT BEING WORLDLY

# Satan's World

By Luther Blackmon

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 Jn. 2:15). The Bible refers to the world in three ways. One of these worlds is “a spiritual dominion and Satan is its ruler. Passages such as Heb. 1:2; Heb. 11:2; and Acts 17:24 refer to the physical universe as the “world.” In Jn. 3:16 “the world” means the people who inhabit the earth. I am sure that the prohibition of 1 Jn. 2:15 does not apply to the beauties of the world in which we live or the people who live here. The “world” of 1 Jn. 2:15 is the dominion of Satan.

## Two Kingdoms

Christ is King of kings (1 Tim. 6:15). He has a kingdom and he sits on his throne, now. Satan also has a kingdom. Jesus said, “Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of the world cometh and hath nothing in me” (Jn. 14:30). Again, “. . . the prince of this world is judged” (Jn. 16:8-11). Paul said. . . . the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not . . .” (2 Cor. 4:4). Other scriptures could be given but these should be enough to show that Satan is the ruler of a spiritual dominion. This dominion is called “the world.”

## **Contrast and Conflict**

Between Christ and Satan there can be no peace or compromise. We either fight in the army of the Lord or we fight against him and with his enemies. There is no middle ground-no man's land-and the fellow who thinks he can be neutral will discover at the judgment that he has merely been a cowardly pacifist in the army of Satan. He is not even a "dedicated" sinner. James said, "ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (Jas. 4:4). Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (In. 15:18-19).

## **The Nature of Satan's Kingdom**

The kingdom of Satan, like that of Christ, is not territorial. It is not a place. It is a condition, a relationship. A child of the devil and a child of God may share the same roof. They may be married to each other, and as far as the marriage relationship is concerned, they are one. But spiritually they are an eternity apart, serve different masters, and bear allegiance to different governments and kings.

Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Lk.17:21). Paul said, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:17). The kingdom of Christ is composed of those in whose hearts he rules. To that extent his kingdom is within his subjects-this throne within their hearts. The dominion of Satan is likewise -composed of those who do his will. Paul said, "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey (Rom. 6:17). The world of Satan is a matter of service rather than location.

## **Misconceptions**

I was given a gentle rebuke by a very sincere lady for playing golf. She said, “it is of the world.” Some, like her, seem to think that everything we do is either a part of our Christian duty or it is “of the world.” I am not trying to defend my golf game. I am not real sure that there should not be some kind of punishment for a fellow who plays as lousy as I do, but not on the grounds that it is worldly. A thing is not worldly simply because it is not a Christian duty, or because it is in the world. It is worldly when it violates the law of God, either by act or association. Under given circumstances this could be true of any form of recreation, even pitching horseshoes. But pitching horseshoes is not worldly, per se.

## **Worldliness Defined**

John defines the world as (1) Lust of the flesh; (2) Lust of the eyes; (3) Pride (vain glory) of life. And we would remind the reader that John says, “all that is in the world.” Therefore anything that is of the “world” is embraced in these things. Let us look at them.

### **“The Lust of the Flesh”**

What is meant by “the flesh?” The answer to this question is not as simple as appears at first glance. Sometimes “the flesh” means only the physical body. But we make a mistake if we assume that it never means more than that.

Body is translated from the Greek soma; flesh from the word sarx. Paul speaks of the marks which he bore in his body (Gal. 6:17); he speaks of Abraham’s body as being as good as dead (Rom. 4:19); he urges us to present our bodies a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:2). In all these, body is a translation of soma.

The word flesh (*sarx*) is also used sometimes to denote simply the physical body. For example, Paul speaks of circumcision of the flesh in contrast with circumcision in the heart (Rom. 2:28). He speaks of his “thorn in the flesh” which undoubtedly means a physical, bodily affliction. But *sarx* often means more than flesh and blood and bones. Sometimes it seems to mean a disposition acquired by giving too much rein to the fleshly appetites. A notable example of this, it seems to me, is found in Romans, chapters 7 and 8. “So then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin” (Rom. 7:25). Again, “For to be carnally minded (*carnal* also is from *sari* LB) is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace: Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:6-8). In his little book, *Flesh and Spirit*, William Barclay points out that “when Paul lists the works of the flesh in Gal. 5:19-21 he certainly begins with immorality, impurity and licentiousness, but he goes on from there to enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, the party spirit which are not sins of the body at all” (p. 18). The body standing alone is neither good nor bad. It is possible, however, for one to give place to the appetites of the body to such extent that he develops a disposition to be controlled by these bodily appetites. Then he is “Carnally (fleshly) minded.” In this condition he cannot please God.

Although the fleshly body is neither good nor bad of itself, it is, nevertheless, a bundle of appetites and desires. These appetites are not wrong. They were given us by our Creator. For every natural desire God has provided legitimate satisfaction. Even so, these God given propensities provide a door of access through which Satan many, if we are not careful, enter our lives and make us his slaves – a part of his “world.”

## **“The Lust of the Eyes”**

The “lust of the eyes” means inordinate desire for things. In this category would fall covetousness, greed and like sins. The pursuit of things has caused many people to lose their perspective and their sense of values. Such became easy victims of Satan’s wiles. It may be a fine house, an address in an exclusive part of the city. It may be the desires to be rich-to make and hold money-just plain sordid money. Whatever it is, remember that unrestrained desire for material things is an open invitation to Satan to move in and take over. Such a one is his legitimate prey.

## **“The Pride of Life”**

This includes a lot of things. But if I had to say it in one sentence, I would say that it is the inordinate desire to curry the favor of our fellows, to be popular, to have the praise and approval of men. Popularity is not wrong unless it costs too much, but it nearly always does. Experience and observation, as well as the scripture, have proven that popularity often exacts a heavy toll.

Go to the homes for un-wed mothers and ask those girls about it. Most of them are there because they wanted to be accepted by a certain segment of our society. Ask them if they think it was worth it. Go to the penal institutions and ask those young men (and women) if they did not start the life of crime partly because they wanted to be popular with certain people. So, they allowed themselves to be bullyragged by some social misfits with an inferiority complex, or sweet talked by some friends (?) who convinced them that an easy life as a big shot with lots of money-somebody that everyone would know-was their cup of tea-fruit just ready to be picked. Ask them if it was worth it.



Preachers too numerous to mention, and who once stood for the truth, have cast their lot with the degressive movement in the church. Some of them no doubt, did it for financial reasons. Others, because they like things nice and quiet. They would rather “switch than fight.” But I am persuaded that the majority did it because they began to feel the pressure from some schools, papers, big churches and big (?) preachers. They did not want to be “cast out of the synagogue.” I say this because I have not heard of one of them that gave a scriptural reason for his change. I must conclude, therefore, that they did it for other reasons.

## Conclusion

Of all that we have said, this is the sum. Satan is the ruler of a spiritual empire which is called the “world.” It is not a place but a relationship. His subjects are those who do his will. His appeal is through the flesh, the outer man. By this means he is able, more often than not, to bring into captivity the inner man, the heart.

**Man is a dual creature.** He is composed of flesh and spirit. Paul describes this dual nature in these words. “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my- mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:22-23). Christ and Satan work from different directions. Satan works through the flesh to gain control of the spirit. Christ works on the spirit (heart-inner man) to control the actions of the flesh. This he does by the word of God. There is no other way by which he could do it, consistent with His plan. He created man a free agent, a creature of choice. Man can serve God or refuse to serve him, just as he likes. Therefore, God will not exert a power over man that disregards his right to choose. The “direct operation of the Holy Spirit” fellows need to learn this lesson.

Where is your spiritual citizenship? Which country do you call home? The church of the world? The kingdom of Christ or the kingdom of Satan? You may say, "I don't care." But you will care. And there are others who care now. The Lord cares. Every faithful Christian cares.

The glitter of the world has blinded many millions. Satan sees to that. But you will see a day when you would gladly give all the pleasure you had in a lifetime for just one hour of relief from the consequences of your unfaithful life.

Truth Magazine, XX:13, p. 11-12  
March 25, 1976

## What Does It Mean to Be in the World-Not of the World?

**They are not of the world,  
even as I am not of the world.**

*John 17:16*

- *“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. **Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**” (John 15:19)*
- *“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them **because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.** I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. **They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.**”(John 17:14)*
- *“Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” (James 1:27)*
- *“**Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” (1 John 2:15)*
- *“Adulterers and adulteresses! **Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.**”(James 4:4)*

Notice in the first two verses that Jesus is specifically telling us that we are not to be **“of the world.”** He then goes one step further in the third verse from James when He tells us that He wants us to remain **“unspotted”** from the world.

Jesus then perfectly wraps it up in the last two verses when He tells us that if we ever get to the point where we have become too friendly with the world and the ways of it, then we will literally become the enemy of God Almighty Himself!

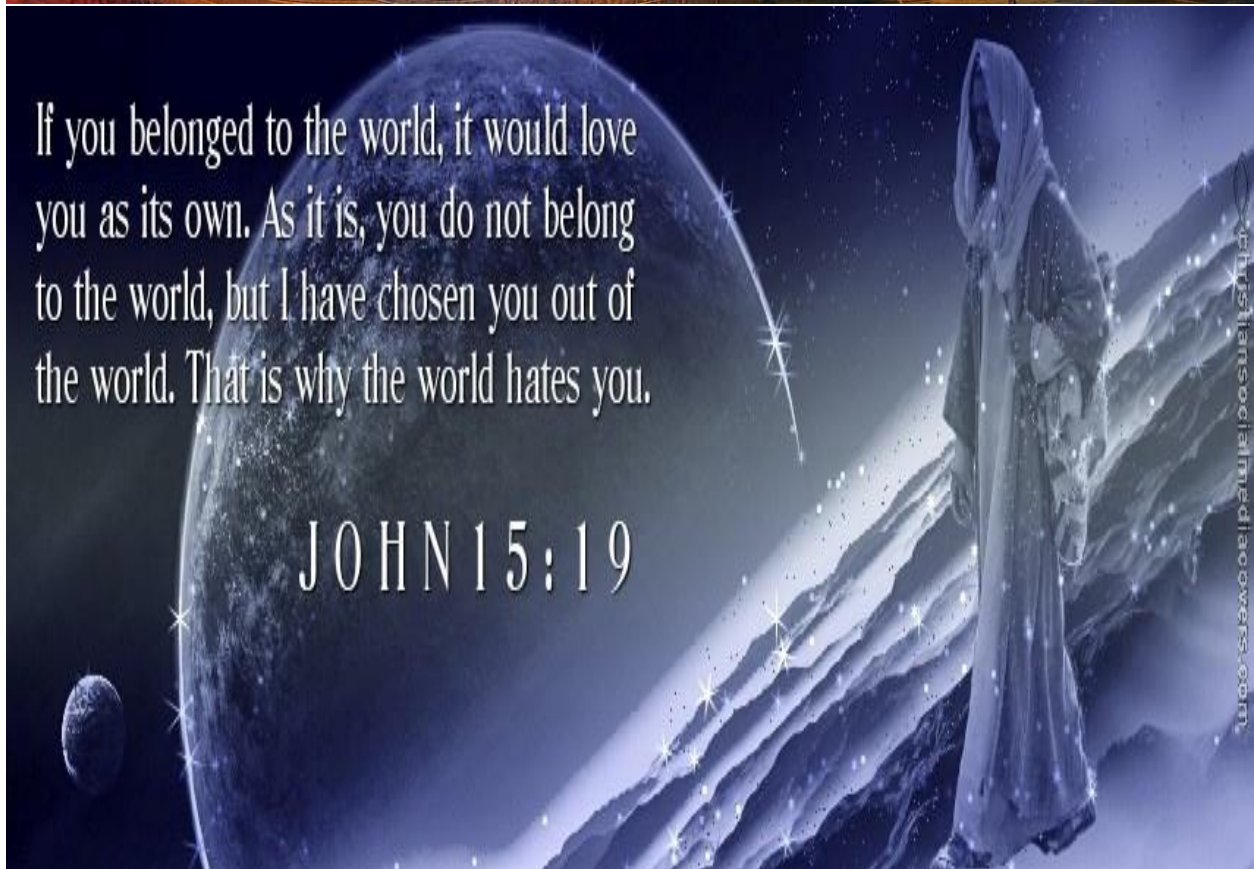
When Jesus Himself is telling us that we will become His Father’s enemy if we become too friendly and too attached to the ways and material things of this world – you know we are dealing with a very serious warning from the Lord on this issue!

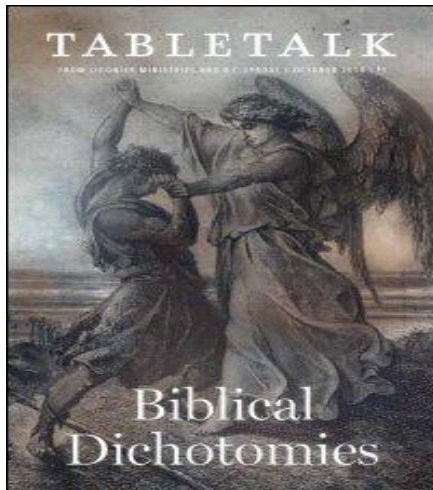
Jesus points out to us that all of the lustful pursuits and things of this life will eventually pass way when we die and cross over.

In another verse, Jesus has already told us that what good will it do a man to **gain all the wealth** of this world as his possessions, but then **lose his own soul** in the pursuit and acquirement of all of that wealth. It will all have ended up being for naught when everything’s finally said & done.









**The New Testament writers frequently contrast flesh (Greek *sarx*) and Spirit/spirit (Greek *pneuma*). But the contrasts are not all the same.**

### **Physical vs. Spiritual Aspect**

Paul exhorts, “Let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body [*sarx*] and spirit” (2 Cor. 7:1). His point is that sin contaminates our whole being, which he views here as having two aspects: physical (external) and spiritual (internal).

Paul uses this dichotomy elsewhere:

“Though I am absent in body [*sarx*], yet I am with you in spirit” (Col. 2:5; see 1 Cor. 5:3); “you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (1 Cor. 5:5).

### **Physical Weakness vs. Noble Desires**

“The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38). We can be physically weak in a way that makes it hard to do what is right while nobly desiring to do what is right.

### **Physical Body vs. Non-physical Person**

“See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Luke 24:39). After Jesus rose from the dead, He had to convince His disciples that He had a physical body and was not merely a ghost or non-physical person.

Paul contrasts physical and spiritual warfare: “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but . . . against the spiritual forces [Greek *pneumatikos*, an adjectival form of *pneuma*] of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

### **Physical Body vs. Holy Spirit**

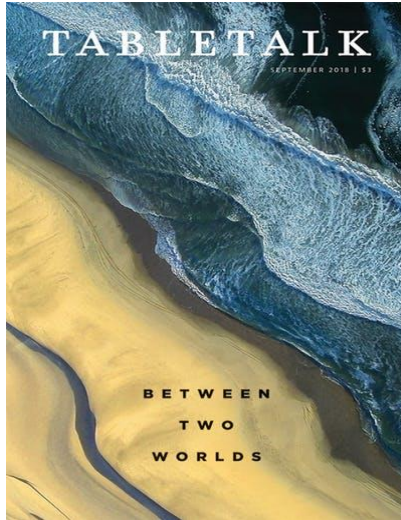
Christ appeared and was killed in a body, and the Spirit resurrected Him:

“He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit” (1 Tim. 3:16). Christ was “put to death in the body [*sarx*] but made alive in the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18 NIV; see 4:6).

### **Perishable vs. Imperishable Body**

In 1 Corinthians 15:35–57, Paul contrasts our perishable (physical) body with our future imperishable (physical) resurrection body: “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (v. 50). “It is sown a natural body [Greek *sōma*, a synonym of *sarx*]; it is raised a spiritual [*pneumatikos*] body [*sōma*]. If there is a natural body [*sōma*], there is also a spiritual body [*pneumatikos*]” (v. 44). In this case, the natural body and the spiritual body are both physical; the Bible never calls the body itself evil. The difference between them is that the spiritual, or resurrection, body will never die.





## The Already and the Not Yet

by Burk Parsons

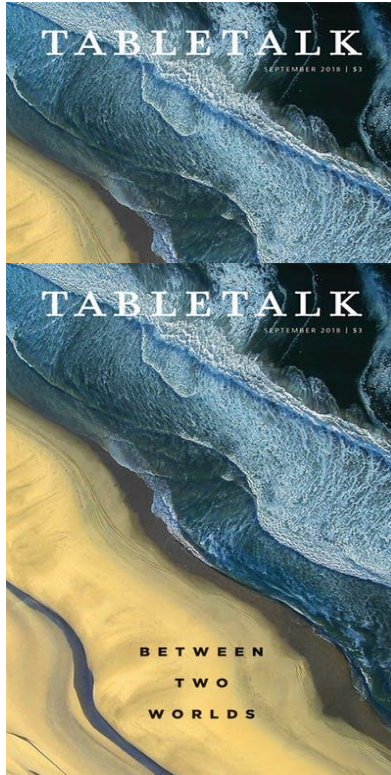
This world is not our home, but it will be. We live out our days in this sad world eagerly awaiting the new heaven and new earth, clinging daily to this promise: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. ([Revelation 21:3-4](#)). We are pilgrims on our journey home, and we are homesick for a place we have never been. We are foreigners, aliens, and strangers in a strange land whose citizenship in heaven is secure in the One who has gone before us, who is seated at the right hand of the Father, and who is returning to judge, to conquer, and consummate.

**We are pilgrims on our journey home, and we are homesick for a place we have never been.**

In this world we will have tribulation, but “take heart,” Jesus said—not because we will eventually overcome the world, completely change the world, get used to this world, or come to love the world—but because Jesus declared, “I have overcome the world” ([John 16:33](#)). And so, we wait between the *already* and *not yet*, between what our Lord has declared is already true and what has not yet been revealed. However, our waiting is not in vain, nor is it a passive waiting or an isolated waiting. Rather, we wait for our Groom so that He might gather His bride from every tribe, tongue, and nation for His glory. We wait with hopeful expectation, with active participation in the mission of God, and in community with the church of Jesus Christ. For Christ is the light of the world, and we who are united to Him by [obedient] faith are in Him. As such, as soon as Christ calls us out of darkness and into His marvelous light, He sends us back into the darkness to shine in both word and deed before the watching world. As the world sees our good works and as the world hears our proclamation of the glorious gospel, the bride of Christ from around the world will glorify our Father in heaven.

Although withdrawing entirely from the world often seems attractive, the Lord never gives us that option ([1 Cor. 5:9-10](#)). Rather, as we live in this world of sin and in these bodies of sin, we are ambassadors of Christ on our journey to the promised land. When we pilgrims arrive home, Jesus will wipe away every tear from our eyes—not just our tears of sadness, but our tears of joy—for otherwise we would never be able to see Him face-to-face as we worship Him forever *coram Deo*.





## Eternity in Our Hearts

by John Tweeddale

Few things better capture the anticipation of seeing Christ face-to-face than a wedding. No matter how beautiful her dress, the bride never walks down the aisle with her gaze on her gown. Her focus is on her soon-to-be husband. As stunning as heaven will be, what makes it so marvelous is that we will finally see our Savior's face. The church as the bride will be with Jesus as the groom, and they will live happily ever after.

The English poet named Anne Cousin penned the well-known hymn "The Sands of Time Are Sinking. One stanza in particular encapsulates the drama of beholding Christ in glory:

*The bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Bridegroom's face;  
I will not gaze at glory, but on my King of grace.  
Not at the crown He giveth, but on His pierced hand;  
The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land.*

This side of eternity, the Christian life is like an engagement. It is lived in anticipation of the wedding day. As Christians, we live in between the already of our betrothal to Christ and the not-yet of the wedding feast of the lamb. We are to be like the bride-to-be who takes every occasion to prepare for life with her beloved. The expectation of seeing Christ by sight in heaven must therefore inform how we live by faith here on earth.

## The expectation of seeing Christ by sight in heaven must inform how we live by faith here on earth.

On a more basic level, the eagerness felt by engaged couples exposes a fundamental desire that all people share: a longing for eternity. This point is well made by the Preacher in [Ecclesiastes 3:9-11](#):

*What gain has the worker from his toil? I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end.*

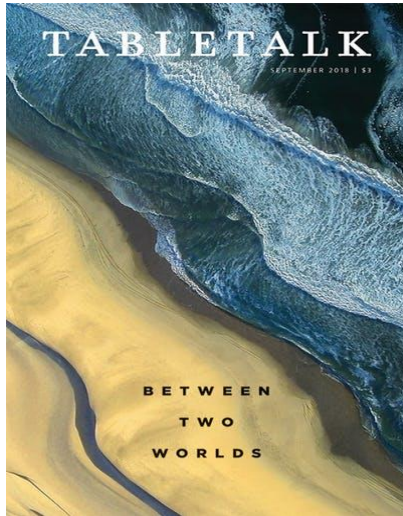
Let's consider two ways this text teaches us about our longing for eternity. First, we are told that God "has made everything beautiful in its time" (v. 11). One modern commentator has called this verse "the greatest statement of divine providence in the whole of Scripture." What makes this biblical text so striking is that there is much in life that is far from beautiful. But the Preacher isn't unaware of the ugliness that pervades the world. His question in verse 9 echoes the curse pronouncement in the garden of Eden: "What gain has the worker from his toil?" This is not merely a rhetorical question that is detached from the pressures of real life experience (see 1:3). The apparent futility of hard work with little gain is something he has witnessed firsthand. "I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with" (3:10).

To be clear, the biblical record affirms the dignity of work. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were commanded to execute their duties with the promise of being fruitful ([Gen. 1:28-31](#); 2:15-17; see [Eccl. 3:13](#)). But after the fall, work is toilsome ([Gen. 3:17-19](#)). We no longer perform our tasks in the lush environs of a garden but in the harsh conditions of a wilderness filled with thorns and thistles, failure and frustration. As the Preacher laments in [Ecclesiastes 2:23](#), "Work is a vexation." When we face hardship, injustice in the workplace, and defeat in completing assignments, we are confronted with the painful truth that this fallen world will never yield lasting gain. Vocational dissatisfaction reminds us that we were made for something greater than that which our hobbies and careers can offer.

But there is hope. We are told that God has made everything beautiful in its time. The "everything" in [Ecclesiastes 3:11](#) harks back to the "everything" in verse 1: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven." That life is lived under the watchful care of a sovereign Creator illumines our understanding of everything. In light of His providence, we learn that there is a time for birth and death, for planting and gathering, for mourning and dancing, for war and peace. Over all these things, God is in control. The beauty is found in the discovery that God orchestrates every last detail according to His perfect design.

[Ecclesiastes 3:11](#) is the [Romans 8:28](#) of the Old Testament. In [Romans 8:28](#), the Apostle Paul states, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." Notice that Paul does not say that all things *are* good but that all things *work together* for good. And what is the good? It is being conformed into the likeness of Christ (v. 29). As Christians experience the seasons of life, we can be comforted in knowing that God uses every circumstance to shape us more and more into the image of His Son.

Puritan Thomas Watson wrote a short book titled *A Divine Cordial*, based on [Romans 8:28](#), in order to comfort Christians undergoing suffering. He observed that "the best things and the worst things, by the overruling hand of the great God, do work together for the good of the saints." It is undeniable that this world is often grim and filled with heartache. But God beautifully uses both joys and sorrows to transform us as Christians into the likeness of Christ. Disappointments have a way of making us long even more to be with Him.



## Living in the World to Come

by Mark E. Ross

The opening vision of the book of Revelation matches its last. In the first, John hears a loud voice commanding him to write what he sees, and he beholds the risen and glorious Lord Jesus, standing in the midst of His churches (1:10–20). The final vision is the descent of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, “coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Again, John hears a loud voice: “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God” (21:1–3). Here, too, the presence of the Lord with His church is the focus. This is not only this book’s, but the whole Bible’s, consummation—Immanuel, “God with us.”

The opening chapter of Revelation is not just a vision of the Lord; it is also a vision of the Lord’s Day (1:10). This is the first known use of this term in reference to the first day of the week. Though this term occurs only here in the New Testament, the early church fathers leave no doubt that this is a reference to the day we call Sunday, which they observed as memorial to the Lord’s resurrection. Elsewhere in the New Testament, the day is called by its Jewish name, literally translated “the first of the Sabbath” ([Matt. 28:1](#); [Mark 16:2](#); [Luke 24:1](#); [John 20:1, 19](#); [Acts 20:7](#); [1 Cor. 16:2](#)). English translations commonly use “week” in the phrase, but behind it stands the Greek word *sabbaton*, which simply translates the Hebrew word for “Sabbath” (*shabbat*). The significance of this will appear below.

Very early in the history of the church, the first day of the week became the day when Christians gathered for worship. Possibly this practice began on the day of Jesus’ resurrection, for it was then that our resurrected Lord first met with His disciples and “stood among them” ([Luke 24:36ff.](#)). John’s gospel likewise reports that “he came and stood among them,” with special emphasis placed upon the identification of the day—“on the evening of that day, the first day of the week” (20:19). The next dated meeting of the Lord with His disciples was “eight days later,” when Jesus again “came and stood among them” (v. 26). This was the following Sunday by Jewish inclusive counting (see “the third day”; [Luke 24:7](#); 21, 46). In [Acts 20:7](#), Luke reports that the church in Troas gathered together on “the first of the Sabbath” to break bread. His wording suggests that this was their regular practice. Paul had arrived there seven days earlier, and though he was hastening to make Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost (v. 16), he stayed at Troas seven days, apparently to be there “on the first day of the week, when [they] were gathered together to break bread” (v. 7).

The significance of this reference could easily be missed by English readers. We are so accustomed to the organization of time by weeks that we might assume it has always been so, and it was among the Jews. But it was not among the gentiles. The New Testament does not even have a Greek word for it, but uses the Jewish word for “Sabbath,” with the day succeeding it called “the first of the Sabbath.” The planetary week that we know only later became standard across the Roman Empire. Thus, in [Acts 20:7](#), as also in Paul’s instructions to the churches of Galatia and Corinth mentioned in [1 Corinthians 16:2](#), we must remember that all these churches were in gentile territory, where “week” was not a standard measure of time. Yet the Apostle to the gentiles has evidently organized these churches according to a seven-day cycle, with emphasis falling on “the first of the Sabbath” rather than the seventh day that was called the “Sabbath.” While in [1 Corinthians 16:2](#) there is no mention of the church’s meeting together on this day, it would be very odd for Paul to specify this day for setting apart gifts for the church of Jerusalem unless there was something in their life together as Christians that pointed to this day rather than another for such a demonstration of “the communion of saints.” It is not as if they were paid on a weekly basis on “the first of the Sabbath,” for the weekly calendar had not yet become commonplace.

Paul would certainly not be one to impose a purely Jewish ceremony upon gentile churches, so the seven-day cycle must have had more enduring authority than the other festivals instituted at Sinai ([Lev. 23](#)). Paul indeed faults the Galatians for observing “days and months and seasons and years” ([Gal. 4:10](#)), which, along with circumcision, were Jewish ceremonies imposed on them by false teachers (5:2–6; so also [Acts 15:1](#)). No doubt, a similar imposition is behind Paul’s warning to the Colossians not to let anyone be their judge “in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath” ([Col. 2:16](#)). **Yet, along with these strong rejections of the Jewish ceremonies, Paul instructs the Galatians and Corinthians to “put something aside and store it up” on “the first day of every week” ([1 Cor. 16:2](#)).** Clearly, something greater than Moses was here. The weekly Sabbath of the Jews was not a ceremony first instituted at Sinai. It was a creation ordinance given at the beginning of the world for all people ([Gen. 2:1–3](#)). Our Lord indicated as much when He said, “The Sabbath was made for man” ([Mark 2:27](#))—it was not just for the Jew.

The Sabbath day was lost to the world sometime after the fall, but it was reclaimed for Israel at the time of the exodus ([Ex. 16](#)) and incorporated in the covenant God made with them at Sinai (20:8–11). Indeed, it became the sign of that covenant, to be observed throughout their generations, as a covenant forever (31:12–17). It became a day of “holy convocation” ([Lev. 23:1–3](#)) with special sacrifices appointed for its celebration ([Num. 28:1–10](#)). Ever the memorial of God’s creation of heaven and earth ([Ex. 20:8–11](#); 31:17; [Lev. 24:8](#)), Moses also made it a memorial to Israel’s redemption from Egypt ([Deut. 5:12–15](#)). “Rest” was the principal idea connected with its observance, but this rest was not merely ceasing from labor. It was also a holy convocation at the house of Yahweh, the symbol and focus of His living presence among them in both the tabernacle ([Ex. 25:8](#)) and its successor, the temple ([2 Chron. 6:18](#)). The Sabbath also pointed forward to the everlasting rest that would come at the consummation ([Heb. 3:7–4:10](#)).

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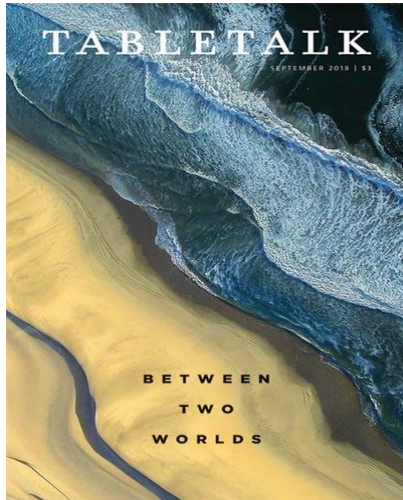


Psalm 92 is “A Song for the Sabbath,” and it celebrates the great blessing this day offers to the people of God. Its opening verses speak of the goodness and joy of worshiping in His presence (vv. 1–4), and its concluding verses speak of the flourishing that comes to those who are thus planted in the house and courts of our God (vv. 12–15). The pinnacle of this neatly balanced song is verse 8: “But you, O Lord, are on high forever.” It is the only single line in the psalm, and it occurs at its very center. Above and below this pivotal verse, the overthrow of the wicked (vv. 5–7) and the exaltation of the righteous (vv. 9–11) are rehearsed. Sabbath rest and worship thus offer an oasis for the weary and heavy-laden people of God, who live in a world where the wicked often flourish and the righteous often suffer. The worship of the Sabbath day peels back the illusion created by this fallen world and shows us that God is on high forever, and therefore the true outcome of all things will be just as He has promised—everlasting rest will come to the people of God. The Sabbath day thus anticipates the consummated kingdom, bringing into time the blessings of eternity and bringing down to earth the joys of heaven.

The New Testament does not do away with this appointed means of grace but transfers it to a new day. While Paul authoritatively abolishes the duty of seventh-day worship (Rom. 14:1–6; Gal. 4:8–11; Col. 2:16–23), he at the same time organizes churches around “the first of the Sabbath” (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2), which by the time of John’s Revelation was known as the Lord’s Day. Like the Sabbath day that preceded it in the Old Testament, it is the day above all days when the New Testament people of God are joined in holy convocation, hearing God’s Word read aloud and expounded, and breaking bread with one another (Acts 20:7). It is the day above all days when the Lord is present with His people, standing in the midst of them, enthroned upon their praises (Ps. 22:3), as they sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) and offer their prayers to Him (1 Tim. 2:1).

John Eliot (1604-90) preached that those who were zealous for and zealous on the Lord’s Day would thereby spend one-seventh of their life on earth in heaven. While they lived on earth, they would be no stranger to heaven, and when they died heaven would be no strange place to them. No, indeed, for they will have been there a thousand times before.

The Apostle John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day when he saw the Lord standing among His churches, again speaking words of hope and assurance. The Lord Jesus still reveals Himself to His churches when they gather to worship Him in spirit and in truth. The Lord’s Day has especially been appointed for this purpose and it is rich with blessing. As the Puritan David Clarkson observed, “So that the presence of God, which, enjoyed in private, is but a stream, in public becomes a river that makes glad the city of God.”



# God's People in Exile

by [Ra McLaughlin](#)

Most people intuitively recognize the difference between a house and a home. That's what makes exile such an effective punishment — it prevents us from going home. It separates us from loved ones and safety, and it strips us of our sense of belonging. It can even put us in hostile and dangerous places. God's people have been living as exiles in foreign lands ever since we were thrown out of the garden of Eden. Our entire history has been a cycle of exile and restoration. The good news is that the cycle is coming to an end. For now, though, our lives are a mixture of both exile and restoration.

## THE GARDEN OF EDEN

Humanity was created as part of God's plan to extend His heavenly kingdom to earth ([Matt. 6:10](#); [Rev. 21-22](#)). To accomplish this, God created a perfect world and set aside a special land called Eden (meaning "pleasant" or "delightful place" in Hebrew). The four rivers in Eden ([Gen. 2:10-14](#)) indicate that it stretched from Mesopotamia to Egypt.

God planted a garden in Eden, from which the headwaters of all four rivers flowed. This suggests that the garden was both elevated and central, perhaps in the Judean Mountains. He also assigned humanity to "work" and "keep" the garden ([Gen. 2:15](#)) and to "fill the earth and subdue it" (1:28). In other words, our job was to expand the borders of the garden to the ends of the earth.

In Eden, God established the covenant of works to govern our relationship with Him (Westminster Confession of Faith 7.2). We were responsible to obey God by fulfilling our appointed duties and by not eating the forbidden fruit ([Gen. 2:17](#)). If we obeyed, we would be blessed with everlasting life (3:22). If we didn't, we would be liable unto death (2:17).

Sadly, the serpent tricked Eve, Eve persuaded Adam, they both ate the forbidden fruit, and humanity was exiled from the garden (chap. 3). God posted angelic guards to make sure humanity didn't sneak back in (v. 24).

## THE CURSE OF EXILE

Humanity's first exile cast us from God's manifest presence and put us and the rest of creation under God's curse ([Rom. 8:20-22](#)). Work became hard, childbearing became painful, and everyone eventually died ([Gen. 3:16-19](#)). We lived in broken fellowship with God ([Rom. 5:10](#); [Eph. 2:1-3](#)) and in human conflict. Those conditions have persisted. Without God's intervention, that's all we can ever be.

God promised to send a Redeemer to save us from exile and ultimately from death ([Gen. 3:15](#)). He established the covenant of grace (WCF 7.2), through which Christ is reversing the curse and exile of Adam's sin ([Rom. 5:12-19](#)).

## We live and walk by faith, knowing that God's promises are true even when they don't feel like it.

Humanity's exile from the garden became programmatic for the way God administered His covenant with humanity, at least on a corporate level. God gives us covenant laws. We can keep them and be blessed or break them and be cursed. The curse might be as bad as death, but God more frequently opts for something such as exile. If we turn to Him in faith, He'll redeem us. If we don't, punishment might increase ([Lev. 26](#); [Deut. 28-31](#)).

On our own, we can never be good enough to avoid exile, let alone earn God's blessings. So, Christ does it for us. If we're united to Him by [obedient] faith, we have the promise of full restoration from Adam's exile.

### THE FLOOD

After being exiled from the garden, humanity descended into further wickedness. We became false worshipers and murderers, despising both God and neighbor. Cain, the first murderer, was exiled from the Lord's presence in Eden ([Gen. 4:16](#)), and his descendants were worse than he had been. Humanity became so evil that God destroyed almost all of us in the flood (chaps. 6-9). Only Noah and his family were spared.

The flood carried Noah to Ararat, just beyond the border of Eden. This geographical move amplified humanity's curse, taking us further from God's favored land. Nevertheless, God confirmed the covenant of grace with Noah (6:18; 9:9), indicating that through Noah, humanity would recover what had been lost not just in the flood but in the fall.

Under the Noahic covenant, humanity began to be restored to God's favor. Correspondingly, we also began to move back into Eden. It was very different by this time, but it still represented the hope of God's kingdom.

### ABRAHAM'S SOJOURN

Eventually, God chose Abraham to become the father of a new nation, through which God would fulfill His plan for an earthly kingdom (12:1-3; 17:4-8). Geographically, He led Abraham from the distant portions of Eden in Mesopotamia toward its center.

Abraham's move was occasioned by God's grace and blessing rather than by His wrath and curse. Still, it involved his leaving his home without knowing where he was going. Moreover, when Abraham got to Canaan, the land was in a severe famine (12:10). So, he temporarily moved his family to Egypt, then back to Canaan once the famine had ended.

During this time, Abraham's life seemed far from blessed. His wife was taken into Pharaoh's harem, his nephew was kidnapped, and Abraham had to lead his household into battle (chaps. 12–14). All this was before God made a covenant with him. God had given him several offers and assurances of land and progeny (12:1–3, 7; 13:14–17) and later confirmed them at Abraham's request (15:8).

God covenanted to give Canaan to Abraham, along with descendants too numerous to count. Through those descendants, He would extend Abraham's kingdom over the entire world (vv. 1–21; 17:1–14; [Rom. 4:13](#)).

Abraham never saw these promises fulfilled ([Heb. 11:13](#)). He lived and died as a foreigner in the very land God had promised to give him, with only one son (Isaac) to whom God had extended the covenant promise ([Gen. 22:16–18](#)). But neither Abraham nor anyone in Scripture after him ever believed that God's promises had failed.

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## THE EXODUS

Two generations later, Abraham's family moved back to Egypt as honored guests, with God's promise that they would return to Canaan as a great nation ([Gen. 46:3–4](#)). That promise was fulfilled, but only after God allowed the Israelites to be enslaved by the Egyptians for centuries ([Ex. 6:6](#); 12:40).

God returned Israel to Canaan not because they remembered His covenant but because He did. (2:23–25). As with Noah and Abraham, the reason for their prolonged suffering appears not to have been their own sin but the sinfulness of others. Nevertheless, God used it for their good ([Rom. 8:28](#)). Israel became a mighty nation and left with the plunder of Egypt ([Ex. 3:22](#)).

By returning to Canaan, Israel was repeating a move Abraham had made. Like Adam, they had been cast out of the garden. Like Noah, they had been cast out of Eden. Like Adam, Noah, and Abraham, they had been promised a return to Eden, where they would begin to extend God's kingdom to the ends of the earth.



Israel became unfaithful to God during the exodus. So, even though He allowed the nation to leave Egypt, He didn't restore them to the promised land. Instead, He extended their exile by having them wander until the entire first generation that had left Egypt, except Joshua and Caleb, had died in the wilderness ([Num. 14](#)).

## THE FIRST KINGDOM

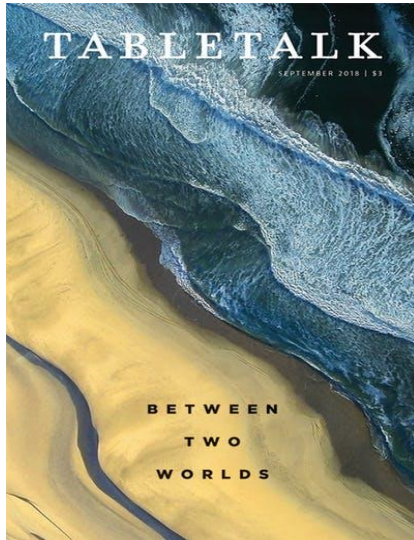
In Canaan, Israel struggled for centuries before God made a covenant with David that promised one of his sons would rule Israel forever ([2 Sam. 7](#); [Ps. 89](#)). Then, under David's son Solomon, Israel rose to the height of its power. Its borders stretched to the edges of Eden and its people were too numerous to count ([1 Kings 4:20-21](#)), just as God had vowed to Abraham.

Solomon built the temple as God's house and throne room ([1 Chron. 28:2](#); [Isa. 6:1](#)), and Solomon's own throne was an extension of God's ([1 Chron. 28:5-6](#); [29:23](#)). Like the tabernacle, the temple and its furnishings echoed imagery from Eden. Both structures outwardly reflected their spiritual purpose of being the place where God dwelled and met with His people. But even here, something was missing. God didn't walk with His people as He had with Adam in the garden.

Later, Solomon himself became unfaithful. So, in the days of his son Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided between Judah in the south and Israel in the north ([1 Kings 12:16-24](#)). Eventually, both the northern and southern kingdoms were taken into new exiles. Just as they had spiritually distanced themselves from God, they were geographically removed from His throne.

## THE LAST KINGDOM

Where does that leave us now? Are we living in exile, or are we living in God's heavenly kingdom on earth? In some sense, it's both. Insofar as God's kingdom is already here, it's largely spiritual ([Luke 17:20-21](#)). So, we're physical exiles but not spiritual exiles. We struggle with the physical world, corruptible flesh, and the presence of sin ([Rom. 7:14-25](#); [Gal. 5:17](#)). But spiritually, we're citizens of God's kingdom, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and seated with Christ in the heavenly places ([Eph. 2:4-7](#)).



## Living as Dual Citizens

by [Justin Taylor](#)

**It was not easy to trap Jesus in ethical or theological dilemmas. But that did not stop the Jewish leaders from trying. Jesus made it clear that His kingdom is not “of this world” ([John 18:36](#)). His kingdom, which properly belongs to the age to come, was breaking into this world and this present age. So how, the Jews wondered, did His kingdom relate to the institutions of our time, such as the family and the state?**

In [Luke 20](#), the Sadducees pushed the family question on Him, constructing a thought experiment about the nature of marriage in the resurrection for a widower who remarries. Jesus responded, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage” (vv. 34–35). Family is an enduring creation ordinance, but the kingdom of the age to come operates in a different way.

When the Jewish scribes and elders asked Jesus whether it was lawful to give tribute to Caesar, Jesus asked them to show Him a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription was on it? When they responded, “Caesar’s,” Jesus drew His conclusion: “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (vv. 22–25). In a subversive way, Jesus radically limited the authority of Caesar and showed the unlimited authority of God. The likeness on the denarius meant they owed tribute to Caesar, but the image of God, stamped onto our human nature, means we owe our very lives to the maker of heaven and earth. Government is an enduring creation ordinance, but the kingdom of the age to come operates in a different way.

### **THE CITY OF GOD AND THE CITY OF MAN**

In the fifth century, Augustine wrote *The City of God*, his magisterial work of political theology wherein he contrasts the *civita Dei* (city of God) with the *civitas terrena* (literally, city of the world). In popular circles, Augustine is widely misunderstood to have been talking about the City of God as life in heaven versus the City of Man as life on earth in the material realm. In that understanding, we are members of both the City of Man and the City of God. But in reality,

**Augustine was talking about two communities or groups of like-minded individuals with competing visions of both heaven and earth. The City of Man begins—and this is crucial—not with creation but with the fall. Its desires and agenda are deeply disordered, driven by love of self and not of God, and operating according to the standards of the flesh and not the Spirit. The redeemed, who make up the City of God, seek God as the highest good and orient everything around love for Him. As Christians, then, we live among the City of Man but belong to the City of God.**

## IN BUT NOT OF

Augustine’s paradigm has deep biblical roots. As we live in this world, we recognize that “here we have no lasting city” ([Heb. 13:14](#)); like Abraham, we look “forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (11:10). And yet, even though we are “sojourners and exiles” ([1 Peter 2:11](#)) who call no place on earth our permanent home, we are also commanded to “seek the welfare of the city . . . and pray to the Lord on its behalf” ([Jer. 29:7](#)). We are not to be “of the world” but are irreducibly “in the world” and sent deeper “into the world” as ambassadors and emissaries of Christ ([John 17:15–16](#); see [1 Cor. 5:9–10](#)). We are to be transformed by the Word instead of conformed to the world ([Rom. 12:2](#)). We are to keep ourselves “unstained from the world” ([James 1:27](#))—and yet we must taste like salt and shine like light ([Matt. 5:13–16](#)) to a dark and rotting culture around us (see [Phil. 2:15](#)).

Christ calls us to a life of discipleship where we follow Him in teaching others to obey everything He commanded us.

## DUAL CITIZENSHIP

One of the biblical metaphors for thinking through our relationship between the present age and the age to come is citizenship. Citizenship is a publicly recognized legal status that authorizes someone to be a citizen—that is, a full and functioning member of a *civitas*, a social and political community, along with the rights and duties that come along with it. Unlike someone who is merely a subject in a kingdom, a citizen participates in the community to help maintain civic order.

In the book of Acts, we see the Apostle Paul not only acknowledging the concept of his Roman citizenship but also actively appealing to it. When the police told Paul and Silas that the magistrates authorized their quiet release from jail, Paul became indignant: “They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out” ([Acts 16:37](#)). In [Acts 22](#), Paul successfully protested a flogging at the hands of the magistrates by asking the centurion a simple question: “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned? . . . I am a citizen by birth” (vv. 25, 28). In both cases, the response by the Roman authorities was one of genuine fear, since they had been unjustly violating the rights of one of their citizens (21:38–39; 22:29).

Although Paul had obtained Roman citizenship through his family’s history, he came to have another kind of citizenship as well. Writing to the church in Philippi, he says that for Christians, “our citizenship is in heaven” ([Phil. 3:20](#)). Jesus said His kingdom is not of this world ([John 18:36](#)). When we are born again and are adopted into the family of God, we enter a new kingdom and submit to a new King, having been “delivered . . . from the domain of darkness and transferred . . . to the kingdom of his beloved Son” ([Col. 1:13](#)).

## FOUR WAYS TO LIVE IT OUT

**Here are four things to remember as we seek to be faithful with our dual citizenship.**

*1. Recognize the rule of God over all, though He rules different institutions in different ways.* Christ has authority over both heaven and earth ([Matt. 28:18](#)), but in light of the fall, He rules the temporal order of this age (including created institutions such as the family and the state) differently than He rules the church. Government in this age enforces order through the power of the sword, enforcing order through the coercion of law; the kingdom of God, on the other hand, comes through the power of the Spirit, producing transformation of the gathered people of God through the proclamation of the gospel and participation in the means of grace.

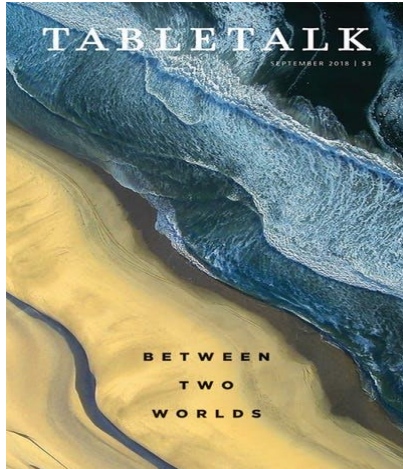
*2. Understand that just because our earthly citizenship is not ultimate, that does not make it unimportant.* Temporal things can make a significant difference. Paul knew that appealing to the authorities about his Roman citizenship was not the same as sharing the gospel with them. But his earthly rights were still important. Good laws cannot change hearts, but they can still mean the difference between life and death.

Yes, saving an eternal soul is more important than fixing a temporal need. Alleviating eternal suffering is superior to reducing the suffering of this age. But the Bible doesn’t actually ask us to choose between evangelism & civic engagement, because Christ calls us to a life of discipleship where we publicly identify with Him and follow Him in teaching others to obey everything He commanded us ([Matthew 28:19–20](#)).

3. *Gladly receive all of God's gifts, including His common grace of government.* It is not wrong to feel frustration when the nations rage ([Ps. 2](#)), because this means the world is not operating according to its God-given design. But we must never forget the goodness of God in instituting this system in our fallen world. God has appointed earthly rulers ([Rom. 13:1-2](#)) for our good (v. 4), and we are to respect and honor them (v. 7), no matter how bad they are. Government is a gift from God, designed to promote and protect good while serving as a deterrent to that which is bad (vv. 2-4). One of the reasons we are to pray for our rulers is so that government will function in such a way that we have the sort of conditions that allow us to live quiet and godly lives ([1 Tim. 2:2](#)).

4. *Embrace God's means on earth for publicly identifying our heavenly citizenship.* At one level, the world cannot see our heavenly citizenship. It is a status recognized by no earthly government. Our life is "hidden with Christ in God" ([Col. 3:3](#)). However, God has ordained a way in which our citizenship can be publicly declared here and now, in the age between the two advents of Christ. The church of Jesus Christ — the worshiping community made up of God's people gathered in God's place under God's rule practicing God's means of grace—is the expression of the kingdom of God in this world. Heavenly citizens [worshiping] at local churches on earth.

There are more important things in life than the political order and our civic engagement. It can easily become idolatry, invested with an allegiance and identity that goes beyond Scripture. But it is also easy to shirk our duties and participation as an earthly citizen, justifying our apathy for spiritual reasons that themselves go beyond Scripture. Whatever side we are tempted to emphasize, let us remember that we are dual citizens. Part of being a good citizen—in both the heavenly and earthly realms—involves letting our civilian lives be shaped by the gospel and informed by the Word of God as we prayerfully work to become informed, to love our neighbor, and to work for the common good of the city even as we wait for and invite others to the city yet to come.



# Separationism

by [Christopher Gordon](#)

**Christians today are greatly discouraged by what they are seeing in the world. It is becoming very difficult to be a Christian and live together in this world with unbelievers. Christians are thinking a lot about separation, and a farm to get away from it all doesn't seem like a bad idea.**

There are certainly legitimate reasons for making a move to another place. The problem is that many Christians justify a move because they want to escape the problems they are experiencing in the world. After all, didn't the Lord call believers to be separate from the world ([2 Cor. 6:14-18](#))? What does this mean? Are we called to withdraw from the world and have no contact with non-Christians?

Few Christians would think this call means we are to live a monastic life, but getting away from the world and its problems can be its own brand of monasticism. The irony is, that kind of separation can be a very worldly pursuit. It assumes that one can achieve in this life the glories of what is promised only in the new heavens and earth. And such a separation in this way sends a poor message to the world—that we don't care about them and only want to get away. What becomes of the Great Commission with this kind of separation? This is why we need a healthy consideration of what it means to be separate from the world.

## COME OUT AND BE SEPARATE

Christians have always struggled with how to understand the call to be a separate people in the world. There have always been those who either, using Richard Niebuhr's classic categories, pit Christ against culture or assimilate Christ into culture. We can fall back into the world just as easily as we can desire to separate out of the world. So, to what kind of separation is God calling the Christian in this world?

A brief reflection of Paul's instruction to the Corinthian Christians provides us with the answer. They were allowing worldliness to go unchecked in the church. Some of the symptoms included sinful divisions, worldly ministry methods, pagan practices in worship, abuse of spiritual gifts, sexual immorality, and toleration of false doctrine.



Paul's goal in addressing these problems was to call the church to proper separation from the world as God's people. In [1st Cor. 5:1](#), Paul addresses a report that gross sexual immorality was being tolerated in the church. Because the church refused to address the issue by exercising church discipline, they were compromising their status as God's holy community.

## The great need of the hour is convicted Christians who are willing to stand together for the truth of the gospel.

In calling the church to be separate, Paul made a surprising connection to the Old Testament: "Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" ([1 Corinthians 5:7](#)). Paul grounded his call to separateness in the story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The Passover, together with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, celebrated Israel's deliverance from death and their separation from the land of Egypt. Anything brought back among them from their former way of life was a threat to their separate status as God's people. The church, like Israel, was called to "go out from their midst, and be separate from them" ([2 Cor. 6:17](#)). They were to come out of Egypt and never to let Egypt come back into them.

Paul recognized that the church in Corinth was confused over the issue of separation. They appear to have taken his call to be separate as unreasonable.

Paul's answer is very instructive for us. He explained that the call to be separate does not mean that they were to have no contact with sinners in the world. They were not called to leave the world the way the monks tried to leave the world. Separation is not achieved by avoidance of sinners in the world. The believer is called to separate by way of fellowship. There is a participation in Christ's body that is unique only to believers. Paul was calling the church to think differently about the world than they did with regard to Christ's church.

The world will always be what it is. It operates on its own system of values, attractions, and wisdom that often stand in opposition to the righteousness of God. By becoming Christians, we have left their fellowship and been joined to another. Our former love for the world has been replaced by love for Christ, but none of these truths entails a withdrawal from or refusal to mix in among the people of the world. This is why Paul explained to the Corinthians that because we live in the world there is no possible way to avoid mixing with unbelievers in daily life. Christians have an earthly citizenship, too, so long as they remain on this earth.

Christians are separate from the world, however, insofar as we refuse to join that way of life that stands in opposition to our heavenly citizenship. We are called to separate from the world by refusing to have fellowship with those who practice a way of life from which we have been delivered. We are separate in our heavenly status as Christ's body and in the way that we behave before the world.

This is where the Corinthians had failed. They allowed into their fellowship someone who claimed to be a believer and yet lived in sexual immorality. The church's refusal to separate from their former way of life had the consequence of joining together the church and the world. This is why Paul called them to separate from "anyone named a brother" ([1 Cor. 5:11](#)) who lives in a manner inconsistent with their new identity as the redeemed people of God. The Lord calls us to separate from those who claim to be believers and yet live in a way that contradicts the Christian faith and life through the practice of sin without repentance. We separate by breaking fellowship with them. The intimacy, care, and participation that exists among believers is not shared with those who refuse to repent and believe the gospel.

**The Corinthian church was to accomplish this separation through church discipline. By casting the man back into the world, they were preserving their separate status as Christ's people. Would they still cross paths with this man? Certainly. But now they no longer had Christian fellowship with him, and their willingness to maintain the purity of Christ's church as believers in the world is what biblical separation is all about.**

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## **HOW THEN SHALL WE SEPARATE?**

With these principles set before us, there are a few ways forward that Christians should consider when it comes to the issue of biblical separation.

A separation, as described by Paul to the Corinthians, is the crying need of the hour for us, too. Because the call to be separate has not been taken seriously in the church, the church today has lost its identity in the world. The church ought to look very different from the world in belief and practice. Many churches could begin to solve this problem by casting out the "Achans" from their midst (see [Josh. 7](#)).

Second, Christians need to set the right priorities in their pursuit of separation. Often Christians are separating from each other and the world on all the wrong issues. Christians need to unite in what is most important as we allow for differences, without separation, on those matters of liberty of conscience.



Finally, Christians need to consider their witness to the world. In His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus specifically prayed to His Father that believers would not be taken out of the world ([John 17:15](#)). The Lord left us in the world to be His witnesses. Unbelievers need the gospel, and that is why we are here. Does the world perceive this about us? Do they see that we care enough to help them know the blessedness that we have in Christ? We carry the answer in the message of the cross, but if the sense unbelievers get from us is that we are running away from them, why would we think they will turn to Jesus and desire to enter our fellowship? In our proper separation, we go to them with the gospel and remember that our witness is the reason the Lord is preserving us in the world.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Come out from among them and be separate,” says the Lord.



2 Corinthians 6:17  
LifeHopeandTruth.com

# Let's Revise the Popular Phrase "In, But Not Of"

**Article by**

**David Mathis**

Executive Editor, [desiringGod.org](http://desiringGod.org)

*"In, but not of"* — if you've spent much time in Christian circles, you're probably familiar with this slogan. *In the world, but not of the world*. It captures a truth about Jesus's followers. There's a real sense in which we are "in" this world, but not "of" it.

*In, but not of*. Yes, yes, of course.

But might this punchy phrase be giving the wrong impression about our (co)mission in this world as Christians? The motto could seem to give the drift, *We are in this world, alas, but what we really need to do is make sure that we're not of it*.

In this way of configuring things, the starting place is our unfortunate condition of being "in" this world. *Sigh*. And our mission, it appears, is to not be "of" it. So, the force is moving away from the world. "Rats, we're frustratingly stuck *in* this ole world, but let's marshal our best energies to not be *of* it." No doubt, it's an emphasis that's sometimes needed, but isn't something essential being downplayed?

We do well to run stuff like this through biblical texts. And on this one in particular, we do well to turn to John 17, where Jesus uses these precise categories of “in the world” and “not of the world.” Let’s look for Jesus’s perspective on this.

## Not of This World

On the eve of his crucifixion, Jesus prays to his Father in [John 17:14–19](#),  
I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

**“Being ‘not of the world’ isn’t the destination in these verses but the starting place.”**

Notice Jesus’s references to his disciples being “not of the world.” Verse 14: “The world has hated them because they are *not of the world*, just as I am *not of the world*.” And there it is again in verse 16: “They are *not of the world*, just as I am *not of the world*.”

Let's all agree it's clear that Jesus does not want his followers to be "of the world." Amen. He says that he himself is "not of the world," and his disciples are "not of the world." Here's a good impulse in the slogan "*in*, but not *of*."

## It's Going Somewhere

But notice that for Jesus being "not of the world" isn't the destination in these verses but the starting place. It's not where things are moving toward, but what they're moving from. He is not of the world, and he begins by saying that his followers are not of the world. But it's going somewhere. Jesus is huddling up the team so that we can run the next play and advance the ball down the field.

Enter verse 18: "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." And don't miss the surprising prayer of verse 15: "I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one."

## Sent into This World

Jesus is not asking his Father for his disciples to be taken out of the world, but he is praying for them as they are "sent into" the world. He begins with them being "not of the world" and prays for them as they are "sent into" the world.

**So maybe it would serve us better — especially in light of John 17 — to revise the popular phrase "*in*, but not *of*" in this way: "*not of*, but *sent into*." The beginning place is being "not of the world," and the movement is toward being "sent into" the world. The accent falls on being sent, with a mission, to the world — not being mainly on a mission to disassociate from this world.**

## Crucified to the World — and Raised to It

Jesus's assumption in John 17 is that those who have embraced him, and identified with him, are indeed not of the world. And now his summons is our sending — we are sent into the world on mission for gospel advance through disciple-making.

Jesus's true followers have not only been crucified to the world, but also raised to new life and sent back in to free others. We've been rescued from the darkness and given the Light not merely to flee the darkness, but to guide our steps as we go back in to rescue others.

So let's revise the popular phrase "in, but not of." Christians are not of this world, but sent into it. *Not of, but sent into.*



# The Kingdom of God Within You

Posted by [Mark Mayberry](#) August 21, 2012

By Roger Hillis

“Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say “See here!” or “see there!” For indeed the kingdom of God is within you’ (Luke 17:20-21).

The first century Pharisees just didn’t get it. They had so many misconceptions about the nature of the Lord’s kingdom and they passed most of those mistaken ideas on to their children and their children’s children. The biggest problem was that the entire Jewish nation was looking for an earthly kingdom. Many still are.

Thayer defines kingdom as “1. royal power, kingship, dominion, rule . . . 2. a kingdom i.e., the territory subject to the rule of a king ... 3. frequently in the N.T. in reference to the Reign of the Messiah .... (96-97).

There are therefore two major thoughts from the word “kingdom.” One involves the “concrete” use of the term as realm or territory. The other usage is more “abstract” and refers to the Lord’s reign or authority. Both usages are found in the Bible.

There are clear instances where the idea of rule or do-minion is in view. See Psalms 103:19 and Daniel 4:31. Territory is not under consideration here; authority is. And the word “kingdom” sometimes means territory. See 1 Kings 11:13, 34-37 as an example. Something to rule over is implied in the word itself.

The problem arose because, every time a Jew saw or heard a Messianic prophecy, he read “powerful, earthly king who will lead our armies into victorious conquest of all other nations and free us from foreign oppression.” And the Jews had this concept driven into their minds for so long that nothing else registered. More than 400 prophecies about the coming Anointed One all told them (from their perspective) that the Christ would be their physical deliverer. Here are just a few of those verses:

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever (Dan. 2:44).

These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever (Dan. 7:17-18).

There are many others. As you have time, read Isaiah 2:1-4, 9:1-7, Micah 3:9-4:8, and Zechariah 8:20-23. This kingdom, ruled by the Son of David, would be the most powerful kingdom ever and would be eternal.

It was under those conditions and in that type of atmosphere that Jesus came into the world. He was the Messiah, the one who would deliver them. But his deliverance was from sin and spiritual bondage, not from national oppression. Both John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1) and Jesus (Matt. 4:17) preached that the kingdom was “at hand.” It was not some 2000 years in the future; it would be established in the lifetime of his auditors (Mark 9:1).

But the Jews still did not understand. For hundreds of years, their ancestors had been telling them of this powerful, earthly Messiah who would be the answer to all their national problems. They could not shake that impression and, on many occasions, when Christ did something awe-some, they thought their dreams were coming true. “Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He de-parted again to a mountain by Himself alone” (John 6:15). They wanted an earthly king so badly!

Even the apostles did not fully comprehend until the Holy Spirit came on them on Pentecost. As late as Acts 1:6, they asked Jesus, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

And of course, many today still make the same mistake. They continue to look for the establishment of Christ’s physical kingdom on earth, based primarily on a misunderstanding of Revelation 20. The kingdom which they seek will never come. Christ’s spiritual kingdom already is here.

Many of the verses which speak of the kingdom tell us of the territory over which he rules the church. See John 3:5, Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 1:13, Hebrews 12:28, and Revelation 1:5 (ASV). There are also numerous verses which use the term “kingdom” to refer to Christ’s power, authority and majesty, and not to the territory over which he exerts that dominion (see Luke 1:31-33; 2 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 11:15; 12:10).

Are you a part of the kingdom of the Lord? Are you a faithful Christian? Have you made Jesus the Lord and King of your life? If not, continue to read and study the Bible. Obey its commands and the Messiah will add you to his kingdom. “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Col. 1:13). May God bless your search for truth. – Guardian Of Truth Magazine



## THE LIMITS OF SECULAR & RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

### The Intolerance of Tolerance

D. A. CARSON

#### **Sharpening the Contrast between the Old Tolerance and the New**

Under the older view of tolerance, a person might be judged tolerant if, while holding strong views, he or she insisted that others had the right to dissent from those views and argue their own cases. This view of tolerance is in line with the famous utterance often (if erroneously) assigned to Voltaire: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." This older view of tolerance makes three assumptions: (1) there is objective truth out there, and it is our duty to pursue that truth; (2) the various parties in a dispute think that they know what the truth of the matter is, even though they disagree sharply, each party thinking the other is wrong; (3) nevertheless they hold that the best chance of uncovering the truth of the matter, or the best chance of persuading most people with reason and not with coercion, is by the unhindered exchange of ideas, no matter how wrongheaded some of those ideas seem. This third assumption demands that all sides insist that their opponents must not be silenced or crushed. Free inquiry may eventually bring the truth out; it is likely to convince the greatest number of people. Phlogiston (an imaginary substance that chemists once thought to cause combustion) will be exposed, and oxygen will win; Newtonian mechanics will be bested, and Einsteinian relativity and quantum mechanics will both have their say.

#### *Jottings on the History of Tolerance*

Since we are casting an eye backward across the centuries, the tolerance of which I am now writing is of course what I have called the older tolerance. It is nicely defined by Edward Langerak:

Toleration is the enduring of something disagreeable. Thus, it is not indifference toward things that do not matter and it is not broad-minded celebration of differences. It involves a decision to forgo using powers of coercion, so it is not merely resignation at the inevitability of the disagreeable, although begrudging toleration can be granted when one believes that coercion, while possible, would come at too high a price. Tolerating another's actions is quite compatible with trying to change another's mind, as long as one relies on rational persuasion—or, perhaps, emotional appeals—rather than blunt threats or subtle brainwashing.

**Religious toleration** generally applies to *expressing or acting upon* theologically-related beliefs, although the mere *holding* of beliefs or the *persons* holding them have also been the objects of intolerance and toleration.... [I]n spite of some behavioral similarities, toleration is distinct from the sort of pluralistic ecumenicism that seeks consensus on central religious matters or views other religious beliefs as simply different routes to similar goals. We can take religions extremely seriously, believe that we are clearly right and others are egregiously wrong on a matter of huge and holy significance, and still decide to tolerate their propagation of the error.

## Early Christian Thought

What is transparently obvious in all of these analyses is how every society mixes tolerance and intolerance in complex ways, a mix that is grounded in a certain moral vision, and all the pragmatic (and even corrupting) decisions that flow from that vision. This is true in the pagan world, the Christian world, and any other world for that matter. During the church's first three centuries or so, the dominant criticism Christians received from the diverse pagans of the Roman Empire was that their religion was too exclusive. Celsus, Porphyry, Symmachus, and many other scholarly pagans were happy to defend one branch of pagan thought against another, but none of them claimed to represent the *only* way to the divine. It follows that all of them took umbrage at the claim of Christians that Christ provides the *only* way to eternal life.

All the ancient critics of Christianity were united in affirming that there is no one way to the divine.... It was not the kaleidoscope of religious practices and feelings that was the occasion for the discussion of religious pluralism in ancient Rome; it was the success of Christianity, as well as its assertions about Christ and about Israel.... By appealing to a particular history as the source of knowledge of God, Christian thinkers transgressed the conventions that governed civilized theological discourse in antiquity.

This antipathy toward Christians, all in the name of a more tolerant view of different (pagan) religions, inevitably constituted part of the backdrop that made the cycles of official Roman persecution of Christians—the most violent *intolerance*—a morally acceptable pattern in the culture, until the numbers of Christians and the quality of their lives and sufferings began to modify public perception. Until that occurred, intolerance toward Christians was widely perceived as a virtue.

Not surprisingly, during the early centuries of the church's existence Christians could passionately defend tolerance. Toward the end of the second century, Tertullian of Carthage wrote, "It is a human law and a natural right that one should worship whatever he intends; the religious practice of one person neither harms nor helps another. It is no part of religion to coerce religious practice, for it is by free choice not coercion that we should be led to religion" (*To Scapula* 2.1–2). Again: "See that you do not give a reason for impious religious practice by taking away religious liberty and prohibit choice in divine matters, so that I may not worship as I wish, but am forced to worship what I do not wish" (*Apology* 24.6–10). About a century later, Lactantius wrote, "Religion is to be defended not by putting to death, but by dying, not by cruelty but by patience, not by an impious act but by faith.... For nothing is so much a matter of free will as religion [*Nihil est enim tam voluntarium quam religion*], for if the mind of the worshipper turns away it is carried off and nothing remains" (*Divine Institutes* 5.19). He goes on to say, "religion cannot be a matter of coercion [*religio cogi non potest*]" ; it has to do with the will (*voluntas*).

With the Constantinian settlement, Christians suddenly found themselves allied with imperial power. Instead of being the disadvantaged religious community in the Empire, they now enjoyed the advantages of being associated with the emperor. That called forth new rounds of reflection on the relations between church and state and on the dynamic tension between tolerance and intolerance. Once Christianity became the official religion, believers were no longer in danger of officially sanctioned persecution; inevitably, however, they faced two new threats: (a) pressure from the state to be controlled by the state and (b) the temptation to pursue power for its own sake in a way that was impossible for them before the Christian profession of Constantine, or to use the power of the state to establish Christianity.

So far as we know, the first Christian leader to demand, by appealing to Scripture, the suppression of pagan cults was Firmicus Maternus in his *On the Error of Profane Religions* (c. A.D. 346). More influential by far was the authority of Augustine. His struggle against the Donatists, which occupied much of his energy in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, chronicles his shift in perspective. He became Bishop of Hippo in A.D. 395 and determined to end the ugly schism between Catholics and Donatists as expeditiously as possible. Initially he took only peaceful measures, but in the early part of the fifth century his attitude changed. In part he was responding to violence against Catholics; in part he discovered that compulsory measures were often effective. Augustine remained implacably opposed to torture and physical coercion. Nevertheless, the stances he adopted toward the Donatists and the steps he took reshaped Christian understanding of how others should be treated. He deployed the command “compel them to come in” (Luke 14:23) from the parable of the great supper as sanction to enforce the submission of unbelievers and heretics (a formidable display of ripping a text out of its context); more importantly, he appealed to the civil authorities for help. “What death is worse for the soul than the liberty to err?” he asked (*To the Donatists*). Augustine thus “established a precedent which fortified the practice of repression by the Medieval Church.” This is not to say that everyone followed Augustine’s line. For instance, in A.D. 591 Gregory the Great wrote to Virgilius, Bishop of Arles, and to Theodore, Bishop of Marseilles, commending them for their zeal in evangelizing Jews, but criticizing them for the use of coercion instead of resorting to “the sweetness of preaching.” Nevertheless, Augustine’s hardening position pointed the way for many church leaders in later centuries.

## Concluding Reflections

One of the clearest thinkers on this subject is J. Daryl Charles:

Tolerance in its conception took on the cast of a virtue because of its concern for the common good and its respect for people as persons. We endure particular customs, behaviors or habits—sometimes even (relatively) bad habits—of people in the interest of preserving a greater unity. In the Lockean context, tolerance was advocated for religious non-conformists. Never was it construed, however, to imply—much less to sanction—morally questionable behavior. Consider, however, the devolution of a concept. What was a public virtue in its prior state becomes a vice if and when it ceases to care for truth, ignores the common good, and disdains the values that uphold a community. The culture of “tolerance” in which we presently find ourselves is a culture in which people believe nothing, possess no clear concept of right and wrong, and are remarkably indifferent to this precarious state of affairs.

As a result of this transmutation, “tolerance” becomes indistinguishable from an intractably intolerant relativism. The challenge facing people of faith is learning how to purify tolerance so that it remains a virtue without succumbing to the centripetal forces of relativism and the spirit of the age.

The new tolerance, then, has become a supreme virtue, if not *the* supreme virtue, of much of the Western world and beyond. No longer a function of a broader ethical and moral cultural consensus, tolerance is not worked out in terms of what might be *permitted*—legally, intellectually, socially—granted the “givens” of this broader consensus, but becomes an absolute good that gains the power to erode other cultural distinctives, including moral and religious distinctives. In the mind of many observers, this new tolerance thereby rushes in to support moral relativism. Because of its independent status, this new tolerance becomes, ironically, a *moralizing* support of moral relativism. One of the purposes of this chapter has been to show how great a change this is from the understanding and function of tolerance in the past, when tolerance was not perceived to be an intellectual stance but a social response.

In addition to the ways these changes in our understanding of tolerance have affected Western culture, we need to become aware of how people in other cultures are reading these changes. In his book *Why the Rest Hates the West: Understanding the Roots of Global Rage*, Meic Pearse spells out how this new understanding of tolerance is perceived to be a threat to other cultures:

The currency of the term *tolerance* has recently become badly debased. Where it used to mean the respecting of real, hard differences, it has come to mean instead a dogmatic abdication of truth-claims and a moralistic adherence to moral relativism—departure from either of which is stigmatized as intolerance.... Where the old tolerance allowed hard differences on religion and morality to rub shoulders and compete freely in the public square, the new variety wishes to lock them all indoors as matters of private judgment; the public square must be given over to indistinctness. If the old tolerance was, at least, a real value, the new, intolerant “tolerance” might better be described as an antivalue; it is a disposition of hostility to any suggestion that one thing is “better” than another, or even that any way of life needs protected space from its alternatives.

### *The Charge of Intolerance*

**Truth Grounded in Revelation** That revelation has come to us in the natural world, in great events of miraculous power attested by witnesses, in the personal work of the Spirit of God, in the enormously rich variety of writings that make up the Bible, and supremely in the person of Jesus Christ. These are not mutually exclusive channels. For instance, most of what we know propositionally about Jesus is found in the Bible, including those parts that preserve the testimony of witnesses—so here we have Jesus himself, witnesses who have left words about him, and the Bible that preserves them and conveys them.

Three things must be said about this content.

*First*, the content can be—indeed, has been—put into propositions, creeds, catechisms, statements of faith. It has substance. Of course, there is an interpretive element in all our confessions, for finite beings cannot know anything without interpreting it. Only Omniscience can escape the limitations of perspectivalism—of looking at things from a limited perspective.

But that does not mean that all perspectives are equally valid, or that there is no truth in any particular interpretation. Moreover, especially when the Bible treats certain topics again and again, we can know certain things about those topics truly. As Christians band together to study the Bible, they come to convictions about what the Bible is saying—and that leads, rightly, to shared creeds that are modifiable only by more light from the Bible itself. Our confession of such truth cannot participate in the perfection of Omniscience, but it is nonetheless valid and appropriate to the limitations of our finitude and our fallenness. Better yet, it is made possible by a gracious God who condescends to disclose himself in human words, and by the Spirit who convicts rebels of sin and illumines darkened minds. The substance can be summarized in a few lines, in lengthy treatises, or anything in between. It will include many wonderful truths about God, including his perfections, his holiness, his personhood, his omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence, the triunity of his being, the faithfulness of his ways, the graciousness of his pursuit of his rebellious image-bearers; the doctrines of creation and fall; the history of Abraham, of Israel, of the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants; the rise of the Davidic monarchy with its attendant promises; the coming of Jesus, virgin-born, truly God and truly human being; his perfect life and matchless teaching, his propitiating and expiating death, his triumphant resurrection displaying his vindication before his Father and his triumph over Satan and his demonic hosts; Christ's multi-faceted kingdom that is already forcefully advancing in this dark world but that will reach consummation in the splendor of the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness, where Jesus' blood-bought people, the church drawn from every tribe and nation, will enjoy resurrection existence and the bliss of love and holiness forever. The only alternative is hell itself. Nor can we ignore the many biblical claims to the exclusiveness of Jesus as the way to be reconciled to the one God, the God who made us, who redeems us, and who will be our Judge on the last day.

The truth of the Bible, as we have seen, focuses on our rebellion and need as God sees them, and on God as the ruler, sovereign, judge, and gracious Savior who alone can rescue us from our sin and reconcile us to himself. These things can be tested by the systematic study of Scripture. Those who hold, for instance, to "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" (MTD), or to the essential equivalence of all religions, simply cannot make their case out of any holistic reading of the Bible, but only by the most egregious and subjective proof-texting.

### **Truth Addressing Sin and Redemption**

In other words, a religion may make exclusive claims even while acknowledging that other religions say important things. What we must learn from this observation, I think, are two things. *First*, the fundamental issues that divide religions are more than discrete propositions (though certainly not less). These propositions are intertwined with what we think of God, with what we think salvation consists in and how it is or is not achieved, with how one views the world, with how one diagnoses the deepest human problems, with one's relationship with God (or with some notion of the divine). In short, these religions embrace amazingly diverse views of what salvation consists in, of what the divine is like, of how one is "saved."

In Christian terms, there are massive and coherent perceptions about the entire drama of sin and redemption—yet even to put it like that is to stipulate a decisively *Christian* way of looking at the world. These perceptions simply do not work together in any other religion—just as other religions have their own perceptions about the world and religious reality. It is simply unfair to *any* of them to pretend they are all saying the same thing.

The point of these reflections is simply to show that more than isolated propositions are disputed between major religions. There are entire matrices of beliefs, amounting to competing worldviews about what I have called “sin and redemption.”

The *second* thing to learn is that the secular frame of reference that grounds so much of the new tolerance is, from one perspective, no less religious than the religions it seeks to displace. The chief difference is that *while the secularist wants all other religions to retreat into the private sphere, he or she insists that secularists have the right to control the public sphere because they are right—completely unaware that they are trying to impose their worldview on others who disagree with it.* Others, they say, are intolerant because they say those with whom they disagree are wrong. But, of course, the secularists are no less insistent that those who disagree with them are wrong, yet never entertain a guilty wisp of thought suggesting that perhaps they themselves are intolerant.

In short, this truth question catches up with *all* of us. And it affects our broadest visions of what we think is wrong with the world, and how to address it. All of us think in terms of (our own equivalents of) sin and redemption.

### **Truth and Tolerance: Concluding Reflections**

(1) *Religion without truth.* Interfaith dialog, whether in formal settings or in coffee klatches, will likely come to happy friendship *provided no participant believes very much to be true within his or her respective traditions.* A Muslim who believes very little and a Christian who believes very little and a Jew who believes very little will have a lot in common: very little. No wonder they are in agreement. They do not disagree over very much, and therefore happily agree. Really interesting dialog would take place, however, if believers showed up who happily articulate the exclusive claims of their respective religions. Then one would discover whether or not genuine tolerance (in the first sense) will prevail: honest debate where each side can feel free to say others are wrong, without fear of coercion by the state. Such friendship, when it occurs, is truly valuable; the friendship of *The Faith Club* is largely narcissistic.

(2) *“Tolerance” without convictions.* G. K. Chesterton is reputed to have said, “Tolerance is the virtue of a man without convictions.” That is true under the second definition of tolerance. Under the first understanding of tolerance, however memorable the line, it is not quite true. Under the first definition, tolerance is the virtue of a person with convictions who thinks that others should not be coerced to agree with his convictions. B. B. Warfield understood the distinction more than a century ago. In 1887 Phillips Brooks, the Rector of Trinity Church, Boston, published two lectures on tolerance. Warfield approved of some of what Brooks wrote on the subject, but he also commented:

[T]he kind of tolerance which Dr. Brooks most admires, “the tolerance which grows up in any man who is aware that truth is larger than his conception of it, and that what seems to be other men’s errors must often be other parts of the truth of which he has only a portion,” appears to us no tolerance at all, but catholicity of spirit. We are not “tolerant” of known or suspected truth; true tolerance comes into play only when we are confronted with what we recognize as error; and this is the reason why, as Dr. Brooks admirably argues, there can be no real tolerance in a mind which has no strong convictions and no firm grasp on truth.

(3) *Tolerance without religious liberty.* Tolerance—whether the old kind or the new—is a different and less profound notion than the right to religious liberty. The concept of the *right* to religious liberty presupposes a particular understanding of human beings, of God, and of liberty.

(4) *Truth without the cross.* One of the things that supporters of the new tolerance fear is the claim to truth that could easily turn totalitarian. But one of the remarkable features of Christianity is that at the heart of our faith is the Lord Jesus, who claims to *be* the truth (John 14:6) and yet who goes to the cross to save others. The exclusiveness of his claim is never diminished, yet this truth incarnate goes to the cross for the sake of others. While we insist on the power and non-negotiability of truth, we are also humbled by a God who in the person of his Son discloses truth crucified.

## **Morality and Tolerance**

The effect of this change is striking. It used to be that the moral issues held a central place in public discourse, and part of that discourse dealt with how much deviation from those moral standards could be tolerated. Increasingly, however, the rights and wrongs of the old moral issues receive scant attention while the public discourse focuses on what sanctions should be imposed on those who do not “tolerate” (definitely the new sense!) the abolition of what were once the moral standards. In other words, the primary “moral” line drawn through Western culture declares that those who “tolerate” just about anything are good, and those who do not are bad and therefore should not be tolerated.

These are not abstract issues. A culture that minimizes values such as honor, integrity, valor, self-sacrifice for the sake of other people, truth-telling, and courtesy, while maximizing (moral) freedom so strongly that the issues themselves cannot be debated because everything has been decided under the controlling rubric of the new tolerance, is destined in the long haul to pay horrendous costs.

## **Distinguish Empirical Diversity From Inherent Goodness of Diversity**

We must distinguish between the reality (often a delightful reality) of empirical diversity and the dogma that diversities of every kind are good.

Reviewing the recent book by Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell that analyzes the state of religion in America, R. R. Reno writes:



Ah, America. Where else in the postmodern West can you find snake-handling preachers; earnest middle-aged women at Unitarian churches who talk about astrology; bookstores full of novels about the rapture; entire seminaries given over to dispensational scholasticism; home-schooling Catholics; liberal Jesuits; Jewish Buddhists, Black Muslims, and more—all mixed together in the urban centers, suburban sprawl, and endless rural emptiness of our continent-spanning country?

For what we must see is that there is no logical connection from the observation of the undisputed diversity to the entirely disputable dogma that every axis of diversity is equally good. Are the Nazis as good as the Amish?

The same is true of epistemological pluralism. The matter is nicely discussed by Paul Helm:

We have—I take it—good but not infallible grounds for our views; and others with different beliefs think that they have good but not infallible grounds for their views. And even if some of us have views which are infallibly true, we cannot convince everyone else of the fact. And yet this fact, the fact of epistemological pluralism, does not, or ought not, to lead to [*sic*] us to think that scepticism is true or even that relativism, the first cousin of scepticism, is true either.

... I go along with those who argue that toleration is highly desirable precisely because of our own epistemic fallibilism. Because I may be mistaken in my beliefs, and you may be mistaken in yours, a framework in which our views can be disseminated and argued about is surely something that is of benefit to us both. As a result of such arguments each of us may be able to review his opinions and the reasons that he has for holding them, and the strength with which he holds them.... [It] might be argued that toleration is necessary precisely to avoid a collapse into scepticism. Worse, a belief which can only maintain itself by not tolerating its rivals is likely to be viewed sceptically by opponents and cynically by its proponents. We need toleration of diverse opinions to make manifest that there is a spectrum of reasonableness and unreasonableness.

### **Challenge Secularism's Ostensible Neutrality and Superiority**

Another way of getting at the last two points is this: we have little choice but to challenge the ostensible neutrality and superiority of contemporary secularism. Neither secularists of atheistic persuasion, nor theists who have bought into the thesis that secularism is essentially neutral, should be discouraged from articulating their views, of course.

More importantly, once we have opened up the door to categories like right and wrong, truth and error, then we can no longer escape fundamental questions about what *makes* something right or wrong, true or false—and then we have begun to engage the largest questions of human existence, essentially religious/theological questions. These in turn together remind us afresh that discussions about tolerance and intolerance are valuable *when they are a function of some belief system, some value system, and not when questions of tolerance and intolerance have been cut off from questions of truth and morality.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Carson, D. A. (2012). [\*The Intolerance of Tolerance\*](#) (pp. iii–176). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

# The Intolerance of the Gospel

By Mike Willis

One of the most offensive things about those who are New Testament Christians in the eyes of the non-Christian world is their belief in the “oneness of the church” or “one way of salvation.” The man who believes that there is just one church is considered an ignorant bigot in the eyes of most people today. A man must learn to be tolerant of another’s religion, we are told. However, one thing which I have observed in my discussions with the “tolerant” is this: it is extremely difficult for the tolerant to tolerate the intolerant. They are perfectly willing to tolerate any religious belief or practice so long as the one involved in that belief or practice does not say that it is the only way to heaven!

Yet, my brethren, one of the very things which offended the religious community of Jesus’ day was His statements about the exclusive nature of the gospel. He said, “I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins” (Jn. 8:24). This statement offended the Jews of Jesus’ day. When Peter said, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12), the Jews were offended. When Paul labored to turn away the pagans from their idols to worship Jehovah, the Ephesians were offended (Acts 19:23f). All of the inspired writers believed that there was but one way of salvation, namely, through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of the first century was intolerant. It would not tolerate the belief that one could be saved through Judaism; it would not tolerate the belief that one could be saved through the various religions of the pagans; it would not tolerate perversions in the gospel from false teachers among the Christians. The first century gospel was intolerant of other religions.

Consider with me this passage as an example of the intolerance of the gospel:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9).

Let us examine this passage very carefully as it illustrates the intolerance of the first century gospel.

## **Paul's Opponents**

A consideration of the heresy with which Paul was confronted will be helpful in understanding this important passage. Paul had gone into Galatia to preach the gospel; he converted many to the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. Upon his departure to regions which had not heard of the gospel, Judaizers entered the church and made havoc of his work. These men denied Paul's apostolic authority. Hence, chapters one and two of Galatians are designed to refute their denial of his authority and to show that he had as much apostolic authority as any other apostle.

The Judaizers apparently charged that Paul had departed from the old Jerusalem gospel and was a false teacher. The doctrinal point of departure which the Judaizers pressed was this: they taught that a man had to submit to the Mosaical law (and, specifically, to circumcision) in order to be saved.

Here are some of the things which characterized this apostasy:

(1) It was quick. Paul said, “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you . . . .” The apostasy did not occur over a long period of years; it occurred almost overnight.

(2) It was to a “different” gospel. Paul said, “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another . . . .” The Greek New Testament has a play on words here which is pretty well reproduced in the English by the words “different” and “another” (the KJV has “another” in both places). The Greek word *allos* refers to “another of the same character” whereas the Greek word *heteros* refers to “another of a different character.” Paul’s wonder is that they should have so soon accepted a gospel different in character and kind from that which they had already received, which therefore had no right to be called another gospel because it was no gospel at all. The gospel taught salvation through grace by faith; the Judaizers taught salvation through perfect obedience to the Mosaical law. The word “gospel” means “good news.” That man could be saved by perfect obedience to the Mosaical law was not “good news” because no one could obey the law perfectly. Hence, this was a different gospel; a doctrine of salvation which did not deserve to be labeled “gospel.”

(3) It perverted the true gospel. Paul said, “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” These Judaizers did not deny the virgin birth, death, burial, or resurrection of Christ. They did not deny that baptism was essential for salvation. Indeed, they did not deny any of the facts or the one act which those who distinguish between gospel and doctrine label as “gospel.” Rather, they bound the Mosaic law upon those Gentiles who wanted to follow Christ. To bind the Mosaic law upon Gentiles was to pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(4) It disturbed churches. Paul said, “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ.” Those who teach their opinions (such as whether or not God will save the pious unimmersed, overlook sins of ignorance, etc.) disturb churches.

To tamper with the gospel is to trouble the Church . . . .Indeed, the Church’s greatest troublemakers (now as then) are not those outside who oppose, ridicule and persecute it, but those inside who try to change the gospel . . . .Conversely, the only way to be a good churchman is to be a good gospel-man. The best way to serve the Church is to believe and to preach the gospel (John R. W. Stott as quoted by James Montgomery Bolce, “Galatians,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. X, p. 428).

My brethren, you think of the good men whom you know as faithful gospel preachers. Ask yourself how many of them have divided churches, caused problems among the saints, etc. Even experience itself confirms that those who are faithful to the gospel do not trouble the churches and that those who try to improve the gospel are the real troublemakers of the church.

(5) It brought damnation. Paul said, “But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.” The heresy which Paul was fighting would cause a man to lose his soul! When Peter became involved in it, “he stood condemned” (2:11). Because this

heresy was, and any heresy is, damning, Paul withstood it; he had to demolish this departure from the true gospel. He could not tolerate it; he had to eradicate it.

## **The Duty of Intolerance**

Our society has reached the state where it is critical of intolerance. The man who will not tolerate another’s religion is considered narrow-minded and bigoted. Tolerance of all religions is considered charitable and extolled by most people. Yet, Paul was a most intolerant person as he wrote Gal. 1:6-9.

The grounds of Christian intolerance is the exclusive claims of the gospel. Jesus taught that there is but one way of salvation; He said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (Jn. 14:6). The gospel is not a way of salvation; it is the way of salvation. The gospel is not a life for men; it is the life unto men. The gospel is not a truth; it is the truth. The grounds of intolerance of the gospel is that it is the only means of salvation!

## **The Limits of Intolerance**

Though intolerance is a virtue, there are some very real limits to intolerance. When John Calvin condoned the execution of Servetus for his heretical doctrine, he had certainly violated the limits of intolerance.

Intolerance does not give the right to exterminate those who teach false doctrines.

Intolerance must be limited to the rights of the gospel, not the claims of the preacher. Intolerance commonly springs from personal jealousy or party spirit. Our intolerance is not toward men who preach the same gospel in other terms than we use. It is against those who teach another gospel. And, my brethren, the gospel of gimmicks as manifested by those involved in the bus ministry, the gospel of recreation as manifested by those involved in church sponsored recreation. and the gospel which tolerates practically any religious belief as manifested by the unity-in-diversion faction are not the gospel of the first century! If these were being opposed simply because someone used other terms than did I in preaching the same gospel, they should be tolerated. That is not the case, however; those involved in these movements have perverted or distorted the old Jerusalem gospel! Consequently, these perversions cannot be tolerated.

Our intolerance must, therefore, be limited to perversions of the gospel. Matters pertaining to personalities, which scriptural methods are used, individual consciences, etc. must be tolerated. The Christian must be tolerant of anything which does not pervert the gospel of Christ or destroy the unity of the saints.

## **Conclusion**

The average fellow seems to think more of tolerance than he does of truth. Indeed, this spirit has invaded the church. Apparently, those propagating this spirit of tolerance have forgotten that heresy is damning. The Pulpit Commentary contained these important remarks on this passage:



There is a spirit abroad that leads men to think that everybody is right, that nobody is wrong, that nothing but an evil life will bring retribution hereafter. By men of this spirit the apostle would be regarded as cruelly illiberal and narrow (p. 47).

The lessons revealed in Gal. 1:8-9 need to be preached anew to every generation that men everywhere might learn that the gospel cannot tolerate perversions of it. There is but one way of salvation-through the gospel of Jesus Christ. One who perverts that gospel destroys the one way of salvation. Consequently, the Christian cannot ignore even the smallest perversion of the gospel. He cannot tolerate heresy.

Truth Magazine XXII: 9, pp. 147-149  
March 2, 1978

# Tolerate, Then Embrace

Posted by [Mark Mayberry](#) September 10, 2012

By Larry Ray Hafley

Concerning our moral and spiritual culture, a commentator said, “What this generation *tolerates*, the next generation will *embrace*.” Both sacred and secular history have proven the truth of this assessment time and time again. Everything from dancing to drinking, from abortion to mercy killing, has gone from toleration to acceptance. In the home and in the church, everything from immodesty to immorality has been first allowed and then endorsed. Adulterous marriages, gambling, and other similar sins, have gone from being permitted to being sponsored. Remember when wearing shorts and attending dances were condemned? Now, shorts are worn to services and dances are held in church buildings! Truly, what “this generation tolerates, the next generation will embrace.”

One generation tolerated sprinkling for baptism if a person were seriously ill. The next generation accepted sprinkling for baptism. One generation approved a “chief” elder. The next generation appointed them. One generation introduced instruments of music as an “aid” to singing. The next generation demanded them. One generation accepted the “fellowship hall” (which, at first, was just a few tables in the basement for social meals). The next generation built gymnasiums (“Family Life Centers”). One generation apologized for “hard liners” who opposed denominational religion. The next generation saw their sons and daughters joining those denominations.

One generation spoke of the need to reach out in a “non-judgmental” way to our Catholic and Protestant friends. The next generation welcomed Presbyterians into “our fellowship” with a handshake. One generation spoke of congregational singing as “one of our traditions.” The next generation defended choruses and choirs. One generation applauded preachers who closed their sermons without an appeal for sinners to be baptized for the remission of sins. The next generation denied the gospel plan of salvation in general and baptism in particular.

What does this say to us? What is our responsibility? “You shall observe to do therefore as the Lord . . . hath commanded you: *ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left*” (Deut. 5:32). “Hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Tim. 3:14). “Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17).

The next time we are tempted to deviate from the word of God, let us remember that what we tolerate, our children will embrace!

The  
UNEQUAL  
YOKE

*"LET US LAY ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT"*

(Heb. 12:1)

*By*

C. H. MACKINTOSH

**THE UNEQUAL YOKE**

Under the Mosaic economy, we learn the moral principle.—“Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled. Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woolen and linen together.” (Deut. 22:9–11; Lev. 19:19.)

Now, there are four distinct phases in which “the unequal yoke” may be contemplated, viz, **the domestic, the commercial, the religious, and the philanthropic.**

Some may be disposed to confine 2 Corinthians 6:14 to the first of these; but the apostle does not so confine it. The words are, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” He does not specify the character or object of the yoke, and therefore we are warranted in giving the passage its widest application, by bringing its edge to bear directly upon every phase of the unequal yoke; and we shall see the importance of so doing ere we close these remarks, if the Lord permit.

I. And **first, then, let us consider the domestic or marriage yoke.** Like a sheep and a goat linked together, the sheep longs to feed on the green pasture in the field, while, on the other hand, the goat craves the brambles which grow in the ditch. The sad consequence is that both are starved. One *will* not feed on the pasture, and the other *cannot* feed upon the brambles, and thus neither gets what his nature craves, unless the goat, by superior strength, succeeds in forcing his unequally yoked companion to remain among the brambles, there to languish and die. The moral of this is plain enough; and, moreover, it is, alas! of but too common occurrence. The goat generally succeeds in gaining his end. The worldly partner carries his or her point, in almost every instance. It will be found, almost without exception, that in cases of the unequal marriage-yoke, the poor Christian is the sufferer. Thus, much as to the question of the unequal yoke in its influence upon the life, the character, the testimony, and the discipleship of the child of God.

I would now say a word as to its moral effect as exhibited in the domestic circle. Here too the consequences are truly melancholy. Nor could they possibly be otherwise. Two persons have come together in the closest and most intimate relationship, with tastes, habits, feelings, desires, tendencies, and objects diametrically opposite. They have nothing in common; so that in every movement they can but grate one against the other. It produces estrangement, coldness, distance, and misunderstanding; or, if it does not produce these, it will doubtless lead, on the part of the Christian, to a forfeiture of his discipleship and his good conscience.

Then, as to its effect upon children, it is equally sad. These are almost sure to flow in the current with the unconverted parent. "Their children spoke half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." There can be no union of heart in the training of the children,—no joint and mutual confidence in reference to them. One desires to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; the other desires to bring them up in the principles of the world, the flesh, and the devil: and as all the sympathies of the children, as they grow up, are likely to be ranged on the side of the latter, it is easy to see how it will end. In short, it is an unseemly, unscriptural, and vain effort to plow with an "unequal yoke," or to "sow the ground with mingled seed;" and all must end in sorrow and confusion.\*

Now, were it thus with Christians in the matter of unscriptural marriage, it would save them a world of sorrow and perplexity; but it is not thus. The heart gets out of communion, and is morally incompetent to "try the things that differ;" and when in this condition, the devil gains an easy conquest, and speedy success in his wicked effort to induce the believer to yoke himself with "Belial"—with "unrighteousness"—with "darkness"—with "an infidel."

II. We shall now consider "**the unequal yoke**" in its commercial phase, as seen in cases of partnership in business. This, though not so serious an aspect of the yoke as that which we have just been considering, will nevertheless be found a very positive barrier to the believer's testimony. When a Christian yokes himself, for business purposes, with an unbeliever—he virtually surrenders his individual responsibility. Henceforth the acts of the firm become his acts, and it is perfectly out of the question to think of getting a worldly firm to act on heavenly principles. They would laugh at such a notion, inasmuch as it would be an effectual barrier to the success of their commercial schemes. They will feel perfectly free to adopt a number of expedients in carrying on their business which would be quite opposed to the spirit and principles of the kingdom in which he is, and of the Church of which he forms a part.

True, the conscience of a Christian who transgresses in this matter may seek relief in various ways—may have recourse to various subterfuges—may set forth various arguments to persuade itself that all is right. It will be said that "we can be very devoted and very spiritual, so far as we are personally concerned, even though we are yoked, for business purposes, with an unbeliever." This will be found fallacious when brought to the test of the actual practice. A servant of Christ will find himself hampered in a hundred ways by his worldly partnership. If in matters of service to Christ he is not met with open hostility, he will have to encounter the enemy's secret and constant effort to damp his ardor, and throw cold water on all his schemes.

But perhaps nothing so operates on the hearts of Christians, in inducing them to yoke themselves commercially with unbelievers, as the habit of seeking to maintain the two characters of a Christian and a man of business. This is a grievous snare. In point of fact, there can be no such thing. A man must be either the one or the other. If I am a Christian, my Christianity must show itself as a living reality in that in which I am; and if it cannot show itself there, I ought not to be there; for if I continue in a sphere or position in which the life of Christ cannot be manifested, I shall speedily possess naught of Christianity but the name without the reality—the outward form without the inward power—the shell without the kernel.

I should be the servant of Christ, not merely on Sunday, but from Monday morning to Saturday night. I should not only be a servant of Christ in the public assembly, but also in my place of business, whatever it may happen to be. But I cannot be a proper servant of Christ with my neck in the yoke with an unbeliever; for how could the servants of two hostile masters work in the same yoke? It is utterly impossible; as well might one attempt to link the sun's meridian beams with the profound darkness of midnight. It cannot be done. It is impossible that anyone whose eye is filled and whose heart is occupied with Christ, could ever yoke himself with a worldly partner, for any object whatsoever.

Hence, if I find myself in partnership with an unbeliever, and my conscience tells me I am wrong, let me honestly and frankly state to my partner that I can no longer go on with him; and having done that, my place is to use every exertion to wind up the affairs of the firm in an upright, a straightforward, and businesslike manner, so as to give no possible occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully, and that my good may not be evil spoken of. We must avoid rashness, headiness, and high-mindedness, when apparently acting for the Lord, and in defense of His holy principles. If a man gets entangled in a net, or involved in a labyrinth, it is not by bold and violent plunging he will extricate himself. No; he must humble himself, confess his sins before the Lord, and then retrace his steps, in patient dependence upon that grace which can not only pardon him for being in a wrong position, but lead him forth into a right one.

Moreover, as in the case of the marriage-yoke, the matter is very much modified by the fact of the [business] partnership having been entered into previous to conversion. Not that this would, in the slightest degree, justify a [business] continuance in it. If I have wronged God by getting into [business] partnership with an unbeliever, I must not wrong any man in my way of getting out of it. Profound subjection to the Word of God will set all to rights, will lead us into straight paths, and enable us to avoid all dangerous extremes.



III. **The religious phase of the unequal yoke.** In looking through Scripture we find almost numberless passages setting forth the intense spirit of separation which ought ever to characterize the people of God. Whether we direct our attention to the Old Testament, in which we have God's relationship and dealings with His earthly people, Israel, or to the New Testament, in which we have His relationship and dealings with His heavenly people, the Church, we find the same truth prominently set forth, namely, the entire separation of those who belong to God. Israel's position is thus stated in Balaam's parable, "Lo, the people shall *dwell alone*, and shall not be reckoned amongst the nations." Their place was outside the range of all the nations of the earth, and they were responsible to maintain that separation. Throughout the entire Pentateuch they were instructed, warned, and admonished as to this; and throughout the psalms and the prophets we have a record of their failure in the maintenance of this separation, which failure, as we know, has brought down upon them the heavy judgments of the hand of God. I take it for granted that my reader is sufficiently acquainted with his Bible, to render quotations unnecessary. Should he not be so, however, a reference, in his concordance, to the words, "separate," "separated," and "separation" will suffice to lay before him at a glance the body of Scripture-evidence on the subject. The passage just quoted from the book of Numbers is the expression of God's thoughts about His people Israel: "The people shall dwell ALONE."

The same is true, only upon a much higher ground, in reference to God's heavenly people, the Church—the body of Christ—composed of all true believers. They too are a separated people.

We shall now proceed to examine the ground of this separation. There is a great difference between being separate on the ground of what we are and of what God is. The former makes a man a Pharisee; the latter makes him a saint. If I say to a poor fellow-sinner, "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou," I am a detestable Pharisee and a hypocrite; but if God, in His infinite condescension and perfect grace, says to me, I have brought you into relationship with Myself in the person of My Son Jesus Christ, therefore be separate and holy from all evil; come out from among them and be separate; I am bound to obey, and my obedience is the practical manifestation of my character as a saint—a character which I have, not because of anything in myself, but simply because God has brought me near unto Himself through the precious blood of Christ.

It is well to be clear as to this. Pharisaism and divine sanctification are two very different things; and yet they are often confounded. Those who contend for the maintenance of that place of separation which belongs to the people of God, are constantly accused of setting themselves up above their fellow-men, and of laying claim to a higher degree of personal sanctity than is ordinarily possessed. This accusation arises from not attending to the distinction just referred to. When God calls upon men to be separate, it is on the ground of what He has done for them upon the cross, and where He has set them, in eternal association with Himself, in the person of Christ. But if I separate myself on the ground of what I am in myself, it is the most senseless and vapid assumption, which will sooner or later be made manifest. God commands His people to be holy on the ground of what He is: "Be ye holy, for I am holy." This is evidently a very different thing from "Stand by thyself: I am holier than thou." If God brings people into association with Himself, He has a right to prescribe what their moral character ought to be, and they are responsible to answer thereto. Thus, we see that the most profound humility lies at the bottom of a saint's separation. There is nothing so calculated to put one in the dust as the understanding of the real nature of divine holiness. It is an utterly false humility which springs from looking at ourselves in reality, based upon pride, which has never yet seen to the bottom of its own perfect worthlessness.

Some imagine that they can reach the truest and deepest humility by looking at self, whereas it can only be reached by looking at Christ.—

"The more Thy glories strike mine eye,  
The humbler I shall be."

This is a just sentiment, founded upon divine principle. The soul that loses itself in the blaze of Christ's moral glory is truly humble, and none other. No doubt we have a right to be humble when we think of what poor creatures we are, but it only needs a moment's just reflection to see the fallacy of seeking to produce any practical result by looking at self. It is only when we find ourselves in the presence of infinite excellency that we are really humble.

Hence, therefore, a child of God should refuse to be yoked with an unbeliever, whether for a domestic, a commercial, or a religious object, simply because God tells him to be separate, and not because of his own personal holiness. The carrying out of this principle in matters of religion will necessarily involve much trial and sorrow; it will be termed intolerance, bigotry, narrow-mindedness, exclusiveness, and such like; but we cannot help all this.

Provided we keep ourselves separate upon a right principle and in a right spirit, we may safely leave all results with God. No doubt the remnant in the days of Ezra must have appeared excessively intolerant in refusing the co-operation of the surrounding people in building the house of God, but they acted upon divine principle in the refusal. “Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the Lord God of Israel, then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, ‘Let us build with you; for we seek your God as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto Him, since the days of Esar-haddon, king of Assur, which brought us up hither.’ ” This might seem a very attractive proposal—a proposal evidencing a very decided leaning toward the God of Israel; yet the remnant refused, because the people, notwithstanding their fair profession, were, at heart, uncircumcised and hostile. “But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel said unto them, ‘Ye have nothing to do *with us* to build a house unto *our* God; but *we ourselves together* will build unto the Lord God of Israel.’ ” (Ezra 4:1–3.) They would not yoke themselves with the uncircumcised—they would not “plow with and ox and ass”—they would not “sow their field with mingled seed”—they kept themselves separate, even though by so doing they exposed themselves to the charge of being a bigoted, narrow-minded, illiberal, uncharitable set of people.

So, also in Nehemiah we read, “And the seed of Israel *separated themselves* from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.” (Chap. 9:2.) This was not sectarianism, but positive obedience. Their separation was essential to their existence as a people. They could not have enjoyed the divine presence on any other ground. Thus, it must ever be with God’s people on the earth. They must be separate, or else they are not only useless, but mischievous. God cannot own or accompany them if they yoke themselves with unbelievers, upon any ground or for any object whatsoever.

The grand difficulty is to combine a spirit of intense separation with a spirit of grace, gentleness, and forbearance; or, as another has said, “to maintain a narrow circle with a wide heart.” This is really a difficulty. As the strict & uncompromising maintenance of truth tends to narrow the circle around us, we shall need the expansive power of grace to keep the heart wide, and the affections warm. If we contend for truth otherwise than in grace, we shall only yield a one-sided and most unattractive testimony. And on the other hand, if we try to exhibit grace at the expense of truth, it will prove, in the end, to be only the manifestation of a popular liberality at God’s expense—a most worthless thing.

*Per fas aut nefas*\* can never be a divine motto. The means are not sanctified by the end; but both means and end must be according to the principles of God's holy Word, else all must eventuate in confusion and dishonor. It might have appeared to Jehoshaphat a very worthy object to recover Ramoth Gilead out of the hand of the enemy; and moreover, he might have appeared a very liberal, gracious, popular, large-hearted man, when, in reply to Ahab's proposal, he said, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and *we will be with thee* in the war." It is easy to be liberal and large-hearted at the expense of divine principle; but how did it end? Ahab was killed, and Jehoshaphat narrowly escaped with his life, having made total shipwreck of his testimony.

Thus we see that Jehoshaphat did not even gain the object for which he unequally yoked himself with an unbeliever; and even had he gained it, it would have been no justification of his course.\* Nothing can ever warrant a believer's yoking himself with an unbeliever; and therefore however fair, attractive, and plausible the Ramoth expedition might seem in the eye of man, it was, in the judgment of God, "helping the ungodly, and loving them that hate the Lord." (2 Chron. 19:2.) The truth of God strips men and things of the false colors with which the spirit of expediency would deck them, and presents them in their proper light; and it is an unspeakable mercy to have the clear judgment of God about all that is going on around us: it imparts calmness to the spirit, and stability to the course and character, and saves one from that unhappy fluctuation of thought, feeling, and principle which so entirely unfits him for the place of a steady and consistent witness for Christ. We shall surely err if we attempt to form our judgment by the thoughts and opinions of men; for they will always judge according to the outward appearances, and not according to the intrinsic character and principle of things. Provided men can gain what they conceive to be a right object, they care not about the mode of gaining it. But the true servant of Christ knows that he must do his Master's work upon his Master's principles and in his Master's spirit. It will not satisfy such an one to reach the most praiseworthy end unless he can reach it by a divinely appointed road. The means and the end must both be divine. I admit it, for example, to be a most desirable end to circulate the Scriptures—God's own pure, eternal Word; but if *I could not* circulate them save by yoking myself with an unbeliever, I should refrain, inasmuch as I am not to do evil that good may come.

But, blessed be God, His servant can circulate His precious book without violating the precepts contained in that book. He can, upon his own individual responsibility, or in fellowship with those who are really on the Lord's side, scatter the precious seed everywhere, without leaguering himself with those whose whole course and conduct prove them to be of the world. The same may be said in reference to every object of a religious nature.

It can and should be gained on God's principles, and only thus. It may be argued, in reply, that we are told not to judge—that we cannot read the heart—and that we are bound to hope that all who would engage in such good works must be Christians; and that therefore it cannot be wrong to link ourselves with them. To all this I reply that there is hardly a passage in the New Testament so misunderstood and misapplied as Matthew 7:1—"Judge not, that ye be not judged." In the very same chapter we read, "Beware of the false prophets; by their fruits ye shall know them." Now, how are we to "beware" if we do not exercise judgment? Again, in 1 Corinthians 5 we read, "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Here we are distinctly taught that those "within" come within the immediate range of the Church's judgment; and yet according to the common interpretation of Matthew 7:1 we ought not to judge anybody; that interpretation, therefore, must needs be unsound. If people take, even in profession, the ground of being "within," we are commanded to judge them. "Do not ye judge them that are within?" As to those "without" we have naught to do with them.

All this is plain enough. The people of God are told to exercise judgment as to all who profess to be "within;" they are told to "beware of false prophets;" they are commanded to "try the spirits:" and how can they do all this if they are not to judge at all? What, then, does our Lord mean, when He says, "Judge not"? I believe He means just what St. Paul, by the Holy Ghost, says, when he commands us to judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of God." (1 Cor. 4:5.)

**We have nothing to do with judging motives, but we have to judge conduct and principles; that is to say, the conduct and principles of all who profess to be "within."**<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Mackintosh, C. H. (n.d.). [\*The Unequal Yoke\*](#) (pp. 1–38). New York: Loizeaux Brothers.

## "Be Not Unequally Yoked"

by [Dave Miller, Ph.D.](#)

Paul admonished the Corinthian Christians, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). This statement often has been applied to the question of marriage, with the subsequent conclusion that Christians are commanded not to marry non-Christians. However, this interpretation creates several problems.

First, marriage is not under discussion in the context. Great care must be taken to avoid misapplying the principles taught in a given passage. The application of a passage must be accurate. For example, to apply the injunction “taste not” (Colossians 2:21) to eating chocolate would be a misapplication on two counts. First, it assumes that chocolate is included in the category of substances being forbidden in the context. Second, it fails to perceive the fact that “taste not” was what the **opponents** of Paul were enjoining. They were wrong in their making of a law that God had not made. Likewise, the prohibition of not being unequally yoked would have to be demonstrated to apply to marriage.

Second, if forming a marriage between a Christian and non-Christian is being forbidden, the only way to repent of such an action would be to **sever the marriage**. The only way to repent of an illicit relationship is to terminate the relationship (cf. Ezra 10:11; Mark 6:18; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). Those who fail to separate would be subject to church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:1ff.). Paul explicitly stated in the context to “come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17). But this inevitable conclusion would contradict Matthew 19:9, where Jesus stated that there is one and only one grounds for divorce, i.e., fornication—not marriage to a non-Christian.

Third, if marriage to a non-Christian is forbidden, then non-Christians sin when they marry each other. The non-Christian who marries another non-Christian is guilty of not marrying a Christian.

Fourth, if the Christian sins when he marries a non-Christian, what about that non-Christian whom the Christian marries? That non-Christian would not be sinning since he/she is marrying a Christian. Hence, the very action that is sin for one (the Christian) is righteous and proper for the other (non-Christian)!

Fifth, such an interpretation of 2 Corinthians 6:14 implies that marriage is a “Christian” institution. Yet the marriage relationship was formed by God **at Creation** thousands of years before Christianity was introduced onto the planet (Genesis 2:24). God’s marriage laws apply equally to **all people in all periods** of Bible history.

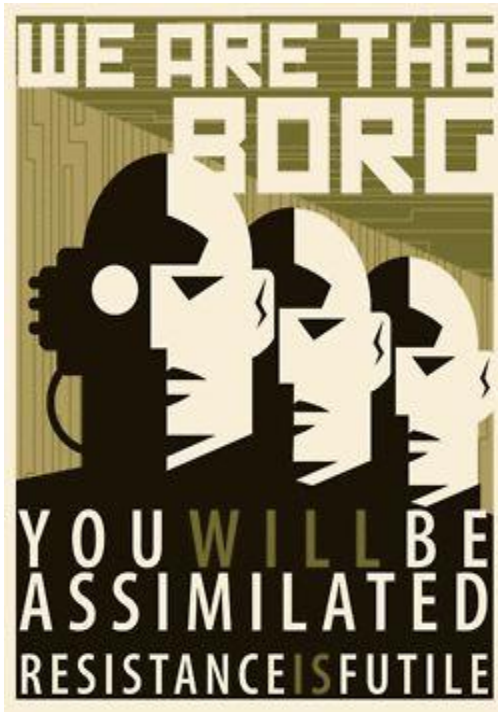
No one prior to the cross of Christ married a Christian! Yet marriages contracted prior to Christianity were valid if contracted in harmony with God's marriage laws (i.e., in accordance with Genesis 1:27, 2:24, Matthew 19:3-12, Romans 7:1-3, and 1 Corinthians 7:1-40).

All persons who choose to be married are required by God to "marry in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39). That is, one must marry in harmony with God's laws, even as children are to obey their parents "in the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1), i.e., compliant with parental instructions that are in harmony the will of Christ. Marriage of a Christian to a non-Christian may well be fraught with peril. It may be at times inexpedient, unwise, or extremely dangerous spiritually. However, the Bible does not teach that it is sinful.

**So, what does this passage mean? It means that Christians should not contract any social arrangement (e.g., business) with another that would require the Christian to violate God's law. For example, suppose you form a business partnership with a non-Christian by opening a restaurant. Afterwards, you learn that your partner intends to serve alcohol and sell cigarettes to customers. Or perhaps you find that he is cheating customers by overcharging them. Or you discover that he is not reporting profits to the IRS. In each of these cases, you as a Christian would find yourself in an "unequal yoke," i.e., a relationship that would necessarily involve you in wrong doing. What should the Christian do in such a case? "Come out from among them," i.e., sever the business partnership.**



THE DANGERS OF ASSIMILATION & SYNCRETISM



## You Are Not A Robot!

Alexander Campbell Actuated  
Medieval Meiderlin's Maxim:

"We would be in the best shape  
if we kept in the essentials Unity  
– in the non-essentials Liberty  
– and in both Charity!"

Alexander Campbell Simplified:

**"In Faith, Unity; In Opinion,  
Liberty; In All Things, Love!"**



# Joshua's Conquest of Canaan

International Standard Version © 1996-2012 ISV.org



- Joshua's Conquest of Canaan
- X Major Battle
- River
- Trade Routes

0 20 Miles

## Early Journeys/Campaigns of Joshua

- 1 From Edom to Moab
- 2 Moses Appoints Joshua as Leader (Num 27:18-23)
- 3 From Plains of Moab to Mt. Nebo
- 4 Joshua Ordained as Successor to Moses (Deut 31:7-8,14)
- 5 To Shittim-God encourages Joshua (Jos 1:1-9)
- 6 Spies sent out (Jos 2:1)
- 7 To the Fords of Jordan-Orders Given About the Crossing (Jos 1:10-18)
- 8 Crossing the Jordan (Jos 3:14-17)
- 9 12 Men Bring Stones from the Riverbed (Jos 4:1-8)
- 10 To Gilgal (Jos 4:19-24)
- 11 Joshua Builds Memorial w/Stones
- 12 To Jericho-Joshua Met by the Lord Who Promises the Conquest of the Land (Jos 5:13-15 6:1-5)
- 13 Jericho Captured & Destroyed (6:6-27)
- 14 Jericho to Ai-Israel Defeated (Jos 7)
- 15 To Jericho-The Valley of Achor
- 16 Achan & Family Stoned for Disobedience (Jos 7:24-25)
- 17 To Ai-A Victorious Assault (Jos 8:1-29)
- 18 To Mt Ebal -Alter Erected
- 19 Law Written on Stone Alter (Jos 8:30-35)
- 20 To Gilgal
- 21 Gibeonites Sue for Peace (Jos 9:3-15)
- 22 To Gibeon -Treaty Made (Jos 9:16-27)
- 23 Return to Gilgal (Jos 10:6)
- 24 To Gibeon -protect them from the Amorites (Jos 10:6-10)
- 25 Joshua's Army drive Amorites to Makkedah-Lord Sends Hailstones (Jos 10:11)
- 26 To Gilgal-Valley of Aijalon
- 27 Joshua Commands Sun and Moon to Stand Still (Jos 10:12-14)
- 28 To Makkedah-Final Attack
- 29 Five Kings are Slain (Jos 10:18-28)

## The Southern Campaign

- 30 To Libnah
- 31 To Lachish
- 32 To Gezer
- 33 To Eglon
- 34 To Hebron (Jos 10:31-42)
- 35 To Debir
- 36 To Kadesh
- 37 To Bamea
- 38 To Goshen
- 39 To Gaza and surrounding country
- 40 Return to Gilgal (Jos 10:43)

## The Northern Campaign

- 41 From Gilgal to the Waters of Merom
- 42 Sidon, Hazor conquered (Jos 11:6-14)
- 43 Return to Gilgal (Jos 14:6)
- 44 To Shiloh-Tabernacle Erected and Allotments to Tribes (Jos 18:1-10)
- 45 Joshua's Men Map out Land
- 46 To Shechem-Joshua Farwell Address and Stone of Witness (Jos 23-24)
- 47 Death and Burial of Joshua near Shechem (Jos 24:29-30)

## Summary of God's Justification for the Jewish Wars of Conquest

In considering the ethical aspects of the conquest, we must understand that the OT wars were limited to a specific setting in space and time, very explicit regulations, and a particular objective. Although it's a very difficult concept for those of us living in modern times, the Bible clearly states that God Himself ordained the warfare.

When all aspects are considered however, it is clear that, while the conquest is an act of divine justice, it is ultimately an **act of divine grace within the context of God's perfect plan of redemption.**

**God used Israel as His instrument of divine judgment to drive out the immoral Canaanites from His land.**  
**Total destruction of the inhabitants was to protect the Israelites from adopting their wicked behavior.**

Israel's right to the land was based upon God's promises to the forefathers, rather than any intrinsic merit, but their prolonged occupation was subject to their continued obedience to God and His covenants. Thus, continuation as stewards of the land was on a spiritual rather than ethnical basis. – ad Dei Gloriam

## **DEUTERONOMY 20: 12–18**

**Verse 16: "But of the cities of these peoples which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes to remain alive."**



# **THE JEWISH WARS OF CANAAN CONQUEST IN THEIR MORAL CONTEXT**

- ✓ **While God does not reveal all the details concerning his sovereign decisions, Scripture indicates God's moral will flows from his perfectly good and just nature. Therefore, God Almighty has morally sufficient grounds for his commands even if those reasons are not to be fully revealed to humankind. Yet, in this specific case several of those reasons are evident...**

- ✓ **God's command to destroy the Canaanites was motivated by his intention to preserve Israel from the deep moral corruption that would have inevitably resulted by way of cultural assimilation with the pagan nations. God's wrathful justice upon resident indigenous Canaanites resulted in an act of mercy (protection) upon the Israelites. Therefore, through this extension of logic & under such specific conditions, God's command to destroy an entire local ethnic population did constitute a moral good.**

- ✓ **The local Canaanites were a morally decadent and a reprobate people. Archaeological discoveries have revealed that their cultural practice included very many moral abominations such as temple prostitution, child sacrifice and even bestiality. And for hundreds of years they consistently ignored God's call for them to repent of their wicked ways (Gen. 15: 16). In God's eyes they were well beyond moral rehabilitation.**

- ✓ **Life in the ancient Near-Eastern world was very brutal. And the Canaanite nations together viewed the Israelites as their enemies. In this context of warfare among nations God's conquest command to destroy these pagan peoples was a necessary act of war.**

- ✓ **God, as the sovereign creator and sustainer of life, has prerogative to take life at his just discretion (Deuteronomy 32: 39; Job 1: 21). Because the cosmos belongs to the Lord, he has the ontological right to do as he wishes with his creatures. His only constraint of action is his own moral nature.**

**God is therefore in a different moral category of being than his creatures.**



- ✓ **God's direction to exterminate the Canaanite cities was not a command to actual murder (or to take life without just cause). Rather, conversely, it instead constituted God's commandment for capital punishment of grand scale and therefore reflected a retributive form of justice (where the punishment matched the crime).**

- ✓ **The divine command for the Hebrew army to destroy the Canaanites took place in a unique historical and biblical context. This was not a common or normative event in the life of God's people. "Yahweh" is compassionate & patient and remains, in spite of this act, a God of mercy (Exodus 34: 6).**

# Old Testament Events & the Goodness of God

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

The Scriptures affirm that God is morally perfect. He is holy (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), just and righteous (Psalm 89:14), and good (Psalm 100:5; 106:1). Being a morally perfect entity (Matthew 5:48), all that God does, commands, and approves must of necessity be good (Psalm 119:39,68).

In view of this, the beginning Bible student may be troubled when he encounters certain divinely directed situations in Old Testament history, and when he reads several biblical passages that — superficially at least — appear to reflect upon the character of God. Let us consider a few of these problems.

## The Extermination of the Canaanites

When the Israelites were commissioned to take the land of Canaan, the Lord instructed them to smite completely the peoples, and to show no mercy upon them (Deuteronomy 7:1-5). Accordingly, when Israel invaded Jericho, for example, we are informed:

“And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, both young and old, and ox, and sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword” (Joshua 6:21).

How does the sincere Bible student come to grips with this seeming breach of the goodness of God? Several things must be taken into consideration.

## Rampant Immorality

It must be noted that the Lord had been very patient with these grossly immoral pagan tribes for a long, long time. When Abraham first came into the land of Canaan, Jehovah promised that this country would someday belong to his seed, but it could not yet be theirs for “the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full,” declared God (Genesis 15:16). It is as though the sins of those heathen peoples gradually were filling a container; eventually, a point would be reached that God could tolerate it no longer. The wicked would have to be destroyed. Thus, it was not a violation of His goodness; rather it was to preserve it, that He had them destroyed.

Archaeological discoveries, such as those at Ugarit, have revealed the corruptness of the Canaanite nations. For example, in the Canaanite religion El was the chief god and Baal was his son. These were “gods” who had absolutely no concept of morality.

In a poem known as “The Birth of the Gods,” El is said to have seduced two women, and horrible sexual perversions are associated with his name. He married three of his own sisters — who also were married to Baal. He is represented as practicing vile sex acts and influencing others to do likewise. It is little wonder that the evidence indicates that the Canaanites followed their gods in such abominations.

In the Canaanite religion, homosexuals and prostitutes were employed to raise money for the support of the temples. It is not an exaggeration to say that these pagans elevated sex to the status of a god [that sounds rather modern, doesn't it?]. Many scholars believe that there are hints of this sordid background in such Old Testament passages as Deuteronomy 23:18-19 — where a prohibition is given against bringing the “hire of a harlot, or the wages of a dog (a male prostitute; see Harris, et al., 1980, 1:439) into the house of Jehovah.”

## Brutality

The Canaanite religion was a horribly brutal system as well. For instance, the goddess Anath is pictured as killing humans by the thousands and wading knee-deep in blood. She cut off heads and hands and wore them as ornaments. And in all of this gruesomeness, the Baal-epic says that her liver was swollen with laughter and her joy was great. In this connection it also must be mentioned that the morally depraved Canaanites also sacrificed their own babies to their gods.

Funerary jars have been found with the bodies of young children distorted by suffocation as they struggled for life after having been buried alive as a sacrifice to Canaanite gods. Such young children have been found in the foundation pillars of Canaanite houses, and sometimes religious ceremonies were associated with their sacrifice (Wilson, 1973, p. 85).

Professor Kenneth Kitchen was correct when he remarked that the “Canaanite religion appealed to the bestial and material in human nature” as evinced by the Ugaritic texts and Egyptian texts of Semitic origin (see Douglas, 1980, 1:234.).

## Preservation of Good

**But it also is important to emphasize that the destruction of these wicked people was for the moral preservation of the nation of Israel. The Old Testament makes this clear. When they invaded Canaan, the Hebrews were not to allow their enemies to live “that they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so would ye sin against Jehovah your God” (Deuteronomy 20:18).**

**But why was this so important? Among other reasons, it was through the Hebrew nation that the Messiah was to make His appearance! Thus, the salvation of mankind ultimately was at stake. The extermination of the wicked inhabitants of Canaan, therefore, was an example of moral surgery in order to save the life of the patient (the human race).**

**Moreover, remember this: God, because of Who He is, has the right to render judgment upon evil at any time.**

## **What about the Children?**

The question is bound to arise, however: “But why did God allow the children to be destroyed?” This query hardly could be treated thoroughly in an article of this brevity; however, some comment does need to be made.

First, in a world where there is to be freedom of choice, one must be allowed to suffer the consequences of wrong-choice making, even when he is not a party to such choices. Making bad decisions not only affects us, but affects those around us as well. We fall heir to the consequences of evil in others as a part of the price that we pay for our own freedom! So, children often are victims who suffer because of the evil in their parents.

Second, however, the question raised above represents a real problem only if it is viewed in terms of the present. If one sees the matter in terms of eternity, the situation becomes altogether different. Would it not have been infinitely worse, in view of eternity, had these children grown to maturity and adopted the same pagan practices as their parents? Even this consideration, though, must be seen in the light of the principles mentioned above, i.e., with respect to the coming of Christ and God’s temporal judgment upon sin.

We certainly do not know all of God’s mind on this important theme (cf. Romans 11:33), but if we study the Old Testament record of the Lord’s dealings with these nations, together with the archaeological findings that illustrate the corruption of these people, surely we ought to be able to see that Jehovah’s wisdom regarding those events should not be disputed.

Finally, it might be noted that no one has the right to criticize the moral activity of God unless he can establish and defend some genuine moral standard apart from God — and this no unbeliever can do!

## The Biblical Imprecations

The “imprecatory” sections of the Scriptures are those portions that contain the writers’ prayers or songs for vengeance upon enemies, or which end in triumphant praise at their destruction. For example, “Destroy thou them, O God” (Psalm 5:10), or “Break thou the arm of the wicked and evil man” (10:15; cf. 18:40-42; 28:4; 31:17; Jeremiah 15:15; 17:18; Nehemiah 6:14; etc.).

Many have wondered how such expressions could be a part of divine revelation. Though the subject is complex, perhaps the following thoughts will shed some light on this matter.

These writings are not mere hot-headed bursts of personal vindictiveness characteristic of an inferior Old Testament code. We recognize, of course, that a lower level of moral responsibility was tolerated in an ancient, infantile human race that gradually was being prepared for the coming of the gospel age (cf. Matthew 19:8; Acts 14:16-17; 17:30-31; Romans 3:25).

Nonetheless, the Old Testament in many instances (unless divine judgment was being exercised — see sections above) encouraged service to one’s enemies (Exodus 23:4-5) and forbade hatred, vengeance, etc. (Leviticus 19:17-18; Proverbs 20:22; 24:17; 25:21-22). One ought not, therefore, take a low view of the biblical imprecations that obviously were placed into the divine record for a purpose.

The biblical imprecations ultimately express a zeal for Jehovah’s cause, and, significantly, express a willingness to leave vengeance in His hands. But they do acknowledge that punishment for sin is a part of the divine order (cf. Psalms 58:11; 104:35; 1 Samuel 24:21ff.). One must remember that:

- The enemies of Israel were the enemies of Israel’s God.
- Israel’s defeat was a reproach to His Name.
- The cause at stake was not merely the existence of a nation, but the cause of divine truth and righteousness.



This aspect of the conflict is most completely expressed in Psalm 83, and prayers for vengeance such as those of 79:10,12 and 137:8 express the national desire for the vindication of a just cause, and the punishment of cruel insults (Kirkpatrick, 1906, p. xci.).

It ought to be recognized that some of the language of the imprecations, though seemingly brutal, is highly figurative, with metaphors and images being borrowed from an age in history characterized by much savagery. No one would argue, for example, that Christ was suggesting that certain people — who caused stumbling in others — should literally be weighted with a stone and thrown into the sea (Matthew 18:6), or that Paul, in rebuking those who exalted circumcision, hoped that they literally would mutilate themselves (Galatians 5:12 — ASV footnote).

One must focus, therefore, upon the idea being conveyed, and not necessarily the poetic imagery in which the idea is clothed. This principle needs to be applied to the Old Testament imprecations.

## “Unethical” Actions by God

Some critics have alleged that the Bible represents God as sometimes acting in ways that are clearly unethical. For example, concerning Pharaoh, God said: “I will harden his heart” (Exodus 4:21). The book of Ezekiel quotes the Lord as saying: “I gave them also statutes that were not good” (Ezekiel 20:25). And Jeremiah said of Jehovah: “Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people” (Jeremiah 4:10). Numerous sincere Bible students have been greatly perplexed by these and similar passages.

The solution lies in an understanding of certain idiomatic traits of Hebrew expressions. The great scholar, James MacKnight noted that: “Active verbs were used by the Hebrews to express, not the **doing**, but the **permission** of the thing which the agent is said to do” (1954, p. 29, emp. added).



This involves the concept of man's free will. God has allowed man to have freedom of will, and when human beings choose to do wrong, the Lord is not going to overpower them and force righteousness upon them. The truth is — Jehovah allows humans to act as they will (though ultimately there is a price to be paid). But sometimes the Bible, using figurative terminology, represents God as performing the action, though in reality He does not.

With reference to the examples cited above, we may observe that the Scriptures clearly teach that Pharaoh hardened his own heart by yielding to the enchantments of his magicians and refusing to submit to the will of God (Exodus 7:11-14,22; 8:15,19; 9:34). And the Lord let him go his own rebellious way that he might eventually demonstrate Who really was in control! (cf. Romans 9:17-18).

Additionally, when Ezekiel affirmed that God gave statutes that were not good, he cannot be saying that the Holy God literally gave bad laws. Rather, he is suggesting that when those stubborn people determined that they did not want to submit to Heaven's law, God permitted them to follow the wicked statutes of the pagan nations around them!

Note the words of Psalm 81:12 — "So I let them go after the stubbornness of their heart, That they might walk in their own counsels."

And when Jeremiah suggested that God deceived the people of Israel, he really was saying that the Lord allowed them to follow their own paths of self-deceit, and to eat the bitter fruits thereof.

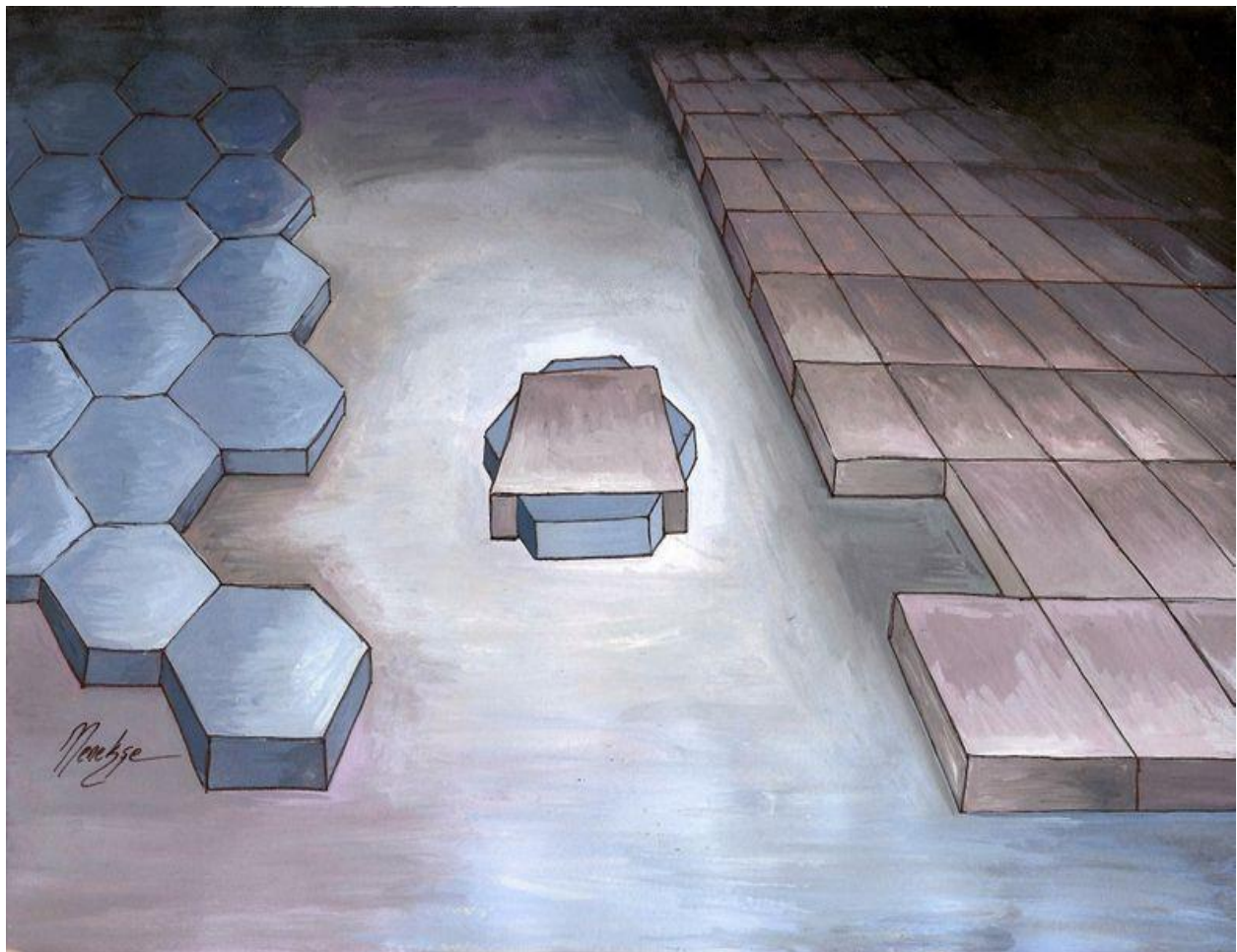
Because of rampant sin, Jeremiah had foretold of a great destruction to be visited upon the people of God (4:5ff), but the people declared that this evil would not come, "neither shall we see sword or famine" (5:12), and the prophets who declared such were considered to be just so much "wind" (5:13). Since they were determined to be deceived, God, in effect, said: "Go ahead and be deceived; I will not stop you."

## Conclusion

Those who respect the Bible as the verbally inspired Word of God need to realize that though they may, from time to time, encounter certain passages of Scripture that seem difficult to understand initially, there are adequate explanations for these texts. By means of patient and thorough research, we can discover many of the answers that will help solve these problems.

And even if we have not yet found all the answers, we ought never to foolishly charge God with error.

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## Religious Syncretism, Hellenism, and Christians

by Lewis Loflin

Syncretism is a process where the fusion of cultures, religions, and philosophies produce both new faiths and cultures or the destruction of older faiths. One definition from [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com) states:

Religious syncretism, the fusion of diverse religious beliefs and practices. Instances of religious syncretism-as, for example, Gnosticism (a religious dualistic system that incorporated elements from the Oriental mystery religions), Judaism, Christianity, and Greek religious philosophical concepts-were particularly prevalent during the Hellenistic period (c. 300 BC. ad 300).

The fusion of cultures that was effected by the conquest of Alexander the Great (4th century BC), his successors, and the Roman Empire tended to bring together a variety of religious and philosophical views that resulted in a strong tendency toward religious syncretism. Orthodox Christianity, although influenced by other religions, generally looked negatively at claims of syncretism.

Hellenistic syncretism often took local gods and integrated them with Greek deities. One example found in 1 and 2 Maccabees was placing a statue of Zeus in the Temple caused great outrage among most Jews. That led to a revolt against Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Greek Damascus - this in my view was the beginning of the conflict that produced Christianity. But the story of syncretism begins even earlier.

By 722 B.C. the Twelve Tribes really no longer existed and had fused then divided into two bitterly divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah. At this time Assyria destroyed Israel. While many refugees fled to Judah others were deported and replaced by other deported people from other regions of the Assyrian Empire. This was a tactic the Assyrians used on conquered nations to maintain control over a region.

This event had to send shock waves to the Yahweh chosen and exposure to new ideas.

In 332BC the region fell to Alexander the Great and the era of Hellenism began. This was a period when Greek culture, science, religion, and philosophy began to displace and change native cultures. Only during the period of the Maccabees Revolt (~140-63BC) was Judah/Israel free from foreign control. During that time Judaism was forced on many non-Jews - a fundamentalist' backlash which is what the Maccabees was about - opposing Hellenism.

Yet in Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece, and Syria millions of Jews were influenced by Hellenism with Alexandria the most important. From Hellenism - the syncretism of Judaism, Greek culture and philosophy, and elements of Egyptian culture produced Philo of Alexandria. This fusion produced sister heresies collectively known as Gnosticism.

## Syncretism in Early Christianity

Nascent Christianity appears to have incorporated many European Pagan cultural elements, "baptizing" or "Christianizing" them to conform with Christian belief and principles, at least partially through discarding theologically and morally incompatible elements. One example of this is the strong reliance of St. Augustine on pagan Greek Plato and St. Thomas Aquinas's many quotations of "The Philosopher," Aristotle.

Many scholars agree to this syncretism in principle, though any specific example is likely to be labeled "controversial". Open Theists (a subset of Protestant Evangelicals) assert that Christianity by the 3rd and 4th centuries had incorporated Greek Philosophy into its understanding of God.

This in particular involved the use of **Allegorical Interpretation** to reinterpret the Jewish Scripture. Later other elements such as Christmas (originating from Pagan Yule holidays) and Halloween are examples of relatively late Christian syncretism. Roman Catholicism in Central and South America has also integrated a number of elements derived from indigenous cultures in those areas." Marxism has been influential among some Catholics.

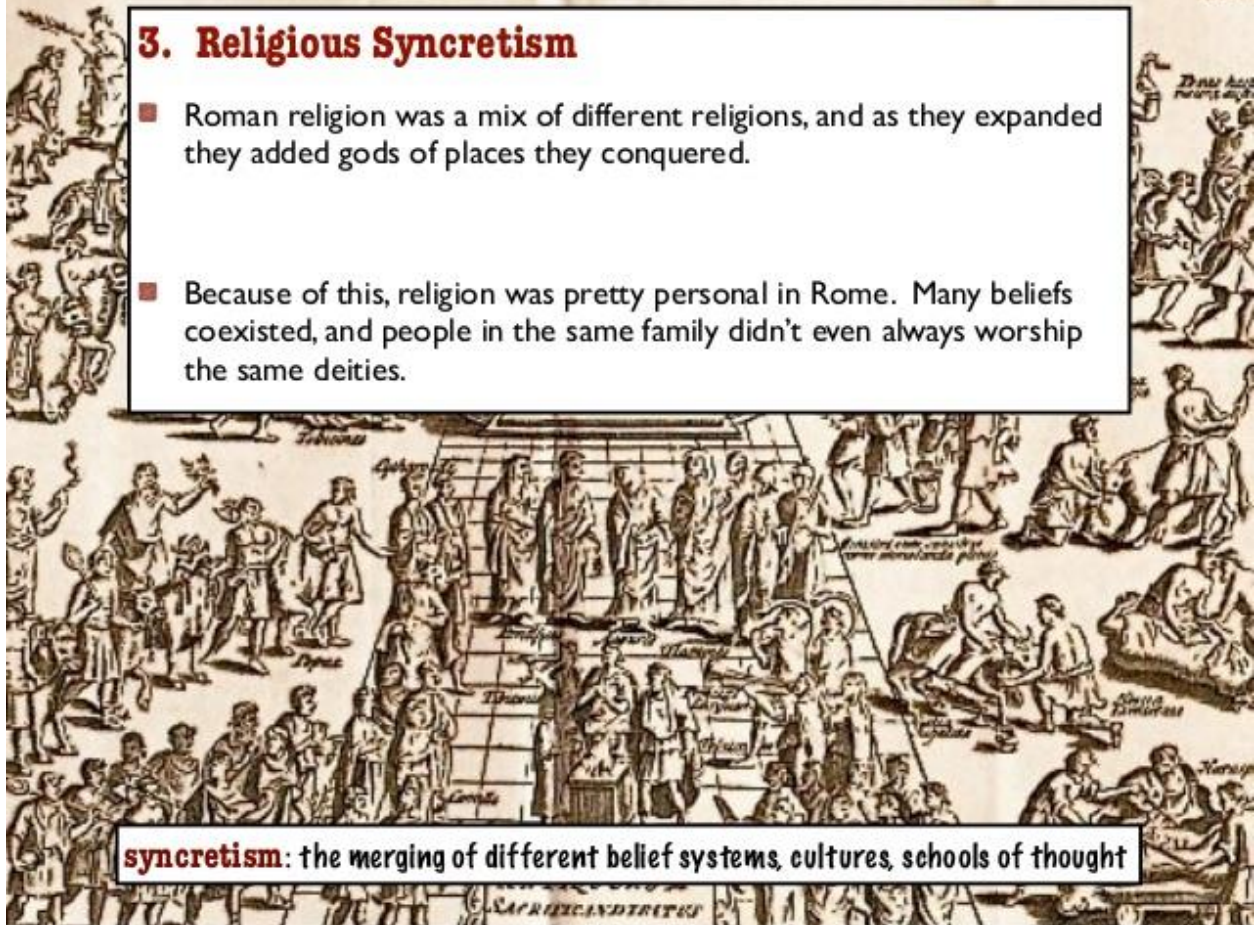
**Syncretism can be contrasted with contextualization, the practice of making Christianity relevant to a culture.**





### 3. Religious Syncretism

- Roman religion was a mix of different religions, and as they expanded they added gods of places they conquered.
- Because of this, religion was pretty personal in Rome. Many beliefs coexisted, and people in the same family didn't even always worship the same deities.



**syncretism:** the merging of different belief systems, cultures, schools of thought

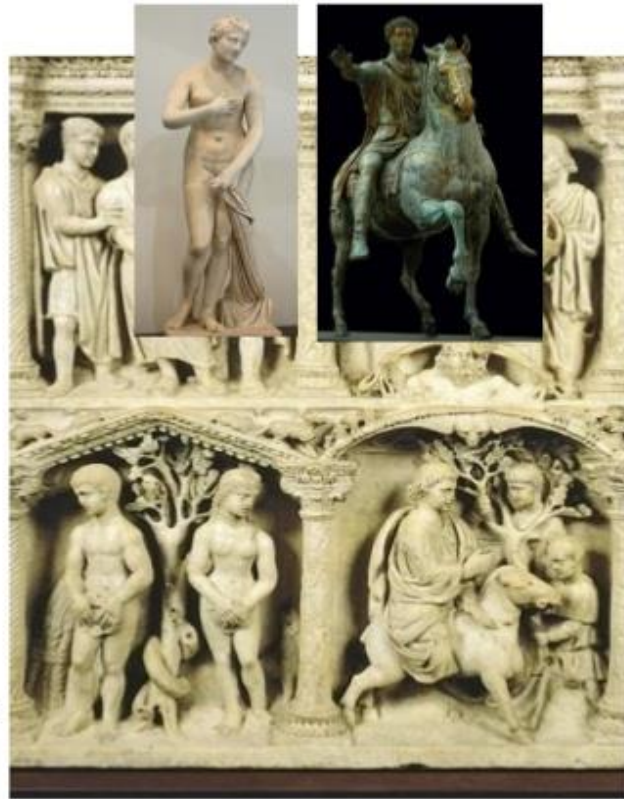


## Religious Syncretism

**The fusion of diverse religious beliefs and practices.** -- *Britannica Online Encyclopedia*

- As pagans convert to Christianity, they carry with them a cultural memory of the pagan world
- To ease the process of conversion, familiar pagan images are given new, Christian meanings which make the new doctrines easier to adopt
- Manifests itself in iconography that can be read from both a pagan and Christian perspective

GREEK Venus Pudica; ROMAN Equestrian Statue of Marcus Aurelius, Rome, Italy; CHRISTIAN Adam and Eve and Christ entering Jerusalem on an ass, detail from Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus, Rome, Italy



## Other Forms of Syncretism: The Virgin de Guadalupe

- The Virgin de Guadalupe is a cultural symbol that unites Mexicans
- The Catholic Church encouraged festivals that coincided with indigenous festivals in order to blend the two and appropriate indigenous festivals as new Christian celebrations
- “After the conquest, the church destroyed shrines to indigenous gods and goddesses, and tried to stamp out the cult of Tonantzin, an Aztec virgin deity”
- Tonantzin was the “honored mother” of Mexico and a fertility goddess
- Mary, mother of Jesus, merged to symbolize the Mother figurehead in both Catholicism and ancient Aztec beliefs



Source: Rose Anna Mueller, *Virgin of Guadalupe*  
<http://www.blueroadrunner.com/virgen.htm>

# RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM



- Through time a culture's religious beliefs and practices persist, but also change through incorporating new elements.
- Religions are adopted and transformed.
- FOR EXAMPLE: Early Christianity incorporated European paganism so that "Christ's Mass" became integrated with pre Christian symbols and practices.



**SYNCRETISM: IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS, RIGHT?**







## CLASSIC ROMAN SYCRETISM \*

The Romans, identifying themselves as common heirs to a similar civilization, identified Greek deities with similar figures in the Etruscan-Roman tradition, though cult practices weren't usually copied. Syncretic gods of the Hellenistic period found wide favor in Rome: Serapis, Isis, Mithras are syncretic deities. Cybele, as she was worshiped in Rome, was essentially a syncretic goddess. The Greek god Dionysus was imported into Rome as Bacchus, and the Anatolian Sabazios was converted to the Roman Sabazius.

The correspondences varied: Jupiter is a better match for Zeus than say the rural huntress Diana is for the feared Artemis. Ares is not quite Mars. The Anatolian goddess Cybele was physically imported to Rome from her Anatolian cult center Pessinos in the original aniconic archaic stone idol; she was identified in Rome as Magna Mater & was given a matronly, iconic image that had been developed in Hellenistic Pergamum.

Likewise, when the Romans encountered Celts and Teutons, they mingled these Northern gods with their own, creating Apollo Suceellos (Apollo the Good Smiter) and Mars Thingus (Mars of the war-assembly), among many others. In the Germania, the Roman historian Tacitus speaks of Teutonic worshippers of Hercules and Mercury; most modern scholars conclude that Hercules was likely Thor, and Mercury was Odin.

**\* This blending with primitive paganism and Greek philosophy continued under Roman Catholicism...**

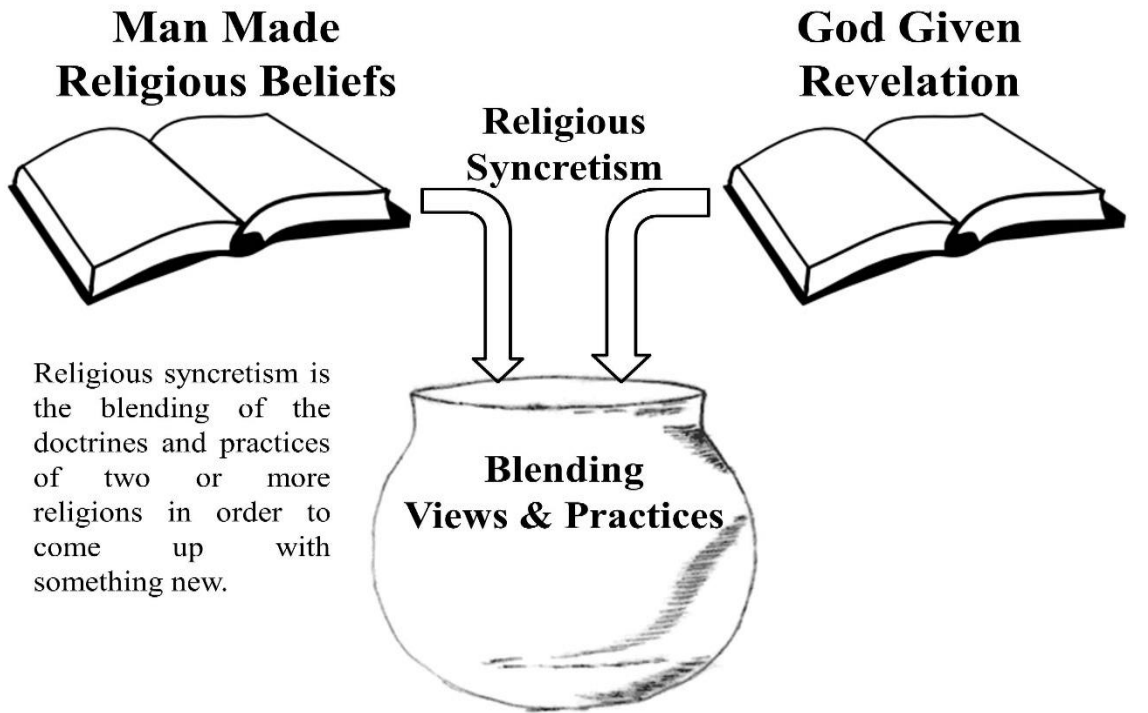
## Modern Syncretism with Christianity

Syncretism was an essential feature of Greek paganism. Hellenistic culture in the age that followed Alexander the Great was itself syncretic, essentially a blend of Persian, Anatolian, Egyptian (and eventually Etruscan-Roman) elements within a Hellenic overall formula.

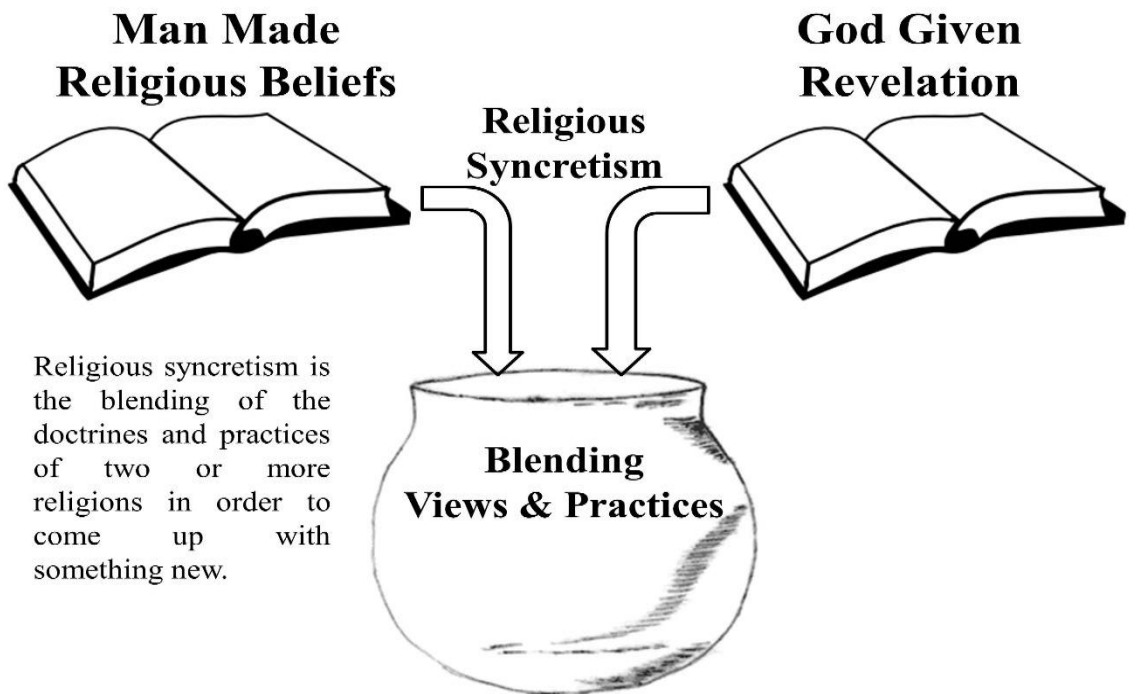
These identifications derive from the Hellenic habit of identifying gods of disparate mythologies with their own. When the proto-Greeks whose language would evolve into Greek first arrived in the Aegean and mainland Greece early in the 2nd millennium BC, they found localized nymphs and divinities already connected with every important feature of the landscape: mountain, grove, cave and spring all had their locally-venerated deity. The countless epithets of the Olympian gods reflect this syncretic character.

Today syncretism continues for both Christianity and Judaism in particular the more liberal branches. Unlike fundamentalists that insist on traditional Bible interpretations - liberal churches are abandoning belief altogether or adding new elements. Some such the Unitarian Universalists, Humanistic Judaism, etc. incorporate various political causes, environmental mysticism/activism, Eastern religion-mysticism, etc. into a bewildering mish-mash operating in an overcoat of religion. Others may reinterpret Jesus as everything from a social worker to a Marxist revolutionary to a Buddhist wise man. The combinations are endless.

In summery syncretism has always been an element of most cultures and give birth to new ideas and changes old or replaces older ideas. The process continues today with changes in some and backlashes from others.



[www.thinkingonscripture.com](http://www.thinkingonscripture.com)



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## **Church History: Doctrinal Departure in Serial Dilution**

### **Departure Principle: Primary Versus Delegated Authority**

Besides the generic and specific classification, there are two kinds of authority: primary and delegated. Primary authority is the original source of all power or authority. It is the authority that resides in the person by right of his relationship to those who are subject to his authority. All divine authority begins with God, the Father!

Besides the generic and specific classification, there are two kinds of authority: primary and delegated. Delegated authority is that which is given to another by the one who has the primary authority. All authority of God has been delegated to his Son, Jesus Christ, and not one single word has been delegated to mankind. In utilizing this authority delegated to the Son, Christ has delegated or granted certain power to others in administering his authority. The apostles received this power. All authority comes from the Son!

### **Doctrinal Departure Principle: The Law of Expediency**

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians - Chapter 6 - Verse Twelve: “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

*First Corinthians Chapter Six & Verse Twelve States - The Lawful Expediency Must Meet Certain Criteria: First, **it must be lawful.** For something to be lawful, it must make a stand on: command, approved example or necessary conclusion.*

If there is no means of showing where God commands it, the apostles practiced it, or draw a scriptural conclusion, it is outside authority bounds per 2nd John 9!

*Therefore, There Are Two Principles Apparent: Expedients Cannot (1) Be an addition to the word of God -or- (2) Be of a substitution for God's ways. A true expedience, therefore, neither adds to or changes the plan of God!*

*The Lawful Expediency Must Meet Certain Criteria: Secondly, **it cannot be explicitly stated.*** This is an evident conclusion from the first point. When God speaks, man is not left to use his judgment & reasoning ability to determine if he is going to act. When God speaks, obedience by faith must be forthcoming from man, and he cannot decide if he wants to do what God has commanded. Yet, with the area of thoughtful expediency, human wisdom can be utilized in that realm where God has left man free to use his own individual and collective judgment.

Thirdly, to be an expedience, **it must edify the church.** From First Corinthians 14: 26 - We can see that when matters of personal judgment pierce the Lord's body, then we had better examine our Bibles & hearts for the correct answers!

**In summation, most of the heresy, false doctrine, and apostate formulations of human religious tradition – even if kick started in a butterfly effect - can be traced and time tracked in terms of a serial dilution of sound precept and principle – gradual and generational.**

