

Can You Tell?

Can You Tell If People Are Saved By How They Live?

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CAN YOU TELL?

Suppose you have a cousin who is one of the nicest people you know. He never curses or consumes alcohol, he coaches little league, and he is a deacon in the church he faithfully attends. Since he trusted in Jesus Christ as his Savior when young, you have always considered him to be a Christian or “**born again**.” But you recently found out that he confessed to sexually abusing young boys and was arrested.

How could this happen? You are shocked and begin to ask yourself all kinds of questions. Is it possible that he was not saved after all or maybe he had lost his salvation? Did he have a “**head belief**” instead of a “**heart belief**?” Maybe he didn’t have enough faith or the right kind of faith. Can a true believer succumb to such temptations and lusts? How could a “born again” Christian commit these detestable acts?

Some people do not think such a sinful person could possibly be saved. Let’s ask a few fundamental questions to find the answer. On what does salvation depend? Does it depend on a person’s behavior, one’s morality? Or does it depend on a person’s faith in Jesus Christ alone? What does the Bible say?

I John 5:13 - These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

Notice that this verse does not say that we need to avoid serious sins or do good works in order to know that we have eternal life. Why not? Aren’t good works and being a nice person required to be saved, and aren’t they necessary to keep salvation once you have it? **No!** The Bible says that salvation is a **GIFT** from God. Would you call something that you had to work or pay for a gift? Of course not, a gift is free!

Rom.6:23 - For the wages of sin is death; but the GIFT of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Eph.2:8 - 9 - For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the GIFT of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

These are but a few of the many verses that make it very clear that all we need to do to receive the free gift of salvation is to simply believe in Jesus Christ. He became our substitute and took the punishment for our sins. Its trusting in Christ’s perfect work on the cross rather than depending on our own good works that saves us. **Faith in Christ is the only thing that matters in salvation!**

Acts 16:31 - . . . BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved . . .

John 3:14b -16 . . . the Son of man [Jesus Christ] must be lifted up [on the cross]; that whoever BELIEVES in Him has eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever BELIEVES in Him will not perish but has everlasting life.

Nothing here about how good or how bad a person might be. That is because being good does not get us into heaven and being bad does not keep us out. It should be obvious that salvation depends on what Christ did, not on what we do.

Of course believers are commanded to do good works but never for the purpose of securing salvation. **GOOD WORKS DO NOT SAVE!** With this in mind, can we tell if a person has received God’s gift of salvation by observing his lifestyle? The initial answer comes from understanding what happens the moment a person trusts in Christ. Let’s take a look.

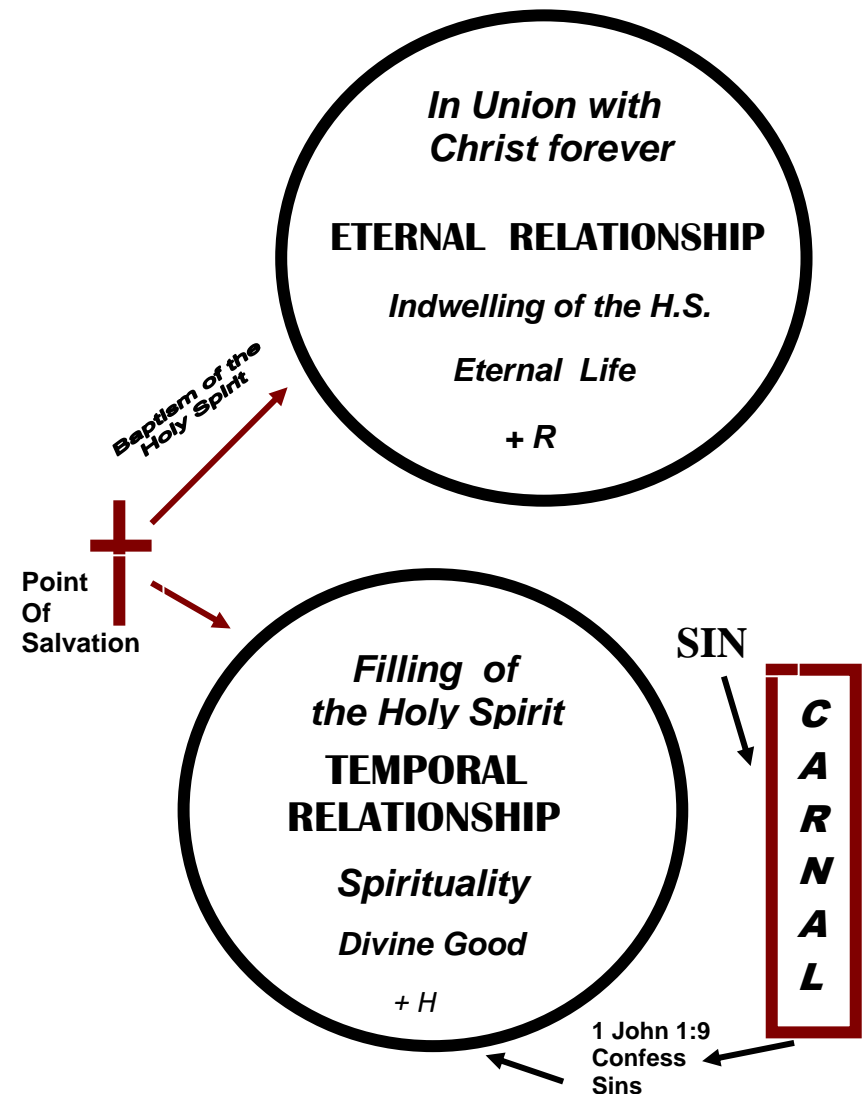
THE TOP CIRCLE

In the diagram on the following page, the cross represents the point in time when we are born again by believing in Jesus Christ. At that moment of our spiritual birth, we are placed into union with Christ. This makes us permanent members of the ***Royal Family of God*** as represented by the top circle. This is accomplished by God the Holy Spirit and is called the ****Baptism of the Holy Spirit*** (*1 Cor. 12:13*). All believers are said to be “***in Christ***,” a permanent position which cannot be undone (*John 10:28, Rom. 8:28-29*). It means we share in all that Christ is and has, including His Royal priesthood, His sonship, and His power. We are also given God’s own righteousness, ***+R*** (*Rom. 4:5*), and eternal life (*John 3:36*).

In addition to all of this, believers receive the ****Indwelling of the Holy Spirit*** which means that the Holy Spirit takes up residence in the bodies of believers as taught in *1 Cor. 6:19*. This is also permanent. There is no Biblical record of any Church Age believer ever losing his imputation of God’s perfect righteousness, of losing his position in Christ, of losing eternal life, or of losing the indwelling of the Holy Spirit because these are irrevocable!

None of these things are felt, so how we feel is no indication that these things have occurred. They are unfelt and unseen things accomplished by God the moment we believe in Christ. God gives them and we receive them. That’s grace. No one earns or deserves such wonderful blessings. Only through the study of God’s Word can one come to know and appreciate the phenomenal things that God accomplished for us at salvation.

The definition of underlined words in bold with asterisks are found in the **Glossary in the back of this book.*



THE BOTTOM CIRCLE

The bottom circle represents the time in our lives when we experience fellowship with God. We are ***Filled with the Holy Spirit** during this time and are said to be ***Spiritual**.

Inside the bottom circle, we are humble, relaxed, and happy, **+H**, as we operate from God's omnipotent power rather than by our own puny power. As we study the Word of God, the Holy Spirit teaches us spiritual phenomena so that we learn to face life from the divine perspective and to apply doctrinal principles even when assailed with hardships and adversities. The Holy Spirit helps us to relax and to maintain composure and contentment no matter how unpleasant the circumstances may be.

Rather than winging it, guessing, or simply doing what feels right, the Holy Spirit helps us to base our decisions on the infallible Word of God. This requires knowledge of Biblical principles which is why it is imperative for us to learn Bible doctrine. The Bible contains over seven thousand promises that help to instill confidence and courage to those who claim them.

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are motivated to do good works based on our gratitude and love for God. Those works are accomplished through the power and influence of the Holy Spirit and are called ***Divine Good**. We cannot take credit for what God's grace has produced through us. God does the work, He gets the glory, and we get the blessing. As we learn Bible doctrine, we grow towards spiritual adulthood. We come to realize that our good works are the result of spiritual growth and not the means of our spiritual growth.

We retain our spiritual status and wonderful place of blessing until we yield to the temptation to sin. Then our harmony and rapport with God is interrupted.

OUTSIDE THE BOTTOM CIRCLE

When a believer chooses to sin, he loses the filling of the Holy Spirit, steps out of the bottom circle, and enters into a state of ***Carnality**. His ***Old Sin Nature** has full control over his soul. Even when saved, the Bible teaches that the believer retains his old sin nature, sometimes called **"the flesh"** or **"the old man"** (*Gal. 5:46-17, Eph. 4:22*). The sin nature is the tendency to sin in all of us; it tempts us to sin and will continue to try to gain control and to dominate us until the day we die. [see diagram on page 29]

When the believer yields to temptation, he is under the sin nature's domination and can commit any type of sin (*Rom. 7:14-25*). Nowhere does the Bible guarantee a believer that he will become a wonderful person and no longer be capable of committing detestable acts (*1 John 1:8,10*). So, no matter what his sins are, they do not prove that he is unsaved. They only prove that he is carnal and that his fellowship with God has been broken.

Carnal believers not only sin but they also produce ***Human Good** which is called **"wood, hay, & stubble"** **1 Corinthians 3:12**. Unbelievers produce human good, too. But man's righteousness is totally unacceptable to God. **Isaiah 64:6** says that God compares man's righteousness to **"filthy menstrual rags"**. However, believers filled with the Holy Spirit produce divine good called **"gold, silver, and precious stones"** (*1 Corinthians 3:12*). These are not only acceptable to God, HE REWARDS THEM !

An interesting question arises. If good works are needed to validate salvation and both believers and unbelievers can produce them, then how **CAN WE TELL** who is saved and who isn't? We must conclude that **WE CAN'T! Good works do not**

prove that a person is saved, and a person's sins do not prove that he is lost. Someone may be very nice and moral, yet be unsaved. Someone else may be very rude and immoral, yet be saved but living outside of the bottom circle in carnality.

As believers, the moment we sin, we lose the benefits of being filled with the Holy Spirit. We lose our divine viewpoint and our relaxed mental attitudes. We no longer produce divine good because we start using our own power rather than relying on God's. And we can no longer discern scriptures with accuracy. The Bible warns us about "***grieving***" the Holy Spirit which we do every time we sin. It grieves the Holy Spirit when we are controlled by our sin natures ***Eph. 4:13.***

The Bible also warns us not to "***quench***" the Holy Spirit which means staying in carnality over a prolonged period of time. Quenching the Holy Spirit means that there is no divine production, no spiritual growth, no glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing but a lot of confusion and wasted time (*1 Thess. 5:19*). When the Holy Spirit is grieved or quenched, our spiritual lives are shut down, and there is no production of divine good.

When we become apathetic and indifferent towards God and His Word, we essentially lock Him out of our lives. The Holy Spirit is quenched, and we can easily become consumed by mental attitude sins like worry, fear, dread, guilt, anger, jealousy, bitterness, revenge, self-pity, greed, sexual lust, etc. Before we know it, we are on a desperate search for happiness and become frustrated because it eludes us. Frustration leads to bitterness, and bitterness poisons our entire lives. Eventually, we reach the point of ****Reversionism*** where we openly resist God. This spiritual retrogression may bring us to an early death, which is called ****Sin Unto Death, SUD,***

God may remove us from this earth for failing to heed the warnings of divine discipline. We will still go to heaven, but we will be peons there forever.

GETTING BACK INTO THE BOTTOM CIRCLE

So, how do believers escape the sin nature's control and regain fellowship with God? By confessing their sins to God the Father. They are immediately forgiven, fellowship with God is restored, and the filling of the Holy Spirit is recovered. Many call this process ****Rebound.***

1 John 1:9 - If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Wait just a minute. You mean I don't have to do anything to make up for my sins? All I need to do is to admit them to God and I'm forgiven? I don't have to do penance, feel sorry for my sin, promise never to do it again, perform rituals, go to church, give money, or do good deeds? **NO, YOU DO NOT !!!**

Even though we do not deserve it, God the Father forgives us of our sins because Christ already paid for them. It is as simple as that. God would be unjust to judge us for sins for which He had already judged His Son. Forgiveness is based on what Christ did for us, not on what we do. This is grace - receiving something that we do not earn or deserve.

A believer is taking personal responsibility for his sins when he confesses them to God. He is acknowledging his guilt and is recognizing that Jesus Christ already paid for those sins. Based on that, the case is dismissed, and the believer is forgiven.

The believer's confession necessitates humility which is the whole idea. By naming his sins to God, the believer switches from arrogance to humility and fellowship is restored.

You will notice in **I John 1:9** that God's forgiveness is not limited to a certain number of sins. Jesus Christ paid for every single sin. The penalty for ALL sin was paid in full when He hung on the cross and declared, **"It is finished!"** (*John 19:30*). Nor does **I John 1:9** say that God's forgiveness is limited to certain kinds of sins. The notion that some sins are forgivable, **"venial sins,"** and some are not, **"mortal sins,"** is one of the false doctrines of Catholicism.

SPIRITUALITY VS CARNALITY

When the believer confesses his sins, he is forgiven of **"all unrighteousness"** which includes any that he did not know were sins and ones he did not remember committing. The Holy Spirit resumes control of his soul, teaching and empowering him so that he is once again **"walking in the Spirit"** (*Gal. 5:16-18*). His status is changed from carnal to spiritual. He is restored to the place of blessing and fellowship with God in the bottom circle. However, the next time he sins, back into carnality he goes again.

A believer is either absolutely spiritual or he is absolutely carnal. These are mutually exclusive. He cannot be partly spiritual and partly carnal at the same time. He is either spiritual, living in the bottom circle and under the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit, or he is carnal, living outside the bottom circle, out of fellowship with God, and under the controlling influence of the Old Sin Nature.

Most people do not understand that spirituality is a matter of confession. They think spirituality is achieved by doing good or becoming a better person. They try to become spiritual by their own power and determination.

They change their pattern of sinning from the more obvious sins, such as cursing, drunken-ness, fornication, or drug abuse, to more subtle sins like self-righteousness, judging, gossiping, and worry.

Many people mistakenly assume that the proof they are really saved and are spiritual is the fact they no longer commit the shocking type of sins. What these Christians do not realize is that the less obvious sins are just as serious as the obvious, more shocking ones. Actually, mental attitude sins, like worry, fear, arrogance, anger, revenge, jealousy, judging, and sins of the tongue, such as speaking ill of others, are sins God hates the most, **Proverbs 6:16-19**.

CONDEMNATION VS DISCIPLINE

Many believers do not understand that they are not condemned for their sins, **Rom.8:1**. Even unbelievers are not condemned for their sins; their condemnation comes from rejecting the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

John 3:18 - Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Believers are not condemned for their sins, but that does not mean that their sins have no consequence. They will receive **divine discipline** because of unconfessed sin, but this should not be confused with condemnation. **Condemnation** is eternal judgment for unbelievers, whereas divine discipline is temporary punishment for believers.

There is no limit on how often a believer can get spanked. Some learn the easy way, but others, the hard way. Some never learn no matter how many times they go to the divine woodshed. They spend their entire lives feeling the sting of God's paddle.

Confession of sin immediately brings an end to the unbearable suffering of divine discipline, or God reduces the suffering so that it becomes bearable. There is no limit on how many times we can confess our sins because there is no limit to God's grace. He is faithful to forgive our sins every time we admit to Him that we did them. What a wonderful plan God devised to provide sinners with a way to maintain a close relationship with Him!

BELIEVERS OF THE BIBLE

If we could tell who is saved by their fruits and the tenor of their lives, wouldn't we find that believers of the Bible were very moral, obedient, and productive? Wouldn't they be free of persistence or grievous sins? Well, we rarely find such people. Instead, we find that the saved of the Bible were in various stages of spiritual growth with their ups and downs.

Some were spiritual babies who disobeyed and readily yielded to the temptations of their old sin natures. Some were adolescents who tried to learn God's Word but failed to trust the Lord under pressure. And some were mature believers who at times failed by disobeying God or by committing shocking sins. Let's take a look at a few of them:

1. In the beginning as a baby believer, Abraham obeyed the Lord only in part. He disobeyed God by taking his family from Ur with him to settle in Haran instead of going on to Canaan as God commanded, he lied to Pharaoh, and for nearly 50 years, he failed to trust God's promise to provide him a son from his own wife, Sarah.

2. When Moses was returning to Egypt from Midian, he defied God, refused to circumcise his son, and nearly died because of it. Another time, he lost his temper and disobeyed God in front of the entire congregation of Jews. The Lord punished him by not permitting him to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land (Numbers 20:8-12).

3. The people of the Exodus generation were believers (Ex. 4:30-31), but they were despicable. They were guilty of chronic complaining, ungratefulness, disobedience, immorality, and idolatry.

4. King Saul was a believer who persisted in a lifestyle of sin. His jealous rage drove him to chase David all over the country in order to kill him. He gave the order to kill every-one in the city of Nob, including the priests. The night before he died, he went to see the witch of Endor for help instead of seeking God's help. Saul died the sin unto death. God took his life because he was so rebellious and unrepentant; yet Saul joined other saved souls in Abraham's Bosom because, no matter what, he was saved (1 Sam.28:19).

5. David was a believer when God chose him to be king of Israel (1 Sam. 13:14 & 16:13); yet he lied to Ahimelech, the priest, which resulted in the massacre of every man, woman, and child in the entire city of Nob. He sacrificed the security of his country when he deceived King Achish in order to save his own life. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and then tried to cover it up by having her husband murdered. He was a polygamist and a lousy father.

6. In spite of all of this, he was the greatest king of Israel. He may have sunk to the bottom, but he also rose to the top. He was always confessing his sins, putting them behind him, and moving on. He had maximum love and respect for the Lord that few believers ever develop. God awarded David an unprecedented honor when He gave Jesus Christ the title, "Son of David."

7. Like his father, David, Solomon was saved, but he wasted much of his life in rebellion to God taking 700 wives, 300 concubines, and becoming involved in idolatry (1 Kings 11:1-3).

8. *As baby believers, Christ's disciples were a bunch of faithless cowards who abandoned Him when he was arrested. And they refused to believe that Christ had risen from the grave even when people reported having seen the resurrected Lord (Luke 24:10-11).*

9. *In Romans 7:15-25, Paul said that he did not practice what he wanted to do, but rather practiced the very evil he wished not to do. Like all believers, there were times when he was spiritual and times when he was carnal. Even as a mature believer, he disobeyed a direct order from God when he went to Jerusalem. For this, he received severe divine punishment.*

10. *Paul addressed those in the Corinthian church as Believers, I Corinthians 1:2. He called them “sanctified” and “saints.” However, they were horrible sinners, and in some cases, acted worse than unbelievers. The following partial outline of I Corinthians describes them:*

Chapter 1 - The Corinthians kept on quarreling and engaging in dissension.

Chapter 3 - Paul called them spiritually immature believers because they stayed in carnality. They formed divisions among themselves out of jealousy, arrogance, and vindictiveness. Verses 10-15 warned them that they would lose their rewards if they continued to wallow in sin.

Chapter 4 - Paul called them arrogant, he used sarcasm to awaken them to their wretched condition, and he threatened to return to them with a rod if they didn't straighten up.

Chapter 5 - Paul admonished them for not separating from one of their number who was guilty of incest.

Chapter 6 – Paul said it was to their shame that they took fellow believers to court. He warned them that if they continued to fall back into their old sinful lifestyles, they would not inherit the kingdom of God. What this means is covered in detail on pages 15 – 16.

11. *Revelation chapters 2 and 3 addressed the first century churches. Chapter 2 warned that they had forsaken their first love and had “fallen.” Does that mean that they lost their salvation? Absolutely NOT! Chapter 3 describes them as “lukewarm,” “wretched,” “miserable,” “poor,” “blind,” and “naked.” This describes believers in reversionism who are constantly out of fellowship with the Lord and under the control of their old sin natures. Christ is depicted as knocking on the door with warning discipline. If they would open the door through confession of sins, they would regain fellowship with him, illustrated by Christ coming in and dining with them.*

These are just a few examples of believers who some may have thought were unsaved based on their sinful lives. Yet none lost their salvation, none were condemned for their sins, and none were unsaved. However, they all received divine discipline as believers do when they get out of line. **Hebrews 12:6** tells us that because God loves every believer, He disciplines them in order to get them back on track.

Many of the people listed were great believers. The Bible does not reveal their sins to us to disparage them, but to point out that all believers need God's grace and that His grace is sufficient. It is important that we do not judge believers of the Bible or anyone else. It is never anyone's duty to judge the spiritual status of other believers. Only God is qualified to evaluate us: ***“Man looks on the outside, but God looks on the inside,” I Samuel 16:7.*** God has provided us with this wonderful freedom which is referred to as the **privacy of the priesthood.**

DISTURBING LISTS

The Bible contains lists of sins that some think true believers would never commit. Two such lists are found in *I Cor. 6:9-10* and *Gal. 5:17-21*. They list the people **“who will not inherit the kingdom of heaven:”** fornicators, idolaters, adulterers,

homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, revilers, swindlers, drug addicts, carousers, those who lose their temper, those who are covetous, impure, and jealous, and those who cause dissension.

Do these lists refer to unbelievers? NO. Do they refer to believers who have lost their salvation? NO. Or is it possible that such sinners may have had faith but not a “saving faith” that was strong enough to secure salvation? NO to all of these questions! We must study the context carefully to know this.

These lists were written to confront people already saved who were guilty of falling back into their old sinful habits (*1 Cor. 6:8*). They were warned that by yielding to temptation, they would forfeit the privilege of being co-heirs and co-rulers with Jesus Christ during the ***Millennium**. These verses do not say that they would not **“inhabit”** the kingdom of God. They say that they would not **“inherit”** the kingdom of God.

There is a big difference between inhabiting and inheriting. It is the difference between living in a place and actually owning it.

ILLUSTRATION: If you rent a house, there are certain restrictions that must be observed, and there is a limit on what you can do. Things like knocking out walls, removing porches, or painting it different colors might not be permitted. You could not move it or sell it because you do not own it. However, if you inherit a house, it is your own possession to do with as you like.

The rebellious believers, guilty of perpetuating sins on the disturbing list, are like renters. There will be things they won't get to do or have in heaven and restrictions that they will have to observe. Believers who grow up spiritually and do not fall back into their old sinful habits will inherit rights and privileges beyond their wildest dreams. They will be granted the honor of co-ruling with Christ in the kingdom of God.

Rev. 2:26 - And he who overcomes, and he who keeps my assignments until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations. . .

The Bible describes two types of inheriting and two types of overcoming. Everyone inherits eternal life when they believe in Jesus Christ, but only spiritually mature believers “inherit” the kingdom of Heaven. Everyone overcomes the world when they accept Christ, but only mature believers demonstrate by what they think, say, and do that they are overcomers - winners who are qualified to co-rule with Him.

INHERITING POSITION

All believers inherit salvation

(Matthew 25:34, Titus 3:7, Hebrews 1:14)

This is related to Positional Sanctification

OVERCOMING POSITION

All believers overcome the world

(1 John 5:4-5, Revelation 21:7)

This is related to Positional Sanctification

Every person inherits eternal life and overcomes the world when he trusts in Jesus Christ as his Savior. He is permanently set apart by God for blessing, ***Positional Sanctification**, regardless of how he chooses to live his life. Sinful behavior does not change the magnificent things God does at salvation.

God blesses man based on who and what He is, not on who and what man is. God is impressed with His own righteousness only, not man's. God's righteousness is imputed to a person the moment he trusts in Christ (*Rom. 4:5*). Therefore, God blesses believers because they possess His divine right-eousness. He does not bless them because of any human righteousness they produce.

So in reality, God has overcome the world for believers, but those who choose to remain spiritual babies, who seldom study God's Word, and who live only to satisfy their lusts will be double losers. While living on this earth, they will be unhappy, disillusioned, arrogant, insecure, angry, and empty. And then, for all eternity, they will lose out on the rewards and privileges that God would have loved to have given to them. They lose out while on earth, and they lose out in eternity.

Every person that believes in Christ has a secure position for inheriting and overcoming. However, there is an even greater inheritance and a more significant state of overcoming that God has made available to those who grow up spiritually by learning and applying doctrinal principles. The first position sets up the potential to experience the second, which far exceeds the first.

INHERITING POTENTIAL

Only spiritually mature believers will inherit the kingdom of God. They will be co-heirs and co-rulers with Christ.

*(Romans 8:17, Colossians 3:22-24, Hebrews 6:11-12)
Related to Experiential Sanctification*

OVERCOMING POTENTIAL

Only spiritually mature believers will overcome in such a way as to receive authority and rewards in heaven.

*(Revelation 2:7-26, 3:5, 12,21)
Related to Experiential Sanctification*

Mature believers are set apart by God for “**special blessings**.” This is ***Experiential Sanctification**. While they are not sinless, their lives demonstrate that they have overcome Satan's ***Cosmic System** and ***Legalism** through learning and then using the spiritual dynamics found in God's Word.

They have maintained victory over the cosmic system by continued faith in God's immutable Word.

They overcome the inevitable adversities of life because they do not allow themselves to become distracted from their number one priority, that is their relationship with the Lord. Jesus Christ will personally delegate authority and distribute rewards, decorations, rights and privileges to them at the ***Judgment Seat of Christ** (*II Cor. 5:10*).

MORE DISTURBING LISTS

Revelation 21:8 - But for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and immoral persons, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.

Revelation 22:15 - Outside [heaven] are the dogs, and sorcerers, and the immoral persons, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

Some people are very disturbed by these verses because they know that they are guilty of some of the sins listed in them. Therefore they are frightened that they may be going to hell because of those sins. If that were true, it would be disturbing indeed. Of course, that is not what these verses are saying.

Chapters 21 and 22 of Revelation describe the perfect environment of the eternal state for believers. One reason heaven is such a wonderful place is because no sin will be there. Believers will have resurrection bodies minus old sin natures, so they will no longer sin. Believers can be cowards, liars, idolaters and worse while on earth, but in heaven, everything will be different.

The point that these verses make is not how sin-free a person must be to get to heaven, but how sin-free heaven will be.

The only place in eternity to find the kind of people these verses describe will be the Lake of Fire, inhabited by unbelievers, Satan and demons.

It is important to note that the Lake of Fire will not only contain wicked and evil people, guilty of such things as murder, idolatry, and adultery, it will also contain some of the nicest and most moral people in the world. This may shock a person who does not understand salvation by grace, but anyone who depends on himself rather than Christ to get into heaven will never make it, regardless of how good he may be.

NEW THINGS AND OLD THINGS

When a person is born again, he becomes a new creature and partakes of the divine nature (*II Cor. 5:17, II Peter 1:4*).

II Cor. 5:17 - Therefore, if any man is in Christ, [has believed in Jesus Christ] he is a new creature; the old things are passed away; behold, new things have come.

Some interpret this to mean that God gives believers the supernatural power to avoid sin. They think **“old things”** are the sins that they no longer commit, and **“new things”** refer to their new lifestyle of morality. They claim that this new lifestyle is the evidence needed to prove that one is genuinely saved.

But it must be remembered that morality is not spirituality. Unbelievers can be the most moral people in the whole world. No, spirituality is far, far greater than morality! Christians have a much higher calling than just being sweet, kind and moral. Yet out of ignorance of God’s Word, many miss the mark because they think that their morality is spirituality.

Believers are **“new creatures,”** not because of what they do, but because of what God has done.

The **“old things”** that have passed away are: **1)** spiritual death, **2)** condemnation, **3)** absolute control by the old sin nature.

The new things that have come are: **1)** eternal life, **2)** God’s imputed righteousness, **3)** the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit. Notice what the next verse says.

II Cor. 5:18 - Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

“All these things” refer to the invisible things accomplished by God for us at salvation. These are not visible changes of behavior which may or may not occur in the life of the new believer. Some of the differences and similarities between believers and unbelievers that help to further explain the “old things” and “new things” are discussed on pages 30-31.

WORKS VS NO WORKS

James 2:14, 26 - What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? . . . For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

Some people use these verses to teach that no one can be a true believer unless he has the works to prove it. In other words, they say that it takes faith plus works to be saved. However, these verses have to be taken out of context to obtain this meaning. Also, these people fail to consider who James’ readers were and what his purpose was for writing to them.

James was rebuking **“the brethren,”** fellow believers who were not acting like believers. They were saved, but their faith was not evident. They were spiritual babies who had no works because they were not living under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Verses 15 through 17 give an illustration of “**a brother**” or “**a sister**” who talks the talk but does not walk the walk. People could not see manifestations of the faith that had saved these believers. Instead, what people could see was their lack of charity and compassion for others. They were selfish, prideful hypocrites because they spent most of their time in carnality. That is what was visible. Therefore, their faith was dead as far as producing any divine good or converts.

James 2:24 – You see that a man is justified by works [before men], and not by faith alone [which justified him before God].

The message is simple. Believers are justified before men by their works and justified before God by their faith. They are not justified before God by their faith and their works! The apostle Paul said, “***we are justified by faith apart from the works of the law,***” **Rom. 3:28**, to describe how justification is granted. James speaks of works to describe how justification is shown.

Many scriptures make it abundantly clear that salvation is a free gift acquired by faith alone in Christ alone and that works are not necessary to make salvation secure. Here are a few.

John 3:16,18,36, 6:28-29,40,47, Acts 16:31, Rom.3:27-28, 4:5, 6:23, 9:30-33, Gal. 2:16, 3:11 & 26, Eph. 2:8-9, Titus 3:5, II Pet. 1:3-5, I John 5:11-13, Jude 24

Believers are commanded to do good works which are accomplished when filled with the Holy Spirit. But God gives us the freedom to obey or to disobey this command. Failure to do good works is a sure sign that we are wasting valuable time God has given us to fulfill His perfect plan. Not only will we miss out on the opportunity of sharing His happiness while here on earth, but we will lose the fantastic blessings that He wants to give us in heaven. However, failure to produce good works should not bring salvation into question because being saved does not mean that good works will automatically be produced.

Believers who fear that they might not be producing enough good works to maintain their salvation doom themselves to a legalistic life of doubt and worry. They will never have true peace of mind because they constantly question if they have been good enough to go to heaven. How sad and how unnecessary. They need to meditate on I John 5:12-13.

A LAZY BELIEVER'S ARGUMENT

James 2:18 -19 - But someone may well say, “You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

Here is another passage quoted by those who believe in faith plus works for salvation. Their idea is that faith alone was not enough to save demons because they also needed works. And since demons have no works, they shudder to think of being thrown into the ***Lake of Fire**. Some draw the conclusion that if faith alone was not enough for fallen angels, then it is not enough for fallen man either. This is absurd!

The first step to help understand these verses is to realize that THEY ARE ABOUT SERVICE, NOT SALVATION! This is true of the entire second chapter of James.

James plays the part of the lazy believer who is looking for an excuse not to serve. That believer would say that whether you have works or not, it does not matter because neither one shows faith. An absence of works certainly doesn't show faith, but the presence of works does not show faith either since unbelievers can also produce them. Now this is true.

The lazy believer would use the illustration about the demons to prove his point that there is no connection between faith and works. Demons have faith, but rather than producing good works, their faith only produces shuttering.

Now this is true, too, BUT the misguided believers of James' day were using this to excuse themselves from having to show love, compassion or charity towards others. They would say that their faith at salvation is all that God required of them as Christians.

James calls the lazy believer a **“fool”** in verse 20 and was teaching believers that faith and works go together, **not for salvation**, but for living the Christian life **after salvation**. There are many commands and responsibilities as priests and ambassadors that God expects of believers. James was pointing that out, how God expects believers to be good servants and to produce divine good. He was encouraging them to stop thinking only of themselves and to start thinking of others. Unbelievers are more prone to listen to the gospel given by believers who do good things for others. Who would listen to a self-righteous hypocrite?

But in no way was James insinuating that failure to be good servants would prove that our faith at salvation was not genuine. And he definitely was not suggesting that we try to determine if others are saved by their works.

FRUIT INSPECTORS

Many Christians think that it is OK to scrutinize the lives of others in order to determine if they are truly saved. This is nothing but judging, plain and simple. It is an invasion of privacy and is never condoned by the scriptures (*Matt. 7:1-3*).

Other people's sins are no one else's business. They are a private matter between them and the Lord. Furthermore, other believer's production is nobody's business either. That is a private matter between them and the Lord as well.

The Bible warns us to be on the alert for false prophets and to recognize them by their fruits (*Matt. 7:20*). Their fruit is their false teaching.

They do not teach salvation by faith alone, they reject God's gracious recovery system from sin, and they substitute emotionalism and human works for spirituality. False teachers are to be recognized by their fruits, but this verse does not give anyone an excuse for judging other people. God has called us to be fruit producers, not fruit inspectors.

ASSURANCE

No one can have peace or true security in this life without also having confidence that he is going to heaven when he dies. We have seen how the Bible makes it clear that one's salvation is secured by faith alone in Christ alone. Assurance is based on faith and nothing else.

Some object to this by saying that it's too easy, too simplistic. They call it **“easy believism,”** claiming that faith without works is nothing more than an **“intellectual assent of the mind”** that cannot secure salvation. They insist that works are necessary to confirm the genuineness of one's faith. But how many works

would be required to prove that it is genuine? How many sins would prove that it's not genuine?

If these questions were legitimate, the Bible would answer them, but it doesn't. Those insisting that works are needed to confirm their salvation cannot be sure they are really saved until they take their last breath. Every time they stumble in life, they wonder if they are really saved. It is a life of fear and insecurity.

It is sad to see so many believers lacking the tranquility of soul that God wants them to have because they continually question their own salvation as well as that of others. They have allowed themselves to be enslaved by the cruel tyranny of legalism because they don't understand how much we all must depend on God's grace.

They are forever working to reassure themselves of their own salvation, and they constantly critique the behavior of others in order to determine their standing before God.

Christ has set us free from legalism, so we must be careful not to slip back into its self-righteousness. We become spiritual losers if we succumb to legalism by ignoring God's grace and taking credit for the good that occurs. Some will suffer great shame at the Judgment Seat of Christ as they watch things they were so proud of go up in smoke. God wants us to be spiritual winners so that we will receive eternal rewards, decorations, special rights, and privileges as a memorial to what He accomplishes through us. He receives all of the credit and glory.

THE CHALLENGE

At the moment of salvation, we are spiritually born into an age-old, invisible war known as the ***Angelic Conflict**. We become a target for Satan and his forces of evil. But we have nothing to fear since God has graciously provided everything we need in order to overcome the attacks we will be subjected to.

John 16:33 - These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the [devil's] world you may have tribulation, but take courage: I have overcome the world.

Satan wants us believers to remain spiritual babies so that he can use us to his own advantage. His most effective method of achieving this is to distract us from learning God's Word. He wants our minds on the worldly details of life and not on God. The Bible warns us about this and gives us this command:

Romans 12:2 - Stop being conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind [through Bible study], so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable, and perfect.

Satan has been very successful at distracting believers. Many remain in spiritual kindergarten because they have allowed the things of this world to become more important to them than the things of God. They are indifferent towards the Word of God because they truly expect to receive security, love, and happiness apart from God. But what they wind up with is frustration and despair.

Others are distracted by their own high morals and human good, thinking that these are the keys to spirituality and how to live the Christian life. They take pride in how much they know about the Bible, but in reality, they are confused about the most fundamental doctrines. They need to get under the ministry of a pastor whose accurate and dogmatic teaching will take them all the way to spiritual maturity.

Unfortunately, many are close-minded and unteachable because they think they know it all. They reject the divinely delegated authority of the pastor-teacher who teaches dogmatically under the filling of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, they remain spiritually ignorant and vulnerable to false teaching. Because they live by their emotions instead of sound doctrine, they are easy targets for false teachers and cults.

Ephesians 4:14-15 - We are no longer to be children tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming, but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up.

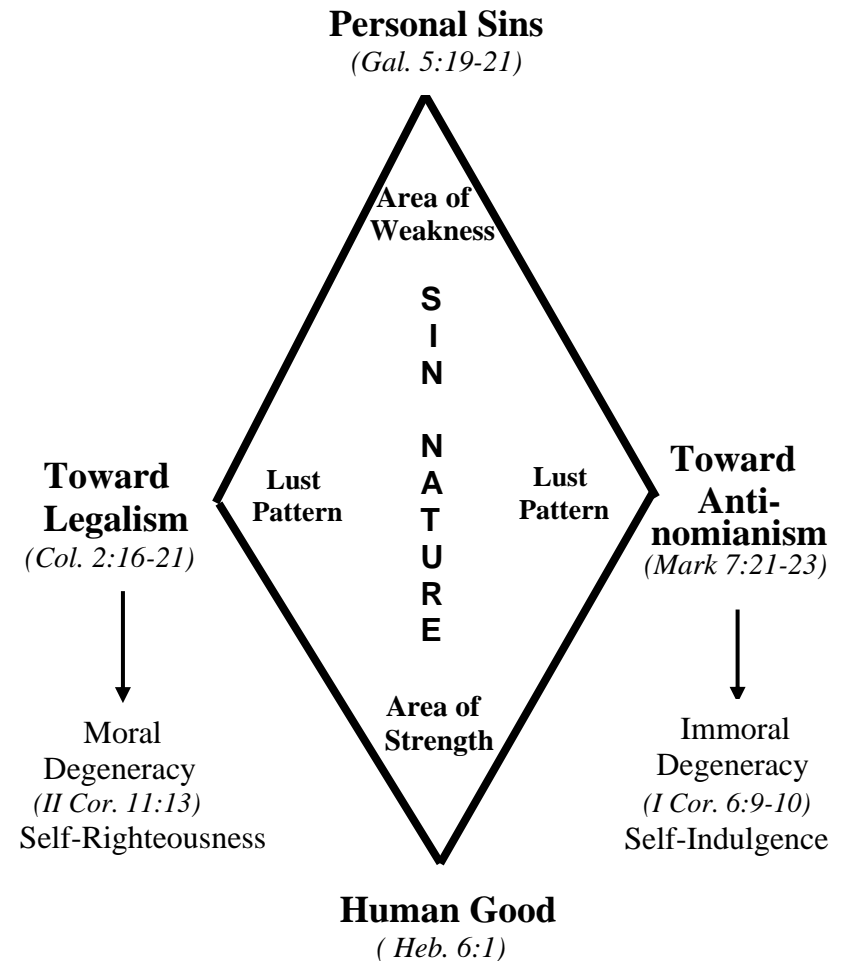
The Holy Spirit will guide those who are humble and truly hungry for truth to a pastor who is properly prepared to train them for spiritual combat. Those believers who rise to the challenge to **"grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ"** acquire true wisdom. They find that the more Bible doctrine they learn and apply, the more they want.

The only thing they fear is losing their spiritual momentum. This occurs when believers allow the details of life to distract them from their number one priority, their spiritual advance through the intake of Bible doctrine.

Mature believers have developed the capacity to love God and to truly appreciate who and what He is. Their love for Him motivates them to unconditionally love their fellow man. They are happy, strong, resolute, and fearless. They have confidence in God and courage towards men. They do not dread adversity because they have learned that there is no victory without conflict. They know that great blessings can be gained from undeserved suffering. By utilizing the power of the Holy Spirit, studying the Word daily, and practicing those precepts, they are heroes. They are winners. Their lives glorify God to the maximum!

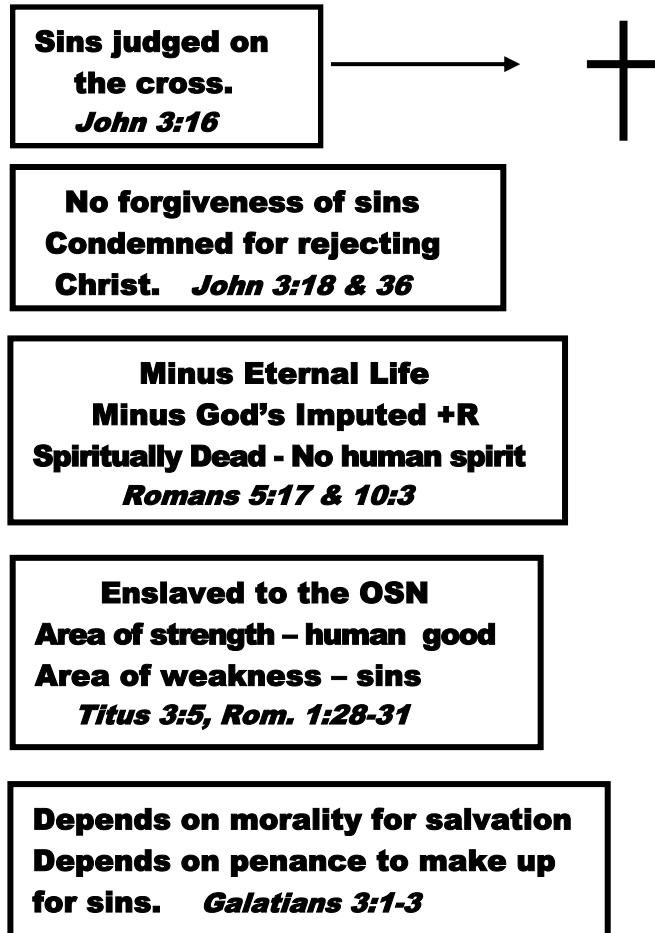
It is my earnest desire that these pages have motivated you to rise above doubt, ignorance, and spiritual mediocrity so that you are now determined to press hard towards the goal of spiritual maturity.

OLD SIN NATURE



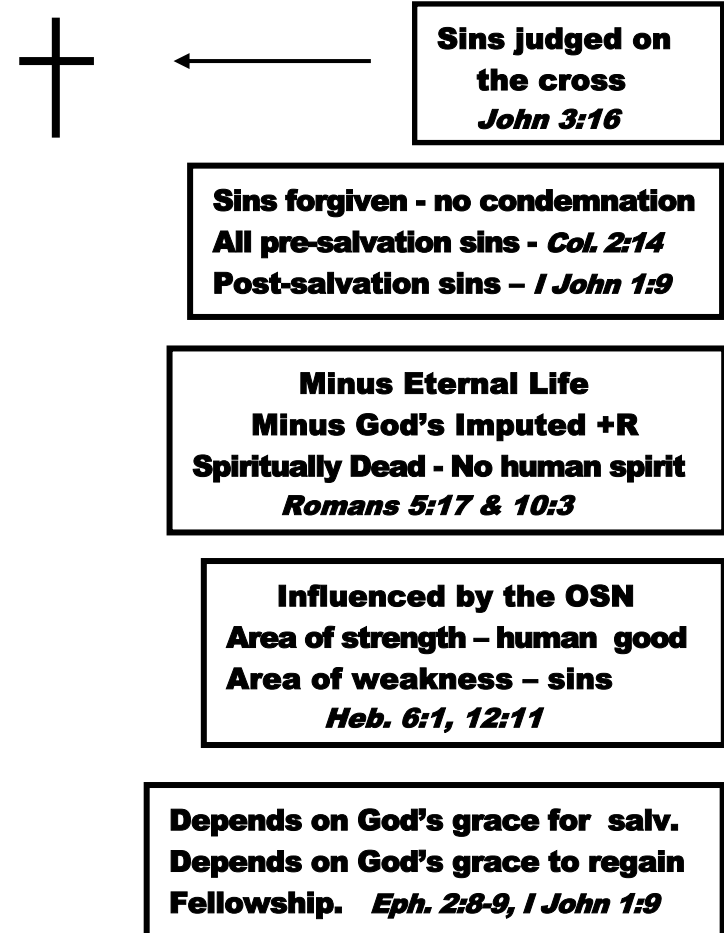
The UNBELIEVER

Natural Man I Corinthians 2:14



The BELIEVER

New Creature II Corinthians 5:17



GLOSSARY

Angelic Conflict – is the unseen conflict in which the forces of Satan are warring against the forces of God.

Carnality – is the status of believers when they have lost fellowship with God because of unconfessed sin. The filling of the Holy Spirit is lost as the sin nature takes control of their lives.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit – The Holy Spirit identifies the believer with Jesus Christ at the moment of salvation. From that point on, he is “**in Christ**” and nothing can ever change that.

Divine Good – the good that a believer produces when he is filled with the Holy Spirit which is rewardable in heaven.

Experiential Sanctification - Every believer is positionally sanctified at salvation, but only mature believers are set apart for special privileges and blessings. This is the extra measure of grace spoken of in James 4:6.

Filling of the Holy Spirit – occurs when the believer confesses his sins to God the Father. He is said to be “**spiritual**.” The Holy Spirit empowers him to learn spiritual phenomena, to think divine viewpoint, to produce divine good, and to face life with confidence in God and courage towards men and circumstances.

Human Good – the good deeds produced by the area of strength of the old sin nature. The good deeds of a carnal believer have no spiritual value and are indistinguishable from the good deeds performed by an unbeliever.

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit – a permanent status acquired at the moment of salvation by every Church Age believer that transforms the body into a temple for the simultaneous indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Judgment Seat of Christ – The works of Church Age believers are to be evaluated by Christ in heaven.

Lake of Fire -- the final abode for unbelievers and fallen angels who are eternally condemned and separated from God.

Legalism – man’s futile attempts to gain salvation, spirituality, and the approbation of God through human effort.

Old Sin Nature – the tendency to sin that is within every person. The sin nature was acquired originally by Adam at his Fall and is subsequently passed down genetically to all mankind through copulation. It includes an area of weakness that produces personal sins and an area of strength that produces human good. It also has a lust pattern or trend toward either asceticism or lasciviousness.

Positional Sanctification – union with Christ whereby every believer is permanently set apart to God to receive blessing. This is common to every believer and does not depend on his spiritual advance after salvation.

Rebound -- the method of restoring the believer’s fellowship with God through confession of personal sins privately to God the Father (*1 John 1:9*); the means of going from carnality to spirituality.

Reversionism – is the believer’s retrogression from any stage of spiritual growth brought on by persistent carnality,. A believer can go through eight stages of Reversionism if he continues to ignore and disobey God.

Sin Unto Death – The reversionistic believer is removed from this earth because he refuses to respond with humility to divine discipline and to confess his sins to God.

Spirituality – is the absolute status of being in fellowship with God through the use of confession of sin (rebound) that results in the filling and control of God the Holy Spirit.

Other Booklets by Pastor Mike Smith

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Homosexuality
Scripture Guide
Rearing Children
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